

**Early Anti-Methodism as an Aspect of
Theological Controversy in England, c.1738-
c.1770**



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Abstract

This thesis provides the first large-scale reintegration of anti-Methodism into the wider theological controversies of the eighteenth century. It argues that there was a close connection – and in many cases, a direct link – between anti-Methodist writers and those involved in other theological controversies. Moreover, it shows that anti-Methodist polemics interacted with and were informed by contemporary debates on such issues as Deism, miracles, and the afterlife. This study also explores authors who used anti-Methodism as a forum to voice heterodox views. The fact that these heterodox ideas were often disagreeable to both evangelicals and High Churchmen is significant because it suggests that – on various points of theology – John Wesley and George Whitefield differed little from their ‘orthodox’ Anglican opponents. By highlighting these theological similarities between evangelicals and High Churchmen, this thesis challenges the traditional stereotype that the eighteenth-century Church of England had become indifferent to theology.

Chapter One introduces Wesley and Whitefield’s key Anglican opponents, and discusses the print culture of early anti-Methodist literature. Chapter Two locates the soteriological disputes between Methodist and anti-Methodist divines as part of a long-standing debate on faith and works, which can be traced back to earlier clashes between Reformed and Arminian divines during the Restoration period. Chapter Three analyses Methodist teachings on self-denial, and considers the ways in which anti-Methodist clergymen reconciled their attacks on evangelical asceticism with their seemingly contradictory charges of antinomianism. Chapter Four explores how anti-Methodism was used as a platform to voice heterodox views on original sin and the afterlife. Chapters Five and Six provide a fundamental reappraisal of the relationship (and

perceived relationship) between evangelicalism and irreligion by showing that anti-Methodism overlapped with anti-Deism and the eighteenth-century miracles debate. The final chapter shows that anti-Methodist authors often adopted a decidedly partisan approach to historical writing, which was modelled on seventeenth-century polemical historiography.

Long Abstract

Methodism was a divisive phenomenon, which generated a torrent of printed criticism in England throughout the middle decades of the eighteenth century. While these early polemical attacks on such evangelicals as John Wesley and George Whitefield have gained some scholarly attention, historians have tended to view anti-Methodism as an isolated category of literature, theology and intellectual history. Consequently, attacks on evangelical clergy and thought have largely been the preserve of Methodist historians, and have not attracted much attention among scholars in wider spheres of eighteenth-century history. This thesis addresses this issue by providing the first large-scale reintegration of anti-Methodism into the wider theological controversies of the age. It argues that there was a close connection – and in many cases, a direct link – between anti-Methodist writers and those involved in other theological controversies. Moreover, it considers the ways in which these polemics interacted with and were informed by contemporary debates on such issues as Deism, miracles, and the afterlife. Rather than viewing these theological clashes between Methodist and anti-Methodist divines as part of a ‘Great Awakening’, this thesis locates these debates within a lineage of long-standing controversies on such issues as Dissent, ‘enthusiasm’, and antinomianism.

By exploring examples of transatlantic anti-evangelical communication, this study provides a fundamental counterpoint to the growing secondary literature on Anglo-American evangelical networks. Crucially, by highlighting such transatlantic communication, it also shows that these polemical attacks on Wesley and Whitefield were sometimes informed and shaped by events in America (and vice versa). Another recurring theme throughout the chapters is literary disguises. For instance, it provides

examples of authors who subtly ridiculed evangelicalism by posing as followers or sympathisers of Whitefield. While this form of literary disguise has gained a fair amount of scholarly attention, this study explores an alternative form of deception which – despite its relative commonality – has largely been ignored by historians. Indeed, it was not unusual for authors to subtly attack a large and politically influential person or organisation by publishing a work which, on the surface, appeared to be targeted at a marginalised person or group. Several case studies are advanced to show that anti-Methodism often provided heterodox authors with a forum to voice various ideas and doctrines, which were disagreeable to both evangelicals and orthodox High Churchmen. By emphasising the prominence of such literary disguises, this thesis makes an original contribution to our knowledge and understanding of eighteenth-century history and literature. More specifically, it shows that both historians and literary scholars need to think much more carefully about who the unnamed targets of polemics may have been. Importantly, by showing that evangelicals and their High Church opponents often shared similar views regarding what constituted ‘heterodoxy’, this thesis challenges the traditional stereotype that the eighteenth-century Church of England had largely given way to spiritual and theological laxity.

This study consists of seven chapters. Chapter One provides a contextual overview of early anti-Methodist literature. It introduces several of Wesley and Whitefield’s key Anglican opponents, including Edmund Gibson, Daniel Waterland, William Warburton, Joseph Trapp and George Lavington. Moreover, it considers the various theological controversies in which these Anglican divines engaged, and highlights the ways in which this information will relate to discussions in subsequent chapters. This section is followed by discussions on the print culture of these texts. Attention is drawn to the coverage of these texts, their intended readership, and the

various printers and booksellers who were responsible for creating and disseminating them.

Chapter Two considers debates on justification by faith, good works, and assurance. It argues that, soteriologically speaking, one should view these early clashes between Methodist and anti-Methodist divines as a continuation of those debates which had occurred between Arminian clergymen and their Reformed counterparts after the Restoration. Rather than being anything original, Whitefield's attack on the late Archbishop Tillotson was little more than a reiteration of what John Edwards had said about Tillotson a generation earlier. Furthermore, when High Churchmen attempted to correct the seemingly antinomian sentiments of evangelicals, they often turned to the Arminian writings of the Restoration divine, George Bull, who had provided one of the most effective rebuttals of the Reformed view on faith and works. One may initially wonder where Wesley, as an Arminian, fitted into this controversy. Indeed, given his polemical battles with Whitefield over the issue of predestination, one would assume that his anti-Calvinist credentials were beyond question. Yet, as this chapter shows, Wesley was sometimes erroneously viewed as a Calvinist because of his references to 'assurance', and his refusal to place sanctification before any initial justification. The chapter closes by considering the Roman Catholic Bishop Richard Challoner's attack on Methodist soteriology. While this piece, on the surface, was an attack on Methodism, a closer reading of the text reveals that Challoner's real intention was to attack Protestantism in general.

Chapter Three explores Methodist teachings on self-denial and asceticism. It incorporates discussions on Wesley and Whitefield's differing definitions of Christian Perfection, and the reactions which such teachings generated among the established clergy. By showing that Methodist asceticism formed part of a long-standing 'holy

living' tradition within the Church of England, this chapter argues that there was nothing particularly controversial about Wesley and Whitefield's teachings on self-denial. Importantly, it notes that their attacks on pleasures and recreations were not radically different from the sentiments of some of their High Church opponents, such as Edmund Gibson and Arthur Bedford. Rather, asceticism was only perceived as dangerous when it was taught by those who appeared to harbour a subversive agenda. In other words, it was feared that anarchy would ensue when asceticism was taught by those who viewed themselves as superior to an ecclesiastical establishment. Thus, it was for this reason that Joseph Trapp and others made the seemingly paradoxical association between evangelical asceticism and antinomianism.

Chapter Four considers instances where anti-Methodism was utilised as a disguise for heterodoxy. It continues the previous chapters' discussions on literary disguises by focusing particularly on Thomas Whiston, an Anglican divine, who used anti-Methodism as a platform to voice several heterodox views which were repugnant, not only to Methodists, but also to numerous High Churchmen, who similarly despised evangelical 'enthusiasm'. Whiston's controversial opinions included his rejection of the Augustinian doctrine of original sin, along with his subtle show of support for the annihilationist views which his uncle, William Whiston, had recently expressed in *The Eternity of Hell Torments* (1740). Importantly, Whiston's tract serves to illustrate two things. First, it shows that evangelicals and orthodox High Churchmen differed little when it came to their views on original sin and the afterlife. Second, the fact that Whiston's views – in particular, his annihilationism – were often associated with social subversion suggests that one should not too readily view anti-Methodism as simply a form of social control. In this instance, it was clearly the anti-Methodist Whiston who posed the greater challenge to the religious, social and political status quo.

Chapter Five explores the complex relationship between anti-Methodism and anti-Deism. It shows that attacks on evangelicalism often mirrored attacks on irreligion. Like Deists, evangelicals were often associated with madness, melancholia and suicide. To various Anglican and Dissenting polemicists, both evangelicalism and Deism were simply different forms of ‘enthusiasm’. In other words, both groups were seen to place a dangerous amount of trust in their own whims and fancies – be it Wesley’s ‘heart-warming’ Aldersgate experience on the one hand or Tindal’s ‘intuition’ on the other. Thus, by showing that there was a link between anti-Methodism and anti-Deism, this chapter argues that such categorisations as ‘Enlightenment’ and ‘Counter-Enlightenment’ are unhelpful when describing contemporary perceptions of Deism, which, like Methodism, was often associated with madness, melancholia and ‘enthusiasm’.

Chapter Six continues these discussions on irreligion and heterodoxy in the context of the eighteenth-century miracles debate. It analyses those entries in Wesley’s published journal which described his encounters with alleged demoniacs. These journal entries were subsequently attacked by several Anglican divines, who believed that Wesley’s accounts of modern demoniacs would cause ‘reasonable’ Christians to find scientific explanations for the demoniacs described in the New Testament. This chapter also explores William Warburton’s *Doctrine of Grace* (1763), which attacked the ideas of evangelicals and the late Conyers Middleton. While this text has gained some scholarly attention, historians have failed to explain why Warburton attacked these seemingly opposite extremes in the same text. As this chapter shows, Warburton viewed Middleton’s ‘latitudinarian’ heterodoxy as an excessively rationalistic reaction to Wesley’s ‘enthusiasm’.

The final chapter explores the polemical use of history in early anti-Methodist literature. It focuses on such themes as Islam, the early Church, Medievalism, and Reformation history. Several scholars have claimed that the eighteenth century witnessed a 'historical revolution'. Apparently, it was during this period that historians eschewed the partisanship which had characterised seventeenth-century historical writing, and, instead, adopted objective and 'scientific' approaches to historiography. While this chapter acknowledges that historians often attempted to convey a sense of objectivity, it diverges from the notion of a 'historical revolution'. Rather, it shows that early anti-Methodist literature adopted a decidedly partisan approach to historical writing, which was modelled on seventeenth-century polemical historiography. Furthermore, by showing that Methodist and anti-Methodist polemicists often attacked each other by referring to historical examples of 'popery', this chapter argues that there was no unifying concept of 'modernity' during this period.

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Abbreviations

BL	British Library
Bod	Bodleian
FP	Fulham Papers
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library
<i>ODNB</i>	<i>Oxford Dictionary of National Biography</i> (Oxford, 2004)
<i>PWHS</i>	<i>Proceedings of the Wesley Historical Society</i>
SPCK	Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge
SPG	Society for the Propagation of the Gospel
USPG	United Society for the Propagation of the Gospel

Introduction

A ‘Torrent of Opposition’

In 1744, George Whitefield spoke of the ‘Torrent of Opposition’ which evangelical itinerants like himself and John Wesley were facing. To Whitefield, such opposition was a positive thing because it signified that evangelical preachers were following a ‘Divine Commission’.¹ Eighteenth-century Methodism was certainly a divisive phenomenon, which generated much controversy and hostility. As both John Walsh and, more recently, Michael Snape, have shown, such opposition sometimes took the form of physical violence and mob action.² In addition, Methodists faced a torrent of printed criticism, which is the focus of this study. We know from Clive Field’s exhaustive bibliography of eighteenth-century anti-Methodist literature that well over five-hundred attacks on evangelicalism were published in Britain between 1738 and 1800. Yet, their distribution was not spread evenly across this period. As Field has shown, around two-hundred of these attacks appeared between 1738 and 1745. Up until the early 1740s, it was usually Whitefield who was centre stage in these polemics. By the mid-1740s, however, it was John Wesley who was gaining most of the limelight and, inevitably, the criticism. This sudden shift in focus was largely due to Whitefield’s lengthy visits to the American colonies, which enabled Wesley to gain a foothold in England.³

¹ G. Whitefield, *An Answer to the First and Second Part of an Anonymous Pamphlet, Entitled, Observations Upon the Conduct and Behaviour of a Certain Sect Usually Distinguished by the Name of Methodists* (Boston, 1744), p. 15.

² J.D. Walsh, ‘Methodism and the Mob in the Eighteenth Century’, in G.J. Cuming and D. Baker (eds), *Popular Belief and Practice* (Cambridge, 1972), pp. 213-27; M.F. Snape, ‘Anti-Methodism in Eighteenth-Century England: The Pendle Forest Riots of 1748’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 49 (1998), pp. 257-81.

³ C. D. Field, ‘Anti-Methodist Publications of the Eighteenth Century: A Revised Bibliography’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 73 (1991), pp. 159-280; Idem, ‘Anti-Methodist Publications of the Eighteenth Century: A Supplemental Bibliography’, *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, 6 (2014), pp. 154-86.

These printed assaults took many literary forms. A relatively small number of these publications were satirical assaults, which were often bawdy in tone. Rather than focusing on doctrinal controversies, the aim of these plays, poems, novels/novellas, and illustrations was usually to ridicule Methodist leaders by portraying them as self-interested tricksters and sexual predators.⁴ However, most of these early anti-Methodist works adopted a considerably more serious tone, and addressed numerous theological, social, and political concerns. While the bulk of these works were written by Anglican clergymen, it was not unusual to see Dissenting clergymen and members of the laity attacking Methodism in print. Some republished earlier works from the seventeenth century, which addressed the theme of religious ‘enthusiasm’.⁵ Others composed fictional dialogues, in which the Methodist character was portrayed as the antagonist.⁶ In addition, several bishops, including Edmund Gibson, the bishop of London, and Richard Smalbroke, the bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, attacked Methodism in their pastoral letters and episcopal charges.⁷ Numerous other anti-Methodist works took the

⁴ For examples of anti-Methodist plays, see *The Mock-Preacher: A Satyrico-Comical-Allegorical Farce* (London, 1739); T. Este, *Methodism Display'd: A Farce of One Act* (Newcastle, 1743); S. Foote, *The Minor* (London, 1760). For poetry, see *The Methodists: An Humorous Burlesque Poem* (London, 1739); *The Mournful Nuptials; or, Love the Cure of All Woes: A Tragedy* (London, 1739); *Dr. Codex's Pastoral Letter Versified, by Way of Caution Against Lukewarmness on One Hand and Enthusiasm on the Other* (London, 1739). For novels/novellas, see *The Accomplished Methodist; or, The Life of David Nefas, Esq.* (London, 1739); [R. Graves], *The Spiritual Quixote; or, The Summer's Ramble of Mr. Geoffry Wildgoose: A Comic Romance*, 3 vols. (London, 1773). For satirical cartoons, see *Enthusiasm Display'd; or, The Moor-Fields Congregation* (London, 1739); *Harlequin Methodist, to the Tune of 'An Old Woman Cloathed in Grey'* ([London?], n.d.); *Doctor Rock's Speech to the Political Mob in Covent-Garden* (London, 1743); W. Hogarth, ‘Credulity, Superstition, and Fanaticism (1762)’, *The British Museum*, http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details/collection_image_gallery.aspx?assetId=195326&objectId=1439184&partId=1 (accessed 22 August 2015).

⁵ For example, *Enthusiasm Explained; or, A Discourse on the Nature, Kind and Cause of Enthusiasm, With Proper Rules to Preserve the Mind from Being Tainted with It* (London, 1739), which was a republication of the Cambridge Platonist Henry More's *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* (1656).

⁶ For examples, see *The Question Whether It Be Right to Turn Methodist Considered in a Dialogue Between Two Members of the Church of England* (London, 1739); *A Plain and Familiar Dialogue Between a Steady and a Wavering Christian, Occasioned by the Defection of the Latter from the Doctrines and Ordinances of the Gospel and Primitive Unadulterated Christianity* (London, 1749).

⁷ E. Gibson, *The Bishop of London's Pastoral Letter to the People of his Diocese; Especially Those of the Two Great Cities of London and Westminster: By Way of Caution, Against Lukewarmness on the One Hand, and Enthusiasm on the Other* (London, 1739); R. Smalbroke, *A Charge Delivered to the Reverend the Clergy in Several Parts of the Diocese of Lichfield and Coventry in a Triennial Visitation of the Same in 1741* (London, 1741).

form of open letters to specific evangelical leaders.⁸ However, by far, the two most common forms of anti-Methodist literature were either sermons or commentaries on specific evangelicals. Of course, various newspapers played their part in opposing evangelical ‘enthusiasm’. During the late 1730s and early 1740s, William Webster’s staunchly High Church Tory newspaper, the *Weekly Miscellany*, was undoubtedly the most ardently anti-Methodist newspaper. But why did Methodism generate so much hostility? When historians have tried to answer this question, they have tended to consider the various ways in which Methodism seemed to defy the religious, social and political status quo.

Social and Political Opposition to Methodism

Traditionally, historians have described eighteenth-century Methodism as a movement which was especially popular amongst those members of society who were in a disadvantaged position – most notably, women and the labouring poor. Nevertheless, this does not mean that historians have necessarily viewed Methodism as a socially radical phenomenon. Some have argued the exact opposite, and described early Methodism as a socially repressive movement, which resonated amongst the intellectually vulnerable poor because of its seemingly theatrical and superstitious nature. In two 1906 articles and a 1913 monograph, Élie Halévy described early Methodism as a new form of Puritanism, which tapped into the fears and anxieties of the industrial poor through religious emotionalism and a renewed emphasis on eternal rewards. It was for this reason, according to Halévy, that Methodism was a counter-

⁸ For examples, see T. Land, *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. Whitefield, Designed to Correct his Mistaken Account of Regeneration, or the New Birth* (London, 1739); E.B., *An Expostulatory Letter to the Reverend Mr. Whitefield, and the Rest of his Brethren, the Methodists of the Church of England, Wherein the Rites and Ceremonies of that Church are Considered, and the Partiality of Those Gentlemen With Regard to the Practice of Them Condemn'd* (London, 1739).

revolutionary movement, which distracted the industrial poor from revolting against their social superiors.⁹ In his 1950 survey of eighteenth-century England, J.H. Plumb claimed that Wesley was ‘absolutely and completely conservative’. Under his leadership, the ‘puritan ideal was reborn shorn of its political radicalism.’ Thus, Plumb concluded that Methodism was ‘not a religion *of* the poor but *for* the poor’.¹⁰ However, it is E.P. Thompson’s *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963) which historians tend to automatically associate with the notion that Methodism fostered submissiveness and passivity. While Thompson was primarily writing about Methodism during the period immediately after Wesley’s death, his central argument was not restricted to this generation of evangelicals. Early in the work, Thompson alleged that nineteenth-century Methodists possessed a strong (or, as he saw it, defeatist) work ethic, which they had inherited from Wesley, who ‘rarely let pass any opportunity to impress upon his followers the doctrines of submission, expressed less at the level of ideas than of superstition’.¹¹

Thompson also claimed that part of Methodism’s appeal to poor labouring men was its alleged feminisation of Christ. In other words, the ‘sacrificial, masochistic, and erotic language’ of Methodist hymns was something which allegedly aroused the passions of Wesley and Whitefield’s male followers, who viewed the Eucharist as a ‘marriage-feast’. Such a ‘feast’, according to Thompson, enabled these men to unite their ‘feelings of self-mortification’, their ‘yearning for the oblivion of the womb’, and their ‘tormented sexual desire’.¹² However, according to Thompson, it was not only the male congregants who were aroused at the Methodists’ nocturnal Love Feasts. Indeed, Thompson added that the ‘pious sisterhood’ also found much ‘consolation’ in listening

⁹ J.D. Walsh, ‘Élie Halévy and the Birth of Methodism’, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 25 (1975), pp. 1-20.

¹⁰ J.H. Plumb, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, revised ed. (Harmondsworth, 1963), pp. 94-96.

¹¹ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York, 1963), p. 41.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 372.

to the sordid confessions of sinners and backsliders.¹³ It was for these reasons that Thompson viewed Methodism as little more than ‘perverted eroticism’.¹⁴ Today, virtually all historians of Methodism are wary of Thompson’s decidedly speculative arguments, which largely stemmed from a personal dislike of the denomination in which he was raised. More recent scholars have avoided such speculation, and, instead, explored the thoughts and feelings of those who claimed to experience evangelical conversions.¹⁵ Several historians have considered the ways in which members of the laity – in particular, women – were empowered by their evangelical conversions, which often placed great emphasis on individual experience. As these scholars have noted, it was the setting of the class meeting which enabled various Methodist women – including such famous examples as Sarah Crosby and Mary Bosanquet Fletcher – to become exhorters and, subsequently (with Wesley’s reluctant approval), preachers.¹⁶

Phyllis Mack considers the experiences of Methodist women in her 2008 monograph, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment*. Without denying that Methodism was popular among women, Mack chooses to analyse male and female conversions alongside each other. Such an approach, according to Mack, prevents scholars from ‘measuring women’s achievements by male standards and perceptions’, thus allowing for a more accurate picture of their shared experiences as ‘worshippers,

¹³ Ibid., p. 368.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 370.

¹⁵ For an overview of Thompson’s background, and how it influenced his views on Methodism, see D. Hempton and J.D. Walsh, ‘E.P. Thompson and Methodism’, in M.A. Noll (ed.), *God and Mammon: Protestants, Money, and the Market, 1790-1860* (New York, 2001), pp. 99-120.

¹⁶ E.K. Brown, *Women of Mr. Wesley’s Methodism* (New York and Toronto, 1983). See also the following works by P.W. Chilcote: *John Wesley and the Women Preachers of Early Methodism* (Metuchen, N.J., 1991); ‘John Wesley as Revealed by the Journal of Hester Ann Rogers, July 1775-October 1784’, *Methodist History*, 20 (1982), pp. 111-23; *She Offered Them Christ: The Legacy of Women Preachers in Early Methodism* (Nashville, 1993); ‘Sanctification as Lived by Early Methodist Women’, *Methodist History*, 34 (1996), pp. 90-103; *Her Own Story: Autobiographical Portraits of Early Methodist Women* (Nashville, 2001); *Early Methodist Spirituality: Selected Women’s Writings* (Nashville, 2007). For more recent works on eighteenth-century Methodist women, see E.M. White, ‘Women, Work, and Worship in the Trefeca Family 1752-1773’, in G. Hammond and P.S. Forsaith (eds), *Religion, Gender, and Industry: Exploring Church and Methodism in a Local Setting* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 109-22; B.C. McNelly, ‘Mothers in Christ: Mary Fletcher and the Women of Early Methodism’, in Ibid., pp. 123-36.

thinkers, and sufferers'.¹⁷ Mack notes that – in addition to describing feelings of spiritual isolation – both male and female evangelical converts often described their feelings of familial loneliness. Often, such loneliness had resulted from the loss of someone close. On other occasions – especially in the case of Methodist women – these feelings of isolation were generated by a distant or abusive spouse. To these individuals, their evangelical conversion alleviated these feelings of isolation and loneliness by providing them with a new sense of family, and generating 'protective relationships' and 'passionate friendships'.¹⁸

Mack has also sought to deflate the traditional stereotype that Methodist emotionalism only appealed to the poorer, less educated, members of society. Indeed, Mack has highlighted examples of shared emotional experiences which transcended social boundaries. For instance, Mack notes that, in their letters to Charles Wesley, both John Gambold, an Anglican divine (who subsequently joined the Moravians), and Nathaniel Hurst, an apprentice, 'used similar images – a gaping abyss, an earthquake – to express their feeling of existential terror.'¹⁹ Of course, there were aspects of evangelicalism which, inevitably, would have deterred many social elites. As Nigel Aston convincingly argues, the 'honour code which still informed elite values sat awkwardly against' evangelicalism's 'call to repentance', and its emphasis on original sin and 'human guilt'. Nevertheless, Wesley and Whitefield's differing attitudes and theologies generated differing results among social elites. It was Whitefield's Calvinist Methodism that tended to gain 'polite' converts – the most significant example being Selina, Countess of Huntingdon – because it provided them with a 'gratifying sense of spiritual election to match their high caste on earth'. Nevertheless, Wesley's failure to

¹⁷ P. Mack, *Heart Religion in the British Enlightenment: Gender and Emotion in Early Methodism* (Cambridge, 2008), p. 21.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 75-82.

¹⁹ Ibid., pp. 29-30.

gain many 'polite' converts was also largely down to the fact that, unlike Whitefield, he was far less willing to acknowledge his 'social superiors.'²⁰ Despite these nuances, the stereotype amongst Methodism's opponents was certainly the notion that evangelical religion primarily appealed to women and the labouring poor.

Bishop Gibson claimed that Methodism appealed to 'ignorant' women.²¹ Another author similarly found the idea of 'several Women of the lowest Rank, and meanest Education...sitting in close Debate upon the important Subjects of Religion' particularly repugnant.²² Methodism's apparent popularity among women inevitably led to allegations of sexual predation. Unsurprisingly, during the late 1730s and 1740s, most of these accusations were levelled at the youthful Whitefield. For example, in 1739, the Oxford don and poet, Joseph Trapp, alleged that Whitefield's 'enthusiasm' appealed to 'women of a most infamous and prostitute character'.²³ Similar allusions to sexual deviance appeared in an early anti-Whitefield cartoon, which depicted him bare-legged and surrounded by female admirers. Where one woman in the cartoon is labelled 'hypocrisy', another is labelled 'deceit'.²⁴ Methodist Love Feasts were an especially potent source of rumour and gossip. While evangelicals claimed that these nocturnal events were merely opportunities for believers to share in communion and fellowship, others alleged that this was simply a front for a much more sordid agenda. One author crudely alleged that such events enabled Whitefield to fixate upon 'a youthful

²⁰ N. Aston, 'John Wesley and the Social Elite of Georgian Britain', *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 85 (2003), pp. 128-29.

²¹ E. Gibson, *The Charge of the Right Reverend Father in God, Edmund, Lord Bishop of London, at the Visitation of his Diocese in the Years 1746 and 1747* (London, 1747), p. 6.

²² [S. Weller], *The Trial of Mr. Whitefield's Spirit. In Some Remarks upon His Fourth Journal* (London, 1740), p. 36.

²³ J. Trapp, *The Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger of Being Righteous Over-Much* (London, 1739), p. 55.

²⁴ *Enthusiasm Display'd*.

creature's lily breast'.²⁵ Yet, Whitefield was certainly not the only itinerant preacher who faced such accusations.²⁶

An article which appeared in a 1747 edition of the *Gentleman's Magazine* claimed that 'now and then a bastard-child was bro't into the world by some of the 'female devotees' of a certain evangelical preacher of Salisbury. The author of this article also attacked Methodism's apparent popularity amongst 'the meaner sort' of people.²⁷ One item, which appeared in a 1739 edition of the *Weekly Miscellany*, similarly described Methodist itinerants as 'Ringleaders of the Rabble.'²⁸ Another author alleged that many of those who attended these assemblies returned home drunk on 'Geneva [gin] potions.'²⁹ Uncouth behaviour at field services was sometimes said to degenerate into violence, with 'vast Multitudes of the Rabble' committing 'Devastations in the Farmers Grounds, by breaking up Inclosures, trampling down the grain, pilfering Turneps, &c.'³⁰ The *Weekly Miscellany* described how one individual had been 'in imminent Danger of suffering Violence, only for expressing a Dislike of Mr. Whitefield's Conduct.' This newspaper also claimed that some of Whitefield's followers had even 'threaten'd to pull down Churches because their Master and his Brethren were not suffer'd to preach in them.'³¹ Paradoxically, it was the labouring poor whom local squires (and, occasionally, vicars) bribed when they wished to recruit a mob, and drive evangelical itinerants out of their locality.³²

²⁵ *The Amorous Humours and Audacious Adventures of One Whd.* (London, 1739), p. 7.

²⁶ For more on evangelical preachers who faced allegations of sexual deviance during the 'long' eighteenth century, see W. Gibson and J. Begiato, *Sex and the Church in the Long Eighteenth Century: Religion, Enlightenment and the Sexual Revolution* (London, 2017), pp. 145-50.

²⁷ *Gentleman's Magazine*, XVII (1747), p. 531.

²⁸ *Weekly Miscellany*, 12 May 1739.

²⁹ *Genuine and Secret Memoirs Relating to the Life and Adventures of that Arch Methodist, Mr. G. W—fi—d* (Oxford, 1742), pp. 26, 85.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 25-26.

³¹ *Weekly Miscellany*, 12 May 1739.

³² Walsh, 'Methodism and the Mob', p. 216.

Many also alleged that Wesley and Whitefield's open-air services diverted vast swathes of the laity from their daily labours. In 1739, Bishop Gibson stated that such gatherings drew people away from their 'proper Business which God has required them to attend.'³³ In addition, it was often feared that those members of the laity who chose to become itinerant preachers were putting both local and national industry at risk. George White, a Lancashire country parson, predicted that the 'visible Ruin' of the country's 'Trade and Manufacture' would imminently ensue unless the activities of these evangelical itinerants ceased.³⁴ Some feared that disruptions to labour and industry would naturally lead to disruptions within the family household. Such fears often featured in discussions on lay itinerants, who were perceived to have no guaranteed source of income. One critic of lay preachers asked

How many handicraft men, who have nothing to depend upon for their subsistence, and that of their wives and children, but their daily Labour (already perhaps too much inclined to Laziness) will forsake it to run after him [Whitefield].³⁵

Some predicted that evangelical converts and their families would become burdensome to their parishes as soon as they were completely destitute. Ralph Skerret, a rector in London, stressed that those who let attendance at revival meetings disrupt their day to day labours were acting 'to the certain prejudice of Themselves and their Families.' Skerret warned that such behaviour would cause masses of families to 'seek Relief'

³³ Gibson, *Pastoral Letter...Enthusiasm on the Other*, p. 51.

³⁴ G. White, *A Sermon Against the Methodists, Preach'd at Colne and Marsden in the County of Lancaster to a very numerous audience, at Colne, July 24 and at Marsden, August 7 1748* (Preston, 1748), p. iv.

³⁵ *A Letter to the Right Reverend the Archbishops and Bishops of the Church of England: Upon Mr. Whitefield's Extraordinary Manner of Preaching the Gospel; His Criminal Presumption, and Enthusiastick Doctrine* (London, 1739), p. 17.

from the 'parishes to which they belong.'³⁶ Skerret's fears were confirmed by one anonymous curate, who stated that, because of Whitefield's preaching, 'several poor People, who before supported themselves and Families by their Labour, had now left off to work, and were become burthensome to their Parishes.'³⁷ Finally, it was often claimed that Methodism created divisions within families, especially when husbands and wives had differing attitudes towards evangelical religion. An anti-Methodist riot that occurred in Wednesbury, Staffordshire, in 1743, allegedly occurred because of divisions between a collier and his wife, who 'absented herself' with a Methodist preacher.³⁸ Using 1 Timothy 5:14 as his scriptural precedent, Samuel Weller of Maidstone declared that, rather than deserting their homes to follow such itinerants as Whitefield, women needed to '*marry, bear Children, guide the House, and be employed in the necessary and important Offices of domestic Life.*'³⁹

Of course, many of the Methodists' practices, including itinerant preaching and open-air preaching, were viewed by numerous Anglican divines as violations of several criminal and ecclesiastical laws. In a 1744 tract, Bishop Gibson noted that the 1670 Conventicles Act (22 Car. II. c. 1) explicitly prohibited people from gathering for religious meetings in fields. Gibson added that there was no mention of field preaching in the 1689 Toleration Act, thus implying that the practice was still prohibited under the 1670 legislation.⁴⁰ When it came to their apparent violation of ecclesiastical laws, Gibson stated that evangelical itinerants who entered a parish without a license from the

³⁶ R. Skerret, *The Nature and Proper Evidence of Regeneration* (London, 1739), pp. vii-viii.

³⁷ A Curate in the Country, *Observations on the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Answer to the Bishop of London's Last Pastoral Letter* (London, 1739), p. 26.

³⁸ *Some Papers Giving an Account of the Rise and Progress of Methodism at Wednesbury in Staffordshire, and Other Parishes Adjacent: as Likewise of the Late Riot in Those Parts* (London, 1744), pp. 21-22.

³⁹ [Weller], *Trial of Mr. Whitefield's Spirit*, p. 35.

⁴⁰ [E. Gibson], *Observations upon the Conduct and Behaviour of a Certain Sect, Usually Distinguished by the Name of Methodists* ([London], 1744), pp. 3-4. While this work is undated, we know from an advertisement in 17-20 March edition of the *London Gazette* that it was published on 'This Day'.

local bishop were violating Canon L of the Church of England.⁴¹ Finally, Gibson described the large numbers of laity who deserted their own parish church to listen to evangelical preachers. This, in turn, often resulted in many people wishing to partake in communion at churches in which they were not known to the presiding minister. Gibson noted that, under the terms of Canon XXVIII, ministers were instructed to ‘forbid, and remit such home to their own Parish-Churches and Ministers’, where they could ‘receive the Communion with the rest of their Neighbours.’⁴² Whitefield subsequently published a response, in which he addressed several of Gibson’s grievances. For example, he argued that, since he was an Anglican clergyman and not a Dissenter, neither the penal statutes of Charles II’s reign nor the 1689 Toleration Act applied to him. Whitefield stressed that he and his followers saw ‘no sufficient Reason to leave the Church of *England*, and turn Dissenters’. He then went on to facetiously compare Methodists to ‘Sailors’ who refused to abandon a ‘*leaky*’ ship.⁴³

Thus, while both Wesley and Whitefield remained Anglicans until the day they died, they clearly encouraged a variety of practices which were contrary to the political, ecclesiastical, and social norms. Such practices included itinerant preaching, conducting outdoor services, and allowing ‘ignorant’ members of the laity – both male and female – to share their experiences of the New Birth. When historians have addressed anti-Methodism during the eighteenth century, it is these social and political objections that have usually featured prominently in their discussions.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 11.

⁴² Ibid., p. 5.

⁴³ Whitefield, *Answer to the First and Second Part of an Anonymous Pamphlet*, p. 7.

Historiography

Until relatively recently, discussions on eighteenth-century anti-Methodist publications were the preserve of Methodist ministers, such as Luke Tyerman, who made numerous references to these early attacks on evangelicalism in his biographies of John Wesley (1870-71) and George Whitefield (1876-77). While Tyerman is to be applauded for identifying a diverse range of anti-Methodist texts, it is unfortunate that his descriptions of these works were often brief and, unsurprisingly, overly disparaging.⁴⁴ In 1902, Richard Green, another Methodist minister, compiled a thorough bibliography of anti-Methodist works, which was largely derived from Tyerman's earlier works. In his bibliography, Green included summaries of many of these works. While some of these summaries were descriptive, much of what Green had to say about these works was largely lifted from Tyerman. Therefore, these summaries often amounted to little more than a description of why the author in question was wrong to attack the Methodists.⁴⁵ In 1916, Josiah Barr published a work entitled *Early Methodists Under Persecution*. As Field notes, Barr's work focused largely on anti-Methodist mobs, though he did include some brief discussions on anti-Methodist literature. From the title of the work, it is unsurprising that – as with Tyerman and Green – Barr's treatment of these texts was almost entirely condemnatory.⁴⁶

Within the last few decades, however, scholarly treatment of these early anti-Methodist works has been considerably more balanced and, in some cases, even

⁴⁴ L. Tyerman, *Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley, M.A.: Founder of the Methodists*, 3 vols. (London, 1870-71); Idem, *The Life of the Rev. George Whitefield, B.A., of Pembroke College, Oxford*, 2 vols. (London, 1876-77).

⁴⁵ R. Green, *Anti-Methodist Publications Issued During the Eighteenth Century: A Chronologically Arranged and Annotated Bibliography of All Known Books and Pamphlets Written in Opposition to the Methodist Revival During the Life of Wesley; Together with an Account of Replies to Them, and of Some Other Publications* (London, 1902).

⁴⁶ J.H. Barr, *Early Methodists Under Persecution* (New York, 1916); Field, 'Anti-Methodist Publications', p. 161.

sympathetic towards them. Anti-Methodist satire has been the focus of several literary studies. In *Methodism Mocked* (1960), which remains the most comprehensive treatment of eighteenth-century anti-Methodist satire, Albert Lyles provided an informative overview of how these early satirical attacks on Methodism were shaped.⁴⁷ More recent monographs by Misty Anderson and Brett McNelly have sought to build on Lyles's work by considering the motivations behind these satirical assaults, and the various ways in which evangelicals responded to such public ridicule. In *Imagining Methodism* (2012), Anderson claims that anti-Methodist satirists viewed evangelical heart religion as an 'antimodern' phenomenon, which, in turn, made it an 'anti-British' phenomenon. Moreover, Anderson argues that the 'underlying danger posed by Methodism was the Methodist conversion' because such events 'challenged the agency and autonomy of the modern self as a secular and autonomous enterprise'. As will be seen, this study diverges from Anderson in the sense that it avoids such teleological categorisations as 'secular', 'modern', and 'anti-modern' when describing interactions between early Methodists and their opponents.⁴⁸ In *Textual Warfare & the Making of Methodism* (2014), McNelly devotes a chapter to the early clashes between the Methodists and the theatre. More specifically, McNelly considers Samuel Foote's anti-Whitefield play, *The Minor* (1760), and the responses it generated among Methodists and their other opponents.⁴⁹

Surprisingly, relatively few studies have focused specifically on anti-Methodist visual satire. William Hogarth's famous *Credulity, Superstition, and Fanaticism* (1762), along with its less famous precursor, *Enthusiasm Delineated* (1761), is the focus of a

⁴⁷ A. Lyles, *Methodism Mocked: The Satiric Reaction to Methodism in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1960).

⁴⁸ M. C. Anderson, *Imagining Methodism in Eighteenth-Century Britain: Enthusiasm, Belief & the Borders of the Self* (Baltimore, 2012), p. 4.

⁴⁹ B. C. McNelly, *Textual Warfare & the Making of Methodism* (Oxford, 2014), ch. 3.

monograph and a more recent article by Bernd Krysmanski.⁵⁰ In addition, several articles and graduate dissertations have considered the relatively large number of anti-Wesley cartoons which appeared in response to Wesley's condemnation of the American Revolution.⁵¹ Anti-Methodist visual satire is a topic to which Peter Forsaith devotes a chapter in his forthcoming monograph on images of Wesley. In this chapter, Forsaith contextualises these visual assaults on Methodism by comparing them to other contemporary satirical attacks on the clergy, such as *The Fat Pluralist and his Lean Curates* (1772).⁵²

Clerical attacks on Wesley and Whitefield have also been discussed in several works on the social and political consequences of eighteenth-century Methodism. For instance, various essays by John Walsh have highlighted the complex nature of Methodism's relationship with eighteenth-century politics. Without denying that Wesley was a pro-establishment Tory, Walsh has drawn attention to the various aspects of his ministry which were often viewed as politically subversive. As Walsh notes, Wesley's support for Christian Communitarianism attracted fierce opposition from various clerics, who, unsurprisingly, viewed it as a levelling principle, reminiscent of the social and political upheavals which had occurred during the 1640s and 1650s.⁵³ In addition, both Walsh and, latterly, David Hempton, have explored the ways in which

⁵⁰ B.W. Krysmanski, *Hogarth's 'Enthusiasm Delineated': Nachahmung als Kritik am Kennertum, Eine Werkanalyse, Zugleich ein Einblick in das sarkastisch-aufgeklärte Denken eines "Künstlerrebellens" im englischen 18. Jahrhundert*, 2 vols. (Hildesheim, Zurich and New York, 1996); B. Krysmanski, 'We See a Ghost: Hogarth's Satire on Methodists and Connoisseurs', *Art Bulletin*, 80 (1998), pp. 292-310.

⁵¹ R. Glen, 'The Fate of John Wesley in English Satiric Prints', in T. Macquiban (ed.), *Methodism in its Cultural Milieu* (Oxford, 1994), pp. 35-43; C.L. Hegenbarth, 'Religion and Representation: Methodism 'Displayed' in a Series of Seven Images Accompanying Six Anti-Methodist Publications, 1778-9', (M.Phil. Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2011); A.M. Bonewitz, 'A Wolf in Sheep's Clothing' (MA Thesis, University of Virginia, 2012).

⁵² P. Forsaith, *Image, Identity and John Wesley: A Study in Portraiture* (London, 2017), ch. 8.

⁵³ J.D. Walsh, 'John Wesley and the Community of Goods', in K. Robbins (ed.), *Protestant Evangelicalism: Britain, Ireland, Germany and America c.1750-c.1950: Essays in Honour of W.R. Ward* (Oxford, 1990), pp. 25-50. See also Walsh's 'Methodism and the Mob', pp. 218-19.

Methodist meetings were widely perceived as ‘the bane of industry’.⁵⁴ By highlighting the socially and politically radical nature of early evangelicalism, these scholars have successfully deflated the assumption – exemplified in earlier works by Plumb and Thompson – that eighteenth-century Methodism was a politically conservative movement, which instilled submissiveness amongst the superstitious and intellectually vulnerable poor. The controversial nature of early Methodist gatherings is something that has also been discussed in recent works by W.M. Jacob, Jeremy Gregory and William Gibson – all of whom have provided us with insightful discussions on the complex relationship between the Church of England and eighteenth-century Methodism. As these scholars have noted, it is paradoxical that, on the one hand, both Wesley and Whitefield continually professed their unwavering loyalty to the established Church, while, on the other, they regularly violated the ecclesiastical laws through such acts as field preaching and extemporary prayer.⁵⁵

Other aspects of anti-Methodism have gained significantly less scholarly attention. One area which remains virtually unexplored is the various doctrinal and theological grievances which Methodists confronted. The most extensive treatment of this subject remains Donald Kirkham’s 1973 doctoral dissertation on pamphlet opposition to eighteenth-century Methodism in England. Kirkham’s thesis, which covers the 1730s through to 1800, encompasses discussions on social, political and doctrinal opposition to Methodism. Kirkham’s chapter on doctrinal controversies is a lengthy one, which incorporates such topics as assurance, justification by faith, original

⁵⁴ J.D. Walsh, ‘“The Bane of Industry”? Popular Evangelicalism and Work in the Eighteenth Century’, in R.N. Swanson (ed.), *The Use and Abuse of Time in Church History* (Woodbridge, 2002), pp. 223-41. For Hempton’s discussions on social opposition to eighteenth-century evangelicalism, see *Methodism: Empire of the Spirit* (New Haven and London, 2005), pp. 87-92.

⁵⁵ W. M. Jacob, ‘John Wesley and the Church of England, 1736-40’, *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, 85 (2003), pp. 57-71; J. Gregory, ‘“In the Church I Will Live and Die”: John Wesley, the Church of England, and Methodism’, in W. Gibson and R. Ingram (eds), *Religious Identities in Britain, 1660-1832* (Aldershot, 2005), pp. 147-78; W. Gibson, ‘Whitefield and the Church of England’, in G. Hammond and D.C. Jones (eds), *George Whitefield: Life, Context, and Legacy* (Oxford, 2016), pp. 46-63.

sin, and perfection. Kirkham is to be commended for covering such a large chronological range, and discussing a mammoth amount of anti-Methodist literature (much of which had been unknown to Tyerman and Green).⁵⁶ Nevertheless, Kirkham's thesis, along with the rest of the existing literature on anti-Methodism, has failed to address the theological diversity of these polemics. Indeed, anti-Methodist Anglicans have often been lumped together by historians. Furthermore, scholars have tended to view these early anti-Methodist polemics in isolation from the various theological controversies which were being waged during this period.

Aims

This study seeks to reintegrate anti-Methodism into the wider theological controversies of the age. It argues that there was a close connection – and in many cases, a direct link – between anti-Methodist writers and those involved in other theological controversies. More specifically, it considers the ways in which these polemics interacted with and were informed by contemporary debates on such issues as Deism, miracles, and the afterlife. Rather than viewing these theological clashes between Methodist and anti-Methodist divines as part of a 'Great Awakening', which suddenly occurred during the 1730s, this study argues that these debates should be located within a lineage of long-standing controversies on such issues as Dissent, 'enthusiasm', and antinomianism. Crucially, this thesis will also provide evidence to suggest that, on various points of theology, orthodox High Churchmen differed little from evangelicals. By highlighting such similarities, these discussions will, in turn, complement those revisionist works which have combated the traditional Victorian stereotype that the eighteenth-century

⁵⁶ D. H. Kirkham, 'Pamphlet Opposition to the Rise of Methodism: The Eighteenth-Century English Evangelical Revival Under Attack' (PhD Thesis, Duke University, 1973), ch. 3.

Church of England had completely given way to theological liberalism, and moral and spiritual laxity.⁵⁷ It will also be argued that, when thinking about Methodism and its opponents, such demarcations as ‘Enlightenment/Counter-Enlightenment’ and ‘modern/anti-modern’ are misleading and anachronistic. To secular historians, who associate Deism with ‘modernity’, Wesley and Whitefield’s ministries epitomised the anti-modern, anti-intellectual ‘Counter-Enlightenment’.⁵⁸ On the other hand, some, such as Harry Stout, have described Whitefield as a ‘modern preacher’ because of his extensive utilisation of the press.⁵⁹ The problem with these conflicting interpretations is that – in both instances – the scholars concerned have viewed evangelicalism and irreligion through twentieth- and twenty-first century lenses. This study seeks to approach eighteenth-century theological writers on their own terms, rather than attempt to force them into conformity with ‘modern’ norms. Moreover, by exploring these polemical battles between Methodists and their opponents, it will be shown that notions of ‘progress’ and ‘modernity’ varied depending on one’s religious, denominational or political stance.

Furthermore, by highlighting literary disguises as a common theme throughout, this study seeks to enhance our understanding of the various methods and strategies

⁵⁷ For examples of Victorian High Churchmen, who wrote critical histories of the Georgian Church, see M. Pattison, ‘Tendencies of Religious Thought in England, 1688-1750’, in H. Nettleship (ed.), *Essays and Reviews* (London, 1860), pp. 254-329; C.J. Abbey and J.H. Overton, *The English Church in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols. (London, 1878). For many years, Norman Sykes’s *Church and State in the XVIIIth Century* (1934) was the only serious attempt at a reassessment of the Georgian Church. After a very lengthy gap, this was followed by a collection of essays by John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor, entitled *The Church of England, c. 1689–c. 1833: From Toleration to Tractarianism* (1993). Many of the essays in this volume—in particular, Walsh and Taylor’s highly informative introductory essay—advanced a relatively optimistic picture of eighteenth-century Anglicanism. More recent contributions to this school of thought have included: J. Gregory, *Restoration, Reformation, and Reform, 1660-1828: Archbishops of Canterbury and their Diocese* (Oxford, 2000); W. Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832: Unity and Accord* (London and New York, 2001); J. Gregory and J.S. Chamberlain (eds), *The National Church in Local Perspective: The Church of England and the Regions, 1660-1800* (Woodbridge, 2003); W. Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate: Benjamin Hoadly, 1676-1761* (Cambridge, 2004).

⁵⁸ J.I. Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights 1750-1790* (Oxford, 2011), p. 43; Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, p. 738.

⁵⁹ H.S. Stout, *The Divine Dramatist: George Whitefield and the Rise of Modern Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids, Mich., 1991), pp. xiii-xiv.

which often undergirded eighteenth-century polemical divinity. During this ‘age of disguise’, it was common for polemicists to ridicule a religious stance or political party by impersonating somebody from within that group.⁶⁰ In *The Shortest-Way with the Dissenters* (1702), Daniel Defoe posed as a tyrannical High Church Tory, who likened the suppression of Dissent to the killing of ‘Serpents, Toads, Vipers’ and everything else which was ‘noxious to the Body’.⁶¹ Yet, literary disguises did not always involve an author posing as somebody else. Sometimes, an author would antagonise an opposing group by publishing a work which, on the surface, appeared to be directed at a different group. Benjamin Hoadly, the Low Church bishop of Bangor, adopted this strategy in his *Preservative against the Principles and Practices of the Nonjurors* (1716). In this work, Hoadly denounced the notion of an ‘*uninterrupted Succession of Rightful Bishops*’ and advanced various other views which were offensive, not only to Non-Jurors, but also to conforming High Churchmen, the latter of whom were his primary target.⁶²

As will be seen, these authors sometimes adopted a similar tactic to Defoe, and ridiculed Wesley and Whitefield by posing as one of their followers. For example, the anonymous author of an item (sometimes attributed to Henry Fielding) which appeared in the 8 September 1739 edition of the anti-Walpole periodical, *The Country Journal or, The Craftsman*, claimed to be ‘one of the People call’d *Methodists*’, and attacked contemporary ‘*Reverend Prelates*’ for their failure to condemn ‘monstrous’ luxuries. The author went on to observe that many of Whitefield’s followers ‘have no other Employment but to pass from Field to Field to sing Psalms, and hear the shrill [sic] Voice of the Preacher’. As a remedy, the author proposed that the Methodists would be

⁶⁰ M. E. Novak (ed.), *English Literature in the Age of Disguise* (London, 1977).

⁶¹ D. Defoe, *The Shortest-Way with the Dissenters: Or Proposals for the Establishment of the Church* (London, 1702), p. 18.

⁶² B. Hoadly, *A Preservative against the Principles and Practices of the Nonjurors: Both in Church and State. Or, an Appeal to the Consciences and Common Sense of the Christian Laity* (London, 1716), p. 72.

‘useful to the State’ as governors of a new court, which would be ‘form’d upon the best *Grecian Models*’. The ‘first *Archon*’ was to be ‘the most excellent and industrious Mr *Whitefield*, or in his Absence the ingenious Mr *Westley*’, whose role would be to appoint ‘Men of *Prudence, Piety, and Morality*’. Their clerical opponents, no doubt, would have welcomed such a prospect.⁶³

Finally, these discussions will highlight examples of transatlantic anti-evangelical communications. Within the last few decades, several scholars have described the transatlantic communication and print networks which linked evangelicals on one side of the Atlantic with those on the other.⁶⁴ In the final chapter of his 2008 doctoral dissertation, Fred Witzig describes the various anti-evangelical print networks which existed across the American colonies.⁶⁵ Yet, transatlantic anti-evangelical communication networks remain virtually unexplored. In large part, this is simply because, compared to evangelicals, anti-evangelical authors did not engage in nearly as much transatlantic communication. The absence of a mass transatlantic anti-evangelical network can be attributed largely to denominational rather than spatial boundaries. As Michael Crawford has shown, there was a significant degree of communication between anti-Whitefield Presbyterians in Scotland and ‘Old Light’ Congregationalists in New England. Given their shared Calvinist heritage, it is unsurprising that, in this

⁶³ *Country Journal or, The Craftsman*, 8 September 1739. Martin Battestin attributed this item to Henry Fielding. See M.C. Battestin, *A Henry Fielding Companion* (Westport, Conn. and London, 2000), p. 161. More recent Fielding scholars, on the other hand, deny that he wrote nearly as many (if any) of the *Craftsman* articles which Battestin attributed to him. Thomas Lockwood is one scholar who denies that Fielding wrote anything for this periodical. See T. Lockwood, ‘Did Fielding Write for “The Craftsman”?’’, *Review of English Studies*, 59 (2008), pp. 86-117.

⁶⁴ For a few examples, see S. O’Brien, ‘A Transatlantic Community of Saints: The Great Awakening and the First Evangelical Network, 1735-1755’, *American Historical Review*, 91 (1986), pp. 811-32; M. Crawford, *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England’s Revival Tradition in Its British Context* (New York, 1991), ch. 8; F. Lambert, *Inventing the “Great Awakening”* (Princeton, 1999), ch. 5; D.C. Jones, *“A Glorious Work in the World”: Welsh Methodism and the International Evangelical Revival, 1735-1750* (Cardiff, 2004).

⁶⁵ F. Witzig, ‘The Great Anti-Awakening: Anti-Revivalism in Philadelphia and Charles Town, South Carolina, 1739–1745’ (PhD Thesis, Indiana University, 2008), ch. 6.

instance, such transatlantic and cross-denominational communication occurred.⁶⁶ On the other hand, it is equally unsurprising that there was no significant communication between anti-Methodist High Churchmen in England and ‘Old Light’ Congregationalists in New England. To the former, the latter were simply ‘schismatic’ Puritans. To the latter, the former were simply popish neo-Laudians. However, this is not to say that anti-Methodist High Churchmen in England were completely oblivious to or uninterested in colonial affairs. As these discussions will highlight, some of these divines – most notably Bishop Gibson – had colonial contacts, who kept them informed of Whitefield’s activities in America. Also, these clergymen sometimes attempted to bolster their attacks on evangelical ‘enthusiasm’ by describing colonial American events. Importantly, this shows that anti-Methodism in England was sometimes informed and shaped by events in America.

This thesis consists of seven chapters. Chapter One provides a contextual overview of these early polemical attacks on Wesley and Whitefield. It introduces their key opponents, and considers the various other theological controversies in which these anti-Methodist divines engaged. This section is followed by discussions on the print culture of these texts. More specifically, this analysis considers the coverage of these texts, and the various printers and booksellers who were responsible for creating and disseminating them. Chapters Two, Three and Four focus on soteriological and eschatological controversies. Chapter Two considers debates on justification by faith, good works, and assurance. It argues that, soteriologically speaking, one should view these early clashes between Methodists and anti-Methodists as a continuation of those debates which had occurred between Arminian clergymen and their Reformed counterparts after the Restoration. One may initially wonder where Wesley, as an

⁶⁶ Crawford, *Seasons of Grace*, pp. 167-72.

Arminian, fitted into this controversy. Indeed, given his polemical battles with Whitefield over the issue of predestination, one would assume that his anti-Calvinist credentials were beyond question. Yet, as this chapter shows, Wesley was sometimes erroneously viewed as a Calvinist because of his references to ‘assurance’, and his refusal to place sanctification before any initial justification. Chapter Three explores Wesley and Whitefield’s teachings on self-denial, and the attacks that such teachings generated. Moreover, it considers the ways in which such anti-Methodist clergymen as Joseph Trapp reconciled their attacks on evangelical asceticism with their seemingly contradictory charges of antinomianism. Chapter Four considers the themes of original sin and hell. It focuses particularly on Thomas Whiston, an Anglican divine, who used anti-Methodism as a platform to voice several heterodox views which were repugnant, not only to Methodists, but also to numerous High Churchmen who similarly despised evangelical ‘enthusiasm’. Whiston’s controversial opinions included his rejection of the Augustinian doctrine of original sin, along with his subtle show of support for the annihilationist views which his uncle, William Whiston, had recently expressed in *The Eternity of Hell Torments* (1740).

Chapters Five and Six provide a fundamental reappraisal of the relationship (and perceived relationship) between Methodism and irreligion. Chapter Five explores the complex relationship between anti-Methodism and anti-Deism. By showing that attacks on evangelicalism often mirrored attacks on irreligion, it argues that such categorisations as ‘Enlightenment’ and ‘modernity’ are misleading when describing contemporary perceptions of Deism, which, like Methodism, was often associated with madness, melancholia and ‘enthusiasm’ by orthodox High Churchmen. Chapter Six continues these discussions on irreligion and heterodoxy in the context of the eighteenth-century miracles debate. For instance, it considers those entries in Wesley’s

published journal which described his encounters with individuals whom he believed to be possessed by demons. As this chapter shows, these journal entries were subsequently attacked by several Anglican divines, who believed that Wesley's accounts of modern 'demoniacs' would cause 'reasonable' Christians to find irreligious explanations for the demonic possessions described in the New Testament.

The final chapter explores the uses of history in early anti-Methodist polemics, focusing on such themes as Islam, the early Church, Medievalism, and Reformation history. Several scholars have claimed that a 'historical revolution' occurred during the eighteenth century. More specifically, it has been argued that, during this period, historians eschewed the partisanship which had characterised seventeenth-century historical writing, and, instead, adopted objective and 'scientific' approaches to historiography. However, this chapter argues that – despite their attempts to convey a sense of objectivity – anti-Methodist polemicists adopted a decidedly partisan approach to historical writing, which was often modelled on seventeenth-century polemical historiography. Importantly, exploring the differing ways in which Methodist and anti-Methodist polemicists utilised Reformation history will reinforce the notion that there was no objective concept of 'modernity' during this period.

While the focus of these discussions will be on doctrinal objections, rather than social and political grievances, there will, inevitably, be some overlap. For example, to fully explore such a theological issue as Methodist asceticism, it will be necessary to consider such social issues as Georgian consumerism and recreational activities. Similarly, when discussing heterodoxy during the 1730s, it will be necessary to consider the anti-clerical politics of this period. Chronologically, this study encompasses the period from Wesley's 1738 Aldersgate experience to approximately 1770. There are two reasons why the focus of these discussions end at this date. First, it

was on 30 September 1770 that Whitefield – an individual who features prominently throughout these discussions – died suddenly in Newburyport, Massachusetts. Second, while Wesley outlived Whitefield by twenty-one years, the nature of anti-Methodist literature changed substantially during the 1770s. Indeed, much of the anti-Methodist literature which appeared during this ‘age of revolution’ focused on Wesley’s Loyalist sentiments. It is certainly ironic that a man who was portrayed as a socially subversive neo-Puritan during the 1740s was subsequently attacked for his pro-establishment Toryism during the 1770s.⁶⁷

⁶⁷ For more on anti-Methodism during the ‘age of revolution’, see D.H. Kirkham, ‘John Wesley’s “Calm Address”: The Response of the Critics’, *Methodist History*, 14 (1975-76), pp. 13-23.

Chapter One

Polemical Divinity

Introduction

This opening chapter starts by introducing some of the notable Anglican opponents of Methodism. More specifically, it highlights those early opponents of Wesley and Whitefield who were already renowned for their engagement in theological controversies. Unlike *ODNB* entries, these biographical examinations focus specifically on the individuals' contribution to controversial and polemical debate, and are tailored to the discussions which appear in subsequent chapters of this study. So, for example, the section on Thomas Church discusses his clashes with Arthur Ashley Sykes over the issue of demoniacs. Such information will, in turn, complement the discussions in Chapter Six, which considers Church's later attack on Wesley's descriptions of modern-day demoniacs. Similarly, discussing William Warburton's turbulent relationship with Conyers Middleton in this chapter will, in turn, contribute to our awareness of the context in which Warburton wrote his *Doctrine of Grace* (1763) – a work which is also explored in Chapter Six. Furthermore, by exploring the differing ways in which these divines approached various theological controversies, these biographies will illustrate the theological diversity of anti-Methodist Anglicans. Importantly, introducing these individuals – many of whom feature in multiple chapters – in this opening section will prevent the reader from being subjected to cumbersome and distracting 'mini-introductions' in the subsequent chapters. This section will go on to explore the print culture of these early anti-Methodist polemics. It will focus on such themes as readership, printers, costs, and coverage. Moreover, it will consider which of

these works proved to be particularly popular, and the possible reasons for why this was the case.

Key Individuals

i) Edmund Gibson (1669-1748)

Edmund Gibson was born near Bampton, Westmorland (now Cumbria), in 1669. In 1686, he entered Queen's College, Oxford, and was ordained priest in 1697. At the beginning of his ministry, he was chaplain and librarian to the Whig archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Tenison. Gibson's early ministry was characterised by his polemical battles with various High Church Tories, most notably the crypto-Jacobite, Francis Atterbury. Gibson's resolute support for the Hanoverian monarchy, and his friendship with Tenison's successor, William Wake, resulted in his appointment as bishop of Lincoln in 1715. However, Gibson's subsequent support for the 1718 Religious Worship Act (which repealed the 1714 Schism Act) and the 1719 repeal of the Occasional Conformity Act caused him to fall out with Wake. Gibson subsequently maintained a close (though, ultimately, short-lived) association with Robert Walpole. It was Gibson's closeness to the Prime Minister which earned him the nickname 'Walpole's Pope'. One can assume that Walpole's patronage played no small part in Gibson's translation to the considerably more prestigious appointment of bishop of London in 1723.¹

As a staunch defender of Anglican orthodoxy, Gibson dedicated much of his time to combating the various perceived threats to the Church of England. One such

¹ S. Taylor, 'Gibson, Edmund (*bap.* 1669, *d.* 1748)', *ODNB*.

threat was Deism. In 1725, he charged the Anglican divine, Thomas Woolston, with blasphemy for his *The Moderator Between an Infidel and an Apostate* (1725). In this Deistic treatise, Woolston had rejected the virgin birth and the Resurrection. While Gibson succeeded in his attempt to have Woolston convicted by the Court of King's Bench, his efforts were ultimately in vain. The attorney-general (and prosecutor in this case), Charles Yorke, withdrew the case before any sentencing occurred. This withdrawal was due to the intervention of the heterodox Anglican, William Whiston, who convinced Yorke that the court was incompetent in matters of theology, and unfit to judge such cases. One can assume that Gibson was incensed by this action. In 1727, Woolston added insult to injury when he ironically dedicated his *Discourse on the Miracles of Our Saviour* to Gibson. Throughout this piece – which was the first in a series of six tracts – Woolston rejected any literal interpretation of the miracles described in the New Testament.² Gibson responded by attacking Woolston again – this time in print. Indeed, his *Pastoral Letter* (1728) addressed Woolston's 'infidelity'. This text will be explored further in Chapter Five, where it will be shown that many of Gibson's criticisms of Woolston resembled those which were regularly hurled at evangelicals.³

By the 1730s, the Church of England seemed to be under threat from within the establishment. During this decade, rampant anti-clericalism characterised the House of Commons. It was Gibson's determination to quash this anti-clericalism which caused him to fall out of favour with Walpole. In 1736, they clashed over two of Walpole's controversial initiatives. First, Walpole attempted to repeal the Test and Corporation

² W.H. Trapnell, 'Woolston, Thomas (bap. 1668, d. 1733)', *ODNB*; T. Woolston, *A Discourse on the Miracles of Our Saviour, in View of the Present Controversy Between Infidels and Apostates* (London, 1727). For Woolston's dedication to Gibson, see page iii.

³ E. Gibson, *The Bishop of London's Pastoral Letter to the People of His Diocese; Particularly, to Those of the Two Great Cities of London and Westminster. Occasion'd by Some Late Writings in Favour of Infidelity* (London, 1728).

Acts. When this failed, he attempted to pass the Quaker Tithe Bill, which was designed to shield Quakers from imprisonment for non-payment of tithes. Gibson played no small part in the campaign to quash this bill, which – while successful – made him an enemy of Walpole, and prevented him from succeeding Wake at Canterbury.⁴ To Gibson and other contemporary High Churchmen, anti-clericalism was viewed as something which played into the hands of the Papacy. Thus, the threat of popery was something which was particularly on Gibson's mind during the latter half of the 1730s. In 1738, he published *A Preservative Against Popery*. This three-volume polemic consisted of various anti-Catholic tracts which had been written against James II.⁵ The previous year, Gibson had written to the Duke of Newcastle to describe the 'state of Popery' in his diocese. His extensive report included a reference to 'one Chaloner, who lives with a lady in Queen Square, preaches on Sundays to Men only, and on Thursdays to Women only'. The priest in question was Richard Challoner, who later served as Vicar Apostolic of the London district. Intriguingly, both Gibson and Challoner went on to attack Methodism in print (though, as will be argued in Chapter Two, the latter's polemic was an attack on Protestantism in general).⁶

Gibson spent the last decade of his life engaged in polemical battles with the Methodists. Ironically, when one reads Gibson's earlier writings, it becomes clear that some of his concerns mirrored those which Wesley and Whitefield subsequently voiced. For example, in one early publication on the Lord's Supper, Gibson claimed

⁴ Taylor, 'Gibson, Edmund'. Taylor provides a thorough discussion on Gibson's response to the Quaker Tithe Bill in 'Sir Robert Walpole, the Church of England and the Quakers Tithe Bill of 1736', *Historical Journal*, 28 (1985), pp. 51-77.

⁵ N. Sykes, *Edmund Gibson Bishop of London 1669-1748: A Study in Politics & Religion in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1926), pp. 302-304.

⁶ The letter has been reproduced in an anonymously written article entitled 'The Dark Days of English Catholicism. A Sidelight', which appeared in 16 July 1910 edition of *The Tablet* (pp. 8-9). An unfinished draft of this letter can also be found amongst the Gibson papers at the Bodleian (see MS. Eng. c. 3190, fol. 122).

that Christianity was under threat from 'Lukewarmness'.⁷ This may explain why Gibson's early interactions with the Methodists were cordial. In October 1738, he encountered the Wesley brothers for the first time. According to Charles Wesley's account of the meeting, Gibson was fairly sympathetic towards their plight. He particularly agreed with their belief that, to gain assurance that one was truly a Christian, one initially needed to examine one's sincerity. Gibson was even prepared to turn a blind eye to some of John and Charles's controversial practices, most notably their willingness to re-baptise Dissenters who approached them seeking an Anglican baptism.⁸

Whitefield, on the other hand, pushed Gibson's patience to breaking point. Unsurprisingly, Gibson was shocked by the decidedly arrogant tone of Whitefield's *Journal*, which was littered with descriptions of the itinerant being guided by prophecy (often in the most obscure of circumstances). Ridiculing these various anecdotes formed a large part of Gibson's 1739 *Pastoral Letter*. Nevertheless, Gibson was careful to ensure that his anti-Whitefield stance was not interpreted as an endorsement of spiritual laxity. Indeed, Gibson advertised the *Pastoral Letter* as a check against 'enthusiasm' on the one hand and 'lukewarmness' on the other.⁹ Whitefield subsequently published a response to Gibson, in which he described most of his fellow Anglican ministers as 'indolent, earthly-minded, [and] pleasure-taking'.¹⁰ Such insubordination infuriated various clerics. For example, James Bate of Deptford scoffed at Whitefield's 'unparall'd Pride and Impudence'.¹¹ One anonymous curate was also

⁷ E. Gibson, *The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper Explain'd: Or the Things to be Known and Done, to Make a Worthy Communicant. With Suitable Prayers and Meditations*, 5th edn (London, 1723), pp. 35, 49.

⁸ Sykes, *Edmund Gibson*, p. 298.

⁹ Gibson, *Pastoral Letter...Enthusiasm on the Other*.

¹⁰ G. Whitefield, *The Bishop of London's Pastoral Letter Answer'd by the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield* (London, 1739), p. 16.

¹¹ J. Bate, *Methodism Displayed; or, Remarks upon Mr. Whitefield's Answer, to the Bishop of London's Last Pastoral Letter* (London, 1739), p. 36.

angry that such a ‘young Presbyter’ had dared to ‘reproach his Bishop.’¹² Gibson subsequently used his 1741-42 visitation charge as an opportunity to condemn the ‘Spirit of *Enthusiasm*’ which had recently ‘gone out’. Ministers, according to Gibson, needed to suppress these disturbances by ‘preserving the Bounds of Parochial Communion’. This, in turn, meant that a minister needed to be diligent in the ‘Discharge of [his] Pastoral Duties’. Evidently, Gibson was still willing to concede that evangelicalism’s advancement was at least partly down to neglectful ministers.¹³ However, by 1744, Gibson appears to have been reaching the end of his tether. Indeed, his *Observations upon the Conduct and Behaviour of a Certain Sect, Usually Distinguished by the Name of Methodists* (1744) was noticeably less diplomatic than his previous attacks on Methodism. As Norman Sykes has argued, it is in this pamphlet that we see ‘the gentle remonstrance and moderate persuasions of the pastoral [letter] against lukewarmness and enthusiasm’ being ‘replaced by unsparing denunciation.’ This transition may explain why Gibson published this work anonymously, though he was quickly suspected of being the author. As we have seen, it was in this tract that Gibson accused the Methodists of violating several criminal and ecclesiastical laws.¹⁴

As bishop of London, Gibson was also responsible for all the Church of England’s overseas interests, including the American colonies. Crucially, this means that his overall assessment of evangelicalism was informed, not only by his knowledge of what was occurring in England, but also by the reports he received from colonial

¹² Curate in the Country, *Observations on the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Answer*, p. 23.

¹³ E. Gibson, *The Charge of Edmund, Lord Bishop of London, to the Clergy of his Diocese, in his Visitation Begun in the Year 1741, and Finish'd in the Year 1742* (London, 1742), p. 11.

¹⁴ Whitefield heard word that Gibson was the author. He then wrote to the bishop, claiming that he wished to clarify its authorship before writing a response. No response from Gibson was forthcoming, though Gibson’s printer did confirm its authorship to Whitefield (see Sykes, *Edmund Gibson*, p. 317). For Whitefield’s response (which was originally issued in two parts), see *An Answer to the First and Second Part of an Anonymous Pamphlet*.

clerics.¹⁵ One of his many colonial contacts was Timothy Cutler of Boston, Massachusetts, who had previously been a Congregationalist minister, and rector of Yale College. In 1722, Cutler, along with eight other Congregationalist ministers, had publicly concluded that, out of all the religious institutions, it was the Church of England – not New England’s Congregationalist establishment – which came closest to resembling the primitive church. This was a decision they had gradually reached following their exposure to a range of Anglican texts.¹⁶ While five out of the nine ‘apostates’ had agreed to recant their controversial declaration, Cutler was one of the four ministers who refused to do so. Unsurprisingly, they were swiftly dismissed from their various positions at Yale. They subsequently sailed to England, where they were ordained at St Martin-in-the-Fields by Thomas Green, the bishop of Norwich, on 31 March 1723. During their stay in England, these individuals were also awarded Master’s degrees by both Oxford and Cambridge. Shortly afterwards, Cutler had returned to New England to commence his service as an SPG missionary in Boston.¹⁷ In a letter to Gibson, dated 28 May 1739, Cutler described the recent activities of Jonathan Edwards, the Congregationalist pastor of Northampton, Massachusetts. In 1737,

¹⁵ When one considers the difficulties involved with transatlantic communication during this period, it comes as no surprise that this system was deeply flawed, and prone to communication breakdowns. We know from a recent article by Andrew Koke that Gibson’s overall management of colonial affairs left a lot to be desired. See A.M. Koke, ‘Communication in an Anglican Empire: Edmund Gibson and His Commissaries, 1723-1748’, *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 84 (2015), pp. 166-202.

¹⁶ In 1713, Yale had benefited from a collection of over a thousand books, which the colonist Jeremiah Dummer had accumulated through donations from such individuals as Isaac Newton and Richard Steele. The Dummer collection included the writings of such individuals as Tillotson, Cudworth, More, Newton, Locke and Boyle. Nevertheless, its contents had not been restricted to these Latitudinarian authorities. Indeed, the collection also included several ‘primitive and high church classics’, including John Scott’s *Christian Life* (1681) and William Cave’s exhaustive scholarship on the Fathers. Samuel Johnson, who later went on to found King’s College, New York, was one ‘Yale apostate’ who immersed himself in these primitivist works (especially those of Scott). For Johnson’s primitivism, see P. Doll, ‘The Idea of the Primitive Church in High Church Ecclesiology from Samuel Johnson to J.H. Hobart’, *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 65 (1996), pp. 6-43 (for the quotation, see p. 21); D.F.M. Gerardi, ‘Samuel Johnson and the Yale Apostasy of 1722: The Challenge of Anglican Sacramentalism to the New England Way’, *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 47 (1978), pp. 153-75.

¹⁷ For overviews of the events leading up to the 1722 ‘Yale Apostasy’, and its aftermath, see R.E. Daggy, ‘Education, Church, and State: Timothy Cutler and the Yale Apostasy of 1722’, *Journal of Church and State*, 13 (1971), pp. 43-67; R. Ingram, *Religion, Reform and Modernity in the Eighteenth Century: Thomas Secker and the Church of England* (Woodbridge, 2007), pp. 215-16; J.D. Hoeveler, *Creating the American Mind: Intellect and Politics in the Colonial Colleges* (Lanham, M.D., 2002), pp. 55-60.

Edwards had published *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton*. In this narrative, Edwards described how various members of his congregation had experienced sudden conversions to Christianity, following a period of spiritual dearth in the town. Cutler suggested that this phenomenon may have been triggered by several Harvard 'Visionaries', including a 'Refugee from Canada', who had taught 'the Scholars French, and insinuated himself into the Esteem of many, by a sober Life, and demure Behavior [sic] mixed with much Enthusiasm'. Cutler also reported that those ministers who endorsed Edwards's narrative were 'men of the lowest Form in Learning and Judgement'.¹⁸

Another colonial contact was Alexander Garden, the commissary of South Carolina, who proved to be one of Whitefield's fiercest opponents. In one letter, dated 24 April 1740, Garden informed Gibson of Whitefield's recent arrival in Charleston. While Garden had denied Whitefield the use of his own pulpit, the itinerant had managed to preach at various 'Dissenting meeting Houses' in the area.¹⁹ Garden then attempted to suspend Whitefield from preaching because he had refrained from using the Book of Common Prayer when he officiated at one of these meeting houses. Whitefield, in turn, asked Garden to halt these proceedings so that he could appeal to the Court of Chancery in London. However, the appeal came to nothing, and on 30 July 1741, Garden wrote to Gibson, informing him that he had suspended Whitefield in absentia.²⁰ Unsurprisingly, this 'suspension' had absolutely no effect. In his *Journal*, Whitefield mockingly claimed that he had always intended to treat Garden's threat of

¹⁸ D.C. Stenerson, 'An Anglican Critique of the Early Phase of the Great Awakening in New England: A Letter by Timothy Cutler', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd ser., 30 (1973), pp. 482-83.

¹⁹ LPL, FP X, fols. 58-59: Garden to Gibson, 24 April 1740.

²⁰ Ibid, fols. 86-87: Garden to Gibson, 30 July 1741.

suspension like a ‘Pope’s Bull’.²¹ Garden later informed Gibson’s successor, Thomas Sherlock, of his regret that he had been powerless to excommunicate Whitefield. This, apparently, was because the Writ de Excommunicato Capiendo Act of 1562 did not ‘extend to America.’²²

ii) **Joseph Trapp (1679-1747)**

Joseph Trapp was born in Cherrington, Gloucestershire, in 1679. In 1695, he matriculated at Wadham College, Oxford, where he graduated with a BA (1699) and an MA (1702). In 1703, he became a fellow of the college. To literary scholars, Trapp is most famed for his poetry, which earned him the appointment of first Professor of Poetry at Oxford in 1708. However, for the purposes of these discussions, it is Trapp’s political and ecclesiastical writings that are of most significance. His associates included the Non-Juror, Roger Laurence, and the High Church Tory, Henry Sacheverell. Significantly, Trapp openly supported the latter during his trial before the House of Lords in March 1710. These proceedings had been sparked by Sacheverell’s recent 5 November sermon, in which he had portrayed Dissenters as bloodthirsty Republicans, and Low Churchmen as ‘false brethren’. More controversial, however, was Sacheverell’s claim that their potential to rebel had been strengthened by the seemingly lax policies of the Williamite regime (most notably, the 1689 Toleration Act). Trapp’s ministry was similarly characterised by his respect for the memory of King Charles I, and his condemnation of the Regicide. Such neo-Laudian sentiments led to clashes with Dissenters and Low Church Whigs.²³

²¹ G. Whitefield, *A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield’s Journal, After his Arrival at Georgia, to a Few Days after his Second Return Thither from Philadelphia* (London, 1741), p. 11.

²² LPL, FP X, fols. 134-35: Garden to Sherlock, 1 February 1750.

²³ R. Sharp, ‘Trapp, Joseph (1679-1747)’, *ODNB*.

For example, in a 1715 polemic, Trapp claimed that the Dissenters' 'Exceptions against' the established Church stemmed from either their 'Ignorance' or their 'Obstinacy'. In what was blatantly an attack on contemporary Whigs, Trapp went on to warn that, during the previous century, '*Latitude or Comprehension*' had meant tolerating such evils as 'Murder, Rebellion, Sacrilege, and Regicide.'²⁴ In *The Real Nature of the Church or Kingdom of Christ* (1717), Trapp defended the doctrine of apostolic succession against the Erastian sentiments of Benjamin Hoadly. While Trapp was willing to concede that 'Ecclesiastical Government' may not have been 'Episcopal' during the 'Time of the Apostles themselves', he argued that it 'most certainly' was during the time of 'their immediate Successors'. It was during this post-apostolic age that one found churches being 'administer'd by the Three Orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons' – a practice which, Trapp noted, had 'continu'd to this very Day.'²⁵

Unsurprisingly, Trapp proved to be one of Methodism's most vocal opponents during its early years. In 1739, he preached a series of sermons across London and Westminster. These sermons, which were primarily aimed at Whitefield, focused on the theme of being 'righteous over much' (Ecclesiastes 7:16). Given that Trapp was also a playwright, one can assume that his sentiments were at least partly triggered by Whitefield's unrelenting opposition to the stage. In his *Journal*, Whitefield claimed that, on 29 April 1739, he 'heard Doctor *Trapp* preach most virulently against' him.²⁶ On 5 June 1739, Trapp's anti-Whitefield sermons were published as *The Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger of Being Righteous Over-Much*.²⁷ In this tract, Trapp alleged that the Methodists' – or, more specifically, Whitefield's – contempt for pleasures and wealth

²⁴ J. Trapp, *A Preservative against Unsettled Notions, and Want of Principles in Religion* (London, 1715), pp. 219, 272.

²⁵ J. Trapp, *The Real Nature of the Church or Kingdom of Christ* (London, 1717), p. 3

²⁶ G. Whitefield, *A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal, from his Arrival at London, to his Departure from Thence on his way to Georgia* (London, 1739), p. 89.

²⁷ We know that this work was first published on 5 June 1739 from an advertisement which appeared in the *London Daily Post* on this date.

had been inspired by William Law's writings on asceticism. Methodist asceticism is something which Chapter Three will explore.²⁸

Excessive religious zeal was something which Trapp condemned further in an Oxford assize sermon, which he preached on 2 August 1739. At the request of the Vice-Chancellor, Theophilus Leigh, Trapp quickly published this sermon as *The Nature, Usefulness and Regulation of Religious Zeal* (1739). Trapp's polemics attracted critical responses from a number of evangelicals. For example, an anonymous 'Lover of Truth' ridiculed him by publishing a pamphlet entitled *Dr Trapp Vindicated from the Imputation of Being a Christian* (1739). Law was also quick to defend himself against the aspersions which Trapp had thrown at him and the Methodists. Trapp's message, according to Law, encouraged 'Coldness, Indifference, and a lifeless outward Compliance with all the Duties of Religion', which would ultimately result in a 'criminal Conformity to the Spirit, Fashions, and Corruptions, of the World.'²⁹ In response to these attacks, Trapp published anonymously *The True Spirit of the Methodists and Their Allies (Whether Other Enthusiasts, Papists, Deists, Quakers, or Atheists) Fully Laid Open* (1740). In this work, Trapp voiced several grievances, including his belief that Whitefield had received more in donations over the previous three years 'than one of the Generality of the Clergy receives from his Preferment, in twenty [years].' Like many of Whitefield's critics, Trapp also feared that the itinerant was pocketing the donations which he claimed to be raising for Georgia orphans.³⁰

²⁸ Trapp, *Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger*, pp. 14-15.

²⁹ W. Law, *An Earnest and Serious Answer to Dr. Trapp's Discourse of the Folly, Sin, and Danger, of Being Righteous Over-Much* (London, 1740), p. 6.

³⁰ [J. Trapp], *The True Spirit of the Methodists and their Allies (Whether Other Enthusiasts, Papists, Deists, Quakers or Atheists) Fully Laid Open* (London, 1740), pp. 53-54.

iii) Daniel Waterland (1683-1740)

Daniel Waterland was born in Walesby, Lincolnshire, in 1683. At the age of sixteen, he entered Magdalene College, Cambridge, where he was subsequently elected as a fellow in 1704. In 1714, Waterland was appointed master of the college – a position in which he remained until his death in 1740.³¹ One scholar has described Waterland as ‘the most able, lastingly influential and revered orthodox cleric of his age’.³² Another has claimed that Waterland ‘did more than any other theologian of his generation to check the advance of unorthodox doctrines in the Church of England’.³³ Waterland’s orthodoxy certainly becomes apparent when one examines his credentials. Despite being a Whig and a firm supporter of the Hanoverian monarchy, Waterland commenced his ministry by siding with Roger Laurence and several other Non-Jurors during the lay baptism controversy. Those who sided with Laurence adopted an element of disguise. More specifically, they portrayed their sentiments as an attack on emergency baptisms by midwives. Their actual agenda, however, had been to prevent ‘unauthorised’ baptisms by Dissenting ministers, whose lack of an episcopal ordination rendered them outside of the apostolic succession.³⁴

Furthermore, Waterland was one of the first clerics to attack Matthew Tindal’s *Christianity as Old as the Creation* (1730). In this controversial work, Tindal described ‘True Religion’ as something ‘plain, simple, and natural’.³⁵ To Tindal, the ‘Religion of

³¹ B. W. Young, ‘Waterland, Daniel (1683–1740)’, *ODNB*.

³² R. Ingram, ‘“The Weight of Historical Evidence”: Conyers Middleton and the Eighteenth-Century Miracles Debate,’ in R.D. Cornwall and W. Gibson (eds), *Religion, Politics and Dissent, 1660-1832: Essays in Honour of James E. Bradley* (Farnham, 2010), p. 96.

³³ P.D.L. Avis, *Anglicanism and the Christian Church: Theological Resources in Historical Perspective* (Edinburgh, 1989), p. 150.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 151. For more on the early eighteenth-century lay baptism controversy, see R.D. Cornwall, ‘Politics and the Lay Baptism Controversy in England, 1708-1715’, in Cornwall and Gibson, *Religion, Politics and Dissent*, pp. 147-64.

³⁵ M. Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation: Or, the Gospel, a Republication of the Religion of Nature* (London, 1730), p. 217.

Nature' was 'entirely calculated for the Good of human Society', and independent of 'Types, Metaphors, Allegories' or 'Parables'.³⁶ Given that this was blatantly an attack on the scriptures, it is unsurprising that this work has commonly been referred to as the 'Deist's Bible'.³⁷ Nevertheless, from a perusal of *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, one can discern Tindal's intention to disguise this publication as a work which did not contradict Christian teachings. The front page alone contained quotations relating to 'reason' and 'nature' from a diverse range of authorities, including: the New Testament, Eusebius, Augustine of Hippo, Hugo Grotius, Thomas Sherlock and Samuel Clarke. These quotations were taken out of context as a means of portraying reason as something superior to revelation.³⁸ Elsewhere in the text, Tindal repeated this tactic by admiringly citing such orthodox Anglican authorities as Robert South (1634-1716) and John Scott (1639-1695).³⁹ The supremacy of divine revelation over reason was something that Waterland stressed throughout his response to Tindal, which was published in three parts between 1730 and 1732. While Waterland was usually diplomatic in his polemical confrontations, his anger towards Tindal was especially apparent in places. Such anger is evident in the following passage:

We interpret those Texts about God's *repenting*, by Reason: But by Reason alone, we should have known nothing of the Facts themselves of God's repenting, nor of a thousand others revealed in Scripture. Great is the Light which Scripture brings; and not the less for supposing such Light to shine upon rational Creatures capable of perceiving it, and not upon Fools and Idiots.⁴⁰

³⁶ Ibid., p. 54.

³⁷ J.A. Herrick, *The Radical Rhetoric of the English Deists: The Discourse of Skepticism, 1680-1750* (Columbia, 1997), p. 19.

³⁸ Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, p. i.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 19, 44.

⁴⁰ D. Waterland, *Scripture Vindicated; In Answer to a Book Intituled, Christianity as Old as the Creation. Part I* (London, 1730), p. 31.

Deism was a theme to which Waterland returned in his mammoth defence of Trinitarian orthodoxy, *The Importance of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity Asserted* (1734). Throughout this work, he stressed the importance of appealing to scripture, antiquity and reason. Waterland urged his readers to base their interpretation of the scriptures on the teachings of the ‘Fathers’, whom he lauded as the most reliable ‘Witnesses’, ‘Interpreters’ and ‘faithful Conveyors’ of the truth. Since the ‘*Judgement*’ of the Fathers carried such a ‘great Force of Reason’, submitting to them showed that one was both ‘*reasonable*’ and capable of using one’s ‘*own Understanding* in the best Manner’. Furthermore, by appealing to the ‘*Antients*’, one was guarded against ‘Impostures of all Kinds; whether of *Enthusiasm*, or *false Criticism*, or *conceited Reason*, or *oral Tradition*, or the assuming Dictates of an *infallible Chair*’. The fact that Waterland was recommending the same preventative checks for enthusiasm, Deism and popery is significant because it suggests that he saw affinities between these seemingly disparate ‘Impostures’.⁴¹ As we shall see in Chapter Five, Waterland would return to this theme in his *Regeneration Stated and Explained*, an attack on the evangelical New Birth, which was published on 1 January 1740.⁴²

iv) Conyers Middleton (1683-1750) and William Warburton (1698-1779)

To historians of eighteenth-century Anglicanism, William Warburton’s relationship with Conyers Middleton is one of the most notable examples of a friendship turned sour. Their initial association was one of mutual convenience. Both were outcasts, who shared a desire to ‘combine religion with reason’, and a disdain for ‘the

⁴¹ D. Waterland, *The Importance of the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity Asserted, in Reply to Some Late Pamphlets* (London, 1734), pp. 443-44, 462.

⁴² For the original advertisement, see *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, 1 January 1740.

undiscriminating bigots of orthodoxy.’⁴³ Middleton was born in North Yorkshire in 1683. In 1699, he entered Trinity College, Cambridge, where he was awarded a fellowship in 1705. He was subsequently ordained deacon (1707) and priest (1708). During the early years of his ministry, Middleton served as rector at parishes in Norfolk, Cambridgeshire and Surrey. In 1721, he was appointed librarian of the University of Cambridge, a role in which he remained until his death in 1750.⁴⁴

In 1729, Middleton published *A Letter from Rome*, which was based on some observations he made during a trip to Rome between 1723 and 1724. In this work, Middleton described ‘an uninterrupted Succession from the [pagan] *Priests of Old* to the *Priests of New Rome*’.⁴⁵ Middleton defended this argument by making several comparisons between pagan and popish superstitions. For example, he compared ‘the Use of *Incense* or *Perfumes*’ in Roman Catholic churches to ‘the Old Descriptions of the Heathen Temples and Altars...all of them smoaking at once with Steams of Incense’. In particular, Middleton noted that Virgil had referred to ‘Incense’ and ‘Sweet Odours’ in his description of the shrine to Venus.⁴⁶ Middleton went on to refer to the Ancient Egyptians, and claimed that the ‘Use of *Lights* or *Lamps* in their Temples’ was reminiscent of ‘modern *Rome*’, where one found ‘*Lamps of massy Silver*’ in ‘each Church’.⁴⁷ Middleton also attacked the ‘*ridiculous Penance* of the *Flaggelantes* or *Self-whippers*’, and noted that both the ‘*Fanatical Priests* of *Bellona*’ and the ‘*Votaries* of *Isis*’ had ‘cut themselves...in order to please the *Goddess* by the *Sacrifice* of their own *Blood*’.⁴⁸

⁴³ H. Trevor-Roper, ‘From Deism to History: Conyers Middleton’, in H. Trevor-Roper, *History and the Enlightenment*, ed. J. Robertson (New Haven and London, 2010), p. 112.

⁴⁴ J.A. Dussinger, ‘Middleton, Conyers (1683–1750)’, *ODNB*.

⁴⁵ C. Middleton, *A Letter from Rome, Shewing an Exact Conformity Between Popery and Paganism: Or, the Religion of the Present Romans, Derived from that of their Heathen Ancestors* (London, 1729), p. 13.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 21–22.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

Although Middleton's later years were characterised by his apparent contempt for the post-apostolic Fathers, none of this was evident in his *Letter from Rome*. In fact, Middleton was careful to add that this work was not intended as an attack on the 'primitive Fathers', whom he commended on several occasions. Indeed, Middleton praised Justin Martyr for condemning the 'Heathenish' use of 'Holy-water', and similarly lauded Tertullian for attacking those who venerated idols and images.⁴⁹ Finally, Middleton's *Letter from Rome* was not devoid of sexual imagery. This is clear from his reference to Cicero's condemnation of Publius Clodius Pulcher, who 'publicly dedicated the Statue of a common Strumpet, under the Name and Title of the Goddess Liberty'. Middleton claimed that such a practice remained 'frequent with the present Romans, who have scarce a fine Image or Picture of a female Saint, which is not said to have been designed originally by the Sculptor or Painter for the Representation of his own Mistress'.⁵⁰

Middleton's first serious engagement in theological controversy occurred in 1731, when he published a response to Waterland's attack on Tindal's *Christianity as Old as the Creation*. In his response, Middleton claimed that, by stressing the insufficiency of human reason, Waterland had merely bolstered the Spinozist argument that all religion was founded as a means of implementing and maintaining a political regime. To Zachary Pearce, who would later serve as bishop of Bangor (1748-56) and Rochester (1756-74), Middleton's argument was both an affront to a respected defender of Anglican orthodoxy, and, more importantly, an implicit attack on Moses, whom it seemed to reduce to a despotic charlatan. Although Middleton responded to Pearce, no retractions were forthcoming.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp. 18-19, 49.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 32.

⁵¹ Dussinger, 'Middleton, Conyers'.

Like Middleton, Warburton was a controversialist, who was good at making enemies. He was born in Newark, Nottinghamshire, in 1698. Warburton bypassed a university education, and commenced his career by practicing law. He was ordained deacon in 1723, and served in several posts, including prebendary of Gloucester (1753), chaplain to the king (1754), prebendary of Durham (1755), Dean of Bristol (1757), and, finally, Bishop of Gloucester (1759).⁵² In 1736, he published *The Alliance Between Church and State*. In this work, Warburton advocated a contractual alliance between church and state, which avoided the seemingly excessive Erastianism of Hoadly.⁵³

However, Warburton's most significant work was undoubtedly *The Divine Legation of Moses*, which was published in two parts between 1738 and 1741. In this work, he addressed the Deistic argument that Christianity, along with all priestly religions, had been founded by impostors, who used the doctrine of a future state as a scaremongering tactic. Warburton countered this argument by claiming that, since the Jewish prophets remained silent on the issue of a future state, this could only mean that the Israelites under Moses had encountered Yahweh's extraordinary powers first hand. Importantly, Warburton stressed that, because of their interactions with the mystery religions of Egypt, the Israelites would have previously been exposed to the doctrine of a future state. To Warburton, the Israelites' apparent abandonment of the doctrine was clear evidence that the Mosaic legislation had been founded, not on scaremongering, but on genuine encounters with God.⁵⁴

Warburton devoted much attention to the Eleusinian mysteries. It is important to analyse Warburton's thoughts on this subject because, as we shall see in Chapter Seven, his relatively positive assessment of the mysteries was subsequently attacked by George

⁵² B.W. Young, 'Warburton, William (1698–1779)', *ODNB*.

⁵³ For more on this publication, see S. Taylor, 'William Warburton and the *Alliance of Church and State*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 43 (1992), pp. 271–86.

⁵⁴ For more on the background to Warburton's *Divine Legation*, and the responses it generated, see Young, 'Warburton, William'.

Lavington, who referred to the mysteries at great length in the final part of his *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared* (1751). So, what were the Eleusinian mysteries? On the surface, the Eleusinian mysteries were a series of initiations which were held annually to celebrate the cult of Demeter and Persephone at Eleusis in ancient Greece. We know that these initiations were divided into stages. First, one was initiated into the lesser mysteries. This was then followed by one's initiation into the greater mysteries. Much ambiguity has continued to surround the nature of these initiations, along with exactly what one gained from their final initiation into the greater mysteries. Warburton claimed that the lesser mysteries propagated 'the Doctrine of a future State', and taught that 'the *Initiated* should be happier than all other Mortals in that State...while the Souls of Profane, at their leaving the Body, stuck fast in Mire and Filth, and remained in Darkness'.⁵⁵

So, what, according to Warburton, were successful initiates of the greater mysteries taught? The short answer to this question is: 'monotheism'. Indeed, Warburton claimed that it was the greater mysteries which introduced pagans to the 'vicious Examples of their Gods'. More specifically, it taught them 'that *Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, Mars*, and the whole Rabble of licentious Deities, were indeed only dead Mortals', who had been 'subject, in Life, to the same Passions and Vices' as themselves. Thus, the ultimate objective of the mysteries was 'to remove the Errors of Polytheism'.⁵⁶ Warburton also claimed that the mysteries were 'hidden and kept secret' for 'two Reasons'. Regarding the lesser mysteries, this was done to stimulate 'Man's Curiosity', and encourage people to find out about the existence of a future state. The greater mysteries, on the other hand, depended on such secrecy because initiates were

⁵⁵ W. Warburton, *The Divine Legation of Moses Demonstrated, On the Principles of a Religious Deist, from the Omission of the Doctrine of a Future State of Reward and Punishment in the Jewish Dispensation*, 2 vols. (London, 1738-41), I, p. 138.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 148-49.

taught ‘some things’ which were ‘not expedient for others to know.’⁵⁷ In other words, the ‘polytheistic pantheon’ – despite being ‘an illusion’ – was ‘indispensable for the political order of the society.’⁵⁸ Importantly, Warburton stated that the Eleusinian mysteries originated from the pagan mysteries of ancient Egypt. He supported this point by citing such Greek historians as Herodotus, Diodorus and Plutarch.⁵⁹

The second volume of Warburton’s *Divine Legation* contained an especially controversial argument in relation to ancient Egyptian paganism. Warburton claimed that, because ‘the Jewish *People* were *extremely fond of Egyptian Manners*’, and frequently fell into ‘*Egyptian Superstitions*’, many of Moses’s teachings ‘*were instituted, partly in Compliance to their Prejudices, and partly in Opposition to those Superstitions.*’ In other words, Moses allowed the Israelites to retain some of their pagan Egyptian rituals.⁶⁰ As evidence of this, Warburton quoted Ezekiel’s reference to a ‘secret subterraneous Place’ in the Temple, which God instructed him to find by digging into a wall. God’s intention had apparently been to expose Ezekiel to ‘*what the Ancients of Israel do in the Dark*’ (Ezekiel 8:7-12). To Warburton, the covert proceedings described by Ezekiel provided clear evidence that the Jews had retained some of the practices connected with the Egyptian mysteries. To support this point, he cited Plutarch’s description of some ‘*dark and secret subterranean Vestries*’ which had been found in Egyptian temples.⁶¹

So, why was Warburton’s argument controversial? In short, it could easily have been taken to imply that the God of the mysteries and Yahweh were one and the same. Moreover, Warburton ran the risk of reducing Moses’s teachings to ‘nothing more than

⁵⁷ Ibid., I, pp. 143-44.

⁵⁸ J. Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism* (Cambridge, 1997), p. 101.

⁵⁹ Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses*, I, p. 174.

⁶⁰ Ibid., II, p. 281.

⁶¹ Ibid., II, p. 293.

a huge open-air performance of an initiation into the greater mysteries', which was meant 'not for the select few, but for a whole people.' Such a conclusion would have been music to the ears of the Spinozists against whom he was arguing. Warburton attempted to avoid this pitfall by advancing several arguments.⁶² First, he noted that the doctrine of a future state supplied the 'firmest Support of civil Government'. Thus, it would have made no sense for Moses to stay silent on such a doctrine if he was really nothing more than a 'fraudulent Impostor'.⁶³ Second, Warburton claimed that, had Moses been an impostor, he would not have dared to implement 'so hazardous a System', which had the potential to anger many of his followers. In other words, a charlatan would have had no idea which pagan rituals to maintain and which ones to discard. Therefore, Moses must have possessed an 'admirable and superior Wisdom', which 'an Impostor could never have projected: or at least would never have ventured to leave to the Mercy of a popular Judgement.'⁶⁴

While Warburton claimed that his *Divine Legation* was designed as an antidote to Spinozism, his critics argued that this work would merely result in the opposite effect. One of his staunchest critics was the archdeacon of Wiltshire, Henry Stebbing, who was also an ardent opponent of Methodism.⁶⁵ In a 1744 tract, Stebbing argued that Warburton's thesis 'only furnished out *more Handles* to Unbelievers' because it implied that Moses and all subsequent prophets had intended to '*hood-wink*' the Jews into believing that there was no 'hope of something better to come'. Therefore, Stebbing took Warburton's thesis to mean that the prophets had intentionally prevented the Jews from worshipping God with 'more *pure*, and *sincere*, Affection.' To Stebbing,

⁶² Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, pp. 100-101.

⁶³ Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses*, II, p. 347.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, II, pp. 351-52.

⁶⁵ For Stebbing's anti-Methodist works, see H. Stebbing, *A Caution Against Religious Delusion: A Sermon on the New Birth, Occasioned by the Pretensions of the Methodists* (London, 1739); *An Earnest and Affectionate Address to the People Called Methodists* (London, 1745).

such sentiments were more likely to ‘minister *fresh* Offence’ than ‘*cure* Unbelievers of their Prejudices’.⁶⁶ Later philosophers, such as P.A. d’Origny (1762) and Karl Leonhard Reinhold (1788) similarly believed that Warburton’s treatment of the mysteries merely aided irreligion. These discussions on the Jews and their alleged disbelief in the doctrine of a future state was not the only aspect of Warburton’s *Divine Legation* which attracted criticism.⁶⁷

In the preface to the first volume, Warburton described Middleton as an ‘excellent Person’ and one of Deism’s ‘most formidable Adversaries’.⁶⁸ Given that Middleton was already renowned as a decidedly controversial figure, it is unsurprising that several orthodox divines found Warburton’s public endorsement of him disturbing. For example, one anonymous ‘Country Clergyman’ (who was probably William Webster) attacked Warburton on this and several other points in a letter which appeared in the *Weekly Miscellany* on 24 February 1738.⁶⁹ While Thomas Sherlock subsequently condemned the ferocity of this letter, he also expressed his alarm that Warburton had associated himself with such a provocative figure. However, for the time being, Warburton maintained his friendship with Middleton.⁷⁰

Importantly, it was probably Warburton who introduced Middleton to evangelical ‘enthusiasm’. In a letter to Middleton, dated 27 August 1738, Warburton echoed the Cambridge Platonist, Henry More (1614-1687), by claiming that one found ‘Enthusiasm Triumphant’ in Whitefield’s ‘Missionary’s Journal’. Warburton went on to describe how another friend of his had recently encountered John Wesley. According to

⁶⁶ H. Stebbing, *An Examination of Mr. Warburton’s Second Proposition, in His Projected Demonstration of the Divine Legation of Moses* (London, 1744), pp. 132-33.

⁶⁷ Assmann, *Moses the Egyptian*, p. 100.

⁶⁸ Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses*, I, p. xviii.

⁶⁹ *Weekly Miscellany*, 24 February 1738. Four days later, Middleton wrote to Warburton, and expressed his disgust at the author’s ‘most virulent & infamous manner’. Middleton also believed that the item was a ‘joint production of [Richard] Venn & Webster’. See BL Add. MS 32457, fol. 128: Middleton to Warburton, 28 February 1738.

⁷⁰ For an informative overview of this episode, see J.S. Watson, *The Life of Bishop Warburton, D.D. Lord Bishop of Gloucester from 1760 to 1779* (London, 1863), pp. 128-41.

Warburton, Wesley had informed this person that, during his time in Georgia, he had ‘lived most divinely, feeding on boiled Maize with the sauce of Oak-ashes, and sleeping in Fresco, under Trees’. Apparently, it was Wesley’s intention to return to Georgia, where he would ‘cast off his English habit, and wear a dried-skin like the Savages, in order to ingratiate himself the better with them.’ Ultimately, Wesley never returned to America.⁷¹

Warburton’s association with Middleton was not to last. The source of their feud was their differing views on paganism, and its perceived relationship with Roman Catholicism. Evidently, the entirely negative assessment of ancient paganism which Middleton advanced in his *Letter from Rome* ran contrary to the relatively positive arguments that Warburton advanced in his *Divine Legation*. In the second volume of the latter work, which was published on 25 May 1741, Warburton dismissed ‘the many able Writers’ who ‘employed their Time and Learning’ in attempting to prove that Roman Catholics had ‘borrowed their Superstitions’ from ancient pagans. While Warburton did not name Middleton, one can assume that this was at least partly intended as a subtle jibe at him.⁷² Several months later, Middleton published the fourth edition of his *Letter from Rome* (1741), in which he claimed it was ‘strange’ to believe that ‘*the Papists are as truly originals as the Pagans; and borrowed nothing at all in reality from their Heathen Ancestors*’.⁷³ Warburton subsequently took offence, and distanced himself from Middleton, whom he attacked in a 1744 polemic.⁷⁴ Their quarrels did not end there.

⁷¹ Quoted from M.L. Snow, ‘Methodist Enthusiasm: Warburton Letters, 1738-1740’, *Methodist History*, 10 (1972), pp. 34, 39.

⁷² Warburton, *Divine Legation of Moses*, II, p. 356. For the original advertisement, see *Daily Gazetteer*, 25 May 1741.

⁷³ C. Middleton, *A Letter from Rome, Shewing an Exact Conformity between Popery and Paganism: Or, the Religion of the Present Romans, Derived from that of their Heathen Ancestors*, 4th edn (London, 1741), pp. 227-28. For the original advertisement, see *General Evening Post*, 10-12 September 1741.

⁷⁴ W. Warburton, *Remarks on Several Occasional Reflections: In Answer to the Rev. Dr. Middleton, Dr. Pococke, the Master of the Charter House, Dr. Richard Grey, and Others* (London, 1744).

In 1748, Middleton published his highly provocative *A Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers of the Primitive Church* (1749 [i.e. 1748]). In this work, he argued that the miracles described by the early Church Fathers from the second century onwards were false. Middleton claimed that these alleged post-apostolic miracles were

Quite different from that, which we meet with in the New Testament. For in those days, the power of working miracles was committed to none but the Apostles, and to a few of the most eminent of the other disciples...but upon the pretended revival of the same powers in the following ages, we find the administration of them committed, not to those, who were instructed with the government of the Church; not to the successors of the Apostles, to the Bishops, the Martyrs, or the principal Champions of the Christian cause; but to boys, to women, and above all, to private and obscure laymen.⁷⁵

It is important to note that – unlike such freethinkers as Tindal – Middleton did not explicitly attack the apostolic miracles of the first century. It is for this reason that one should view Middleton, not as a Deist, but rather – as Ingram and Young have argued – as a heterodox and ‘ultra-Protestant’ Anglican.⁷⁶ Warburton was one of the first clerics who defended post-apostolic miracles in response to Middleton’s *Free Inquiry*. In *Julian* (1750), Warburton detailed how a ‘miraculous’ earthquake had foiled Julian the Apostate’s scheme ‘to rebuild the TEMPLE OF JERUSALEM’ in 363. According to Warburton, it was after this extraordinary episode that miracles ceased.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ C. Middleton, *A Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers, which are Supposed to have Subsisted in the Christian Church, from the Earliest Ages through Several Successive Centuries* (London, 1749 [i.e. 1748]), p. 24.

⁷⁶ Ingram, ‘Weight of Historical Evidence’, pp. 85-109; B.W. Young, ‘Conyers Middleton: The Historical Consequences of Heterodoxy,’ in S. Mortimer and J. Robertson (eds), *The Intellectual Consequences of Religious Heterodoxy 1600-1750* (Leiden and Boston, 2012), pp. 235-65.

⁷⁷ W. Warburton, *Julian. Or a Discourse Concerning the Earthquake and Fiery Eruption, which Defeated that Emperor's Attempt to Rebuild the Temple at Jerusalem* (London, 1750), p. 2.

In 1755, Warburton completed a manuscript entitled ‘The True Methodist, or Christian in Earnest’. In this piece, which was never published, Warburton controversially attempted to redefine what was commonly understood by the term ‘Methodist’. According to Warburton, all clerics needed to be ‘Methodists’. This did not, however, mean that one needed to follow the teachings of Wesley and Whitefield. Rather, if one intended to become a ‘True Methodist’, one was required to be a minister of ‘method & good order’. This, according to Warburton, was the opposite of the way in which evangelical ‘enthusiasts’ behaved. Thus, throughout this lengthy piece, Warburton outlined the various characteristics of a ‘True Methodist’.⁷⁸ For example, the ‘True Methodist’ was ‘no enemy to learning’. He realised that one found ‘many precious Pearls scattered’ within the pages of ‘antiquity’, including ‘heathen literature’, which he respected ‘not for itself, but for its use’. More specifically, the ‘True Methodist’ observed ‘that some of the very fables of antiquity’ did ‘serve to give light to the scriptures’. In this instance, Warburton was clearly reiterating the sentiments he had previously voiced in his *Divine Legation*.⁷⁹ Furthermore, unlike such false Methodists as Wesley and Whitefield, the ‘True Methodist’ avoided ‘all pernicious extreams of superstition & Enthusiasm’. He achieved this by avoiding a ‘theatrical accent’ when reading the scriptures, and refusing to trust ‘his Extempore thoughts or abilities’.⁸⁰ Although ‘The True Methodist’ never saw the light of day, Warburton had by no means finished with Methodism. In 1763, he published a two-volume polemic, entitled *The Doctrine of Grace*, which was an attack on both Methodism and his late friend turned adversary, Middleton. But what did Warburton perceive the relationship between evangelical ‘enthusiasm’ and the work of Middleton to be? In Chapter Six, it

⁷⁸ W. Warburton, ‘The True Methodist, or Christian in Earnest’, John Rylands Library, Manchester, MS 253B, fol. 2.

⁷⁹ Ibid., fols. 50-52.

⁸⁰ Ibid., fols. 64, 83-84, 134.

will be argued that Warburton identified Wesley's 'enthusiastic' excesses as the root cause of Middleton's rational excesses.

v) Thomas Church (1707-1756)

Thomas Church was born in Marlborough, Wiltshire, in 1707. He was educated at Brasenose College, Oxford, where he graduated with a BA in 1726, and an MA in 1731. From 1740 until his death in 1756, Church served as the vicar of Battersea in London.⁸¹ In 1737, he published *An Essay Towards Vindicating the Literal Sense of the Demoniacks in the New Testament*. This work was written in response to *An Enquiry into the Meaning of Demoniacks in the New Testament*, which had been published earlier that year by Arthur Ashley Sykes, a leading Latitudinarian clergyman of Essex. Sykes had argued that the King James translation was misleading in the sense that it portrayed the demons of the New Testament as Satan's 'Devils'. According to Sykes, the original Greek text contained the word 'daimon', which meant the 'Souls of departed Men'. Sykes claimed that, if the authors of the New Testament had been referring to devils, they would have used the word 'diabolos'. So, in other words, when the evangelists referred to 'demons', they were talking about ghosts.⁸² Controversially, Sykes went on to argue that the demonic possessions described by the evangelists were really 'Cases of *Madness*, or of *Epilepsy*', and not ghosts as they had thought.⁸³

It is important to note that Anglican clergymen had been increasingly embracing scientific explanations for mental and physical illnesses since the mid-seventeenth

⁸¹ J. M. Scott, 'Church, Thomas (1707–1756)', rev. E. Major, *ODNB*.

⁸² [A.A. Sykes], *An Enquiry into the Meaning of Demoniacks in the New Testament* (London, 1737), p. 2; H.C.E. Midelfort, 'The Gadarene Demoniack in the English Enlightenment', in E. Michelson, S.K. Taylor and M.N. Venables (eds), *A Linking of Heaven and Earth: Studies in Religious and Cultural History in Honor of Carlos M.N. Eire* (Farnham, 2012), pp. 53-57.

⁸³ Sykes, *Enquiry into the Meaning of Demoniacks*, p. 79.

century. This was partly due to the works of such philosophers as Meric Casaubon (1599-1671) and Henry More. Both individuals had attempted to explain such behaviour as fits and trances in scientific terms.⁸⁴ By the early decades of the eighteenth century, some clerics were taking their enthusiasm for science to seemingly dangerous extremes, and rejecting any literal interpretation of the miracles described in the Bible. Indeed, Sykes was writing in the wake of Thomas Woolston's six *Discourses* (1727-1730). In the first of these *Discourses*, Woolston ridiculed those who adhered to a literal interpretation of the Gadarene demoniac, which is described in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-20 and Luke 8:26-39). Following his arrival in Gadara (according to Matthew) or Gerasa (according to Mark and Luke), Jesus is said to have encountered a man (or, according to Matthew, two men) who was possessed by demons. Previous attempts to secure him with chains had apparently failed, meaning that he was able to live freely in a graveyard. Jesus then exorcised him of his demons, and transferred them onto a herd of swine. Now possessed, the herd charged to a nearby lake, and drowned. To Woolston, the evangelists' accounts presented various problems. Given that such a 'Madman' would have posed a great danger to his 'Neighbours', it simply made no sense that he had not been executed. Furthermore, Woolston scoffed at the notion that Jesus would have transferred the 'Devils' from the 'Madman' onto a 'Herd of Swine'. Indeed, Woolston erroneously believed that Gadara had been a Jewish land. On these grounds, he claimed that one would not have found 'any Herd of Swine' there.⁸⁵

⁸⁴ A. Taves, *Fits, Trances, & Visions: Experiencing Religion and Explaining Experience from Wesley to James* (Princeton, 1999), p. 18.

⁸⁵ Woolston, *Discourse on the Miracles of our Saviour*, pp. 31-32. According to Midelfort, 'Modern scholars point out that Gadara and Gerasa were both gentile cities, members of the Dekapolis, with much closer connections to Greco-Roman than to Jewish culture. This would explain the presence of swine and swineherds there.' See Midelfort, 'Gadarene Demoniac', p. 52n10.

Of course, Sykes took steps to distance himself from Woolston's heterodoxy in his *Enquiry*. For instance, he was quick to add that none of his arguments brought Jesus's miraculous healing into question. In the case of the Gadarene demoniac, Sykes argued that Jesus's action had been to 'pass' the afflicted man's '*Madness*' onto the herd of swine.⁸⁶ Yet, this failed to convince Sykes's critics. If we return to Thomas Church, he was one divine who feared that Sykes's 'lax and figurative Interpretations' would 'give occasion to the Enemies of any literal Part of the Gospel to interpret it away, or to represent the whole as an unintelligible Figure.' In other words, Church feared that Sykes's argument would be taken to imply that no miraculous healing had occurred at all.⁸⁷ This information is significant because – as we shall see in Chapter Six – Church went on to argue that Wesley's accounts of modern-day miracles played into the hands of Sykes and other heterodox authors who applied reason to the biblical demoniacs, and reduced them to epileptic fits. Throughout his response to Sykes, Church vigorously asserted that the demonic possessions described in the New Testament were just that, and not the result of mental illnesses. Amongst his various arguments, Church noted that the 'Naturalists and Physicians' of the time 'were particularly engaged in searching into the Causes of Distempers'. Therefore, had these demonic possessions really been nothing more than epileptic fits, one would have expected them to 'detect this Pretence, and rightly inform the World'.⁸⁸ While Church conceded that the symptoms of '*Madness*' and '*real Possession*' may have resembled each other, he argued that the apostles were perfectly capable of distinguishing between the two categories.⁸⁹ Church was reluctant to set a firm date as to when 'the Power of casting out Devils' had ceased in the church. Yet, he agreed with John Tillotson's

⁸⁶ Sykes, *Enquiry into the Meaning of Demoniacs*, p. 53.

⁸⁷ [T. Church], *An Essay Towards Vindicating the Literal Sense of the Demoniacs in the New Testament* (London, 1737), p. 99.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 103.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 41-42.

notion that the practice would have been rendered obsolete once the ‘Powers of the World became Christian’ (in other words, following Constantine’s conversion during the fourth century).⁹⁰

Some years later, Church reiterated this point in his *A Vindication of the Miraculous Powers, which Subsisted in the Three First Centuries of the Christian Church* (1750), which was a response to Middleton’s *Free Inquiry*.⁹¹ Despite his reluctance to label Middleton as a ‘Deist’, Church feared that his contempt towards the post-apostolic Fathers would be ‘pushed farther’ by sceptical authors, who would begin to apply its arguments to the miracles described in the New Testament.⁹² Of course, Church was only one of many clergymen who responded to Middleton’s *Free Inquiry*. We have already seen that Warburton was one such author. Another example was Wesley, who swiftly responded with *A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Conyers Middleton* (1749). On the surface, this publication provides us with an example of Wesley siding with several of his old adversaries in a fight against a common enemy (Middleton). Nevertheless, there was much more to Wesley’s *Letter* than this. In Chapter Six, it will be shown that Wesley also used his response to Middleton as an opportunity to attack his ‘orthodox’ Anglican opponents.

vi) Zachary Grey (1688-1766)

Zachary Grey was born in Burniston, Yorkshire, in 1688. He entered Jesus College, Cambridge, in 1704, and subsequently migrated to Trinity Hall, Cambridge, where he was elected as a scholar in 1707. Following his ordination as priest in 1711, Grey was

⁹⁰ Ibid., pp. 116-17.

⁹¹ T. Church, *A Vindication of the Miraculous Powers, which Subsisted in the Three First Centuries of the Christian Church* (London, 1750), pp. 198-228.

⁹² Ibid., p. vii.

appointed rector of Houghton Conquest, Bedfordshire, and vicar of St Giles and St Peter's, Cambridge. He divided his time between these two livings until his death in 1766.⁹³ A staunch Tory and High Churchman, Grey's career was characterised by his veneration of the martyred King Charles I, and his contempt towards Dissenters. In one of his earliest publications, which was entitled *A Vindication of the Church of England* (1720), Grey asserted his unrelenting commitment to episcopacy, and condemned the 'seditious and schismatical Principles' of Protestant sectarians. These sentiments were particularly aimed at James Peirce, a Dissenting minister, who had recently published *A Vindication of the Dissenters* (1717).⁹⁴

Shortly afterwards, Grey published *Presbyterian Prejudice Display'd* (1722), which was in response to Benjamin Bennet, a Presbyterian minister, who had recently written a history of the English Reformation. In one instance, Grey scoffed at Bennet's description of how the Puritans had escaped the 'Fury' of James I's regime by travelling to America. Grey noted that Bennet had based his account of the Puritan migration on 'no other Authority' than Edmund Calamy (the Younger), another contemporary historian of Puritanism. Grey added that, because of their failure to 'comply with the legal Impositions of the Church establish'd', the Jacobean Puritans had been 'fitter to Herd with the Salvages [sic] of *America*, then the civilised Inhabitants of their own native Kingdom.'⁹⁵ Throughout the 1720s and 1730s, Grey continued to attack the works of various Whig/Dissenting historians, including John Oldmixon, Samuel Chandler, and, most notably, Daniel Neal.

Neal's polemical histories included his two-volume *History of New England* (1720) and, most prominently, his four-volume *History of the Puritans* (1732-38).

⁹³ S. Mandelbrote, 'Grey, Zachary (1688–1766)', *ODNB*.

⁹⁴ Z. Grey, *A Vindication of the Church of England, in Answer to Mr. Peirce's Vindication of the Dissenters*, 2 vols. (London, 1720), I, p. 24.

⁹⁵ Z. Grey, *Presbyterian Prejudice Display'd. Or; an Answer to Mr. Benjamin Bennet's Memorial of the Reformation* (London, 1722), p. 30.

Significantly, Neal wrote the latter work against the backdrop of the Dissenters' campaign for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts. Unsurprisingly, Neal's *Puritan History* ruffled many feathers within the established Church. Isaac Maddox, who later served as bishop of St Asaph, immediately responded to the first volume by publishing *A Vindication of the Government, Doctrine, and Worship, of the Church of England* (1733). While Grey assisted Maddox with much of the research for this treatise, his actions were never officially acknowledged (something on which his friend, William Webster, privately commiserated him).⁹⁶ Nevertheless, Grey's efforts were not entirely unnoticed. In a letter, dated 9 September 1734, Bishop Gibson thanked Grey for his contribution, and informed him that he had recently heard that Neal was due to publish a 'second part' (which, in fact, had been published by this stage).⁹⁷ The following year, Daniel Waterland wrote to Grey, and expressed his fear that, by 'lashing' the established Church, 'Neale [sic] and Chandler' were aiding the 'papists'. One can assume that Grey was eager to please such influential figures as Gibson and Waterland.⁹⁸ Therefore, it is unsurprising that he subsequently published an *Impartial Examination* of the second (1736), third (1737) and fourth (1739) volumes of Neal's *History*.⁹⁹

Importantly, Grey had easy access to some of the manuscripts of the Restoration divine and anti-Puritan historian, John Nalson (c.1638-1686). This was because, from about 1730 onwards, many of Nalson's papers were in the possession of Grey's friend

⁹⁶ R. Ingram, 'Representing and Misrepresenting the History of Puritanism in Eighteenth-Century England', in P. Clarke and C. Methuen (eds), *The Church on its Past* (Woodbridge, 2013), p. 212.

⁹⁷ BL Add. MS 5831, fol. 157, Gibson to Grey, 9 September 1734.

⁹⁸ Waterland also used this letter as an opportunity to lament that nobody had responded to Isaac Newton's posthumously published *Observations Upon the Prophecies of Daniel, and the Apocalypse of St. John* (1733). In this work, Newton claimed that Trinitarianism was nothing more than a pagan corruption, which had been imposed on the church during the fourth century. See *Ibid.*, fol. 172: Waterland to Grey, 5 February 1735. Presumably, it was at least partly due to Waterland's remark that Grey soon published his *Examination of the Fourteenth Chapter of Sir Isaac Newton's Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel* (1736).

⁹⁹ Grey's response to Neal's fourth volume earned him a commendation from Thomas Sherlock, the bishop of Salisbury. See *Ibid.*, fol. 159: Sherlock to Grey, 5 April 1739.

(and Nalson's grandson), Philip Williams, fellow of St John's College, Cambridge.¹⁰⁰ Thus, many of the arguments which Grey advanced against Neal were drawn from Nalson's manuscripts. Furthermore, Grey quoted extensively from a two-volume polemic entitled *Foxes and Firebrands* (1680-1682). Nalson co-wrote the first instalment of *Foxes and Firebrands* with Robert Ware, an Irish Anglican, who subsequently wrote the second volume on his own. In particular, Grey cited some of Nalson and Ware's numerous examples of Roman Catholics masquerading as Protestant sectarians.¹⁰¹ In Chapter Seven, it will be shown that Grey went on to utilise this same source in his *A Serious Address to Lay-Methodists* (1745), where he portrayed Methodists as crypto-papist schismatics. This anonymously published work was Grey's third and final attack on Methodism. It had been preceded by *The Quaker and Methodist Compared* (1740) and *A Short History of the Donatists* (1741). The former likened Whitefield's *Journal* to that of the seventeenth-century Quaker leader, George Fox. The latter compared Methodists to Augustine's schismatic adversaries, the Donatists. Both texts will also be explored in Chapter Seven.

Like Neal, Grey was also interested in events on the other side of the Atlantic. He maintained a long-distance friendship with the Yale 'apostate' Timothy Cutler, who encountered Grey when he visited Cambridge to receive his Master's degree.¹⁰² Importantly, it was because of Cutler's letters that Grey was kept informed about evangelicalism's effect on colonial American society. In one letter to Grey, dated 31

¹⁰⁰ Ingram, 'Representing and Misrepresenting the History of Puritanism', pp. 209-10.

¹⁰¹ For example, in his response to the fourth volume of Neal's *History*, Grey cited Ware's description of Henry Hammond's (1605-1660) encounter with a 'pretended *Quaker*'. Apparently, this person informed Hammond that his fluent grasp of Hebrew, Greek and Latin was all down to '*the Holy Spirit*'. However, when Hammond presented him with a '*Welsh Bible*', he refused to read it because he had 'given thee Satisfaction enough'. The man was subsequently charged and - upon a search of his home - found to be in possession of some 'seditious *Popish Books*'. See Z. Grey, *An Impartial Examination of the Fourth Volume of Mr. Daniel Neal's History of the Puritans* (London, 1739), p. 108.

¹⁰² Cutler would later recall being introduced to Conyers Middleton by Grey at Cambridge. See J. Nichols and J.B. Nichols (eds), *Illustrations of the Literary History of the Eighteenth Century*, 8 vols. (London, 1817-58), IV, pp. 297-98: Cutler to Grey, 5 June 1735.

September 1735, Cutler claimed that Neal's *History* was proving to be popular amongst the 'Fanatics' in Boston. Significantly, Cutler was writing against the backdrop of the Northampton revival, which Jonathan Edwards would go on to describe in his *Faithful Narrative*. Cutler informed Grey that this event had generated many 'distracted and bewitched Converts', including Edwards, whom he described as the 'biggest of them [all]'.¹⁰³

In a later letter to Grey, dated 24 September 1743, Cutler provided graphic details of how Whitefield's preaching had affected society in Boston. To Cutler, Whitefield's attacks on the clergy were akin to a 'battering-ram'. Noticeably cruder, however, was Cutler's description of evangelicalism's effect on both the local printing press and the female colonists. His exact words were: 'Our presses are for ever teeming with books, and our women with bastards'.¹⁰⁴ Crucially, this letter provides us with evidence of a transatlantic anti-evangelical book exchange. Indeed, we know from Cutler's letter that he had recently received Grey's '[A Short] History of the Donatists'.¹⁰⁵ In return, Cutler had obtained a book by a 'Dr. Chauncy' as a gift for Grey. The author in question was Charles Chauncy, a Congregationalist minister of Boston, who was the leading opponent of evangelicalism in New England. Presumably, the book to which Cutler referred was Chauncy's recently published *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England* (1743). This mammoth attack on evangelicalism was largely derived from Chauncy's interviews with various local

¹⁰³ BL Add. MS 6396, fols. 7-8: Cutler to Grey, 31 September 1735.

¹⁰⁴ Nichols and Nichols, *Illustrations*, IV, p. 303: Cutler to Grey, 24 September 1743.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 302-304: Cutler to Grey, 24 September 1743. In his 'Anti-Methodist Publications' (p. 177), Field lists a 'J. Trevor' as the author of the anonymously published *A Short History of the Donatists*. While the preface does contain an affidavit by a 'J. Trevor', there can be little doubt that it was in fact Grey who was the author. In addition to the above letter from Cutler, the fourth volume of Nichols and Nichols' *Illustrations* (p. 337) contains an earlier letter to Grey, dated 23 April 1741. This letter - which was from Thomas Potter (son of John) - also referred to Grey's 'History of the Donatists'. Finally, the original advertisement for *A Short History of the Donatists* appeared a mere four days after Potter sent this letter. Presumably, Grey must have had ownership of several copies before they officially went on sale (see *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, 27 April 1741).

ministers, who had recently seen their congregations torn apart by ‘enthusiastic’ itinerants.¹⁰⁶

Unfortunately, none of Grey’s letters to Cutler seem to have survived, meaning that we will probably never know whether he received Chauncy’s work or not. Grey’s *Serious Address to Lay-Methodists* – which was his subsequent and final printed attack on Methodism – contained no reference to Chauncy. Assuming Grey did receive the book, it is possible that he was unwilling to cite the work of a Congregationalist minister. While Chauncy was also an ardent opponent of evangelical ‘enthusiasm’, he would still have been a schismatic in Grey’s eyes. Yet, as Chapter Seven’s discussions will show, Grey was not averse to citing Dissenting authorities (such as Richard Baxter) when it suited his cause. Even if Grey had felt uneasy about citing a Boston Congregationalist, these sentiments – unsurprisingly – did not extend to colonial Anglicans. As we shall see, it was Grey who exposed readers in England to Alexander Garden’s account of the murderous and ‘enthusiastic’ Dutartres family of South Carolina.

vii) George Lavington (1684-1762)

George Lavington was born in Mildenhall, Wiltshire, in 1684. He was educated at New College, Oxford, where he became a fellow in 1708. During his time at Oxford, Lavington was an active member of the Constitution Club, a staunchly Whig organisation, which suffered violence at the hands of a Tory mob for celebrating George I’s birthday on 28 May 1715. Lavington was ordained priest in 1712, and subsequently resigned his fellowship in 1718. He served as rector of various parishes,

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 304. For more on Chauncy, see E.M. Griffin, *Old Brick: Charles Chauncy of Boston, 1705-1787* (Minneapolis, 1980).

including Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire (1717-1730), St Michael Bassishaw, London (1730-1742), and St Mary Aldermary, London (1742-1747).¹⁰⁷ Lavington's ministry was characterised by two interlinked agendas: supporting the Hanoverian monarchy, and safeguarding the Protestant succession. By 1745, he was serving as chaplain-in-ordinary to the king. In the wake of the Jacobite uprising of that year, he preached a sermon at Bath. In the preface to the published version of this sermon, he denounced the Pretender's '*wicked Rebellion*', and praised the residents of the city for their '*Loyalty to his Majesty, and Affection to the Protestant Religion*'.¹⁰⁸ Unsurprisingly, such sentiments earned him some powerful friends. The most notable of these were the Duke of Newcastle and Lord Hardwicke, both of whom are said to have promised Lavington a bishopric. This became a reality in 1746, when he was appointed bishop of Exeter. In 1747, Lavington preached a Restoration day sermon before the House of Lords, in which he reiterated the importance of trusting in 'the *Providential plan* of a *legal Monarchy*, and a sober, rational Reformed *Religion*'.¹⁰⁹ The latter, according to Lavington, stood in stark contrast to the '*Anarchy and Tyranny*' which had been instigated by fanatical Protestants like 'the *mock Protector*' Cromwell, and those who propagated '*Popery*'.¹¹⁰

Yet, as we shall see in Chapter Seven, Lavington's use of history differed from that of such High Church Tories as Zachary Grey. More specifically, Lavington did not use his condemnation of the Regicide as an opportunity to attack Dissenters. This is unsurprising, given that he was aligned with the Whigs. Indeed, there is evidence to

¹⁰⁷ C. Haydon, 'Lavington, George (1684–1762)', *ODNB*; Idem, 'Bishop George Lavington of Exeter (1684-1762) and *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists, Compar'd*', *Southern History Society*, 37 (2015), pp. 62-63.

¹⁰⁸ G. Lavington, *A Sermon Preach'd in the Abbey-Church at Bath, on Occasion of the Rebellion, October 13, 1745* (London, 1745), unpaginated preface.

¹⁰⁹ G. Lavington, *A Sermon Preached Before the House of Lords, in the Abbey Church of Westminster, on Friday, May 29, 1747* (London, 1747), p. 22.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 24.

suggest that Lavington took the concerns of all in his diocese – including Dissenters – seriously. More specifically, he is known to have kept a letter, dated 1 January 1750, from John Lavington, a local Presbyterian minister, who wished to express his alarm at the recent activities of a ‘vagrant Methodist preacher’. It remains unclear whether these two Lavingtons were related to each other. Nevertheless, this Presbyterian minister clearly felt able to approach the bishop about his concerns, implying that he had quickly gained the respect of the local Dissenting community.¹¹¹ By this point, the first two volumes of Lavington’s *Enthusiasm of Methodists* had already appeared in print. It went on to become the most famous (or infamous, depending on one’s denominational stance) anti-Methodist polemic. Spanning three volumes, and a total of 741 pages, it was also the lengthiest attack on eighteenth-century Methodism. Unfortunately for the reader, it is a highly tedious read. Such tediousness is largely due to Lavington’s approach, which involved highlighting even the slightest similarities between Roman Catholics and Methodists. Nevertheless, when one reads the context in which Lavington wrote the piece, it is difficult not to feel a degree of sympathy for him.

Throughout the 1740s, evangelical itinerants had been making their presence felt in the West Country. Their presence often proved to be a great cause for concern in many localities. In April 1744, John Wesley reported that ‘there had been a shaking among’ some locals in Rosemergy, Cornwall, who claimed to have heard word that he had recently been seen ‘with the Pretender in France.’ To the modern reader, these allegations may seem absurd. Yet, as we shall see in the final chapter, it was far from uncommon to see such ‘enthusiasts’ as Wesley being associated with Roman Catholicism. It is also important to note that these accusations came at a time when Britain was gripped by a widespread fear that a French invasion was imminent. It would

¹¹¹ O.A. Beckerlegge (ed.), *The Lavington Correspondence: Being the Letters to the Author of The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar’d* (Bunbury, 1980), p. 15.

be unfair to say that these fears were unwarranted. French naval ships did indeed set sail for Britain in February 1744, and it was only due to adverse weather conditions that this invasion attempt was abandoned.¹¹² Furthermore, St Ives is known to have witnessed anti-Methodist rioting in 1743 and 1744.¹¹³ In 1745, another anti-Methodist riot occurred, this time in Exeter. These disturbances, which went on for several days, were recorded by the Calvinist evangelical, John Cennick. In his account of the riot, Cennick provided graphic details of evangelical converts being subjected to verbal and physical assaults at the hands of the mob. Cennick stressed that many of these victims were women. For example, he described how one woman was ‘struck with a Stone on her Eye so violently’ that she was unable ‘to see out of it’ for ‘many Days.’ Other female converts were apparently derided with such slurs as ‘*Whitefieldite Bitch*’ and ‘*Cennicking-Whore*’.¹¹⁴

Thus, anti-Methodist sentiments were already very strong throughout the diocese of Exeter by the time Lavington was appointed bishop in 1746. The following year, Lavington received a letter, dated 3 July, from two JPs, informing him that Wesley had recently caused a disturbance at a tavern near Redruth. John Fursman, chancellor of Exeter Cathedral, and William Hole, archdeacon of Barnstaple, would later confirm that, when Lavington conducted his primary visitation in the summer of 1748, he visited the tavern in question, and interviewed Mrs Morgan, the landlord’s wife. Mrs Morgan detailed how Wesley had apparently frightened her during her pregnancy by saying that she would be ‘damn’d’ if she was ‘not sure’ that she had been saved.¹¹⁵ As we shall see in Chapter Two, Wesley differed from Whitefield and other Calvinist evangelicals in the sense that he believed that one could only be assured of

¹¹² N. Curnock (ed.), *The Journal of the Rev. John Wesley, A.M.*, 8 vols. (London, 1938), III, p. 129.

¹¹³ Haydon, ‘Bishop George Lavington of Exeter’, p. 65.

¹¹⁴ J. Cennick, *An Account of a Late Riot at Exeter* (London, 1745), pp. 14, 15, 19.

¹¹⁵ Beckerlegge, *Lavington Correspondence*, p. 4.

one's faith, and not one's ultimate salvation. Thus, Mrs Morgan's account is somewhat perplexing. Of course, it is possible that she misidentified Wesley, though we know from his journal that he was in the vicinity between late June and early July 1747. Alternatively, she may have provided an inaccurate (or fabricated) account of events. Regardless, one can assume that her testimony greatly disturbed Lavington.¹¹⁶ It is also important to note that Lavington wrote his attack on Methodism very shortly after he had suffered a series of public humiliations. At some point in 1748, a fictitious extract from the bishop's visitation charge (which was never published) started circulating in the form of a manuscript. It stated that Lavington had preached the following:

My Brethren, I Beg you will rise up with me against moral* preaching. We have been long attempting the reformation of the nation by discourses of this kind. With what success? Why none at all. On the contrary, we have very dexterously preached the people into downright infidelity. We must change our voice – we must preach Christ and him crucified. Nothing but gospel is; nothing will be found to be the power of God unto salvation besides. Let me therefore again and again request, may I not add, Let me CHARGE you to preach Jesus and salvation thro' his name...There are some who are gone out from us, refusing to be under political government, and therefore no friends to the Hierarchy; of whom, yet it must be said, their preaching is right and good in the main; though the persons are † immethodical in their practice.

The passage above was accompanied by two footnotes, which stated the following:

¹¹⁶ Wesley must have heard word of the woman's testimony because he visited her upon his return to Cornwall in August 1750. Wesley's description of the encounter was as follows: 'John Haime, John Trembath, and I called at Mrs. Morgan's, at Mitchell, who readily told me, and that over and over again, that she never saw or knew any harm by me. Yet I am not sure that she has not said just the contrary to others. If so, she, not I, must give account for it to God.' See Curnock, *Journal of the Rev. John Wesley*, III, pp. 304-306, 492. Lavington subsequently published Fursman and Hole's account of the 1748 interview. See [G. Lavington], *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared. Part III* (London, 1751), p. 5. Haydon provides an informative overview of this episode in his recent article, 'Bishop George Lavington of Exeter' (pp. 77-78). See also Beckerlegge, *Lavington Correspondence*, pp. 3-10.

* However moral preaching may be admired by some people, it is clearly evident to all intelligent persons, that it is too weak to work a reformation; whereas the preaching of CHRIST and his RIGHTEOUSNESS will not only beat down Satan under our fee, but establish morality in God's own way.

†The reason of this seems to be, because the regular clergy among them were turned out of the parish churches FOR preaching the very doctrine that the clergy are above CHARGED to preach: And people of all denominations adhering to them, seems to be the cause that they so little regard Hierarchy. But, according to their Prayers and their whole behaviour, they are heartily attached to the civil Government.¹¹⁷

The author's praise for those who had recently 'gone out' from the established Church was clearly intended as a reference to the Methodists. In August 1748, an anonymous 'Clergyman' responded to the fictitious charge by congratulating Lavington on his apparent determination to see 'Moral Preaching' replaced with 'Justification by Faith...the Doctrine of the pure Church of *England*'. While the 'Clergyman' described the Methodists as largely 'Strangers' to him, he claimed to have read some of their books, which he found to be full of the 'Primitive Spirit of Christianity'. The 'Clergyman' further congratulated Lavington on his seemingly sympathetic attitude towards the Methodists, whom he urged the bishop to encourage into his pulpits.¹¹⁸ It is unclear whether the author intended this piece to be satirical in tone, or whether he was simply fooled by the fictitious charge. If we assume the latter, others were certainly not fooled by it.

Upon his return from the American colonies in July 1748, Whitefield was presented with a copy of the manuscript, which he instantly knew to be a fictitious account of Lavington's charge. Whitefield was keen to suppress its circulation, though

¹¹⁷ Quoted from F. Baker, 'Bishop Lavington and the Methodists', *PWHS*, 34 (1964), p. 38.

¹¹⁸ *A Letter to the Right Reverend Father in God George, Lord Bishop of Exeter, Occasioned by his Lordship's Late Charge to the Clergy of his Diocese: In Defence of those Principles of the Methodists, Objected to in his Lordship's Charge* (n.p., [1748]), pp. 3-4, 11.

this ultimately failed. Indeed, the manuscript fell into the hands of a London printer, who published it, and ensured that it received a wide circulation.¹¹⁹ We know that at least one copy of the ‘charge’ reached Ireland because this was where Charles Wesley first encountered it. In his journal entry for 11 September 1748, the younger Wesley joked that the work was ‘worthy to be written in letters of gold’.¹²⁰ On 5 September 1748, Lavington wrote a response to the ‘charge’, which appeared as an item in the *Daily Advertiser* three days later. He commenced his response by stating that the piece was ‘the Product of mere *Fiction*.’ Lavington went on to ‘freely declare’ his sentiments regarding the Methodists. While he conceded that there were ‘several well meaning ignorant People among them’, he believed that ‘the *Sect* in general’ was ‘actuated by a *Spirit of Enthusiasm and Delusion*’, or – in the case of ‘their *Leaders and Teachers*’ – by ‘*something worse*’.¹²¹ Unsurprisingly, the stewards of John Wesley’s Foundery in London found Lavington’s sentiments particularly offensive. They swiftly responded by publishing their own item in the *Daily Advertiser*, in which they denied the bishop’s ‘severe Expressions’, and asserted that many Methodists were ‘Men of Learning and Good Sense’. Wesley’s stewards were not the only evangelicals who responded to Lavington’s item.¹²²

On 5 October 1748, Whitefield wrote a letter to Sir James Stonhouse, a physician (and future Anglican clergyman), whose diverse range of associates included

¹¹⁹ Both the manuscript and printed versions of this fictitious charge can be found in LPL, Secker MS, VIII, fols. 31-32. Despite its seemingly wide circulation, the author has only been able to trace one other copy of the printed version. It can be found in The United Library at Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary, which is in Evanston, Illinois. It is catalogued as *An Extract from D. Lavington the Bishop of Exeter's Charge...* (n.p., 1748). The reference code is: BY440. L41e 1749a.

¹²⁰ T. Jackson (ed.), *The Journal of Charles Wesley* (1849), *Wesley Center Online*, <http://wesley.nnu.edu/charles-wesley/the-journal-of-charles-wesley-1707-1788/the-journal-of-charles-wesley-september-1-december-31-1748/> (accessed 22 May 2016).

¹²¹ The author has been unable to trace a copy of the 8 September 1748 edition of the *Daily Advertiser*. However, we know that the item appeared in this newspaper – and on that date – from a response which Wesley’s stewards (see next footnote) penned on that same date. The stewards stated that Lavington’s item had appeared in ‘this Day’s *Daily Advertiser*’. The quotations above are taken from the *General Advertiser*, which printed Lavington’s item on 9 September 1748.

¹²² Quoted from Baker, ‘Bishop Lavington and the Methodists’, p. 40.

the Calvinist Anglican, James Hervey, the Nonconformist, Philip Doddridge, and, most importantly, Lavington himself. In this letter, Whitefield urged Stonhouse to inform the bishop that he strenuously denied knowing anything about ‘the printing of His Lordship’s pretended Charge, or of the Pamphlet occasioned by it.’ Whitefield added that he had spoken ‘to the Officious Printer, who did it out of his own head, & blamed Him very much.’ While Whitefield regretted that Lavington had been given ‘an Occasion’ to ‘declare His aversion to what is called Methodism’, he conceded that he was unable to ‘blame His Lordship’ for condemning them, given the circumstances. Whitefield closed by expressing his desire that Lavington, along with ‘any other of the Right Reverend the Bishops’, would ‘converse’ with the Methodists.¹²³

This incident illustrates the seemingly sudden change in character that Whitefield experienced during the latter half of the 1740s. Indeed, it is hard to believe that the pragmatic and diplomatic Whitefield we see here was the same individual who had compared the late Archbishop Tillotson to ‘Mahomet’ only a few years earlier. Ultimately, however, Whitefield’s negotiations had little effect.¹²⁴ In March 1749, Lavington published anonymously the first volume of his *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared*, which generated a response from Whitefield.¹²⁵ Later in 1749, Lavington published his second volume, which was also anonymous. It was after the publication of this second volume that Wesley entered the fray, and responded to the mystery author.¹²⁶ Wesley subsequently responded to Lavington’s third volume, which was published in 1751. Like the previous two volumes, this final part appeared

¹²³ Beckerlegge, *Lavington Correspondence*, pp. 2-3.

¹²⁴ Whitefield’s ‘Mahomet’ insult, and its aftermath, will be explored in Chapter Two.

¹²⁵ For the original advertisement, see *London Evening-Post*, 9-11 March 1749. G. Whitefield, *Some Remarks on a Pamphlet, entitled, The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd; Wherein Several Mistakes in Some Parts of his Past Writings and Conduct are Acknowledged, and his Present Sentiments Concerning the Methodists Explained* (London, 1749).

¹²⁶ J. Wesley, *A Letter to the Author of the Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd* (London, 1750).

anonymously. However, by this point, Wesley was confident that he knew the identity of the author. Indeed, when Wesley responded to Lavington's third volume, he addressed the preface to 'the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Exeter'.¹²⁷ This, in turn, convinced Lavington to finally admit to being the author of the *Enthusiasm of Methodists*.¹²⁸ While Lavington's work was primarily designed as an attack on Wesley and (to a lesser degree) Whitefield, they were not the only individuals who responded to his lengthy treatise. Another opponent of Lavington was Vincent Perronet, the evangelical parish minister of Shoreham, Kent, who responded to each of the volumes as they were published.¹²⁹

Lavington's three-part work will be discussed throughout this thesis. It will feature prominently in Chapter Seven, which explores Lavington's utilisation of history, and how this differed from other opponents of Methodism. Moreover, by exploring Lavington's writings on the Eleusinian mysteries, it will be shown that the bishop had another, less obvious, target in mind when he published what – on the surface – was nothing more than an attack on evangelical 'enthusiasm'. More specifically, it will be argued that Lavington used the final volume of his anti-Methodist polemic as an opportunity to correct Warburton's relatively positive assessment of ancient paganism.

¹²⁷ J. Wesley, *A Second Letter to the Author of the Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd* (London, 1751), p. iii.

¹²⁸ G. Lavington, *The Bishop of Exeter's Answer to Mr. J. Wesley's Late Letter to his Lordship* (London, 1752).

¹²⁹ V. Perronet, *Some Remarks on a Late Anonymous Piece: Intitled, The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists, Compared* (London, 1749); *A Second Letter to the Author of a Piece, entitled The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared: Containing Some Remarks on the Second Part* (London, 1749); *A Third Letter to the Author of a Piece, entitled the Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared. Containing Some Remarks on the Third Part* (London, 1752).

Print Culture

While most of these anti-Methodist works were published in London, some appeared in the university towns of Oxford and Cambridge, and (to a lesser extent) in various other provincial locations, including Preston, Newcastle, and Bristol. Unsurprisingly, these provincial anti-Methodist publications were usually generated by visits from influential evangelical itinerants. For example, it is no coincidence that a relatively large number of anti-Methodist polemics appeared in Newcastle during the same year (1743) that John Wesley visited the city.¹³⁰ As William Gibson argues, ‘religion outsold all other genres in the eighteenth century’.¹³¹ Some of these early printed attacks on Methodism certainly sold well, and went through multiple editions. Many, on the other hand, went through one edition, and were largely forgotten after that. The cost of these works – which varied considerably – appears to have had little bearing on whether they sold well or not.

For instance, the first ever anti-Methodist play – which was entitled *The Mock-Preacher* (1739) – was competitively priced at sixpence, thus making it affordable to a diverse readership.¹³² The play’s short length (thirty-two pages) may also help to explain why it was relatively cheap. Given that *The Mock-Preacher* was bawdy in tone, it is fair to say that it was not aimed at the intellectual elite (in other words, those with a university education). Several other pieces of anti-Methodist satire, which were of a similar length, were also priced at sixpence, including *The Methodists: An Humorous Burlesque Poem* (1739) and *Dr Codex’s Pastoral Letter Versified* (1739). Ultimately, however, none of these works went beyond one edition, suggesting that they failed to

¹³⁰ For an index of these provincial imprints, see Field, ‘Anti-Methodist Publications’, Appendix Four.

¹³¹ W. Gibson, ‘The British Sermon 1689-1901’, in K.A. Francis and W. Gibson (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of the British Sermon 1689-1901* (Oxford, 2012), p. 19.

¹³² G. Budge, M. Caines, D. Cook and B. Latimer, ‘Literary and Cultural Figures, Genres and Contexts’, in G. Day and B. Keegan (eds), *The Eighteenth-Century Literature Handbook* (London, 2009), p. 67.

generate much interest. Numerous anti-Methodist sermons were also competitively priced at sixpence. For example, this was the cost of Arthur Bedford's *The Doctrine of Assurance* (1738), which was one of the earliest anti-Methodist sermons. Bedford's thirty-nine-page sermon appears to have sold reasonably well, given that it went through two editions. There was certainly a readership for sermons at the popular end of the market. As Gibson argues, most eighteenth-century 'booksellers regarded sermons – both new and second-hand – as a staple of their trade, and this was in part due to the ubiquity of demand.' Therefore, it was not unusual to see 'charitable printers' producing 'cheap sermons' for the 'benefit of the poor'.¹³³

A particularly popular anti-Methodist work was Joseph Trapp's *Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger*, which went through four editions within a year of its initial publication. Priced at one shilling, Trapp's work would have been targeted at the middle end of the market. Therefore, one can assume that it was the sort of work which would have been disseminated amongst the various London coffee-houses, which were frequented by the middle ranks of society. Of course, it is important to remember that there was no homogenous 'middling sort' during the eighteenth century. In fact, the middle ranks were 'deeply divided' between the 'interests of the City, the untitled gentry and the literary/professional community'. It was for this reason that different coffee-houses often catered for different professions and political persuasions.¹³⁴ Regardless of these professional and political divisions, one can assume that Trapp's defence of a moderate degree of pleasure and entertainment would have resonated with much (though, as we shall see in Chapter Three, not necessarily all) of the middling laity. Thus, it is unsurprising that his *Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger* sold well.

¹³³ Gibson, 'British Sermon 1689-1901', p. 21.

¹³⁴ N. Hudson, *Samuel Johnson and the Making of Modern England* (Cambridge, 2003), p. 120.

Henry Stebbing's *A Caution Against Religious Delusion* (1739) was another anti-Methodist sermon which proved to be very popular. Within a year of its initial publication, this tract had reached its sixth edition. It is intriguing that Stebbing's sermon sold so well, given that the printed price for it was a rather expensive three shillings. Of course, it is important to remember that the printed price of a book did not always match the price that consumers paid. During this period, it was normal for copy-owning booksellers to act as 'congers', who set an artificially high price for a given book. Acting as wholesalers, these congers would then haggle with other – usually smaller – booksellers, and convince them to buy bulk copies of the book. Once they were in possession of these bulk copies, these smaller booksellers were free to set their own price for the book. Therefore, one can assume that many, if not all, of those who bought copies of Stebbing's work would have paid less than the printed price of three shillings.¹³⁵ Like Trapp, Stebbing was a renowned controversialist and defender of Anglican orthodoxy, so this may help to explain why this work sold so well.¹³⁶

One conger who was responsible for the publication of several anti-Methodist works was the London bookseller, Charles Rivington. Long before anybody had heard of Wesley and Whitefield, Rivington already had a reputation for publishing works which sought to uphold Anglican orthodoxy against such perceived threats as Latitudinarianism, Dissent and Deism. For example, Rivington was responsible for the publication of many of those works which attacked Benjamin Hoadly during the Bangorian controversy.¹³⁷ Intriguingly, Rivington also published some of Wesley and

¹³⁵ J. Raven, *The Business of Books: Booksellers and the English Book Trade 1450-1850* (New Haven and London, 2007), pp. 89-90.

¹³⁶ For more on Stebbing, see B.W. Young, 'Stebbing, Henry (bap. 1687, d. 1763)', *ODNB*.

¹³⁷ For examples, see *The Layman's Humble Address to the Bishops and Clergy in Convocation Assembled: Concerning an Attempt to Subvert the Christian Faith, Lately Made by Sam. Clarke, D.D.* (London, 1717); *A Modest Enquiry into the Bishop of Bangor's Preservative Against the Nonjurors. Humbly Offer'd to the Consideration of His Lordship* (London, 1717); J. Smith, *Modest Review of the Lord Bishop of Bangor's Answer to the Reverend Dr. Snape; Or, The Charge of Misrepresentation Impartially Consider'd* (London, 1717).

Whitefield's early works, including those on asceticism and self-denial.¹³⁸ As will be argued in Chapter Three, it was not the Methodists' asceticism per se which generated hostility. When Rivington published these works, both Wesley and Whitefield had yet to engage in the seemingly anti-clerical practices (such as itinerant preaching) which would go on to characterise their ministries. However, by 1738, Whitefield had secured his reputation as an insubordinate 'enthusiast'. Thus, by this point, Rivington was publishing the anti-Methodist works of such orthodox High Churchmen as Tipping Silvester and Arthur Bedford.¹³⁹

Sometimes, anti-Methodism enabled authors to draw on existing prejudices, and republish old works as attacks on Wesley and Whitefield. For example, in 1731, Gilbert Nelson, a schoolmaster of Houghton-le-Spring, near Durham, published a two-volume work, entitled *The Use of Human Reason, in Religion, to Convince Ourselves of Truth, and To Persuade Our Selves to Practice*. In this work, which was written at the height of the perceived Deist threat, Nelson described the 'holy Scriptures' as something which exceeded 'the most refined Reason'. Nevertheless, Nelson instructed his readers that 'a right use' of reason was essential if one was to resist those 'false Prophets' and 'false Christs' who had been preying on Christians throughout the ages. One can assume that this work, which was published in Newcastle, did not sell particularly well. This assumption is based on the fact that, as of 2017, no copies of the second volume are known to exist. A truncated version of Nelson's work subsequently reappeared in 1741 as a 444-page single tract, which was published in London. Intriguingly, Nelson –

¹³⁸ See J. Wesley, *A Sermon Preached at St. Mary's in Oxford, on Sunday, September 21, 1735* (London, 1735); J. Wesley, *The Christian's Pattern; or, A Treatise of the Imitation of Christ* (London, 1735); G. Whitefield, *The Nature and Necessity of Our New Birth in Christ Jesus, in Order to Salvation: A Sermon Preached in the Church of St. Mary Radcliffe, in Bristol* (London, 1737); G. Whitefield, *The Benefits of an Early Piety: A Sermon Preach'd at Bow-Church, London, Before the Religious Societies, at One of Their Quarterly Meetings, on Wednesday, September 28. 1737* (London, 1737).

¹³⁹ T. Silvester, *The Scripture Doctrine of Regeneration Stated, and Shewn to Concur with the Baptismal Service of Our Church: A Sermon Preach'd Before the University of Oxford, at St. Mary's, on Sunday, Feb. 26. 1737-8* (London, 1738); A. Bedford, *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith, Stated According to the Articles of the Church of England* (London, 1741).

who, by this point, had been appointed rector of Oakley, Suffolk – amended the original title page considerably. Indeed, the title page of the 1741 edition claimed that the work had been written ‘in answer to the Methodists’. Such claims, of course, were entirely false. Excluding the title page, the 1741 edition was an exact copy of the first eight chapters of the original work. Consequently, it contained no references to the Methodists beyond the title page. Since evangelicals were often accused of being false prophets who discarded reason, it is easy to see why Nelson chose to republish his 1731 work as an anti-Methodist tract. Similarly, the title page highlighted the fact that this work addressed the ‘Doctrine of Free-Grace...According to the Church of England.’ Contemporary readers would have read this as meaning that Nelson’s work advanced the Arminian doctrine of free will as an antidote to Whitefield’s Calvinism. Presumably, readers would have been surprised to see that Nelson’s discussions on this topic made no explicit reference to Whitefield. Ultimately, this so-called anti-Methodist polemic only went through one edition. Given its mammoth size, it is hardly surprising that it did not sell well.¹⁴⁰

Copies of various anti-Methodist polemics were shipped to America, where they were disseminated by colonial Anglicans. Upon Alexander Garden’s recommendation, copies of Stebbing’s *Caution Against Religious Delusion* went on sale in Charleston towards the end of 1740.¹⁴¹ Bishop Gibson’s 1739 *Pastoral Letter* was dispersed even more widely. Of course, this is unsurprising, given that, as bishop of London, Gibson was responsible for the colonies. Thus, it was common practice for colonial clergymen

¹⁴⁰ G. Nelson, *The Use of Human Reason in Religion: In Answer to the Methodists; the Doctrine of Free-grace Being Explained in the Medium, According to the Church of England* (London, 1741), unpaginated title page and pp. 249-50. The *Clergy of the Church of England Database* (CCed) contains two separate entries for Nelson. See ‘Nelson, Gilbert (CCed Person ID 137255)’; ‘Nelson, Gilbert (CCed Person ID 126461)’, *CCed*, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk> (accessed 29 May 2017). Information about Nelson’s career can also be discerned from another of his works, entitled *The Happiness of Man*, which was first published in Durham in 1736, and subsequently republished (again, in Durham) in 1738. While the first edition listed Nelson as a ‘Schoolmaster’, the second edition listed him as ‘Rector of Oakley, in Suffolk’.

¹⁴¹ *South Carolina Gazette*, 30 October 1740.

to receive copies of their bishop's pastoral letter each year. Timothy Cutler, Alexander Garden and Archibald Cummings, the commissary of Pennsylvania, were three colonial clerics who praised Gibson's 1739 *Pastoral Letter* for its preventative checks against Whitefieldian 'enthusiasm'. In a letter, dated 31 July 1740, Cummings informed the SPG that he had recently 'had a number of them reprinted here [Philadelphia] and dispersed' amongst the colonists.¹⁴² Yet, other, more remote, parts of the colonies struggled to access these tracts. In November 1740, Thomas Colgan of Jamaica, Long Island, felt compelled 'to begg that the society [SPG] wou'd be pleased to bestow' copies of Gibson's *Pastoral Letter*, and Waterland's *Regeneration Stated and Explained*. The latter, according to Colgan, had been occasioned by the 'false and erroneous opinions concerning the Doctrine of Regeneration' which evangelicals had recently been spreading in his locality.¹⁴³ In August 1741, Ebenezer Miller of Braintree, Massachusetts, similarly requested copies of Gibson's *Pastoral Letter*. Miller viewed this work as an antidote to the 'utmost confusion' that Whitefield's recent tour of New England had generated.¹⁴⁴

Another popular anti-Methodist export was Samuel Weller's anonymously written *The Trial of Mr. Whitefield's Spirit*, which was first published in 1740, and subsequently republished in 1745. In a letter to the secretary of the SPG, dated 25 September 1741, Cutler lamented that he only possessed 'two sets' of this work. He added that it would 'highly serve' the plight of colonial clerics if the book was 'spread abroad'.¹⁴⁵ However, Cutler did not have long to wait before it was reprinted in Boston. In late October 1741, the *Trial of Mr. Whitefield's Spirit* was republished and sold by

¹⁴² LPL, FP X, fols. 58-59: Garden to Gibson, 24 April 1740; W.S. Perry (ed.), *Historical Collections Relating to the American Colonial Church*, 5 vols. (Hartford, 1873-78), II, pp. 210-11: Cummings to the Secretary [SPG], 31 July 1740; Perry, *Historical Collections*, III, pp. 350-51: Cutler to Gibson, 14 January 1741.

¹⁴³ Bod MS B.7.2 (USPG Papers), fol. 113: Colgan to the Secretary, 22 November 1740.

¹⁴⁴ Bod MS B.9 (USPG Papers), fol. 12: Miller to the Secretary, 4 August 1741.

¹⁴⁵ Perry, *Historical Collections*, III, pp. 357-58: Cutler to the Secretary, 25 September 1741.

Thomas Fleet, a printer of Boston, who was also responsible for printing the staunchly anti-evangelical *Boston Evening-Post*.¹⁴⁶ The SPG proceedings for 1741-42 noted that twelve copies of the *Trial of Mr. Whitefield's Spirit* were amongst a consignment of books that had recently been sent to Ebenezer Punderson, the Society's missionary in North Groton, Connecticut.¹⁴⁷ Moreover, copies of Weller's polemic are known to have reached the southern colonies. In April 1742, Alexander Garden thanked the SPG for delivering several copies of the book, which he claimed had 'done good service' in Charleston 'and in several other places'.¹⁴⁸ Colonial Anglicans were still disseminating this work as late as 1750. In a letter, dated 8 November of that year, Hugh Neill of Dover, Delaware, informed the Society that the 'Tryal of Whitefield's Spirit' had helped to calm the 'late confusions, introduced by ye New Lights & Itinerant Teachers of other Sectaries'.¹⁴⁹

While the *Trial of Mr. Whitefield's Spirit* was published anonymously, it was not long before Benjamin Mills, a Dissenting minister of Maidstone, Kent, named the local curate, Samuel Weller, as the author.¹⁵⁰ Initially, it may seem odd that Weller's work proved to be so popular. As we have seen, the most popular anti-Methodist tracts tended to be those written by such noted divines as Gibson, Stebbing and Trapp - all of whom were renowned for their engagement in theological and political controversies. Weller, on the other hand, was (and still is) virtually unknown. We know that he served

¹⁴⁶ *Boston Evening-Post*, 19 October 1741. For more on Fleet and the *Boston Evening-Post*, see L. Smith, *The First Great Awakening in Colonial American Newspapers: A Shifting Story* (Plymouth, 2012), pp. 45, 52-53, 108-109.

¹⁴⁷ 'An Abstract of the Charter, and of the Proceedings of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, from the 20th of February, 1740-41, to the 19th of February, 1741-42', in H. Stebbing, *A Sermon Preached Before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts; At Their Anniversary Meeting in the Parish Church of St. Mary-le-Bow, on Friday, February 19, 1741-2* (London, 1742), pp. 44-45.

¹⁴⁸ Bod MS B.10 (USPG Papers), fol. 138: Garden to the Secretary, 9 April 1742.

¹⁴⁹ Perry, *Historical Collections*, V, p. 96: Neill to the Secretary, 8 November 1750.

¹⁵⁰ B. Mills, *An Account of a Controversy Between the Rev. Samuel Weller: L.L.B. Minister of Maidstone in Kent; and Benjamin Mills, A Dissenting Minister in the Same Town: Occasioned by a Reflection Cast Upon the Dissenters in a Late Anonymous Pamphlet, Said to be Written by Mr Weller, Intituled, The Trial of Mr Whitefield's Spirit* (London, 1741).

as perpetual curate of Maidstone, Kent, between 1712 and 1753. Jeremy Gregory is virtually the only scholar who has explored Weller's ministry. Weller, according to Gregory, was a 'model parish priest', whose duties included presiding over 'daily morning prayer, with evening prayer also on Saturday, holy days and eves, and daily in Lent.' Gregory notes that it was 'exceptional' for one minister to convene so many services during this period.¹⁵¹ Significantly, Weller recognised that clergymen needed to avoid complex language and theological jargon if they wished to make their tracts accessible to large numbers of the laity. In one instance, he thanked the SPCK for sending him some 'short and plain treatises' to distribute to his parishioners. Such concision, according to Weller, was uncharacteristic of 'voluminous writers', whom he described as his 'great enemy'.¹⁵²

Yet, this is not to say that Weller was critical of theological learning. In his attack on Whitefield, Weller was keen to address the itinerant's condemnation of '*the Letter-learned Clergymen of the Church of England*.'¹⁵³ Citing Acts 7:22, Weller noted that Moses '*was learned in all the Wisdom of the Egyptians*.' He went on to describe a 'COMPETENT Acquaintance with History, Chronology, and the Antiquities of the Jewish and Christian Churches' as 'indispensable Qualifications in a Minister of God'.¹⁵⁴ As we shall see in Chapter Three, Weller utilised both biblical and extra-biblical sources in his lengthy defence of recreational diversions. As has been noted, pleasures and recreations was a topic which would have resonated with much of the laity in England. The same can be said of the laity in colonial America. By the 1730s, most cities in the American colonies provided opportunities for dancing and balls. This was even true of the traditionally Puritan city of Boston, which, as scholars have noted,

¹⁵¹ Gregory, *Restoration, Reformation, and Reform*, p. 258.

¹⁵² Quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 266.

¹⁵³ [Weller], *Trial of Mr. Whitefield's Spirit*, p. 41.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

had given way to a consumerist ‘Anglicization’ by the early eighteenth century.¹⁵⁵ Therefore, it is unsurprising that – like Trapp’s 1739 work – the *Trial of Mr. Whitefield’s Spirit* sold well, both in England and the colonies.

Summary

During its early years, Methodism was attacked by numerous clerics, who had previously engaged in various theological controversies, including debates on such topics as miracles, demons, and paganism. Many of these early critics of Wesley and Whitefield were High Churchmen, who had long been associated with each other. It is clear from their correspondence that such individuals as Waterland, Gibson and Grey shared a deep commitment to protecting the established Church from a variety of enemies, including Deists, Roman Catholics and, most notably, Protestant schismatics. Some, such as Gibson and Grey, corresponded with High Church divines in the colonies. Thus, their overall view of evangelical ‘enthusiasm’ would have been shaped and informed not only by events in England but also by events in the colonies. However, despite these communications and friendships, it would be inaccurate to refer to a theologically or politically unified group of ‘anti-Methodist Anglicans’. As we have seen, Warburton’s controversial *Divine Legation* generated hostile responses from several High Churchmen who also attacked Methodism. Furthermore, despite their shared hostility towards Methodism, both Grey and Lavington clearly had differing attitudes towards Dissenters. Of course, such differences are hardly surprising,

¹⁵⁵ For the importance of dancing in colonial Virginia, see R. Isaac, *The Transformation of Virginia, 1740-1790* (New York, 1982), pp. 81-87. For dancing (and religious opposition to it) in eighteenth-century America, see A. Wagner, *Adversaries of Dance: From the Puritans to the Present* (Urbana and Chicago, IL., 1997), ch. 4. For more on ‘Anglicization’ in eighteenth-century New England, see J.M. Murrin, ‘Anglicizing an American Colony: The Transformation of Provincial Massachusetts’ (PhD Thesis, Yale University, 1966).

considering the diversity of their political beliefs. Some of these noted divines, such as Stebbing and Trapp, published anti-Methodist polemics which sold particularly well, and went through multiple editions. While one may attribute such strong sales to the authors' reputations, the fact that a 1740 anti-Whitefield tract by the virtually unknown Samuel Weller proved to be so popular – both in England and colonial America – suggests that it was sometimes the contents of these works, rather than their authorship, which determined their level of popularity.

Chapter Two

Justification and Assurance

Introduction

In one of his earliest sermons, George Whitefield described justification as something which could not be achieved through ‘Repentance, Works, or Sacrifices’.¹ Bishop Gibson subsequently addressed these seemingly antinomian excesses in his *Pastoral Letter* (1739), where he described ‘morality’ as ‘an *essential* part of the Christian religion’.² Gibson’s concerns were shared by numerous Anglican divines. Indeed, the question of whether good works were a condition or an effect of justification was a recurring theme in anti-evangelical polemics. But was this controversy anything new? The answer, of course, is resoundingly in the negative. As any historian of the Reformation knows, such debates can be traced back to the later years of Elizabeth’s reign, when Richard Thomson voiced anti-Calvinist views in opposition to the resolutely Calvinist Lambeth Articles of 1595. Thomson was a dissident voice, and his anti-Calvinism was quickly quashed by what, at the time, was still a resolutely Reformed establishment. However, by the 1630s, the tables had been turned, and anti-Calvinism now had political power on its side in the form of Archbishop Laud, whose desire to implement a ritualistic system of worship angered Puritan divines. While he never described himself as such, Laud was regularly labelled as an ‘Arminian’ by his

¹ G. Whitefield, *Of Justification by Christ* (London, 1738), p. 17.

² Gibson, *Pastoral Letter...Enthusiasm on the Other*, p. 45.

Puritan adversaries because he adhered to the doctrines of universal atonement and free will.³

Numerous historians have recognised that there were strong affinities between seventeenth-century Puritanism and eighteenth-century evangelicalism. For instance, John Coffey stresses these commonalities in a 2008 essay. While Coffey recognises that ‘Puritanism’ is a notoriously ambiguous term, which was regularly used as a pejorative during the early modern period, he convincingly defines it as ‘a distinctive subculture centred on a vigorous voluntary religion of Bible study, prayer, fasting, sermon consumption and strict sabbatarianism.’⁴ Importantly, Coffey notes that, like eighteenth-century evangelicalism, seventeenth-century Puritanism incorporated a theologically diverse range of people, a point which he supports through discussions on Anne Hutchinson’s antinomianism, John Goodwin’s Arminianism and Richard Baxter’s Neonomianism.⁵

Coffey’s argument is largely in response to David Bebbington, who claims that Methodism represented the birth of a ‘new movement’ – in other words, a break with the past. This is not to say that Bebbington ignores the debt to which Methodists owed earlier Puritans. Indeed, Bebbington argues that the ‘Methodists inherited a substantial legacy from the Puritans’. More specifically, Bebbington notes that, in the wake of his Aldersgate conversion, Wesley was strongly influenced by the ‘moderate version of Puritanism’ which Richard Baxter had espoused in his *Aphorisms of Justification* (1649). Bebbington also names John Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678) and Joseph Alleine’s *Alarm to the Unconverted* (1672) as two other Puritan texts which

³ See N. Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The Rise of English Arminianism, c.1590-1640* (Oxford, 1987); P. White, *Predestination, Policy and Polemic: Conflict and Consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge, 1992).

⁴ J. Coffey, ‘Puritanism, Evangelicalism and the Evangelical Protestant Tradition’, in M.A. Haykin and K.J. Stewart (eds), *The Emergence of Evangelicalism: Exploring Historical Continuities* (Nottingham, 2008), pp. 255-57.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 259-61.

influenced eighteenth-century evangelicals.⁶ So, why does Bebbington view Methodism as a break from the past? In short, Bebbington believes that, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, the Reformed tradition was almost totally extinct within the Church of England, which is where Methodism emerged. Indeed, Bebbington argues that there is ‘scant evidence’ of any linkage between the ‘Reformed tradition of the seventeenth century’ and ‘the Evangelicals of the eighteenth.’⁷ More recently, however, Stephen Hampton has effectively questioned the extent to which the Reformed tradition declined within the established Church between 1660 and 1714. By drawing attention to such prominent divines as William Beveridge (1637-1708) and John Edwards (1637-1716), Hampton has shown that the Reformed tradition retained a vocal presence in the post-Restoration Church.⁸

This chapter will build on Hampton’s work by arguing that there was a direct continuation between these post-Restoration Anglican Reformers and eighteenth-century Methodists. This will be achieved by exploring the ways in which Calvinist evangelicals often appealed to the writings of Beveridge and Edwards in their soteriological arguments. The prominence of the latter divine will become apparent as these discussions go on to examine Whitefield’s utilisation of Edwards in his attack on the teachings of John Tillotson. On the other hand, it will be shown that High Church opponents of Methodism regularly appealed to the Arminian writings of George Bull (1634-1710) when they addressed evangelicalism’s apparent neglect of good works. Bull’s popularity amongst anti-Methodist Anglicans is significant because it reinforces the notion that these soteriological controversies need to be viewed, not as part of a

⁶ D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989), p. 73.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁸ S. Hampton, *Anti-Arminians: The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I* (Oxford, 2008).

‘Great Awakening’ which suddenly occurred in the 1730s, but rather as a continuation of a long-standing Anglican debate on faith and works.

One may initially wonder where John Wesley, as an Arminian, fitted into this controversy. According to Bebbington, one of the main ‘symptoms of discontinuity’ between the Reformed tradition and Methodism was Wesley’s ‘High Church’ desire to see ‘primitive Christianity’ in action.⁹ Therefore, Bebbington clearly views the Reformed tradition and High Church Anglicanism as two mutually exclusive theological stances. The problems with this interpretation become clear when one turns to the writings and ministry of William Beveridge. Despite his adherence to Reformed orthodoxy, Beveridge was also a High Church divine and an ‘intellectual heir of those...Laudian churchmen who articulated the identity of the Church of England by reference to the primitive Church of the Fathers.’ Peter Doll has described Beveridge as a ‘model parish priest’, who provided a ‘constant round of daily services and weekly communions’, formed ‘religious societies for sacred study and prayer’, and exercised ‘a vigorous discipline’.¹⁰ While Wesley refused to be anchored in one parish, his approach to ministry clearly bore a striking resemblance to Beveridge’s primitivism. Furthermore, as Geordan Hammond has noted, Wesley immersed himself in Beveridge’s patristic writings during his time at Oxford.¹¹ Of course, soteriologically speaking, Wesley diverged from the teachings of Beveridge and other Reformed clergymen in the sense that he viewed works as a necessary condition of one’s final justification (salvation). Given his polemical battles with Whitefield over the issue of predestination, one would assume that Wesley’s Arminian credentials were beyond question. Yet, it will be argued that Wesley’s refusal to place sanctification before any

⁹ Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p. 36.

¹⁰ P. Doll, ‘The Architectural Expression of Primitive Christianity: William Beveridge and the Temple of Solomon’, *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, 13 (2011), p. 278.

¹¹ G. Hammond, *John Wesley in America: Restoring Primitive Christianity* (Oxford, 2014), pp. 21-22.

initial justification, along with his references to a doctrine of ‘assurance’, led to accusations that he was either wittingly or unwittingly spreading Calvinist doctrines and ideas.

Context

John Spurr has described the post-Restoration Church of England as an institution which placed ‘moralism’ at the centre of its ethos. Spurr stresses particularly the importance of *The Whole Duty of Man* (1658), which he claims was ‘the most successful book of the age’.¹² The original aim of this devotional work – which scholars have commonly attributed to the Royalist divine, Richard Allestree (1619-1681) – had been to curb the antinomian excesses of the Interregnum by encouraging moral piety and good works. By the middle decades of the eighteenth century, *The Whole Duty of Man* remained a highly influential text amongst both the clergy and the laity. In 1730, Daniel Waterland advised Cambridge undergraduates that they should consult this text when preparing ‘short private Devotions’.¹³ By 1745, at least forty-five editions of this ‘High Church manual’ had been published in England.¹⁴ Furthermore, it was common practice throughout the eighteenth century for charity schools to provide their students with ‘a Bible, Common Prayer Book, and Whole Duty of Man’ before they departed to commence work as apprentices or servants.¹⁵ Importantly, some Anglican divines viewed *The Whole Duty of Man* as an effective antidote to evangelical ‘enthusiasm’. In

¹² J. Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven, 1991), pp. 279-330 (see p. 282 for quotation).

¹³ D. Waterland, *Advice to a Young Student. With a Method of Study for the Four First Years* (London, 1730), p. 4.

¹⁴ J.C.D. Clark, *English Society, 1660-1832: Religion, Ideology and Politics during the Ancien Régime*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2000), p. 295; R.D. Cornwall, *Visible and Apostolic: The Constitution of the Church in High Church Anglican and Non-Juror Thought* (London, 1993), p. 20.

¹⁵ S. Trimmer, *Reflections upon the Education of Children in Charity Schools* (London, 1792), p. 30. For an earlier example, see R.W. Unwin, ‘Charity Schools and the Defence of Anglicanism: James Talbot, Rector of Spofforth 1700-1708’, *Borthwick Papers*, 65 (1984), p. 29.

1739, an anonymous 'Curate of London' tried to bolster Bishop Gibson's recent *Pastoral Letter* by recommending the 'admired Author of *The Whole Duty of Man*', who had recognised that teaching the 'Moral Attributes of the Deity, was the Only Security against Religious Error' of the 'Enthusiastic Kind'.¹⁶ Two years later, Joseph Trapp attempted to curb William Law's 'enthusiasm' by recommending this text, along with John Rawlet's *The Christian Monitor* (1686), as books for 'good, and sober Christians'.¹⁷

Post-Restoration Anglicanism was also influenced by another authority, namely the writings of George Bull, who later served as bishop of St. David's. In his *Harmonia Apostolica* (1669), Bull attempted to 'confute the Antinomians and Solifidians' by reconciling the two seemingly conflicting views on justification found in Paul's Epistle to the Romans and the Epistle of James.¹⁸ According to Bull, when Paul stated that 'a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law' (Romans 3:28), he was only referring to the 'impossibility of justification by the Mosaic Law.'¹⁹ In no way did this contradict the passage: 'Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only' (James 2:24). Bull was careful to add that James's passage did not 'mean that our works are the principal or meritorious cause of our justification'. To Bull, such a doctrine was tantamount to popery. Rather, James had meant that 'good works, of piety, sanctity, and obedience' were 'conditions necessarily required' of anybody who wished to be 'acceptable unto God to salvation'. Thus, one was justified by a faith which incorporated good works. Moreover, Bull was adamant that faith, along with good works, resulted in a sinner's initial sanctification. These initial works did not

¹⁶ A Curate of London, *A Short Preservative Against the Doctrines Reviv'd by Mr. Whitefield and His Adherents* (London, 1739), pp. 10-11.

¹⁷ J. 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. 48.

¹⁸ G. Bull, *Harmonia Apostolica, or, The Mutual Agreement of St. Paul and St. James*, trans. T. Wilkinson (London, 1801), p. 10.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

necessarily need to be outward deeds which were visible to others. However, at the very least, they needed to be ‘internal works of faith, repentance, hope, charity, &c.’ While Bull considered this initial sanctification to be devoid of righteousness, he viewed it as a necessary condition of any initial justification. Once justified, one underwent a second, righteous sanctification, which resulted from living a moral and holy life. Anybody who wavered from this ran the risk of jeopardising their final justification (salvation).²⁰

We know from Stephen Hampton’s 2008 monograph that Bull’s soteriology was attacked by several Reformed clerics, including William Beveridge, Thomas Barlow and Thomas Tully. Unlike Bull, these ‘anti-Arminians’ rigidly adhered to Article XII of the Thirty-Nine Articles, which described good works as an effect of one’s justification, not a condition. Under such a rule, sanctification could only follow justification – it never preceded it. According to Barlow, when James referred to justification by works, he was merely describing the ways in which outward works acted as a declaration of one’s justified state. In other words, James was referring to sanctification, rather than justification.²¹ By providing compelling evidence that the Reformed tradition remained significant in the post-Restoration church, Hampton has effectively deflated Spurr’s overemphasis on ‘moralism’. Nevertheless, Hampton concedes that ‘Reformed writers were, by the early eighteenth century, a minority within the Church of England.’²² Indeed, the ‘moralist’ Arminianism advanced by Bull had gone on to be repeated in the sermons of other divines, causing it to become the ‘orthodox’ position in the established

²⁰ Ibid., pp. 10, 15, 254; C.F. Allison, *The Rise of Moralism: The Proclamation of the Gospel from Hooker to Baxter* (London, 1966), p. 125.

²¹ Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, p. 99.

²² Ibid., p. 272.

Church. John Tillotson (1630-1694) was one clergyman who propagated a similarly moralistic soteriology.²³

The son of a Puritan clothier, the young Tillotson matriculated at Clare Hall, Cambridge in 1647. Tillotson's early upbringing in a Puritan household may explain why he continued to respect Dissenters in the years following his abandonment of Calvinism, and his subsequent Anglican ordination in 1661 (though Samuel Wesley was noticeably less tolerant towards Dissenters, even though he was also raised as a Puritan). While Tillotson's Latitudinarian approach was praised by Low Churchmen and Dissenters alike, these sentiments were not shared by contemporary High Churchmen. Following the Glorious Revolution, Tillotson's enthusiasm for the Williamite establishment guaranteed that he was a popular figure at the royal court. While Tillotson was initially reluctant to fulfil William's desire that he succeed the deprived Non-Juror, William Sancroft (1617-1693), as archbishop of Canterbury, he eventually bowed to the king's pressure, and was consecrated in April 1691.²⁴ Hampton notes that 'Tillotson's teaching on justification is virtually a facsimile of Bull's.'²⁵ To support this point, he cites the following extract from one of Tillotson's sermons:

St Paul doth plainly oppose faith to the law, and the righteousness of it to the works of the law; and it will clearly appear to anyone that...by faith is meant the dispensation of the gospel; and by the law the Mosaical administration: and the result of all these discourses is, that men are not justified by performing the works which the legal dispensation required, but by assenting and submitting to the revelation of the gospel.²⁶

²³ Ibid., pp. 60-63.

²⁴ I. Rivers, 'Tillotson, John (1630-1694)', *ODNB*.

²⁵ Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, p. 60.

²⁶ J. Tillotson, 'Sermon IX: Of Justifying Faith', in R. Barker (ed.), *Fifteen Sermons on Various Subjects...By the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson, Late Lord Arch-Bishop of Canterbury* (London, 1703), XII, p. 245, quoted in Ibid., p. 62.

Elsewhere in this sermon, Tillotson reconciled the teachings of Paul and James by describing the former's message as: 'we are justified not by the legal Dispensation, but by the Faith of the Gospel, which includes Obedience and good works'.²⁷ In this instance, the similarities between Tillotson and Bull's respective soteriologies are striking. However, as with many theologians, Tillotson was prone to self-contradiction. In other instances, he diverged from Bull by suggesting that these apostles referred to two different types of 'justification'. Under such a rule, Paul's references to 'justification' without works not only excluded those works of the Mosaic Law, but also those of the Moral Law. More specifically, Tillotson believed that Paul was referring to an initial justification, which occurred during one's baptism. Before this first bestowal of grace, it was impossible for the '*ungodly*' to perform any 'works of righteousness'. James, on the other hand, had described a second and final justification (salvation), which one achieved by living a 'good Life'.²⁸ Isaac Barrow (1630-1677), the first Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge, had advanced a similar interpretation. Thus, it is possible that Tillotson's conclusions stemmed from his reading of Barrow, whom he greatly admired.²⁹ Intriguingly, the notion that Paul and James had described two different types of justification – one *without* works, and one *with* works – can be traced even further back to the writings of Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621) and several other Roman Catholic theologians. The fact that Tillotson was an ardent opponent of popery makes his endorsement of this exegesis ironic to say the least. Indeed, numerous theologians, including William Forbes (1585-1634), John

²⁷ Tillotson, 'Sermon IX: Of Justifying Faith', p. 252.

²⁸ J. Tillotson, 'Sermon CLV: Of the Necessity of Good Works', in R. Barker (ed.), *The Works of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson, Late Lord Archbishop of Canterbury* (London, 1712), II, p. 363; 'Sermon IX: Of the Nature of Regeneration, and Its Necessity, in Order to Justification and Salvation', in R. Barker (ed.), *Arch-Bishop Tillotson's Several Discourses*, 2nd edn (London, 1700), IV, pp. 248-49, 254-55.

²⁹ I. Barrow, 'Sermon V: Of Justification by Faith', in J. Tillotson (ed.), *The Works of the Learned Isaac Barrow, D.D., Late Master of Trinity College in Cambridge*, 2nd edn (London, 1700), II, p. 79.

Owen (1616-1683), and George Bull, had automatically associated this exegesis with popery, and rejected it on these very grounds.³⁰ These theological differences between Bull and Tillotson are significant because, as we shall see, their conflicting interpretations of Paul and James's teachings went on to be a matter of contention amongst anti-Methodist Anglicans.

Nevertheless, Hampton is right to highlight the similarities between Tillotson and Bull's views on justification. Both divines clearly viewed outward works as a necessary condition of one's final justification, and this was what set them apart from Reformed anti-Arminians like Beveridge and Edwards. Given these similarities, one may initially wonder why Tillotson has been widely viewed as 'a lynchpin of the Latitudinarian party', and the antithesis of the 'High Church' position championed by Bull. To answer this question, one needs to turn to a sermon which Tillotson preached before Queen Mary in 1690.³¹ In this sermon, Tillotson stated that, while God was 'not

³⁰ Allison, *Rise of Moralism*, p. 37; J. Owen, *The Doctrine of Justification by Faith Through the Imputation of the Righteousness of Christ, Explained, Confirmed, & Vindicated* (London, 1677), pp. 189-91. Bull, *Harmonia Apostolica*, pp. 78-79.

³¹ For the quotation, see Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, p. 63. In an article, which appeared in 1 July 1862 edition of George Denison's (1805-1896) staunchly High Church periodical, *The Church and State Review*, Tillotson and other Latitudinarians were depicted as having unconsciously aided and abetted Deism by encouraging 'looseness of opinion' and preaching nothing but 'vapid morality'. See G. Denison (ed.), *Church and State Review*, 5 vols. (London, 1862-64), I, p. 74. Tillotson's legacy did not fare any better under the scrutiny of one of the most prominent intellectual historians of the Victorian period. According to the sceptical Leslie Stephen (1832-1904), Tillotson's Latitudinarianism played into the hands of Matthew Tindal, thus enabling Deism to 'advance' in strength. See L. Stephen, *The History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols. (London, 1876), I, p. 135. The fact that such sentiments survived well into the twentieth century can be discerned from Gerald Cragg's 1950 monograph, which attributes the 'emergence' of Deism to the likes of Tillotson and Edward Stillingfleet. See G.R. Cragg, *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason: A Study of Changes in Religious Thought Within the Church of England 1660 to 1700* (Cambridge, 1950), p. 81. In his 1982 work on John Toland, Robert Sullivan similarly spoke of 'affinities among Unitarians, deists, and Latitudinarians', whom he describes as 'Christian deists'. See R.E. Sullivan, *John Toland and the Deist Controversy: A Study in Adaptations* (Cambridge, 1982), p. 276. Nevertheless, since the latter half of the twentieth century, various historians have sought to widen the disparities between Tillotson and early Deists. While Irène Simon conceded that Latitudinarianism may have 'led to the utter desiccation of religious life in the eighteenth century and made the Wesleyan revival imperative', she also noted that some of Tillotson's teachings rendered the 'charge of Deism untenable'. To support this point, Simon drew attention to Tillotson's 'belief in the Providence of God at work in the universe'. See I. Simon, *Three Restoration Divines: Barrow, South, Tillotson. Selected Sermons* (Paris, 1967), pp. 2, 126. More recently, Isabel Rivers has convincingly argued that those Deists who claimed Tillotson and other Latitudinarians 'for their intellectual forebears were deliberately selective in their accounts and gave misleading versions of their thought'. See I. Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780*,

obliged to execute what he hath threatned [sic]', it was essential that clergymen continued to preach the eternity of hell torments because there was every chance that God would carry out his threat. Tillotson was careful to add that there was 'no ground at all in *Scripture*' to support the notion that a 'time of terrible torment' was followed by total '*Annihilation*'. Nevertheless, by hinting at the possibility that hell torments were not eternal, Tillotson had opened the floodgates to a barrage of criticism, which commenced following his death in 1694.³²

George Hickes was one of the first individuals to launch an attack on the late archbishop. Hickes also directed his attack on the bishop of Salisbury, Gilbert Burnet (1643-1715), who had preached Tillotson's funeral sermon. Hickes alleged that Burnet had used the funeral sermon as an opportunity to condemn him and his fellow Non-Jurors. In this polemic, Hickes described Tillotson as somebody who had 'openly and directly' written 'against the Eternity of *Hell Torments*'.³³ Charles Leslie was another Non-Juror who joined in the assault. Writing under the guise of the former principal of the University of Edinburgh, Alexander Monro (d. 1715), Leslie portrayed Tillotson as a Socinian because of his 'Sermon against the Truth of Hells Eternity' and his seemingly excessive emphasis on 'Morality'.³⁴ The Deist, Anthony Collins (1676-1729), would later mockingly refer to Tillotson as somebody whom 'all *English Free-Thinkers* own as their Head'. Collins considered Tillotson's message to be a 'charming'

Volume 1: *Whichcote to Wesley* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 87. For an overview of Tillotson's legacy, see J. Blosser, 'John Tillotson's Latitudinarian Legacy: Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy, and the Pursuit of Happiness', *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 80 (2011), pp. 142-73.

³² J. Tillotson, *A Sermon Preach'd Before the Queen at White-Hall, March the 7th, 1689/90* (London, 1690), pp. 13, 16-19.

³³ [G. Hickes], *Some Discourses Upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson Occasioned by the Late Funeral Sermon of the Former Upon the Later* (London, 1695), p. 44.

³⁴ [C. Leslie], *The Charge of Socinianism Against Dr. Tillotson Considered in Examination of Some Sermons He has Lately Published on Purpose to Clear Himself from that Imputation* (Edinburgh, 1695), pp. 21, 28-29. Tillotson himself had lamented that Socinianism was a popular derogatory slur for anybody who tried 'to give a reasonable account of his Faith, and to establish Religion upon rational Principles'. Tillotson singled out the 'incomparable' William Chillingworth (1602-1644) as somebody who had been 'requited with this black and odious Character'. See J. Tillotson, 'Sermon CLXX: The Efficacy, Usefulness, and Reasonableness of Divine Faith', in *Works*, II, p. 464.

one, which was enough to ‘make the *Atheist* wish there were a Deity’.³⁵ However, for the purposes of this chapter, the most significant anti-Tillotson polemicist before 1714 was John Edwards. In the second part of *The Preacher* (1706), Edwards adopted Leslie’s tactic by linking Tillotson’s ‘Doctrine of the Mitigation of *Hell-Torments*’ with Socinianism.³⁶ Edwards reiterated his attack in a later polemic, where he accused Tillotson of ‘Asserting *Justification by Works*’ in a manner akin to the ‘Church of *Rome*, and of the Disciples of Socinus’.³⁷

Yet, these attacks should not obscure Tillotson’s popularity amongst the clergy and laity of various denominations. Indeed, elegies for the late archbishop were quickly published by Samuel Wesley and the poet laureate, Nahum Tate (1652-1715).³⁸ Furthermore, the attacks from Hickes and Leslie met with swift rebuttals from a diverse range of individuals, including Gilbert Burnet, the printer and bookseller, Moses Pitt (c.1639-1697), and the playwright, Robert Howard (1626-1698). Howard fell for Leslie’s ruse and directed his attack on Alexander Monro, who quickly responded by denying that he had written the anti-Tillotson polemic in question.³⁹ The republication of many of Tillotson’s sermons during the early decades of the eighteenth century is evidence of his enduring popularity. These republications included several anti-Catholic sermons. Such works would have seemed especially relevant during a period which witnessed various overseas conflicts with France and Spain, along with several Jacobite

³⁵ [A. Collins], *A Discourse of Free-Thinking, Occasion'd by the Rise and Growth of a Sect call'd Free-Thinkers* (London, 1713), pp. 135-36.

³⁶ J. Edwards, *The Preacher. The Second Part* (London, 1706), p. viii.

³⁷ J. Edwards, *The Arminian Doctrines Condemn'd by the Holy Scriptures, by Many of the Ancient Fathers, by the Church of England, and Even by the Suffrage of Right Reason* (London, 1711), p. 218.

³⁸ S. Wesley, *Elegies on the Queen and Archbishop* (London, 1695); [N. Tate], *An Elegy on His Grace John Lord Archbishop of Canterbury. A Pindaric* (London, 1695).

³⁹ G. Burnet, *Reflections upon a Pamphlet Entituled, Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson, Occasioned by the Late Funeral-Sermon of the Former upon the Later* (London, 1696); M. Pitt, *A Letter from Moses Pitt, to the Authour of a Book, Intituled, Some Discourses upon Dr. Burnet, (now Ld. Bp. of Salisbury) and Dr. Tillotson, (late Ld. A.B. of Canterbury)* (London, 1695); [R. Howard], *A Twofold Vindication of the Late Arch-Bishop of Canterbury, and of the Author of The History of Religion* (London, 1696); A. Monro, *A Letter to the Honourable Sir Robert Howard, Occasioned by a Late Book Entituled, A Two-Fold Vindication of the Late Archbishop of Canterbury, and of the Author of The History of Religion* (London, 1696).

risings and plots.⁴⁰ In 1717, the Latitudinarian cleric and future bishop of Down and Connor, Francis Hutchinson (1660-1739), published *The Life of the Most Reverend Father in God John Tillotson, Arch-Bishop of Canterbury*. In this work, Hutchinson combined his own research with the memoirs of the late Gilbert Burnet, along with some material from an abandoned biography of Tillotson by the former Dean of Salisbury, Edward Young. Hutchinson was particularly keen to highlight Tillotson's 'eloquence', which he tried to replicate in his own sermons.⁴¹ However, a thorough biography of Tillotson did not arrive on the scene until 1752, when the Latitudinarian clergyman and historian, Thomas Birch, published *The Life of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury*.

Tillotson's enduring popularity amongst eighteenth-century Dissenters can be discerned from Philip Doddridge's *Lectures on Preaching*, which praised his preaching style.⁴² Moreover, we know from Daniel Waterland's inclusion of Tillotson's sermons in his *Advice to a Young Student* (1730) that the late archbishop remained a revered authority at Cambridge during this period. While Waterland noted that Tillotson's sermon on hell torments was 'justly exceptionable', he refrained from launching his own attack on this text, and chose instead to direct his students to alternative works by Daniel Whitby and William Lupton, which had already addressed this issue.⁴³ To George Whitefield, however, the popularity of Tillotson's seemingly moralistic

⁴⁰ For examples, see J. Tillotson, *A Form of Prayers, used by His Late Majesty K. William III. When he Received the Holy Sacrament* (London, 1704); *A Sermon of the Unpardonable Sin Against the Holy Ghost* (London, 1716); *The Hazard of Being Saved in the Church of Rome. A Seasonable Discourse against Popery, Preached at White-Hall, Before King Charles II*, 10th edn (London, 1722); *A Discourse against Transubstantiation* (London, 1728).

⁴¹ [F. Hutchinson], *The Life of the Most Reverend Father in God John Tillotson, Arch-Bishop of Canterbury* (London, 1717), p. 20. For more on Tillotson's influence on Hutchinson, see A. Sneddon, *Witchcraft and Whigs: The Life of Bishop Francis Hutchinson, 1660-1739* (Manchester and New York, 2008), pp. 27-29.

⁴² Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, I, p. 191.

⁴³ Waterland, *Advice to a Young Student*, pp. 24-25.

sermons epitomised the extent to which the established Church had diverged from its Reformation roots.

‘A System of Moral Ethicks’?

I then went to the University, where I began my Studies in the usual Manner, applying myself to the Mathematicks, and Classical Learning...I also dedicated proper Seasons to the reading of the Sermons of our best Divines, *Sharp*, *South*, *Calamy*, and some of *Tillotson*’s I have read since; Mr. *Wesley* has read him more; but his Works I now look on only as a System of Moral Ethicks; but think he knew no more of true Christianity than *Mahomet*.

Josiah Tucker, an Anglican clergyman of Bristol, heard Whitefield utter the above statement during a ‘*private Conversation*’. As soon as Whitefield left the room, his scathing attack on Tillotson was immediately noted down by Tucker, who authenticated the account by requesting that Whitefield sign it. The details of this conversation subsequently appeared in the 12 May 1739 edition of the *Weekly Miscellany*.⁴⁴ Whitefield repeated his attack on Tillotson in several further publications. In his *Journal* entry for 30 March 1740, Whitefield spoke of an encounter with a trader, who had recently experienced the evangelical New Birth. According to this account, the trader handed Whitefield ‘seventeen Volumes of Archbishop Tillotson’s Sermons’. While the trader had previously been a ‘great Admirer’ of Tillotson, this was no longer the case, and he apparently instructed Whitefield that he was free to do what he ‘would with them [the volumes]’.⁴⁵ However, Whitefield’s most in-depth critique of Tillotson

⁴⁴ *Weekly Miscellany*, 12 May 1739.

⁴⁵ Whitefield, *Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield’s Journal, After His Arrival at Georgia...Thither from Philadelphia*, pp. 15-16. A later journal entry detailed one of Whitefield’s female converts, who had previously been a ‘great Admirer of Archbishop Tillotson’. Whitefield was thankful

came during his January 1740 visit to Georgia, where he wrote two letters to a ‘*Friend in London*’, which were subsequently published on both sides of the Atlantic.⁴⁶

The first of these two pieces contained the infamous ‘Mahomet’ insult, thus reinforcing Tucker’s earlier account of his conversation with the itinerant. According to Whitefield, this insult had originally been spoken by John Wesley ‘in a private Society’. This letter also drew particular attention to a sermon by Tillotson, which described the ‘*Renovation of our Hearts and Lives*’ as both the ‘Terms’ and ‘necessary *Causes and Means*’ of ‘our Salvation’. Whitefield found such a statement abhorrent because he believed it implied that sanctification was not an effect, but rather a cause of justification. By neglecting the ‘all-sufficient, perfect and everlasting Righteousness and Death of Jesus Christ’, Tillotson had allegedly contravened the teachings of the Apostle Paul, whom Whitefield claimed would have declared an ‘ANATHEMA’ against the text had he been alive. Such a soteriology, according to Whitefield, was merely ‘*Deism refined*’. Whitefield also attacked Tillotson’s 1690 sermon on hell, which he claimed had inspired him to write his 1738 sermon, *The Eternity of Hell Torments* (though he had not explicitly referred to Tillotson in that publication).⁴⁷

that, once the woman’s ‘Eyes’ were ‘opened, to discern spiritual Things’, she could ‘no longer take up with such Husks, fit only for carnal, unawakened, unbelieving Reasoners to eat.’ See G. Whitefield, *A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield’s Journal, from a Few Days after his Return to Georgia to his Arrival at Falmouth, on the 11th of March 1741* (London, 1741), p. 2.

⁴⁶ The 22 March 1740 edition of the *South Carolina Gazette* advertised Whitefield’s first anti-Tillotson *Letter* as something which was due to be printed the following week. Thus, one can assume that it received its initial publication in Charleston in late March of that year. This piece, along with Whitefield’s second letter on Tillotson and another letter addressed to colonial slaveholders, was subsequently published by Benjamin Franklin in issues of the *Pennsylvania Gazette* between 10 April and 1 May 1740. Franklin also compiled the three letters and sold them in book format. See G. Whitefield, *Three Letters from the Reverend Mr. G. Whitefield* (Philadelphia, 1740), pp. 2-12. In England, Whitefield’s first anti-Tillotson *Letter* received its initial publication in 3 July 1740 edition of the *Daily Advertiser*.

⁴⁷ Whitefield, *Three Letters*, pp. 2-5. If Wesley did speak these words, his views regarding Tillotson must have mellowed somewhat by 1750, when he included some extracts by the late archbishop in his *Christian Library*. Wesley’s intention with these extracts was to display Tillotson as somebody who was ‘as far from being the *worst*, as from being the *best* of the English writers’. J. Wesley, *A Christian Library. Consisting of Extracts from and Abridgments of the Choicest Pieces of Practical Divinity, which have been Publish’d in the English Tongue*, 50 vols. (Bristol, 1750), XLV, p. 295.

In the second of these letters, Whitefield quoted extensively from the anti-Tillotson sentiments which John Edwards had expressed in *The Preacher*. While Edwards had died in 1716, his anti-Arminian texts had continued to be printed throughout the 1720s and 1730s.⁴⁸ Moreover, Jonathan Warne, a Calvinist Dissenter, had previously cited Edwards – along with the late Beveridge – at length in several anti-Arminian tracts during the late 1730s.⁴⁹ Significantly, it was through Warne's works that Whitefield first encountered the teachings of Edwards.⁵⁰ Many of Whitefield's quotations from Edwards merely reiterated issues which he had already raised in his previous letter, such as Tillotson's emphasis on morality, and his 1690 sermon on hell torments. However, Whitefield also included quotations from Edwards which addressed points he had not previously raised. One such point was Tillotson's claim that one could 'not find any where revealed in all the Scripture, that there is a God' – a statement which Edwards had equated with Atheism.⁵¹ March 1740 witnessed the publication of

⁴⁸ For examples, see J. Edwards, *The Doctrines Controverted Between Papists and Protestants Particularly and Distinctly Consider'd: And Those which are Held by the Former Confuted* (London, 1724); *Theologia Reformata: Or, Discourses on Those Graces and Duties which are Purely Evangelical, and Not Contained in the Moral Law: And On The Helps, Motives, and Advantages of Performing Them* (London, 1726); *Remains of the Late Reverend and Learned John Edwards, D.D.* (London, 1731).

⁴⁹ The following are two of Warne's early anti-Arminian works. Both texts are littered with quotations from Edwards: *The Church of England Turn'd Dissenter at Last: Or, the Generality of Her Clergy Have Forsaken the Most Material Doctrines of the Common-Prayer* (London, 1737); *Arminianism, the Back-Door to Popery; Humbly Offered to the Consideration of the Arch-Bishops, Bishops, with the Rest of the English Clergy; and the Students in Both Universities* (London, 1738). In 1748, Whitefield penned a letter to a fellow Anglican cleric, whom it would appear was interested in joining the Countess of Huntingdon's connexion. In this letter, Whitefield enthusiastically recommended the writings of Beveridge, Joseph Hall (1574-1656) and Ezekiel Hopkins (d. 1690), all of whom were historical bishops who had maintained the 'good old way' of the Reformation. See 'Letter DCCXI: To the Rev. Mr. L---, London, 19th November 1748', in *The Works of the Reverend George Whitefield*, 6 vols. (London, 1771-72), II, p. 206. Fourteen years later, a reading of Beveridge triggered the conversion experience of a young Rowland Hill (1744-1833), who subsequently became a Dissenting evangelist. See Clark, *English Society, 1660-1832*, p. 295.

⁵⁰ G. Whitefield, *A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal, from His Embarking After the Embargo, to His Arrival at Savannah in Georgia* (London, 1740), p. 19.

⁵¹ Whitefield, *Three Letters*, pp. 5-12. Alexander Garden, the commissary of South Carolina, was the only anti-Whitefield polemicist who addressed this criticism of Tillotson. Garden claimed that Edwards had deliberately misrepresented Tillotson by quoting him out of context and disregarding what had come before and after the sentence in question. As a means of rectifying this problem, Garden displayed these preceding and succeeding sentences. Rather than denying that the Bible contained any 'Mention' or 'Confirmation' of a God, Tillotson's argument had been that citing scriptural 'Revelation' was futile when attempting to convert somebody who did not believe in the existence of a deity. This was because

another *Letter* by Whitefield. On this occasion, Whitefield condemned ‘that much admir’d Book called the WHOLE DUTY OF MAN.’⁵² As with Tillotson, this seventeenth-century authority had previously been attacked by John Edwards – albeit in passing – on at least two occasions. In the first part of *The Preacher* (1705), Edwards criticised *The Whole Duty of Man*’s emphasis on ‘Moral Vertues and the Practical Part of Religion’.⁵³ In a later work, Edwards bemoaned the book’s discussions on ‘Faith’, which contained ‘not a Word of *Relying on Christ, or Trusting in him and his Merits*’.⁵⁴ Whitefield’s grievances with *The Whole Duty of Man* were similar in the sense that he also viewed it as a text which had been designed to ‘civilize’ rather than convert its readers. He was particularly disturbed that he could not find the word ‘Regeneration so much as once mentioned’ in the ‘Index and general Titles at the End of it’.⁵⁵

Whitefield also contested the author’s claim that evidence of God’s ‘second Covenant...with *Adam*’ could be found in the passage ‘*the Seed of the Woman shall break the Serpent’s Head*’ (Genesis 3:15). Whitefield questioned why the author had failed to see the ‘false Divinity’ in believing that ‘God ever entered into any Covenant at all, with Man after he had broken the First?’ The only other covenant that God made, according to Whitefield, was with ‘the second *Adam*, the God-Man *Christ Jesus*’. Since Adam had failed to ‘keep the *first* Covenant’ when he was in a state of ‘perfect Innocence’, Whitefield saw no logic in the notion that God would make another covenant with post-lapsarian mortals, who ‘hate God by nature’. Whitefield also contested a section in *The Whole Duty of Man*’s preface, which stated that, by only

the scriptures ‘suppose’ rather than ‘reveal’ that ‘there is one’. See A. Garden, *Six Letters to the Rev. George Whitefield*, 2nd edn (Boston, 1740), p. 44.

⁵² G. Whitefield, *A Letter from the Rev. Mr. Whitefield from Georgia, to a Friend in London, Shewing the Fundamental Error of a Book, Entitled The Whole Duty of Man* (Charles-Town, 1740), p. 4.

⁵³ J. Edwards, *The Preacher. A Discourse Shewing What are the Particular Offices and Employments of Those of That Character in the Church* (London, 1705), pp. 49-50.

⁵⁴ J. Edwards, *The Doctrin of Faith and Justification Set in a True Light* (London, 1708), p. 179.

⁵⁵ Whitefield, *A Letter from the Rev. Mr. Whitefield...Shewing the Fundamental Error of a Book, Entitled The Whole Duty of Man*, p. 4.

requiring our ‘sincere Repentance’, Christ had removed the ‘*Hardness of the Law given to Adam, which was, never to commit the least sin upon Pain of Damnation*’. For some reason, Whitefield erroneously interpreted this as a rejection of original sin. As a means of combating this perceived heresy, he quoted the following words from Beveridge: ‘*I cannot pray...but I Sin; I cannot hear or preach a Sermon, but I Sin*’. Evidently, Whitefield was intellectually out of his depth when it came to the book’s Adamic theology, which – as one author was quick to point out – he had completely misinterpreted.⁵⁶

Defences of Tillotson and *The Whole Duty of Man*

Whitefield’s attack on *The Whole Duty of Man* was swiftly scrutinised by an anonymous ‘Presbyter of the Church of England’. This author particularly took issue with much of what Whitefield had to say about the book’s Adamic theology. Although Whitefield’s description of a second Covenant of Grace between God and ‘*the second Adam, God-Man Christ Jesus*’ did not present any problems for the ‘Presbyter’, he was perplexed by Whitefield’s implication that humanity remained bound by the terms of the pre-lapsarian covenant. To the ‘Presbyter’, it simply made no sense that God ‘would give Terms of Salvation to Mankind’, but ‘deny him’ the ‘Strength and Ability to perform the Conditions and Duties he requires of him’. The author added that, as fallen creatures, all humans were corrupted by a ‘Frailty’ in their ‘Nature’, a ‘Perverseness’ in their ‘Will’, an ‘Irregularity’ in their ‘Passions’, and a ‘Multitude of Temptations’. By suggesting that post-lapsarian humans were expected to maintain ‘absolute Innocence and Perfection’, Whitefield had created ‘an Inconsistency between God’s All-

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 5-9.

Sufficiency and his Justice'. Under such a rule, one 'might well with Amazement and Despair cry out, *Lord who can be saved?*'⁵⁷

The author was equally determined to correct Whitefield's claim that God had not 'entered into any Covenant at all, with Man' after Adam's fall. In fact, there were various 'other Covenants between God and Man, recorded in holy Writ'.⁵⁸ For example, such a covenant was made 'after the Flood' with Noah, to whom God promised 'he would no more bring a Flood upon the Earth'.⁵⁹ Furthermore, one could find a description in Genesis 12:1 of God's 'Covenant with *Abram* and his seed'. From this, Abraham had been 'obliged' to 'leave his Father's House and Countrey [sic]', and 'live separate from a Company of Idolators'.⁶⁰ These later 'Covenants' did not 'obstruct or take away that Universal Covenant made with Mankind after the Fall'. Rather, these 'other Covenants' were added 'for the Preservation' of this Covenant of Grace, which they were 'subservient to'.⁶¹

The 'Presbyter' also noted that, while perfection was no longer required under the terms of this 'New Covenant', one's salvation still rested on two interlinked conditions: 'Repentance' and 'Faith'. More specifically, it required a 'sort of Life and Manners' which differed from the 'Heathens' and those who followed the 'Inclinations of the Flesh; and the Corruptions of the World' – in other words, 'Fornicators', 'Adulterers', 'Thieves' and 'Drunkards'. Thus, 'Faith' meant more than just a 'bare, simple Assent' to follow Christ. Rather, true faith involved living a 'moral Life', which was 'productive' of...pious, charitable, sober, and righteous Conversation.'⁶² The author of *The Whole Duty of Man* was singled out for his discussions on repentance. By

⁵⁷ A Presbyter of the Church of England, *Defence of the Author of the Whole Duty of Man from the False Charges of Mr. Whitefield and the Methodists his Adherents* (Reading, 1740), pp. 15, 19, 26.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 21.

⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 25.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

⁶¹ Ibid., pp. 21, 25.

⁶² Ibid., p. 34.

‘following his Rules’, it was impossible to ‘err in the Practice of this necessary Duty’.⁶³ Evidently, by describing good works as a condition of one’s salvation, the presbyter was reinforcing an Arminian soteriology which, by the early decades of the eighteenth century, had become the mainstream position in the established Church.

Other divines, such as Joseph Trapp, cited the Arminian teachings of George Bull as a means of correcting the solifidianism which evangelicals appeared to be spreading.⁶⁴ Bull also featured in one of the earliest responses to Whitefield’s attack on Tillotson. This was an anonymous polemic, entitled *The Sentiments of Archbishop Tillotson and Sharp on Regeneration, and of Bishop Moor, Blackal, Bull, &c. on Justification by Faith Only*. In this work, Whitefield was condemned for the ‘Arrogancy and monstrous Presumption’ he had displayed when he attacked the ‘immortal Tillotson’, whom the author described as ‘one of the greatest Champions and most able Defenders of the Christian and Protestant Religion, that the Church of *England* was ever blessed with’.⁶⁵ The bulk of this work was dedicated to portraying Tillotson’s theology as something which was consistent with the teachings of such ‘eminent Prelates’ as Ofspring Blackall (1655-1716) and John Moore (1646-1714), along with several other prominent Anglican authorities, including Edward Wells (1667-1727).⁶⁶ In the section on justification, the editor reiterated Bull’s argument that

The Works then St. *Paul* rejects, as useless to our Justification, are not Godliness and Virtue, holy and charitable Actions, which have intrinsic Goodness in their own Nature: But the Works of the Law, which were only

⁶³ Ibid., pp. 30-31.

⁶⁴ [Trapp], *True Spirit of the Methodists*, p. 49.

⁶⁵ *The Sentiments of Archbishop Tillotson and Sharp on Regeneration, and of Bishop Moor, Blackal, Bull, &c. on Justification by Faith Only, Recommended to the Perusal of the More Serious and Considerate Followers of Mr. Whitefield* (London, n.d. [1739/1740]), p. 9.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 13.

valuable because commanded, and whose Goodness, or Value, expired with the Law.⁶⁷

As evidence that Paul condemned a ‘naked unactive Faith’, the author cited Moore’s discussions of 1 Corinthians 13:2. In this passage, the apostle describes a faith that ‘could remove Mountains’ as ‘nothing’ without ‘Charity’. Thus, when James referred to ‘works’ he was talking about the same kinds of charitable deeds which Paul also endorsed in his First Letter to the Corinthians.⁶⁸ The author noted that Wells had supported his arguments by citing Bull. By referring to Bull, the author of this piece was suggesting that, rather than being the heresy that Whitefield described, Tillotson’s moralistic teaching was consistent with the soteriology of another deceased theologian, who, by the mid-eighteenth century, remained a revered authority amongst orthodox Anglican divines.⁶⁹ Nevertheless, this author had clearly failed to note that Tillotson’s teachings on justification were not consistently in line with Bull’s. To recap, Tillotson diverged from Bull by arguing that Paul and James had referred to two different types of justification – an initial justification *without* works, and a final justification *with* works. Intriguingly, aspects of Wesley’s soteriology were strikingly reminiscent of Tillotson’s teachings. In 1744, Wesley similarly claimed that the apostles had not spoken ‘of the same justification.’ Rather, where Paul had meant those ‘works that precede faith’, James had meant those ‘works that spring from it.’⁷⁰ This is not to say that Wesley’s teachings were entirely consistent with Tillotson’s. Indeed, Tillotson and Wesley advanced differing views on what Paul’s initial justification involved. Where Tillotson believed that one’s first justification resulted from one’s baptism, Wesley

⁶⁷ Ibid., p. 37.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 38.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 45.

⁷⁰ *Minutes of the Methodist Conferences, from the First, Held in London, by the Late Rev. John Wesley, A.M. in the Year 1744*, 3 vols. (London, 1812), I, p. 6.

believed that this initial justification (which he also described as ‘regeneration’) involved a sudden ‘New Birth’. In other words, an experience which mirrored his own conversion at Aldersgate.⁷¹

Yet, both Tillotson and Wesley clearly rejected Bull’s belief that Paul and James had referred to the same type of ‘justification’. Another example of Wesley implicitly distancing himself from Bull can be found in one of his journal entries from December 1739. Here, Wesley noted that he disagreed with the many ‘wise and learned men’ who described one’s initial justification as a ‘twofold’ process, which relied on ‘faith and works’ as necessary conditions. Wesley argued that, ‘by our being justified by faith only, both St. Paul and the Church mean, that the *condition* of our justification is *faith alone*, and *not good works*’.⁷² In a later treatise, Wesley described the ‘*Self*’ as the ‘highest End of unregenerate Men’. While Wesley saw ‘Shreds of Morality’ in the works of the unregenerate, he denied that any of it was ‘*Good*’. This denial even applied to their ‘*religious Actions*’.⁷³ On this point, Wesley was clearly in agreement with Whitefield and other Calvinists in so far as he viewed faith as the sole condition of one’s *entry* into this new life. The key question was: were good works necessary as a means of *remaining* in this regenerate state? Unlike Whitefield, Wesley would have answered this question resoundingly in the affirmative. Thus, as an Arminian, Wesley diverged from the Reformed tradition by viewing sanctifying works as a necessary condition of one’s final justification (salvation). From this, we can see that Wesley’s soteriology had much in common with the post-Restoration ‘moralism’ of Bull and

⁷¹ Tillotson, ‘Sermon IX’, in Barker, *Arch-Bishop Tillotson’s Several Discourses*, IV, pp. 241-65; K.J. Collins, *The Theology of John Wesley: Holy Love and the Shape of Grace* (Nashville, 2007), pp. 181-82, 200.

⁷² Curnock, *Journal of the Rev. John Wesley*, II, p. 326.

⁷³ J. Wesley, *The Doctrine of Original Sin: According to Scripture, Reason, and Experience* (Bristol 1757), p. 506.

Tillotson. Crucially, this shows that the theological divisions between Methodists and anti-Methodists were not always clear-cut.

Indeed, it is paradoxical that Thomas Church's second attack on Wesley contained a particularly detailed epitaph to George Bull. In this piece, Church praised the 'learned and satisfactory Manner' in which the late bishop had advanced his arguments. Church also noted that, while Bull had 'met with some Struggle and Opposition for a Time from some, who were bred up in Calvinistical Notions', the 'Truth' had soon 'surmounted all Difficulties, and approved itself to all learned and unprejudiced Persons.' Since 'that Time', there had been 'little or no Difference among the Divines' on the issue of 'Good Works', which were widely accepted as 'the Conditions of Justification.' There is certainly an element of irony in the fact that Church cited Bull – a traditional defender of Arminianism – in an attack on Wesley, who also classed himself as an Arminian. From this, we can discern that, by the 1740s, one could not speak of 'Arminianism' as a homogeneous theological stance. While Church was aware that Wesley had publicly 'disowned' the 'worst Tenets' of Calvinism, he believed that Wesley was unwittingly spreading a Calvinistic soteriology by implying that good works were not necessary at all.⁷⁴ However, not all of Wesley and Whitefield's opponents were disciples of Bull.

One anti-Methodist work which followed Tillotson's example was *The Important Doctrines of Original Sin, Justification by Faith, and Regeneration* (1740) by Thomas Whiston. Although Whiston, an Anglican divine, did not refer to Tillotson by name, he echoed the late archbishop by arguing that, in the New Testament, there 'are two different Significations of the Terms, *just* and *justify'd* in Scripture.' When Paul

⁷⁴ T. Church, *Some Farther Remarks on the Rev. Mr. John Wesley's Last Journal, Together with a Few Considerations on his Farther Appeal; Shewing the Inconsistency of his Conduct and Sentiments, with the Constitution and Doctrine of the Church of England, and Explaining the Articles Relating to Justification* (London, 1746), pp. 74-75.

referred to justification without works, he was describing the process of being ‘received into Favour and Acceptance with God, by a mere Act of his Grace.’⁷⁵ James, on the other hand, was describing those ‘Works done *after Faith*’, which were ‘conducive to our final Justification with God.’ To Whiston, the notion that the ‘Epistles of St Paul and St James agree’ was nothing more than a ‘human invention’.⁷⁶ Given that Whiston was a Cambridge-educated Arian, it is unsurprising that he favoured Tillotson’s interpretation over Bull’s. As we shall see in Chapter Four, Whiston also utilised this polemic as an opportunity to voice a range of heterodox views which were disagreeable, not only to Methodists, but also to orthodox High Churchmen. Thus, while Whiston made no specific reference to Bull, it is likely that his intention here was to subtly attack the teachings of Bull and, consequently, all those clerics who continued to cite him at length.

Many years later, Samuel Hallifax, a fellow of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, published a polemic entitled *Saint Paul's Doctrine of Justification by Faith Explained in Three Discourses Before the University of Cambridge* (1760). This piece was written in response to a ‘certain teacher among the METHODISTS’ (John Berridge), who had recently preached ‘*before the University of Cambridge*’. Like Whiston, Hallifax advanced the notion that Paul was not referring to the same type of justification as James. According to Hallifax, the ‘excellent Dr. [Isaac] BARROW’ had taught this view ‘*by the most cogent and convincing method of just reasoning*’, and surmised that ‘*From him...it was adopted by the celebrated Archbishop TILLOTSON.*’ Hallifax noted that

⁷⁵ T. Whiston, *The Important Doctrines of Original Sin, Justification by Faith, and Regeneration, Clearly Stated from Scripture and Reason: And Vindicated from the Misrepresentations of the Methodists. With Remarks on Mr Law's Late Tract on the New-Birth* (London, 1740), pp. 23-24.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

*Bishop Bull...treats the notion of two Justifications, a first and final, as false in itself, and foreign to the design both of St. Paul and St. James. His argument is this: that no one is entitled to the favour of even a first Justification, who hath not performed the works of Repentance; and therefore works are necessary as well to the first Justification as the second. The learned Writer was not aware that he was here contradicting the whole tenor of St. Paul's writings, who constantly ascribes the Justification of a Heathen to mere Grace and Favour, only.*⁷⁷

As we have seen, Wesley shared Tillotson's belief that Paul and James's seemingly contradictory teachings on justification needed to be viewed as two separate, but interlinked, stages in a two-stage process. Thus, by following in Tillotson's footsteps, Hallifax was advancing a soteriology which Wesley would have largely deemed acceptable (their interpretation of what this initial justification entailed would still have differed). Importantly, this similarity reinforces the point that the theological divisions between Methodists and anti-Methodists were far from clear-cut. Hallifax's dismissal of Bull is intriguing in the sense that, unlike the heterodox Whiston, Hallifax was a staunch High Churchman and a rigid defender of Anglican orthodoxy.⁷⁸ So, why did he diverge from those earlier High Church opponents of Methodism on this issue? It is possible that Hallifax viewed Bull's argument as a futile line of attack, which anti-Methodist Anglicans had constantly deployed, but to no avail. Yet, there is no reason to doubt that he genuinely favoured Tillotson's interpretation of Paul and James's teachings. It is highly likely that Hallifax would have immersed himself in Tillotson's writings during his years as a student at Cambridge. Subsequently, one can assume that Hallifax, as a don, feared that evangelicalism's penetration into the academic cloisters of Cambridge would lead students to abandon such revered authorities as Tillotson and

⁷⁷ S. Hallifax, *Saint Paul's Doctrine of Justification by Faith Explained in Three Discourses before the University of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1760), pp. vi-vii.

⁷⁸ For more on Hallifax's life and ministry, see R. Hole, 'Hallifax, Samuel (1733–1790)', *ODNB*.

Barrow. Nevertheless, Bull's soteriology was by no means dead and buried amongst Oxford-educated clergymen.

In 1761, George Horne, a fellow (and future President) of Magdalen College, Oxford, preached an anti-Methodist sermon, which was subsequently published at the request of the Vice-Chancellor, Joseph Browne. In this sermon, Horne praised 'the incomparably learned Bishop *Bull*', whose 'work, the *Harmonia Apostolica*' had caused the 'total defeat' of the '*solifidian*, or *antinomian* heresy'.⁷⁹ Horne went on to reiterate Bull's argument that Paul and James were referring to the same type of justification, and that, when the former excluded works, he was merely excluding those '*heathen* and *Jewish* works...performed without the grace of Christ'.⁸⁰ It is unclear whether or not Horne's sentiments were intended as a response to Hallifax's recent dismissal of Bull. Regardless, both Hallifax and Horne's tracts are significant because they alert us to the theological nuances which developed amongst anti-Methodist High Churchmen once evangelicalism penetrated the universities.

Methodism's relatively late arrival at Cambridge may go some way towards explaining why – except for those works mentioned above – Whitefield's anti-Tillotson sentiments barely generated any printed responses from the established clergy in England. On the other hand, it is possible that many of Whitefield's High Church opponents refrained from defending Tillotson because they wished to distance themselves from the late archbishop's less theologically orthodox teachings, most notably his 1690 sermon on hell. It is worth noting that Whitefield's *Letters* on Tillotson were published only a couple of months after William Whiston's annihilationist tract, *The Eternity of Hell Torments* (1740). This information adds

⁷⁹ G. Horne, *Works Wrought through Faith a Condition of Our Justification. A Sermon Preached Before the University of Oxford, at St. Mary's, on Sunday, June 7. 1761* (Oxford, 1761), p. 5.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

credence to the possibility that contemporary High Churchmen were cautious of publishing anything that could even remotely be interpreted as annihilationist.⁸¹

Nevertheless, these interpretations fail to explain why so few clerics responded to Whitefield's attack on *The Whole Duty of Man*, which remained a revered authority amongst High Churchmen. This lack of responses did not go unnoticed by one anonymous author, who lamented in 2 May 1741 edition of the *Weekly Miscellany* that 'some abler Hand' had not already 'exposed the Absurdity' of Whitefield's attacks on these seventeenth-century authorities. The contributor argued that, since Tillotson's sermons were some of the 'best Fences against Popery', Whitefield's condemnation of the late archbishop was an underhand way of aiding his fellow 'Popish Emissaries' and 'bringing in the Pretender'.⁸² In 1749, a lay Anglican (who displayed strong High Church Tory sympathies) attacked Whitefield's treatment of *The Whole Duty of Man*. As the anonymous 'Presbyter' had done some years earlier, the layman mainly attacked Whitefield's misunderstanding of the book's Adamic theology.⁸³

There is also evidence to suggest that the laity were prepared to resort to violence as a means of defending these seventeenth-century authorities. An article which appeared in 5 July 1740 edition of the *Universal Spectator and Weekly Chronicle* described an unnamed 'Methodist Teacher, who had recently been preaching in Marybon-fields'. It was during this service that the preacher instructed his congregation

⁸¹ The original advertisement for Whiston's *The Eternity of Hell Torments* appeared in the *Daily Gazetteer* on 4 January 1740. This work will be explored further in Chapter Four.

⁸² *Weekly Miscellany*, 2 May 1741. Tillotson and the author of *The Whole Duty of Man* also gained a mention, albeit briefly, in a later anti-Methodist work by Bishop Gibson, which was published anonymously in 1744. These authors, whom Gibson described as having been amongst the 'best Writers after the Restoration', had explained the 'Work of our Redemption by Christ', while endeavouring to 'turn the Minds of People to the Practice of Moral Duties' and 'cure them of that Madness and Enthusiasm into which they had been led by the *Antinomian* Doctrins...during the Times of Anarchy and Confusion'. See [Gibson], *Observations upon the Conduct and Behaviour of a Certain Sect*, pp. 12-13. While this work is undated, we know from an advertisement in 17-20 March 1744 edition of the *London Gazette* that it was published on 'This Day'.

⁸³ A Layman, *A Letter to the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield, Shewing the Fundamental Errors of Several of His Performances, and Proving, from His Own Works, that He Has Departed from the Principles of the Church of England in Particular, as Well as from the Church of Christ in General* (London, 1749).

that one ‘might as safely read Plays, or profane Books, as the Whole Duty of Man, or Tillotson’s Works’. Apparently, the crowd ‘resented’ this ‘so highly’ that the preacher was forced to escape in a ‘Hackney Coach, which was almost broke to Pieces by the Mob throwing Stones and Brickbats at it’. This article certainly implied that, amongst the laity, there was a strong sense of loyalty towards Tillotson and *The Whole Duty of Man*.⁸⁴ Yet, one also needs to bear in mind that physical assaults on Methodist itinerants were not uncommon. According to John Walsh, such open-air services regularly ‘contained their share of criminals, of psychopaths, of the shiftless, and of misfits’. Therefore, it is unlikely that the preacher’s condemnation of these authorities was the sole cause of this attack, though this correspondent may have intended to add an aura of respectability to the rioters by portraying them in this light.⁸⁵

Given Tillotson’s popularity among Dissenters, one might assume that Whitefield’s letters were widely attacked from this quarter. Yet, the only example of such a polemic was *A Vindication of Arch-Bishop Tillotson, and the Author of the Whole Duty of Man* (1740), by Ebenezer Hewlett, a lay Dissenter and anti-Trinitarian controversialist.⁸⁶ In this short piece, Hewlett addressed the dilemma posed by Paul’s seemingly contradictory teachings in Romans 2:13 and Romans 4:5 by arguing that the apostle had been discussing a different ‘sort of Justification’ in each of these two passages. In Romans 4:5, Paul stated: ‘But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness’. According to Hewlett, this passage dealt with ‘temporal’ justification, which encompassed ‘all

⁸⁴ *Universal Spectator and Weekly Chronicle*, 5 July 1740.

⁸⁵ Walsh, ‘Methodism and the Mob’, p. 221.

⁸⁶ For Hewlett’s anti-Trinitarianism, see his *The Doctrine of Satisfaction by the Merits of Christ, Supposed to be Blasphemy against God and His Son Jesus Christ, An Enemy to the Holy Scriptures, and to His Majesty King George, the Royal Family, and All True Protestants, with a Hindrance to Mens Salvation* (Bristol, 1733).

mankind both Godly and ungodly', and was 'without works'.⁸⁷ To gain a fuller sense of what Hewlett meant by 'temporal justification', one needs to turn to his *Miracles Real Evidences of a Divine Revelation* (1741). Here, Hewlett defined 'temporal justification' as 'being freed from temporal Calamities'. Thus, it had 'no Relation to Futurity', and merely meant God allowing the ungodly to exist on this earth. More specifically, Hewlett believed that the temporal retribution described in the Old Testament had been annulled under the terms of the New Covenant. Clearly, Hewlett's doctrine of 'temporal justification' was controversial in the sense that it implied that God was nothing more than an inactive clockmaker, who left his world to tick on without any intervention from him.⁸⁸

Hewlett contrasted Romans 4:5 with the apostle's seemingly contradictory argument in Romans 2:13: 'For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified'. To Hewlett, this was a reference to one's 'eternal Justification', which 'belongs only to the righteous, who obey God's Law'. Thus, Tillotson's emphasis on good works was entirely consistent with the tenets of this 'eternal justification', which Whitefield had mistakenly confounded with 'temporal' justification when he invoked the Apostle Paul against the archbishop.⁸⁹ Hewlett's exegesis of Romans 2:13 would have been agreeable to Tillotson, who similarly noted that, in this instance, Paul was referring to the moral law rather than the ceremonial Mosaic Law. However, Tillotson would almost certainly have been perplexed, if not disturbed, by Hewlett's seemingly Deistic doctrine of 'temporal' justification.⁹⁰ From Hewlett's piece, we can see that Anglican divines were not the only polemicists who

⁸⁷ E. Hewlett, *A Vindication of Arch-Bishop Tillotson, and the Author of the Whole Duty of Man* (Bristol, 1740), p. 7.

⁸⁸ E. Hewlett, *Miracles Real Evidences of a Divine Revelation* (London, 1741), p. 32.

⁸⁹ Hewlett, *Vindication of Arch-Bishop Tillotson, and the Author of the Whole Duty of Man*, p. 7.

⁹⁰ J. Tillotson, 'Sermon XII: Knowledge and Practice Necessary in Religion', in *Selected Discourses*, IV, p. 367.

combated evangelicals on the issue of faith and works. The fact that Hewlett claimed to be defending Tillotson could be viewed as evidence of the late archbishop's enduring popularity among Dissenters. Nevertheless, one should not readily dismiss the possibility that Hewlett saw writing a 'defence' of Tillotson as an underhand opportunity to voice his seemingly heterodox doctrine of 'temporal justification'. The fact that Hewlett's piece paid barely any attention to Tillotson certainly suggests that he had alternative motives in mind when he wrote it. Thus, Hewlett's piece provides us with an example of an author who utilised anti-Methodism as an opportunity to propagate a heterodox view.

So, why did Whitefield's attacks on Tillotson and *The Whole Duty of Man* barely generate any responses in England? Of course, it is perhaps only with hindsight that Whitefield seems important. Many clergymen may simply have felt that responding to these attacks would dignify Whitefield's accusations. Moreover, there was nothing particularly original about Whitefield's polemics. We have seen that his 1740 attack on Tillotson was little more than a reiteration of what John Edwards had written a generation earlier. More importantly, it should be noted that Whitefield sailed to America in August 1739. This was only three months after the 'Mahomet' quotation first appeared in the *Weekly Miscellany*. It was during his colonial tour that Whitefield wrote his subsequent letters on Tillotson and *The Whole Duty of Man*. Given that transatlantic crossings were both lengthy and hazardous, it is likely that many clerics assumed (or, at the very least, hoped) that Whitefield would choose to settle in the colonies. Such a belief would explain why Whitefield's anti-Tillotson sentiments seem to have caused more of a stir amongst colonial Anglicans and Dissenters.

While visiting New York, Whitefield boasted in his journal entry for 4 May 1740 that, although his letters against Tillotson and *The Whole Duty of Man* grieved

colonial clerics ‘to the Heart’, their ‘Fury’ had been restrained by their ‘Fear of the People.’⁹¹ Given that Whitefield was a notorious self-publicist, he probably over-exaggerated the popularity of his attacks on these authorities. The manuscript correspondence of several colonial clerics suggests that much of the laity were repulsed by Whitefield’s aggressive style, though one also gets the impression that these divines still viewed him as an intimidating threat. Alexander Garden referred to Whitefield’s attacks on Tillotson and *The Whole Duty of Man* in a letter to Bishop Gibson, dated 24 April 1740. Garden added that Whitefield’s ‘converts’ were ‘ashamed of’ these publications.⁹² Garden must have felt strongly about Whitefield’s attacks on these works, given that he had written a letter to the itinerant three days earlier which addressed this issue.⁹³ In a letter to the secretary of the SPG, dated 17 July 1740, Alexander Howie of Oxford, Pennsylvania, claimed that Whitefield had even ‘desired a great auditory to burn’ copies of *The Whole Duty of Man*. While many ‘serious people’ had apparently been ‘shock’d’ by this ‘antichristian order’, others were described as having been ‘so enthusiastically mad as to obey it.’⁹⁴

In the wake of Whitefield’s tour of the middle colonies, a group of Presbyterians (writing under the pseudonym ‘The Querists’) published a petition against the itinerant. Amongst their various grievances, the Querists argued that Whitefield had acted ‘unchristianly’ when he attacked Tillotson, whom they lauded as somebody who had been a ‘Friend’ to Dissenters, and ‘behaved with much Moderation towards them, whilst he lived.’ It was apparently for this reason that local Presbyterians had refrained from attacking Tillotson as ‘explicitly as they ought.’ Evidently, these individuals were

⁹¹ Whitefield, *Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal, After His Arrival at Georgia...Thither from Philadelphia*, p. 33.

⁹² LPL, FP X, fols. 58-59: Garden to Gibson, 24 April 1740.

⁹³ A portion of Garden’s letter was published in the *South Carolina Gazette* on 3 May 1740. The complete version of this text, along with a further letter on Tillotson, was subsequently included in Garden’s *Six Letters to the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield*.

⁹⁴ Perry, *Historical Collections*, II, pp. 207-8: Howie to the Secretary, 17 July 1740.

not adherents of Tillotson's teachings, which they went on to describe as 'contrary to the Truth of the Gospel.'⁹⁵ In 1740, Whitefield angered the students and tutors at Harvard by scorning them for reading the 'bad books' of Tillotson and Samuel Clarke.⁹⁶

Thomas Church was one of the few Anglican clergymen in England who responded to Josiah Tucker's piece in the *Weekly Miscellany*, which was where the infamous 'Mahomet' quotation first appeared. Yet, Church implied in the postscript that he would not have bothered to write such a response had he known that Whitefield was going to leave the country before its publication. Intriguingly, Church largely ignored the 'Mahomet' anecdote. Instead, he focused on Whitefield's admiration for *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*, a 1677 devotional text by the Scottish Episcopalian, Henry Scougal (1650-1678). Before undertaking any analysis of Church's thoughts on this issue, it is initially important to consider what Whitefield had to say about Scougal's work.⁹⁷

Whitefield's Treatment of Scougal

According to Josiah Tucker's account of his conversation with Whitefield, the itinerant had described Scougal's *The Life of God* as a 'Book worth its Weight in Gold'.⁹⁸ Whitefield expressed these sentiments himself in *A Short Account of God's Dealings with the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield* (1740), which he wrote during his voyage

⁹⁵ *The Querists, or An Extract of Sundry Passages Taken out of Mr. Whitefield's Printed Sermons, Journals and Letters* (Philadelphia, 1740), p. 8.

⁹⁶ For more on this incident and the responses it generated, see Chapter Nine in Hoeveler, *Creating the American Mind*.

⁹⁷ T. Church, *An Explanation and Defense of the Doctrine of the Church of England Concerning Regeneration, Works Before Grace, and Some Other Points Relating Thereto* (London, 1739), p. 60.

⁹⁸ *Weekly Miscellany*, 12 May 1739. This piece was subsequently reprinted in 1 October 1739 edition of *The Boston Evening-Post*.

from London to Philadelphia. In this work, Whitefield described how he had first encountered *The Life of God* when Charles Wesley lent it to him. Whitefield claimed that, before he read this ‘excellent Treatise’, he ‘never knew what true Religion was’. He was particularly captivated by Scougal’s statement that Christianity was much more than simply ‘going to Church, doing hurt to no one, being constant in the Duties of the Closet, and now and then reaching out...to give Alms’ to one’s ‘poor Neighbours’. Rather, ‘true Religion was an [a] Union of the Soul with GOD, and *Christ* formed within us’. Upon reading these lines, a ‘Ray of divine Light was instantaneously darted in upon’ Whitefield’s ‘Soul’.⁹⁹ James Guthrie, the Ordinary of Newgate Prison in London, also described *The Life of God* as a text which John Wesley disseminated to potential converts, whom he instructed to ‘peruse it carefully’ because it contained ‘necessary Instructions concerning their future Happiness’.¹⁰⁰

In England, one certainly gets the impression that neither Scougal nor his work was particularly well known amongst the established clergy. When he reflected on his conversation with Whitefield, Josiah Tucker failed to name Scougal as the ‘Author of *the Life of God in the Soul of Man*’.¹⁰¹ While Thomas Church discussed *The Life of God* at length in his 1739 anti-Whitefield publication, he admitted that he had not encountered this work prior to these discussions. In his evaluation of Whitefield’s enthusiasm for this text, Church agreed that *The Life of God* was ‘written with a great deal of Piety’. It was for this reason that Church was determined to display Scougal’s work as something which was ‘far...from giving Occasion or Countenance to the

⁹⁹ G. Whitefield, *A Short Account of God’s Dealings with the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, A. B. Late of Pembroke-College, Oxford. From His Infancy, to the Time of His Entering into Holy Orders* (London, 1740), pp. 27-28.

¹⁰⁰ [J. Guthrie], *The Ordinary of Newgate, His Account of the Behaviour, Confession, and Dying Words, of the Malefactors, who were Executed at Tyburn, On Wednesday the 13th of January, 1741-2* (London, 1741), p. 33.

¹⁰¹ [J. Tucker], *The Life and Particular Proceedings of the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield* (London, 1739), p. 76.

strange Proceedings of the *Methodists*'. Where Whitefield viewed Scougal's work as something which contradicted 'moralistic' Christian teachings, Church argued the complete opposite. Indeed, Church highlighted the fact that *The Life of God* had been edited and prefaced by Scougal's (and Tillotson's) friend, Gilbert Burnet, who wrote the second section in the work, entitled 'An Account of the Beginnings and Advances of a Spiritual Life'. Church noted that, according to Burnet's preface, Scougal 'actually saw the 2d Letter, approved it' and 'thought it would strengthen his own [work]'. Since Whitefield had made no attempt to 'confine his character to the former Tract', which had been written by Scougal himself, one could only assume that his admiration encompassed the whole of the piece, including the section by Burnet.¹⁰² Church went on to cite the following passage as a means of stressing Scougal's devotion to good works:

Tho' there must intervene a Stroke of Omnipotence to effectuate this mighty Change in our Souls; yet ought we to do what we can to fit and prepare ourselves; for we must break up our fallow Ground, and root out the Weeds, and pull up the Thorns, that so we may be the more ready to receive the Seeds, the Grace and the Aid of Heaven.¹⁰³

Here, Scougal was clearly mirroring Bull by referring to an initial, repentant period of sanctification, which preceded one's first justification. Church also cited individual extracts from *The Life of God*, which contradicted the practices and teachings of Whitefield. For example, Church highlighted Burnet's lesson that all Christians should avoid anything which 'may bring a Disesteem on others'. To Church, Whitefield's 'abusive Reflections on his Brethren the Clergy of the Church of England' was a direct

¹⁰² Church, *Explanation and Defense*, pp. 47-48.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

contravention of this. Church went on to describe Whitefield's itinerant preaching as something which would have been condemned by Scougal, who had admonished those Christians whose 'Holy Zeal' encouraged them to inflict 'Petulancy towards their Superiors, or Rebellion against their Governors'. Church similarly noted that Whitefield's '*overheated Imagination*' was condemned in *The Life of God*, where the 'Pretence of *Inspirations*' was described as a characteristic of 'every bold *Impostor*, or hot-brained *Enthusiast*'.¹⁰⁴

Church was not the only Anglican clergyman who attacked Whitefield for his utilisation of Scougal. In 1739, Charles Wheatly, a Hertfordshire incumbent and noted defender of Anglican orthodoxy, similarly cited Scougal's condemnation of religious enthusiasm as a means of arguing that Whitefield's admiration for *The Life of God* was misplaced.¹⁰⁵ Following Whitefield's hostile response to Bishop Gibson's 1739 *Pastoral Letter*, an anonymous 'Curate in the Country' similarly drew his readers' attention to an extract in *The Life of God* which condemned spiritual 'Pride and Vanity'.¹⁰⁶ Finally, Samuel Weller argued that Whitefield's journals were not written 'in that humble and mortified Spirit' to which *The Life of God* instructed all believers to adhere.¹⁰⁷ Whether these Anglican attacks led Whitefield to re-evaluate his admiration for Scougal remains unknown. However, it is intriguing that *The Life of God* was absent from a list of books 'recommended by Mr. *Whitefield*', which appeared in the *South Carolina Gazette* on 6 September 1740.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp. 49-51.

¹⁰⁵ C. Wheatly, *St. John's Test of Knowing Christ, and Being Born of Him. A Sermon Preached at St. Paul's Cathedral in London. October 14. 1739* (London, 1739), p. 29. For more on Wheatly's engagement in theological controversies, see R. Sharp, 'Wheatly, Charles (1686–1742)', *ODNB*.

¹⁰⁶ Curate in the Country, *Observations on the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Answer*, p. 3.

¹⁰⁷ [Weller], *Trial of Mr. Whitefield's Spirit*, p. 8.

¹⁰⁸ This item listed the following works: '[Matthew] Henry's *Comment on the old and new Testament*', '[William] Burkitt *on the new Testament*', '[John] Guise's [Guyse's] *Paraphrase on the new Testament*', 'Bishop [Joseph] Hall's *Contemplations*', 'Bishop [Ezekiel] Hopkins's *Sermons*', '[Thomas] Boston's *Fourfold state*', '[Benjamin] Jenks's *Submission to the Righteousness of God*', '[Benjamin] Jenk's *Devotions*', '[Ralph] Erskins's *Sermons and Sonnets*', '[Anton Wilhelm] Boehm's *Sermons*', '[Joseph]

Some Scottish evangelicals also believed that Whitefield's reverence for Scougal was misplaced, albeit for reasons which were entirely different from those voiced by Whitefield's Anglican critics. In 1742, John Bisset, a Popular Party minister of Aberdeen, scrutinised an early sermon by Whitefield on self-denial. Significantly, when Whitefield had preached this sermon (which will be explored further in the following chapter), he was still under the influence of the Oxford Methodists, and his Calvinism was not entirely confirmed. Thus, this piece was easy prey for the Reformed Bisset. While Bisset agreed with Whitefield's claim that 'Our Souls by Nature are in a spiritual Dungeon...between the World, the Flesh and the Devil' with thousands of 'Lusts and Corruptions', he was disturbed by the itinerant's belief that:

Jesus Christ like St. *Peter's* good Angel by his Gospel, comes and opens the Prison Door, prescribes Self-Denial, Mortification, Renuntiation [sic] of our selves, and the World, as so many spiritual Keys which will unlock our Sheckles, make them fall off from our Hearts, and so restore us to the glorious Liberty of the Sons of God.

To Bisset, this passage merely implied that it was not Christ who caused these 'Chains' to 'fall off', but rather human acts. Bisset contrasted Whitefield's apparent emphasis on good works with the Westminster Confession of Faith, and concluded that the two were 'Antipodes'. Bisset identified Whitefield's admiration for Scougal as the source of this apparent heresy. He also noted that Scougal's work had been endorsed by William Wishart (c.1691-1753), a moderate Presbyterian, and Principal of the University of

Allen's [Alleine's] *Alarm*', '[Charles] Wesley's, [John] Mason's and [Isaac] Watt's *Hymns*', '[William] Beveridge's *private Thoughts and Resolutions*', '[Samuel] Wright's *born again*', '[Thomas] Shepherd's *sincere Convert and Parable of the Ten Virgins*', '[Thomas] Holyburton's *Life abridged by Mr. John Wesley*', 'Gilbert Tennent's *presumptuous Sinner detected*'.

Edinburgh, without any protests from the ‘Judicators of the Church’.¹⁰⁹ The seceding Associate Presbytery similarly attacked Whitefield for his use of Scougal, and noted that this work had also been recommended by Wishart, along with the ‘*Socinian* and *Arminian*’ teachings of the Cambridge Platonist, Benjamin Whichcote (1609-1683).¹¹⁰

What might we conclude from Whitefield’s use of Scougal, and the responses it triggered? First and foremost, it displays the somewhat haphazard nature of Whitefield’s early soteriology – something for which both his Anglican opponents and other Calvinist evangelicals were quick to rebuke him. Furthermore, it shows that there was not always a clear dividing line between texts which were ‘evangelical’ authorities and ‘anti-evangelical’ authorities. Of course, the validity of Scougal’s theology was merely one of many topics which caused evangelical in-fighting. One issue which caused contention between Wesley and Whitefield was their conflicting doctrines of ‘assurance’.

Assurance

Controversies regarding whether a person could be fully assured of their ultimate salvation were nothing new. In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), John Calvin had stressed the importance of possessing a ‘certainty’ of election. Calvin noted

¹⁰⁹ [J. Bisset], *A Letter to a Gentleman in Edinburgh, Containing Remarks Upon a Late Apology for the Presbyterians in Scotland, Who Keep Communion in the Ordinances of the Gospel, with Mr. George Whitefield, a Priest of the Church of England* (n.p., 1742), p. 89. The passage originally appeared in Whitefield’s *The Nature and Necessity of Self-Denial: A Sermon Preached at the Parish Church of St. Andrew, Holborn, on Sunday, October 9. 1737* (London, 1738), p. 19. For the development of Whitefield’s Calvinism, see M.K. Olson, ‘Whitefield’s Conversion and Early Theological Formation’, in Hammond and Jones, *Life, Context, and Legacy*, pp. 29-45.

¹¹⁰ *Acts of the Associate Presbytery; Viz. I. Act Concerning the Doctrine of Grace...II. Act for Renewing the National Covenant of Scotland, and the Solemn League and Covenant of the Three Nations* (Edinburgh, 1744), p. ix. For more on the reception of Scougal in Scotland (along with the British Atlantic as a whole) during the ‘long’ eighteenth century, see I. Rivers, ‘Scougal’s *The Life of God in the Soul of Man*: The Fortunes of a Book, 1676-1830’, in R. Savage (ed.), *Philosophy and Religion in Enlightenment Britain: New Case Studies* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 29-55.

that, while Paul appeared to condemn ‘security’ in Romans 11:20, he was only condemning a ‘careless, carnal security’, which was ‘accompanied with pride, arrogance, and contempt of others’.¹¹¹ In 1595, William Barrett, the Chaplain of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, preached a controversial sermon in which he denied that it was possible to obtain an assurance of salvation. Given that this was at a time when Cambridge was famed for its rigid adherence to Calvinism, it is unsurprising that Barrett’s sermon enraged senior dons, who accused him of teaching ‘the popish doctrine of doubtfulness of our salvation’.¹¹² While English Calvinists had ceased to be in a position of hegemony by the early decades of the eighteenth century, this did not stop them from openly defending their doctrine of assurance, and attacking those who rejected it. In one of his earliest sermons, Whitefield declared that

They who are regenerate and born again...are infallibly certain of being as happy, both here and hereafter as an All-wise, All-gracious, All-powerful GOD can make them, methinks, every one that has but the least Concern for the Salvation of his immortal Soul, having such Promises, such an Hope, such an Eternity of Happiness set before him, should never cease watching, praying and striving, till he find a real, inward, saving Change wrought in his Heart.¹¹³

In other words, Whitefield was saying that, if one was uncertain of their salvation, they had yet to experience the New Birth. In a letter to Wesley, dated 24 December 1740, Whitefield claimed that it was impossible for Arminians to possess a ‘comfortable assurance of [their] eternal salvation’ because they rejected the ‘doctrine of election’.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ J. Calvin, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. and trans. H. Beveridge (Grand Rapids, Mich., n.d.), p. 779, *Christian Classics Ethereal Library*, <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/calvin/institutes.pdf>, (accessed 7 December 2015).

¹¹² N. Pettit, *The Heart Renewed: Assurance of Salvation in New England Spiritual Life* (Lewiston, NY, 2004), p. 21.

¹¹³ Whitefield, *Nature and Necessity of Our New Birth in Christ Jesus*, pp. 27-28.

¹¹⁴ ‘A Letter to the Rev. Mr. John Wesley’, in *Works of the Reverend George Whitefield*, IV, p. 64.

In fact, Wesley did not claim to believe that an assurance of one's ultimate salvation was possible. When Wesley spoke of a doctrine of assurance, he was referring, not to 'an Assurance of what is Future', but rather, an assurance 'of what *now* is.' In other words, while Christians could feel assured that they were walking in a path of righteousness, they could not be certain that they would remain on this path for the rest of their lives.¹¹⁵ As Kenneth Collins has noted, Wesley believed in 'degrees of assurance'. Initially, this involved an 'assurance of the Holy Spirit', which, in Wesley's case, occurred during his Aldersgate conversion. Once a person was assured of the Holy Spirit's presence within them, they were then required to gain a 'full assurance of faith'. This second assurance was obtained through 'entire sanctification', which Wesley sometimes described as 'Christian perfection'. Wesley's doctrine of perfection, and the controversy it attracted, is something which will be explored in the next chapter.¹¹⁶

Evidently, when Wesley and Whitefield referred to a doctrine of 'assurance', they were talking about different things. However, these theological distinctions were not initially clear to some. Such a misinterpretation is evident in one of the earliest anti-Methodist polemics, *The Doctrine of Assurance* (1738). This work was by Arthur Bedford, a High Churchman, who was noted for his Orientalist scholarship, along with his attacks on the bawdiness of the stage.¹¹⁷ Bedford's overall message in this piece – which was based on a sermon he had recently preached in London – was that 'a Man may be a true Christian' without possessing 'an Assurance of his Salvation.' Such an assurance, according to Bedford, was 'given to very few' and only to those 'whom God calls forth either to extraordinary Services, or to extraordinary Sufferings.' More specifically, the '*Apostles*', who were 'called to...convert the whole World from

¹¹⁵ J. Wesley, *Free Grace. A Sermon Preach'd at Bristol* (Bristol, 1739), p. 15.

¹¹⁶ Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*, pp. 129-37.

¹¹⁷ For more on Bedford's life and ministry, see S. Mandelbrote, 'Bedford, Arthur (bap. 1668, d. 1745)', *ODNB*.

Superstition and Idolatry'. Furthermore, it had been necessary for the righteous to have such 'Supernatural Assistance' during 'Times of Persecution, both among the *primitive Christians*, and in Queen *Mary's* Days'. However, this special gift of assurance was rendered obsolete once Christians were 'safe from any such Dangers'.¹¹⁸ Bedford went on to cite several passages from the Old Testament which described godly kings who, at various times, expressed feelings of despair and perceived failure. This included David's sense of having God's 'arrows' stuck fast inside him (Psalm 38:2), and Hezekiah's affliction, which led him to fear that he would 'not see the Lord' (Isaiah 38:11).¹¹⁹ From the New Testament, Bedford cited Paul's description of faith as a journey of 'meekness', which entailed 'long-suffering' and 'forbearing one another in love' (Ephesians 4:2).¹²⁰

While Bedford referred to neither Wesley nor Whitefield in his sermon, he did single out 'Moravia' as one location where this 'Doctrine of Assurance' was propagated.¹²¹ Given that Whitefield – who had yet to encounter the London Moravians – was in America for most of 1738, it is unlikely that he was Bedford's target.¹²² Since Wesley was aligned with Peter Böhler and the London Moravians at this time, it seems all the more likely that he was the one under scrutiny here.¹²³ The fact that Bedford preached this sermon very shortly after Wesley's 'heart-warming' Aldersgate experience adds credence to this possibility. While Wesley had yet to refer to assurance in print, he had covered the topic in some of his recent sermons around London. Wesley

¹¹⁸ A. Bedford, *The Doctrine of Assurance; or, The Case of a Weak and Doubting Conscience: A Sermon Preached at St. Lawrence Jewry, in the City of London, on Sunday, August 13 1738* (London, 1738), pp. 4-5.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

¹²² While Whitefield probably met some Moravians during his time in Georgia, he did not encounter the London Moravians until the evening of his return to England in December 1738, when he attended a Fetter Lane meeting. See T.S. Kidd, *George Whitefield America's Spiritual Founding Father* (New Haven and London, 2014), p. 59.

¹²³ For an overview of Wesley's friendship with the Moravians and its subsequent decline, see C. Podmore, *The Moravian Church in England, 1728-1760* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 73-80.

subsequently wrote to Bedford on 28 September 1738, and claimed that others had informed him that he was the target of the sermon in question. In this letter, Wesley stressed that, contrary to what Bedford believed, neither he nor his brother nor ‘the Moravian Church’ referred to such Calvinistic notions as ‘an assurance of salvation’ and ‘the impossibility of falling grace’. Rather, Wesley spoke of an ‘assurance of faith’, a ‘hope; or a conviction’ that ‘we have a measure of the true faith in Christ’, and that, ‘if we continue to watch and strive and pray’, it will lead to ‘sanctification’ in this life and ‘redemption’ in the next.¹²⁴

This altercation is significant because it shows that, immediately after his Aldersgate conversion, Wesley was viewed as a Calvinist by at least one divine. Bedford’s misidentification may also go some way towards explaining Wesley’s subsequent determination to assert his Arminian credentials. Yet, we know from Thomas Church’s later critique of Wesley that – despite his clashes with Whitefield over predestination – High Church proponents of Bull’s soteriology still felt that Wesley unwittingly aided Calvinism. This charge was generated by Wesley’s denial that sanctification preceded any initial justification, thus implying that he supported solifidianism. It is clear from several subsequent publications that Anglicans – both clerical and lay – either intentionally or unintentionally continued to blur these theological distinctions between Wesley and Whitefield. In the second edition of his *History of Modern Enthusiasm* (1757), Theophilus Evans, the vicar of Llangammarch, Brecknockshire, bemoaned the ‘presumptuous Doctrine of Assurance...and the Certainty of Salvation, (whereof the two Champions do make such a Rant in their Journals)’.¹²⁵ Mary Hill, an Anglican communicant of Salisbury, similarly portrayed an

¹²⁴ ‘John Wesley to the Revd. Arthur Bedford, September 28 1738’, in F. Baker (ed.), *The Works of John Wesley*, Volume 25: *Letters* (Oxford, 1980), pp. 562-64.

¹²⁵ T. Evans, *The History of Modern Enthusiasm: From the Reformation to the Present Times*, 2nd edn (London, 1757), p. 117. Although anti-Methodism in Wales is beyond the focus of this dissertation,

assurance of salvation as a doctrine which united Methodists in her 1745 *Essay on Schism*. Significantly, Hill's polemic shows that female religious activism was by no means the preserve of evangelicals during this period.¹²⁶

The topic of assurance went on to be a prominent theme in an anonymous polemic, entitled *A Caveat Against the Methodists* (1760). We now know that the author of this work was Richard Challoner, a Roman Catholic bishop, who served as Vicar Apostolic of the London District from 1758 to his death in 1781. At first glance, Challoner's piece had much in common with the anti-Methodist polemics of Anglican divines. Indeed, Challoner cited various biblical passages which anti-evangelical authors often used to attack 'false Prophets' who were actually just wolves in 'Sheeps Cloathing' (Matthew 7:15), and sexual deviants who were said to 'creep into Houses, and take captive silly Women laden with Sins' (2 Timothy 3:6).¹²⁷ Elsewhere in this text, Challoner attacked 'the Methodist's presumptuous Confidence, in the Way of an absolute Assurance, of the Remission of his Sins, and of his Justification, and of his eternal Salvation.'¹²⁸ Challoner went on to argue that the 'Faith, which the Scripture insists upon as necessary to Justification, does not consist in a confident Assurance (excluding all Manner of Doubt or Fear) of our being justified', but rather, a 'firm Belief of all that God has any ways revealed, or promised.' Initially, it seems that, like Bedford, Challoner either ignored or was oblivious to the fact that there was no

Evans's work will continue to be discussed because, as a London publication, it can be viewed as part of the fight against evangelical 'enthusiasm' which occurred in England.

¹²⁶ M. Hill, *An Essay on Schism. With Several Discourses Contrary to the Methodists-Doctrine* (Salisbury, 1745), pp. 4-6.

¹²⁷ [R. Challoner], *A Caveat Against the Methodists* (London, 1760), p. 10. These passages were a common feature in anti-Methodist polemics. For examples, see Bedford, *Doctrine of Assurance*, p. 37; Land, *Letter to the Rev. Mr. Whitefield*, p. 6; [Z. Grey], *A Serious Address to Lay-Methodists* (London, 1745), p. 2. The subjectivity of what constituted a 'false prophet' can be seen from Whitefield's use of the 'Wolves in Sheep's Cloathing' passage to describe the contemporary Church of England. See Whitefield, *Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal...to His Arrival at Savannah in Georgia*, p. 32. For more on Wesley's clash with Challoner, see Chapters Seven and Eight in D. Butler, *Methodists and Papists: John Wesley and the Catholic Church in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1995).

¹²⁸ [Challoner], *Caveat Against the Methodists*, p. 26.

‘doctrine of assurance’ which unified Methodists. Indeed, Wesley would have agreed with Challoner in so far as he also believed that a person could not possess an assurance of their ultimate salvation.¹²⁹

Such an assurance of salvation, according to Challoner, was not ‘Part of *the Faith which was first delivered to the Saints*’. Indeed, ‘it was never heard of in the Church of God, for fifteen hundred Years’.¹³⁰ This statement suggests that Challoner’s anti-Methodist polemic was actually intended as a subtle attack on the Reformation. Further evidence of this can be discerned from Challoner’s exegesis of Matthew 25: 31-46, which he interpreted as:

The eternal Doom both of the *Sheep* and of the *Goats*, will be decided by their *Works*; particularly by the Works of Mercy and Charity: and the Kingdom of Heaven will be given, as a *Reward*, to those who have been diligent in *good Works*.¹³¹

Here, Challoner was reiterating the Council of Trent’s affirmation that the formal cause (not condition) of justification was a sanctifying grace, which incorporated works. Earlier on in the tract, Challoner had condemned ‘their [the Methodists] Doctrine of Justification by Faith alone’, which had been ‘anathematized at its first Appearance, by the undoubted Heirs of the Apostles’. It was for this reason that the Methodists ‘could have no Commission’ from the ‘Pastors of the apostolic Churches’.¹³² But was it just the Methodists whom Challoner placed outside of the apostolic succession? One can

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 42.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 26. Seven years earlier, an anonymous ‘Lay-Man’ of Dublin had similarly complained that an assurance of salvation had not been ‘heard of in Christendom for 1500 years’. One can assume that this author was also a Roman Catholic. A Lay-Man, *A Few Queries Concerning the Growth of Methodism, Humbly Offered to the Consideration of the Rev. the Bishops and Clergy of the Established Church* (Dublin, 1753), p. 11.

¹³¹ [Challoner], *Caveat Against the Methodists*, p. 38.

¹³² Ibid., p. 8.

assume that, as a Roman Catholic, Challoner was referring to all Protestants when he subsequently voiced his contempt for ‘the Methodists, or any other new raised Sect, who have no Succession from...that original, never-failing, one, holy, catholic and apostolical Society, founded by Christ’.¹³³ Therefore, Challoner was using anti-Methodism as a smokescreen to attack Protestantism. As we shall see in the subsequent chapters, such a method of disguise was far from unusual.

In November 1760, four anti-Methodist tracts were handed to Wesley. He subsequently scrutinised each of these publications in a letter, which appeared in *Lloyds Evening Post* on 24 November 1760. Three of the tracts were written by Anglican authors. The other tract, according to Wesley, was by a ‘Dignitary’ of ‘the church of Rome.’ This, of course, was a reference to Challoner’s work. While Wesley was oblivious to its authorship, it was clear to him that ‘*A Caveat against the Methodists*’ was ‘in reality, a Caveat against the *Church of England*; or rather against all the Churches in *Europe* who dissent from the Church of *Rome*.’ Wesley was deeply disturbed that this work was being distributed alongside Anglican attacks on Methodism. What especially puzzled him was why any ‘Protestants, nay Protestant Clergymen’ wished to purchase and disseminate such a polemic. Wesley surmised that some of his Protestant opponents may have seen ‘introducing Popery’ as the ‘only way to overthrow’ Methodism, which they viewed as the larger ‘evil of the two’. Alternatively, it was possible that Challoner’s real agenda had escaped some Protestant readers. In the event of the latter, Wesley urged his Protestant adversaries to consider their actions ‘more seriously’.¹³⁴

Wesley went on to write a more detailed response to Challoner’s piece, a portion of which appeared in the *London Chronicle* on 19 February 1761. In this letter,

¹³³ Ibid., p. 5.

¹³⁴ *Lloyds Evening Post*, 24-26 November 1760.

Wesley addressed several of Challoner's doctrinal criticisms in turn. For example, he countered Challoner's charge that the early Church Fathers had 'anathematized' the doctrine of justification preached by the Methodists. In fact, the 'Prelates at the Council of Trent' had 'anathematized the Apostle Paul' with their doctrine of justification. Intriguingly, Wesley made no effort to correct Challoner's claim that an assurance of salvation was a doctrine which united Methodists. Evidently, such restraint was in stark contrast to Wesley's earlier rebuttal of Arthur Bedford's *Doctrine of Assurance*. The most plausible explanation for Wesley's silence on this matter is that – in the face of a Roman Catholic adversary – he believed it was counterproductive to highlight the divisions amongst Protestants. Indeed, any attempt to distance himself from the Calvinistic doctrine of assurance might have been interpreted as a show of support for Challoner's arguments.¹³⁵ Thus, by comparing Wesley's responses to Bedford and Challoner, we can see the differing ways in which he responded to his critics, and how he manipulated these responses to suit the intended recipient. When Wesley addressed a High Church opponent, he was happy to distance himself from many of the Reformed doctrines which were favoured by Calvinist evangelicals. On the other hand, when Wesley addressed a Roman Catholic adversary, his top priority was to convey an image, albeit a false one, of Protestant unity.

Conclusions

These soteriological clashes between Methodists and High Church divines need to be viewed as a continuation of those earlier debates which had occurred after the Restoration between Arminian Anglicans and their Reformed adversaries. This point

¹³⁵ Curnock, *Journal*, IV, pp. 434-39.

has been illustrated by focusing on Whitefield and Warne's extensive utilisation of Beveridge and Edwards, along with the regular appeals which anti-Methodist Anglicans made to George Bull. Without denying that mid-eighteenth-century evangelicalism incorporated some innovative features (most notably, Whitefield's extensive use of the press), such continuities with the past suggest that, theologically speaking, it is inaccurate to refer to a 'Great Awakening' which suddenly occurred in the late 1730s. Indeed, while Edwards died in 1716, subsequent republications of his key works ensured that his legacy survived into the 1720s and 1730s. Of course, the presence of Wesley means that one cannot simply label evangelicals as 'anti-Arminians'. Soteriologically speaking, Wesley had much in common with his High Church opponents. However, because of his references to a doctrine of 'assurance', Wesley was initially suspected of being a Calvinist by Arthur Bedford. Furthermore, most High Church divines would have rejected Wesley's seemingly 'enthusiastic' notion that one could be 'assured' of the Holy Spirit's presence. Nevertheless, Bedford and others would have agreed with Wesley's belief that one's *full* assurance of faith resulted from sanctifying works. Yet – despite his attacks on predestination – Wesley's teachings on faith and works were still disapproved by some Arminian divines. As we have seen, Thomas Church viewed Wesley as an unwitting 'Trojan horse' for Calvinism because (like Whitefield) he denied that sanctifying works were a condition of the evangelical New Birth. Paradoxically, however, both Wesley and Whitefield were sometimes charged with placing *too* much emphasis on sanctification. The next chapter will discuss these attacks on Methodist asceticism, and explore the ways in which anti-Methodist divines tried to reconcile such grievances with their seemingly contradictory allegations of antinomianism.

Chapter Three

Sanctification, Asceticism and Pleasure

Introduction

In the second edition of his *History of Modern Enthusiasm* (1757), Theophilus Evans described an incident which had occurred in New London, Connecticut, in 1743. Using the anti-evangelical work of the Boston ‘Old Light’ Congregationalist, Charles Chauncy, as his source material, Evans described the activities of one of Whitefield’s ‘fiery Zealots’, James Davenport. Having ‘pretended to receive a Command from the Spirit to destroy every Ornament and bodily Dress that any one most delighted in’, Davenport had apparently ordered his followers to throw their finery onto an open fire. Intriguingly, Evans had omitted the crudest (and most memorable) aspect of this story. According to both Chauncy’s work and a couple of Boston newspapers, Davenport had removed his own breeches, and thrown them into the flames. An embarrassed follower reportedly retrieved the breeches and ordered Davenport to instantly put them back on.¹ Here, Evans was recounting an incident which, according to historians of the ‘Great Awakening’, exacerbated pre-existing tensions between radical and moderate evangelicals, and, ultimately, curtailed the progress of evangelicalism in New England.² In the previous chapter, it was shown that – because of their seemingly excessive emphasis on justification by faith, and their apparent neglect of good works – Methodists were often accused of propagating antinomianism. Paradoxically, however,

¹ Evans, *History of Modern Enthusiasm*, p. 114. For colonial accounts of this incident, see C. Chauncy, *Seasonable Thoughts on the State of Religion in New England* (Boston, 1743), pp. 220-23; *Boston Weekly Post-Boy*, 28 March 1743; *Boston Evening-Post*, 11 April 1743.

² T.S. Kidd, *The Great Awakening: The Roots of Evangelical Christianity in Colonial America* (New Haven and London, 2007), pp. 153-55. H.S. Stout and P. Onuf, ‘James Davenport and the Great Awakening in New London’, *Journal of American History*, 70 (1983), pp. 556-78.

evangelicals were also charged with taking their sanctification too far by teaching lessons in self-denial and asceticism which, to many Anglican divines, were unrealistic. Evans's reference to the Davenport incident was only one of many attacks on evangelical self-denial. Indeed, more prominent evangelicals, such as Wesley and Whitefield, were often attacked for their ascetic teachings.

This chapter will commence by considering the 'holy living' asceticism which Wesley acquired at Oxford. It will show that, throughout the post-Aldersgate years of his ministry, Wesley continued to espouse many of the teachings which were associated with such 'holy living' authorities as Jeremy Taylor and, most notably, William Law. This first section will close by considering attacks on Wesley's asceticism by anti-Methodist divines – in particular, George Lavington, who associated such teachings with the popish monasticism of Ignatius Loyola and other Roman Catholic Saints. These discussions will then move on to consider Whitefield's teachings on self-denial, and the ways in which his views on 'perfection' varied from Wesley's. This will be followed by an examination of the various anti-Methodist responses to Whitefield's asceticism. More specifically, it will consider the various scriptural and philosophical arguments which these polemicists deployed as a means of combating his rigorist teachings. Finally, this chapter will close with an explanation for why the Methodists' asceticism proved to be so controversial. Moreover, these discussions will consider the ways in which such anti-Methodist divines as Joseph Trapp reconciled their attacks on evangelical asceticism with their seemingly contradictory charges of antinomianism.

Wesley's 'Holy Living' Asceticism

During his early years as a member of the Oxford 'Holy Club', Wesley practiced a rigorist regimen, which involved regular prayer, fasting and Bible study. There is no doubt that the seemingly monastic lifestyle of the Oxford Methodists was motivated by their desire to restore the 'primitive Christianity' of the post-apostolic Fathers. Such primitivism was heavily inspired by the patristic works of William Cave (1637-1713) and numerous 'holy living' authorities, including Jeremy Taylor's *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* (1650), Robert Nelson's *The Practice of True Devotion* (1708), and William Beveridge's *Private Thoughts Upon Religion* (1709). Like Wesley, these theologians had immersed themselves in the writings of the Fathers. Although he was quick to condemn their Roman Catholicism, Wesley's early primitivism was also influenced by the mystical piety of the medieval monk, Thomas à Kempis (1380-1471), and the French nobleman, Gaston de Renty (1611-1649). Furthermore, it was through William Law that Wesley was introduced to the *Theologia Germanica*, an anonymously written treatise on mystical piety from the fourteenth century. Crucially, by around 1730, Wesley was also reading Law's ascetic teachings.³

In his *Christian Perfection*, Law stressed that, when he referred to 'perfection', he was not describing a 'State of Life' which was 'neither necessary, nor practicable by the Generality of Christians'.⁴ Indeed, Law firmly adhered to the Augustinian doctrine of original sin, which, in turn, meant that he viewed sinless perfection as something which was unattainable in this life. In fact, Law believed that it was this 'Corruption of

³ H. Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast: John Wesley and the Rise of Methodism* (London, 1989), pp. 68-73; R.P. Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists* (Nashville, 1995), pp. 35-43. Hammond, *John Wesley in America*, pp. 21-23. For Wesley's reading of de Renty, see E. Duffy, 'Wesley and the Counter-Reformation', in J. Garnett and C. Matthew (eds), *Revival and Religion Since 1700: Essays for John Walsh* (London, 1993), pp. 1-19.

⁴ W. Law, *A Practical Treatise Upon Christian Perfection* (London, 1726), p. 1.

our Nature' which made 'Mortification, Self-denial, and the Death of our Bodies necessary.'⁵ So what, in Law's mind, was 'perfection', and how did one achieve it? By 'perfection', Law meant a 'holy and religious Conduct' in 'every State of Life'.⁶ To Law, this entailed the renunciation of one's earthly possessions. Moreover, Law described the 'peaceful, pleasurable Enjoyments of Riches' as 'a State of Life every where condemned by our Blessed Saviour.'⁷ As a means of supporting this claim, Law quoted from numerous biblical passages. One such passage was Jesus's command to his disciples that they needed to 'deny themselves and take up their Cross daily' (Luke 9:23).⁸ Law also referred to the synoptic Gospels' accounts of Jesus's encounter with a 'rich young man' (Matthew 19:16-30; Mark 10:17-31; Luke 18:18-30). To Law, these passages illustrated the virtues of communitarianism and the evils of '*Mammon*'. This, apparently, was because Jesus had instructed the young man to sell all his possessions, and give all his money to the poor, even though the young man had rigidly adhered to the 'Commandments of God'.⁹ Furthermore, Law diverged from the Reformation's condemnation of celibacy by arguing that such abstinence carried spiritual benefits:

You know, my children, the *high perfection*, and the *great rewards* of virginity; you know how it frees from worldly cares and troubles, and furnishes means and opportunities of higher advancements in a divine life; therefore love, and esteem, and honour virginity: bless God for all that glorious company of holy virgins, that from the beginning of Christianity have, in the several ages of the Church, renounced the cares and pleasures of matrimony, to be perpetual examples of solitude, contemplation, and prayer.¹⁰

⁵ Ibid., p. 20. For a recent study on Law's Augustinianism, and how it influenced Wesley, see J.W. Wright, "'Use' and 'Enjoy' in John Wesley: John Wesley's Participation Within the Augustinian Tradition", *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, 6 (2014), pp. 23-28.

⁶ Law, *Practical Treatise*, p. 2.

⁷ Ibid., p. 99.

⁸ Ibid., p. 171.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 128, 161.

¹⁰ W. Law, *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life. Adapted to the State and Condition of All Orders of Christians* (London, 1729), p. 365.

Law's teachings on celibacy had been prefigured by earlier 'holy living' divines. For example, in 1650, Jeremy Taylor had claimed that celibacy was a 'huge advantage of [to] religion'. Celibacy's advantage, apparently, was that it enabled clergymen to live 'a life of Angels', and provided them with the 'great opportunity for the retirements of devotion'.¹¹ Of course, it was not just Wesley and his circle who read Law's works at Oxford. It was there that a young Samuel Johnson read Law's *A Serious Call* in 1729. Initially, the Pembroke College undergraduate had expected it to be 'a dull book', which he would 'laugh at'. Yet, Johnson found Law's book to be an 'overmatch' for him. It was then that he began 'thinking in earnest of religion'.¹²

In fact, both Law's *A Serious Call* and his *Christian Perfection* seem to have sold well. By 1734, both works had gone through three editions. Evidently, these works were at least partly intended as attacks on the consumer culture which is often associated with the eighteenth century.¹³ The fact that there was clearly a market for Law's ascetic teachings is significant because it suggests that eighteenth-century society was not nearly as frivolous and extravagant as it has often been portrayed. Moreover, when John Wesley completed an edited edition of Thomas à Kempis's *The Imitation of Christ* (c.1418-c.1427), it was Charles Rivington who was responsible for its publication and sale in 1735. The fact that Rivington published and sold numerous High Church works – including various subsequent attacks on evangelicalism – is significant because it suggests that there was nothing particularly controversial about

¹¹ J. Taylor, *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Living* (London, 1650), p. 82. For more on asceticism and celibacy during the latter half of the seventeenth century, see S. Apetrei, 'The Life of Angels': Celibacy and Asceticism in Anglicanism 1660-c.1700', *Reformation and Renaissance Review*, 13 (2011), pp. 247-74. For a wider overview of post-Reformation defences of celibacy, see B.W. Young, 'The Anglican Origins of Newman's Celibacy', *Church History*, 65 (1996), pp. 15-27.

¹² J. Boswell, *The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D.: Including a Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides*, ed. J.W. Croker, 2 vols. (New York, 1833), I, p. 24.

¹³ J. Brewer, *The Pleasures of the Imagination: English Culture in the Eighteenth Century* (London, 1997); M. Berg, *Luxury and Pleasure in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (Oxford, 2005).

Wesley's early asceticism.¹⁴ Nevertheless, some undoubtedly viewed his asceticism as extravagant and eccentric. Indeed, the Oxford Methodists' espousal of these various 'holy living' teachings soon caused them to be the subject of ridicule.

On 9 December 1732, an item appeared in *Fog's Weekly Journal*, which described the Oxford Methodists as 'Sons of Sorrow', who were constantly in a state of 'perpetual Melancholy' because of their exclusion of 'the most innocent Pleasures.' Oxford, to them, was 'nothing else but a Monastery.' Elsewhere, the author hinted at their celibate regime by noting that they 'Blood let once a Fortnight, to keep down the carnal Man'. The author was sure that, 'if they knew how to make a proper Incision', the Oxford Methodists would follow Origen's example of self-mutilation.¹⁵ Importantly, this item appeared very shortly after the death of William Morgan. It was rumoured that Morgan, an associate of Wesley, had been driven to starvation by his rigorous self-denial. In October 1732, Wesley had written a letter to Morgan's father, in which he strenuously denied that the young man's final illness had been exacerbated, if not caused, by his asceticism.

Further evidence that Wesley's asceticism remained unchanged by Morgan's death can be discerned from a sermon which he preached at the University Church, St Mary's, in January 1733. In this sermon, which was entitled 'The Circumcision of the Heart', Wesley stressed the importance of imitating Christ, and striving for perfection. While many viewed the contents of this sermon as eccentric and excessive, it did gain the approval of the Rector of Lincoln College, Euseby Isham.¹⁶ It is important to note that all of this was happening at a time when Oxford was gripped by a widespread fear that Deism was penetrating the university. Therefore, it is easy to understand why such

¹⁴ See Wesley, *Christian's Pattern*.

¹⁵ *Fog's Weekly Journal*, 9 December 1732.

¹⁶ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 92; Heitzenrater, *Wesley and the People Called Methodists*, pp. 47-48.

influential dons as Isham were reluctant curb Wesley's seemingly eccentric excesses.¹⁷ Another individual who defended Wesley's asceticism was the anonymous author of *The Oxford Methodists* (1733). While this work has traditionally been attributed to William Law, it is now generally believed that the novelist, Samuel Richardson (or one of his associates), wrote it.¹⁸ Much of this work focused on the recent attack in *Fog's Weekly Journal*. The author responded to these criticisms by praising the Oxford Methodists for tackling those 'Entertainments and Diversions' which usually flowed from the 'Social Bottle'. Such 'diversions', according to the author, signified the 'Depravity of the Age'.¹⁹ Therefore, this source provides further evidence to suggest that there was a receptive audience for these attacks on Georgian consumerism.

In his recent monograph, Geordan Hammond compellingly argues that Wesley's (ultimately disastrous) Georgia mission was particularly motivated by the High Church and Non-Juring primitivism which he had acquired at Oxford.²⁰ However, by the time he returned to England in 1738, the demoralised Wesley had started to distance himself from many of the teachings which had proved to be so influential during his Oxford years and at the beginning of his Georgia mission. It was shortly before his Aldersgate conversion that Wesley distanced himself from Law's seemingly legalistic emphasis on works.²¹ Nevertheless, there is no doubt that the 'holy living' tradition had left a lasting impression on Wesley. Throughout the post-Aldersgate years of his ministry, Wesley

¹⁷ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 68.

¹⁸ J.A. Dussinger, 'The Oxford Methodists (1733;1738): The Purloined Letter of John Wesley at Samuel Richardson's Press', in M. New and G. Reedy (eds), *Theology and Literature in the Age of Johnson: Resisting Secularism* (Newark, 2012), pp. 27-48.

¹⁹ *The Oxford Methodists: Being Some Account of a Society of Young Gentlemen in That City, So Denominated* (London, 1733), pp. 8, 22.

²⁰ Hammond, *John Wesley in America*, passim.

²¹ On 14 May 1738, Wesley wrote the first of several letters to Law. In this letter, Wesley charged Law with placing excessive emphasis on works, and neglecting the importance of possessing a saving faith. For more on Wesley's relationship with Law, and how it evolved, see G.J. Joling-van der Sar, 'The Controversy Between William Law and John Wesley', *English Studies*, 87 (2006), pp. 446-49; Hammond, *John Wesley in America*, pp. 47, 74, 140, 143-44. See also, I. Rivers, 'William Law and Religious Revival: The Reception of *A Serious Call*', *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 71 (2008), pp. 633-49.

espoused various ascetic teachings which were associated with Law. This is evident from such works as Wesley's *Christian Perfection* (1741), in which he defined exactly what it meant to achieve 'perfection' or 'entire sanctification'. Like Law, Wesley was keen to stress that he was not endorsing a doctrine of sinless perfection. As a firm believer in the Augustinian doctrine of original sin, Wesley denied that it was possible for Christians to be freed from ignorance and temptation. Rather, by 'perfection', Wesley meant a state in which Christians no longer committed any outward or voluntary sins.²² Moreover, Wesley continued to share Law's belief that celibacy provided spiritual benefits. In his *Thoughts on Marriage and a Single Life* (1743), Wesley commended those Christians who kept '*themselves pure* in a single Life', but stressed that he was no opponent of marriage, which was 'agreeable to Holy Writ'.²³ Finally, Wesley continued to display an attitude to money which was reminiscent of Law's communitarianism. In one sermon on the 'use of money', Wesley issued the following instruction: 'having first gained all you can, and secondly saved all you can, then give all you can.'²⁴

It was during the post-Aldersgate years of his ministry that Wesley's asceticism was heavily criticised by various Anglican divines. Initially, however, such teachings tended to attract ridicule rather than serious criticism. In a letter to Thomas Birch, dated 16 September 1738, William Warburton described how Wesley and another Methodist preacher had recently been travelling 'on foot'. Upon entering a certain neighbourhood, they had taken 'up their lodging with a Clergyman of their acquaintance.' The following morning, the 'master of the house' had apparently discovered 'their chamber-

²² J. Wesley, *Christian Perfection* (London, 1741), pp. 12-14, 17.

²³ J. Wesley, *Thoughts on Marriage and a Single Life*, 2nd edn (Bristol, 1743), pp. 2, 9. This work went through multiple editions.

²⁴ J. Wesley, 'The Use of Money. A Sermon on Luke xvi. 9', in J. Wesley, *Sermons on Several Occasions* (Bristol, 1760), p. 140. For more on Wesley's Christian communitarianism, see Walsh, 'John Wesley and the Community of Goods'.

pot full of blood', and, 'on asking the occasion, was told it was *their method*, when the blood grew rebellious, to draw it off, by breathing a vein in this manner'. Though there is much ambiguity here, it is plausible to assume that Warburton was referring to phlebotomy as a means of relieving lust.²⁵ As Wesley's popularity grew, some clergymen became increasingly concerned about his ascetic teachings. In the first volume of his *Enthusiasm of Methodists*, Lavington associated Wesley's asceticism with the 'enthusiastic' monasticism of Roman Catholics Saints.

For example, Lavington noted that St. Nereus had been 'such a lover of poverty, that he frequently besought *Almighty God* to bring him to that State as to stand in need of a *Penny*.'²⁶ Similarly, St. Francis of Assisi had always worn 'Apparel of the *vilest sort*.'²⁷ Lavington was particularly keen to highlight the asceticism of the sixteenth-century Jesuit founder, Ignatius Loyola, who had 'made the *Women* weep, tear their Hair, and charming Faces, and throw away their *vain Ornaments*.'²⁸ Like Wesley, Loyola had apparently received 'Faith, and the *complete Perfection* of Divine Sanctity' by 'a *sudden light*'. Here, Lavington was evidently portraying Wesley's perfectionism as a popish form of monasticism.²⁹ Yet, during the late 1730s and early 1740s, it was Whitefield, not Wesley, whom anti-Methodist authors tended to associate with asceticism and perfectionism. When one reads Whitefield's early works, this hardly comes as a surprise.

²⁵ Nichols and Nichols, *Illustrations*, II, pp. 94-96. Gibson and Begiato also discuss this anecdote in *Sex and the Church* (pp. 150-51).

²⁶ [G. Lavington], *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd* (London, 1749), p. 25.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

Whitefield's Self-Denial

As a child, Whitefield had shown a passion for dressing up and performing. In fact, his original ambition had been to become an actor. The fact that these views did not survive into adulthood is clear from his later claim: 'when you see the players on the stage, you see the Devil's children grinning at you.'³⁰ Opposition to the theatre was only one aspect of Whitefield's self-denial. In an early sermon, Whitefield alleged that many of his Anglican brethren were guilty of 'frequenting Taverns', and indulging in 'Billiards, Bowls, and other unlawful Games'.³¹ An early *Journal* entry similarly condemned those 'pleasure-taking Brethren' within the established Church.³² We have already seen that Whitefield was a staunch opponent of *The Whole Duty of Man* and Tillotson's sermons. To Whitefield, both authorities were guilty of propagating a seemingly lax attitude towards recreational diversions. In his 1740 attack on *The Whole Duty of Man*, Whitefield condemned the author's implication that 'Recreations' and 'Gaming' were acceptable in the eyes of God if '*the End of our doing it be meerly to recreate ourselves*'. Whitefield went on to describe a man whom he had recently 'reproved...for Gaming in the *Christmas Holy-Days*'. Apparently, this man had attempted to justify his actions by claiming that '*the Whole Duty of Man*' had instructed him that 'he might do so'.³³

Quoting John Edwards as his source, Whitefield also condemned Tillotson for 'blaming and chastising *those Parents that strictly forbid their Children the use of*

³⁰ Stout, *Divine Dramatist*, p. 239.

³¹ G. Whitefield, *Jesus Christ the Only Way to Salvation. A Sermon Preached on Kennington-Common* (London, 1739), p. 6.

³² Whitefield, *Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal, from his Arrival at London*, p. 75.

³³ Whitefield, *A Letter from the Rev. Mr. Whitefield...Shewing the Fundamental Error of a Book, Entitled The Whole Duty of Man*, p. 10.

Playing Cards or Games'.³⁴ Compared to Edwards and Whitefield, Tillotson had undoubtedly favoured a more moderate approach to recreations. Nevertheless, one could hardly describe Tillotson's attitudes as 'lax'. In one sermon, he had condemned those who were 'drudges and slaves' to their 'sensual pleasures and lusts'.³⁵ Moreover, while Tillotson acknowledged that plays had the potential to be 'instructing and useful', he was appalled by the 'prophaneness' which seemed to surround theatres. To Tillotson, such lewd behaviour was 'not fit to be permitted in a *civilized*, much less in a *Christian Nation*.' Given Tillotson's Puritan background, such sentiments should hardly come as a surprise, though Puritans were certainly not the only religious group who attacked the stage.³⁶ Indeed, anti-stage sentiments were also voiced by such Non-Jurors as Jeremy Collier and William Law, who were the theological and political antithesis of the Latitudinarian Tillotson. One can assume that Whitefield would also have agreed with much of what Tillotson had to say about theatres.³⁷

There is no doubt that, as with Wesley, Whitefield's asceticism was at least partially inspired by Law. Yet, the connections between Whitefield and Law should not be overstated. Even during the early years of Whitefield's ministry – when he was still under the influence of the Oxford Methodists – there is little evidence to suggest that he was particularly reliant on Law.³⁸ Whitefield quoted, albeit only once, from Law's *Christian Perfection* in his *The Nature and Necessity of Self-Denial* (1738), a sermon which he had originally preached in October 1737. Unlike Law's works, this sermon

³⁴ Whitefield, *Three Letters*, pp. 11-12.

³⁵ J. Tillotson, 'Sermon CLVIII: Of Diligence in Our General and Particular Calling', in Barker, *Works of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson*, II, p. 383.

³⁶ J. Tillotson, 'Sermon CLX: The Evil of Corrupt Communication', in *Ibid.*, p. 399.

³⁷ See J. Collier, *A Short View of the Immorality and Profaneness of the English Stage* (London, 1698); W. Law, *The Absolute Unlawfulness of the Stage-entertainment Fully Demonstrated* (London, 1726).

³⁸ In his 1740 spiritual autobiography, Whitefield briefly described how he had read and been impressed by Law's *Serious Call* before he entered Oxford in 1732. See Whitefield, *Short Account of God's Dealings*, p. 25. Like Wesley, Whitefield became increasingly cautious of Law's seemingly legalistic texts. As Isabel Rivers has noted, Whitefield did not include his original endorsement of Law in a subsequent edition of his spiritual autobiography, which was published in 1756. See Rivers, 'William Law and Religious Revival', p. 636.

contained no explicit reference to celibacy, suggesting that, by this point, Whitefield possessed (or, at the very least, was developing) a Reformed suspicion of this seemingly popish teaching. Nevertheless, much of this sermon mirrored the ascetic teachings of Law and other ‘holy living’ theologians.³⁹ Importantly, Whitefield’s Calvinism was not totally confirmed when he preached this sermon.⁴⁰ At one point in this sermon, Whitefield described ‘Self-suffering’ and ‘Self-renuntiation [sic]’ as ‘*indispensable Means of recovering our Primitive Glory*’. Such sentiments were clearly not Calvinistic.⁴¹

Elsewhere in this tract, Whitefield claimed that those who professed to be followers of Christ were called to ‘a constant State of voluntary or Self-suffering and Self-denial.’⁴² He went on to state that all actions, including eating and drinking, should not be done as a means of merely pleasing the self. Rather, such actions needed to be done ‘*to the Glory of God*’. Whitefield stressed that his message was not that one should ‘have no Pleasure in any Thing’ that one did. In fact, one found ‘*Pleasantness*’ in ‘*Wisdom’s Ways*’. However, Whitefield added that ‘pleasing ourselves must not be the principal, but only the subordinate End of our Actions.’⁴³ As Law had previously done, Whitefield reflected on Jesus’s commands for his followers to ‘deny’ or ‘*forsake all*’ (Luke 9:23 and 14:33). Unlike Law, Whitefield did not advance a communitarian exegesis of these passages. In fact, Whitefield was careful to add that he did not intend these passages to be ‘taken in a literal Sense’. He noted that the rich would cease to be ‘serviceable to the Poor’ if they were obliged to sell all their possessions, and donate all their money to charity. To Whitefield, these passages simply meant that Christians were

³⁹ Whitefield, *Nature and Necessity of Self-Denial*, p. 13.

⁴⁰ Olson, ‘Whitefield’s Conversion’, in Hammond and Jones, *Life, Context, and Legacy*, pp. 36-39.

⁴¹ Whitefield, *Nature and Necessity of Self-Denial*, p. 16.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

required to deny themselves the ‘pleasurable Indulgence and Self-enjoyment of Riches’.⁴⁴

Finally, Whitefield stated that, by renouncing the world, one would be ‘*made perfectly whole*’.⁴⁵ Given that Whitefield went on to become a vocal opponent of the Wesleyan doctrine of Christian Perfection, it may initially come as a surprise to see him deploying similar terminology in this sermon. It would be misleading to attribute this apparent discrepancy to the fact that Whitefield’s Calvinism was not entirely confirmed when he wrote this sermon. Indeed, Whitefield continued to refer to a doctrine of ‘perfection’ in his later works, which were written after his Calvinism was entirely confirmed. Moreover, Whitefield continued to believe that all regenerates had achieved a *degree* of perfection. Like Wesley, he often urged his readers and listeners to strive for perfection by imitating the life of Jesus. In fact, many of Whitefield’s grievances about Wesleyan perfectionism stemmed from an erroneous interpretation of what Wesley meant by ‘perfection’. More specifically, Whitefield, along with some of his followers, erroneously believed that, like Quakers, Wesley viewed ‘sinless perfection’ as something which was attainable in this life.⁴⁶ As we have seen, Wesley strenuously denied that sinless perfection was an attainable goal for Christians. Ironically, Whitefield was sometimes forced to assert his rejection of sinless perfection. In a 1739 publication, Whitefield stated that Christians ‘can never be *Righteous enough*, much less *perfectly Righteous*’ because ‘in this Life, Men cannot attain to the Perfection of

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp. 7-8.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴⁶ In a letter to Wesley, dated 25 September 1740, Whitefield lamented that Wesley seemed to believe that ‘a sinless Perfection in this Life [is] attainable’. Whitefield then attempted to correct this perceived error by quoting an Anglican minister’s words to a Quaker. This letter appeared in a polemic by William Fleetwood, which was devoted to attacking Wesley’s doctrine of perfection. While virtually nothing is known about Fleetwood (other than his status as a layman), one can assume that, given his willingness to quote Whitefield, he was an admirer of the Calvinist evangelical. Like Whitefield, Fleetwood erroneously believed that Wesley believed in sinless perfection, and devoted the bulk of this work to combating this doctrine. See W. Fleetwood, *The Perfectionists Examin’d; Or, Inherent Perfection in this Life, No Scripture Doctrine. To which is Affix’d, the Rev. Mr. Whitefield’s Thoughts on this Subject, in a Letter to Mr. Wesley* (London, 1741). For Whitefield’s letter to Wesley, see pp. 96-99.

the heavenly Father'. In this instance, Whitefield was responding to Joseph Trapp, who had recently published his *Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger*.⁴⁷

'Righteous Over-Much'?

Trapp's *Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger* was clearly written in response to Whitefield's *Nature and Necessity of Self-Denial*. Trapp commenced his polemic by denouncing Whitefield and his followers for their 'immoderate, and mistaken Sanctity', which had apparently led them to 'utterly reject all Enjoyment of worldly Pleasures, Honours, Riches, &c.'⁴⁸ Later in this polemic, Trapp expanded on these sentiments by stating that, under Whitefield's regime

No Sort of Gayety or Expensiveness in Dress is permitted to any Persons whatsoever: No sort of Recreation or Diversion; nothing but an universal Mortification, and Self-Denial: No Pleasure, but from Religion only; so that to taste an agreeable Fruit, or smell to a Rose must be unlawful: The bodily Appetites must not be in the least Degree gratify'd, any farther than is absolutely necessary to keep Body and Soul together, and Mankind in Being: No Allowances are to be made for melancholy Misfortunes; or human Infirmary: Grief must be cur'd only by Prayer; to divert it (as the World speaks) by wordly Amusements, is carnal and unchristian: No Books must be read, but Books of Piety: Even the noble Writings of the ancient *Greeks* and *Romans* are unfit to be perus'd by a Christian; who ought to renounce human Learning, and *know nothing but Jesus Christ, and Him crucify'd*.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ G. Whitefield, *A Preservative Against Unsettled Notions, and Want of Principles, in Regard to Righteousness and Christian Perfection* (London, 1739), pp. 22, 29. In another sermon, Whitefield described 'Christian Perfection' as something which 'though begun on Earth, will be consummated only in Heaven'. See *Discourses on the Following Subjects...To Which is Added, Prayers on Several Occasions* (London, 1739), p. 5. See also I. Maddock, *Men of One Book: A Comparison of Two Methodist Preachers, John Wesley and George Whitefield* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 225-26.

⁴⁸ Trapp, *Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger*, p. 4.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16.

It was in his *Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger* that Trapp identified William Law as the root cause of Whitefield's 'uncommanded *Perfections*'.⁵⁰ Trapp expanded on this argument in a later polemic, where he claimed the following:

It is true, I always thought his *Treatise upon Christian Perfection* to be one of the most *Pernicious Books* that has been publish'd in This Age; and could not but lament our hard Lot, that while we are combating *Debauchery, Infidelity, and Atheism* on the one Hand, we should be pester'd with *Enthusiasm, and Frenzy in Religion*, on the other. When it first appeared in the World, I said I fear'd it would do a great deal of Mischief; and so, I am well assur'd, *it has*. When the Sect of *Methodists* first started up, I imputed it very much to *That Book*; and so did Others, as well as I. Accordingly, the Leaders of those Enthusiasts extol it to the Skies.⁵¹

The fact that Whitefield's *Nature and Necessity of Self-Denial* had contained only one brief reference to Law suggests that Trapp overstated the connections between these two individuals considerably. Unfortunately for Whitefield, this meant that Trapp erroneously associated some of Law's teachings with him. For example, Trapp portrayed Whitefield as somebody who supported Law's communitarian exegesis of Jesus's command to forsake all. Yet, Whitefield had deliberately distanced himself from this doctrine in his sermon on self-denial. Trapp noted that, 'in the Days of Christ', it was 'almost impossible for a Man to adhere to Christ, without hazarding the Loss of his temporal Goods'. Thus, in this context, '*forsaking all*' probably meant 'no more, than *being ready to do so*, whenever the Discharge of *our Duty* shall require it'. This problem was simply not something which Hanoverian Christians were likely to

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 4, 14-15.

⁵¹ Trapp, *A Reply to Mr. Law's Earnest and Serious Answer*, pp. 6-7.

encounter.⁵² Trapp's sentiments were echoed by John Brownsword, a curate of Sussex, who similarly argued that it was wrong for modern Christians to view Jesus's words to the rich young man as an endorsement of such a '*levelling Principle*' as Christian communitarianism.⁵³ Brownsword went on to cite numerous examples of property ownership in the New Testament. For example, he noted that John 'had his own House' (John 19:27). Similarly, Barnabas 'had an Estate of his own, which he sold afterwards indeed towards the support of the Christian Church...But not from the Obligation of any Christian Precept' (Acts 4:36-37). Finally, Peter had permitted 'Christians to retain their own if they thought fit' when he said to Ananias '*Whilst it remained was it not thine own, and after it was sold, was it not in thy own power, i.e. to dispose of the Money as thou wouldst?*' (Acts 5:4).⁵⁴

Others focused on Whitefield's apparent contempt for recreational diversions. For example, one anonymous 'Presbyter', who was mentioned in the previous chapter, branded Whitefield 'an *over-scrupulous Zealot*' for his attack on *The Whole Duty of Man*'s approval of recreational activities. Rather than endorsing such 'idle Pastimes' as 'Nine-Pins, Skittles, Dice, Cards, and such-like', this devotional text had merely aimed to encourage 'Moderation' as a more pragmatic alternative to the seemingly joyless lifestyle of seventeenth-century Puritans.⁵⁵ Samuel Weller similarly defended such diversions as '*Horse-races, Balls, and Assemblies*' – all of which, to Whitefield, were '*lying Vanities, hellish Meetings, and the Devil's strongest Holds.*'⁵⁶ Weller provided scriptural precedent for these activities, in particular, dancing (an activity which had

⁵² Trapp, *Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger*, pp. 19-20.

⁵³ J. Brownsword, *The Case of the Rich Young Man in the Gospel, Endeavoured to be Set in a Clear Light, and the Levelling Principle of Selling All, and Giving it to the Poor, as Drawn from that Passage and Lately Advanced and Taught By Some, Proved to be Ill Grounded: A Sermon Preached in the Parish Church of St. Mary le Bow, London, on Sunday, September 16 1739* (London, 1739), p. 11.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵⁵ Presbyter, *Defence of the Author of the Whole Duty of Man*, pp. 37-38.

⁵⁶ [Weller], *Trial of Mr. Whitefield's Spirit*, p. 44. The quotations from Whitefield originally appeared in: *A Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal, During the Time He was Detained in England by the Embargo* (London, 1739), pp. 30-31.

traditionally been condemned by continental Reformers and Anglo-American Puritans).⁵⁷ Initially, Weller quoted ‘*the Virgin should then rejoyce in the Dance, both young Men and old together*’ (Jeremiah 31:13).⁵⁸ This quotation was followed by a description of the Parable of the Prodigal Son, where the ‘elder son’ heard ‘Music and Dancing’ when he ‘drew nigh to his Father’s House (Luke 15:25).’⁵⁹ William Bowman, a Yorkshire incumbent, adopted a similar strategy, and rhetorically asked Methodist preachers, ‘DID not our blessed Saviour *come eating and drinking?* Was he not a Guest at Weddings, Suppers, and Entertainments? Did he not work a Miracle in converting Water into Wine...to answer the innocent Ends of Cheerfulness and Mirth?’⁶⁰

However, anti-Methodist authors sometimes deployed philosophical as well as scriptural arguments in their discussions on pleasures and recreations. If we return to Weller’s *Trial of Mr. Whitefield’s Spirit*, this piece claimed that, when one appealed to the ‘Voice of Nature and right Reason’, one found that ‘Relaxation, Amusement, or Diversion’ was ‘necessary to the Human Mind’, and ‘indispensably requisite to the Health of the Body.’ Although Weller did not deny that some diversions were harmful, he stressed that it was one’s piety which enabled one to decide which diversions were ‘innocent and safe’.⁶¹ In many instances, such assemblies helped to ‘polish and improve the Manners and Minds of Men’, thus preventing party feuds. To support this point, Weller cited Josephus’s description of the ‘three great yearly Festivals of the Jewish Religion’, which were designed to encourage inter-tribal friendships, and prevent factional prejudices.⁶² Some years later, George White, the vicar of Colne and Marsden

⁵⁷ For an overview of Reformed/Puritan opposition to dancing, see Chapters Two and Three in Wagner, *Adversaries of Dance*.

⁵⁸ [Weller], *Trial of Mr. Whitefield’s Spirit*, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

⁶⁰ W. Bowman, *The Imposture of Methodism Display’d; in a Letter to the Inhabitants of the Parish of Dewsbury* (London, 1740), p. 58.

⁶¹ [Weller], *Trial of Mr. Whitefield’s Spirit*, pp. 43-44.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 46.

in Lancashire, similarly defended recreational pursuits by stating that a ‘melancholly Turn of Countenance’ had never been the aim of ‘True Religion’, and that ‘Conveniences and innocent Amusements of Life’ were perfectly acceptable in the eyes of God.⁶³ While neither Weller nor White cited John Locke, their philosophical defences of pleasure certainly bore a striking resemblance to the Lockean notion that all humans are born with a God-given desire to seek happiness. Importantly, Locke had diverged from the hedonism of Thomas Hobbes by arguing that one only found ‘true’ happiness through one’s pursuit of those ‘true’ pleasures, which contributed towards the ‘true intrinsic good’.⁶⁴ So, in the eyes of Weller and White, a moderate degree of pleasure contributed towards the greater good because it provided Christians with a necessary stimulus to go about their lives, and continue serving God.

Early Methodism’s emphasis on self-denial and asceticism clearly did not sit well with many Anglican divines. Such opposition highlights a couple of paradoxes. First, it seems paradoxical that early Methodists were accused of taking their sanctification too far. Indeed, such a criticism seems to contradict the allegations of antinomianism which, as we saw in the previous chapter, were also levelled at Wesley and Whitefield because of their seemingly excessive emphasis on justification by faith, and their apparent neglect of good works. Second, it seems odd that the Methodists were attacked for their ascetic teachings, given that asceticism was certainly not a new phenomenon. This chapter will close by explaining these apparent contradictions.

⁶³ White, *Sermon Against the Methodists*, p. 23. Ironically, White was an example of the kind of ‘pleasure-taking’ minister that Whitefield spoke out against. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that White regularly deserted his parish, and was even imprisoned for debt in 1749. See Snape, ‘Anti-Methodism in Eighteenth-Century England’, p. 266.

⁶⁴ J. Walsh, ‘Locke: Ethics’, *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, <http://www.iep.utm.edu/locke-et/#SH2a> (accessed 24 November 2016).

The Perceived Dangers of Methodist Asceticism

If one were to believe Whitefield's description of his 'pleasure-taking Brethren', it would come as no surprise that numerous divines attacked his teachings on self-denial and asceticism. There is evidence to suggest that Whitefield's grievances were shared, albeit not always publicly, by other divines. In a letter to Zachary Grey, dated 16 March 1739, John Lewis, the incumbent of Margate, lamented the poor sales of his historical writings. Lewis scoffed that most clergymen were too busy hunting during the day, and drinking in clubs at night. Such activities, in turn, meant that their 'cures' were 'treated with sneer & neglect'.⁶⁵ It is fair to say that, compared to evangelicals, most Anglican divines would have adopted the kind of moderate approach to pleasures and entertainments which had been endorsed by such religious authorities as Tillotson and *The Whole Duty of Man*, and such philosophers as Locke. Yet, one should not overstate the extent of the eighteenth-century clergy's enthusiasm for recreational diversions. There is evidence to suggest that, during this period, various parish incumbents feared that the religious element of parish wakes had been completely lost amongst all the frolics and revelries in which their parishioners indulged.⁶⁶ For example, in 1725, Henry Bourne, an incumbent of Newcastle, lamented that these feasts of 'Dedication' had 'degenerated into Drunkenness and Luxury'.⁶⁷ Another contemporary parson – this

⁶⁵ BL Add. MS 5831, fol. 129: Lewis to Grey, 16 March 1739.

⁶⁶ Snape notes that, 'throughout England, community harmony was fostered by calendars of popular festivities, amongst which the annual parish feast (or wake) usually held pride of place. The wake was a traditional celebration originally held on the Sunday closest to the feast day of the saint to whom the parish church was dedicated, but by the eighteenth century parish wakes usually occurred at harvest time, when food and money were in plentiful supply.' See Snape, 'Anti-Methodism in Eighteenth-Century England', p. 262.

⁶⁷ H. Bourne, *Antiquitates Vulgares; or, the Antiquities of the Common People. Giving an Account of Several of Their Opinions and Ceremonies. With Proper Reflections Upon Each of Them; Shewing Which May be Retain'd, and Which Ought to be Laid Aside* (Newcastle, 1725), p. 228.

time from Kidlington, Oxfordshire – similarly complained about the ‘tumultuous manner’ of parish celebrations and festivals.⁶⁸

Crucially, several noted opponents of Methodism were also known for their attacks on what they perceived to be sinful diversions. Edmund Gibson was one example of such a divine. In a 1717 sermon, Gibson urged the laity to remain ‘fixt and stedfast’ in their ‘respective callings’. Such ‘diligence’, according to Gibson, left ‘no place, either for Intemperance, Luxury, and such other Excesses, as grievously defile both Body and Soul.’⁶⁹ Several years later, in a sermon before the Society for the Reformation of Manners, Gibson condemned ‘profaneness and immorality, within these large and populous cities: where great Wealth and Luxury sow the seeds of Lust and Debauchery.’ In this instance, Gibson’s sentiments were directed particularly at those who attended masquerade balls.⁷⁰ In *An Earnest Dissuasive from Intemperance in Meats and Drinks* (1740), Gibson utilised scriptural ammunition to combat drunkenness. The fact that this work had reached its eighth edition by 1750 reinforces the notion that there was a market for such attacks on public immorality.⁷¹ Finally, in 1746, Gibson sought the prosecution of several individuals in his diocese, whom he suspected of coach racing on a Sunday.⁷²

Of course, Gibson was not the only anti-Methodist Anglican who condemned such luxuries and entertainments. Like Whitefield and Law, Arthur Bedford was openly

⁶⁸ Quoted from W.M. Jacob, *Lay People and Religion in the Early Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 69.

⁶⁹ E. Gibson, *A Sermon Preached in the Parish-Church of Lambeth, on Sunday the 20th October, 1717* (London, 1717), p. 6.

⁷⁰ E. Gibson, *A Sermon Preached to the Societies for the Reformation of Manners: At St. Mary-le-Bow, on Monday, January the 6th, 1723* (London, 1723), p. 15.

⁷¹ For example, in one section, Gibson claimed that, ‘in the *New Testament*, we find the Christians who were guilty of this Vice, ranked among the most abominable sinners, and adjudged to the heaviest punishments. The Apostle (1 Cor. V. 10) reckons them with the vilest of Men, *Extortioners* and *Idolators*, and commands all Christians to avoid their Company, as a publick scandal to their Religion: And the same Apostle, to compleat their Doom, expressly declares (1 Cor. VI. 10) that no *Drunkard shall inherit the Kingdom of God*.’ See E. Gibson, *An Earnest Dissuasive from Intemperance in Meats and Drinks*, 2nd edn (London, 1740), p. 15.

⁷² Gibson, *Church of England 1688-1832*, p. 128.

opposed to the bawdiness of the stage, which he often associated with Satan.⁷³ As we have seen, Joseph Trapp advocated a relatively moderate approach to recreations. In his 1902 work on Law, J.H. Overton argued that there ‘was a strong lay element in his [Trapp’s] composition.’ By ‘lay element’, Overton probably meant that, as a poet and playwright, Trapp was relatively sensitive to the recreational needs of the laity.⁷⁴ While Trapp was disappointed that theatres tended to be places of amusement, he still believed that the stage had the potential to instil ‘Lessons of Morality’ – something which is evidenced from his 1704 tragedy, *Abra-Mule: or, Love and Empire*.⁷⁵ Following the publication of Trapp’s *Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger*, the Countess of Hertford wrote a letter to the Countess of Pomfret, who was on the continent at the time. The Countess of Hertford’s assessment of the situation was as follows:

At first he [Whitefield] and some of his brethren seemed only to aim at restoring the practice of the primitive Christians as to daily sacraments, stated fasts, frequent prayers, relieving prisoners, visiting the sick, and giving alms to the poor: but, upon sound ministers refusing these men their pulpits, they have betaken themselves to preaching in the fields; and they have such crowds of followers that they have set in a flame all the clergy in the kingdom, who represent them as hypocrites and enthusiasts. As to the latter epithet, some passages in Mr. Whitefield’s latest journals seem to countenance the accusation; but I think their manner of living has not afforded any grounds to suspect them of hypocrisy. The Bishop of London, however, has thought it necessary to write a pastoral letter, to warn the people of his diocese against being led away by them; though at the same time he treats them personally with great tenderness

⁷³ For Bedford’s anti-stage works, see *Serious Reflections on the Scandalous Abuse and Effects of the Stage: In a Sermon Preach’d at the Parish-Church of St. Nicolas in the City of Bristol, on Sunday the 7th day of January, 1704/5* (Bristol, 1705); *A Sermon Preached in the Parish-Church of St. Butolph’s Aldgate, in the City of London, on Sunday the Thirtieth Day of November, in the Year of Our Lord 1729* (London, 1730).

⁷⁴ J.H. Overton, *William Law, Nonjuror and Mystic: A Sketch of His Life, Character, and Opinions* (London, 1881), pp. 295-96.

⁷⁵ J. Trapp, *Lectures on Poetry read in the Schools of Natural Philosophy at Oxford* (London, 1742), p. 300.

and moderation. I cannot say Dr. Trapp has done the same in a sermon which he has published, entitled, 'The great Folly and Danger of being Righteous over-much'; a doctrine which does not seem absolutely necessary to be preached to the people of the present age.⁷⁶

Evidently, the Countess was not a follower of Whitefield. Yet, at the same time, she clearly disapproved of Trapp's seemingly dangerous tactics, and favoured Bishop Gibson's relatively moderate approach instead. Significantly, this passage reinforces the point that one should not speak of 'anti-Methodist Anglicans' as a theologically or socially unified group. Also, the fact that the Countess displayed admiration and respect for Whitefield's self-denial is important because it suggests that there was nothing particularly controversial about Methodist asceticism per se.

Helen Berry argues that, during the eighteenth century, most clergymen advocated 'moderate frugality amid the rise of a market-driven commercialisation'.⁷⁷ One should certainly not dismiss the significance of popular consumption to these attacks on Methodism. Indeed, Trapp's defence of recreational pursuits would have resonated amongst those Georgian consumers who sought religious justification for their recreational activities. This, in turn, may help to explain why Trapp's work (and, subsequently, Weller's *Trial of Mr. Whitefield's Spirit*) sold so well. Yet, it would be problematic to view these anti-Methodist works as merely defences of 'polite' consumerism. Indeed, if Trapp's main motivation was to protect 'the pleasures of Georgian consumerism', then why had he been so slow to attack Williams Law's ascetic teachings?⁷⁸ While Trapp would later claim that he had always viewed Law's asceticism as excessive, it was not until Whitefield cited Law in his *Nature and*

⁷⁶ A.C.H. Seymour (ed.), *The Life and Times of Selina Countess of Huntingdon*, 2 vols. (London, 1839), I, p. 197.

⁷⁷ H. Berry, 'The Pleasures of Austerity', *Journal of Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 37 (2014), p. 268.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 263.

Necessity of Self-Denial that Trapp chose to attack the mystical Non-Juror in print. In fact, before 1739, Law had received hardly any printed criticism for his asceticism.⁷⁹ Despite their seemingly eccentric behaviour, the Oxford Methodists had similarly failed to stir any serious controversy outside the cloistered confines of the university (with the brief exception of the 1732 item in *Fog's Weekly Journal*).

So why, from the late 1730s onwards, did Whitefield and other evangelicals come under attack for their asceticism? It is important to remember that, unlike Law and the Oxford Methodists, these later 'enthusiasts' appeared to harbour an anti-clerical agenda. Where Whitefield attacked the alleged worldliness of Anglican divines, other evangelical itinerants, such as Benjamin Ingham, disrupted parish wakes and festivals. Both Walsh and Snape have shown that the laity often defended these local customs by resorting to violence.⁸⁰ While there are few accounts of parish ministers actively participating in anti-Methodist mobs, many incumbents would have undoubtedly viewed evangelical attacks on parish festivals as an affront to their authority.⁸¹ We have seen that William Bowman and George White defended recreational pursuits in their anti-Methodist polemics, and it is significant that, at the time of writing, both of these country parsons had recently witnessed invasions by Inghamite itinerants.⁸² Thus, in the eyes of numerous Anglican divines, asceticism only became a politically dangerous

⁷⁹ The author has only found one example of a pre-1739 attack on Law's asceticism. This was an anonymous work by the layman and playwright, William Duncombe, entitled *A Letter to Mr. Law; Occasion'd by Reading His Treatise on Christian Perfection: With a Copy of Verses* (London, 1739). Duncombe acknowledged Law's 'pious Designs', and agreed with his condemnation of the bawdiness which surrounded 'the Stage' (p. 5). However, Duncombe was deeply disturbed by Law's apparent contempt for the 'innocent Pleasures of Life' (p. 6). As Trapp went on to do, Duncombe also attacked Law's teachings on Christian communitarianism, and argued that Law's literal interpretation of Jesus's command to 'sell all' was lacking in 'common Sense and Reason' (p. 7). To Duncombe, such '*wild Enthusiasm*' (p. 19) was characteristic of the '*Church of Rome*' (p. 20), where one found similar '*Monastick Retirements*' (p. 25).

⁸⁰ Walsh, 'Methodism and the Mob', pp. 220-21; Snape, 'Anti-Methodism in Eighteenth-Century England', pp. 270-73.

⁸¹ Walsh notes that, rather than get their own hands dirty, clergymen were more likely to bribe their flock to drive out evangelical intruders. See 'Methodism and the Mob', pp. 216-17.

⁸² Bowman, *Imposture of Methodism*, p. 61; Snape, 'Anti-Methodism in Eighteenth-Century England', pp. 269-70.

phenomenon when it started to be taught and practiced by those who seemed to oppose the established Church. But why did these divines perceive the Methodists' asceticism to be so dangerous? More specifically, how did these polemicists reconcile their attacks on Methodist asceticism with their seemingly contradictory allegations of antinomianism? Of course, it is important to remember that antinomianism was often associated with hypocrisy. With this point in mind, it does not take a huge leap of the imagination to understand how these polemicists reconciled their attacks on Methodist asceticism with their charges of antinomianism.

Trapp was one divine who saw a direct link between asceticism and antinomianism. At the beginning of his *Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger*, Trapp claimed that, once 'Vertue rises beyond its due Bounds, and runs into an Extreme; it loses its Nature, and degenerates into Vice'.⁸³ Elsewhere, Trapp stated that Christians who started out with the 'greatest Rigour, Strictness, and Severity' often became 'grossly and scandalously *immoral*' hypocrites. In other words, once Christians started to view their holiness as superior to the 'Rules and Orders of an excellently constituted Church', they ran the risk of falling 'into the greatest *Excess of Riot*.' If one needed examples of such transitions from holiness to immorality, all one needed to do was read about 'the *Montanists* of old', and the more recent example of the '*German Anabaptists*'.⁸⁴ George Lavington similarly noted that the 'Mendicant Fryers' and 'Illuminati of Spain' had been 'stiff Maintainers of Perfection'. Such a rigorist regime had led these groups to view themselves as 'above [the] ordinances of Church or State', and 'above the Exercise of moral Virtues'. Because they viewed their 'natural

⁸³ Trapp, *Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger*, p. 6.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 53-54.

inclinations as indifferent Things’, these groups had encouraged various ‘unclean mixtures’, which they viewed ‘as no sins’.⁸⁵

Conclusions

There was nothing particularly controversial about Methodist asceticism per se. As we have seen, the ‘holy living’ teachings of William Law, and, subsequently, the Oxford Methodists, generated very little printed criticism. In fact, it has been shown that, throughout the 1730s and 1740s, there was clearly a market for Anglican works on asceticism. The existence of such a market suggests that numerous members of the laity shared similar concerns about public immorality and overindulgences. Crucially, we have seen that some of Methodism’s opponents – most notably, Edmund Gibson and Arthur Bedford – also condemned such indulgences as theatre-going, masquerades and drunkenness. Of course, their condemnation undoubtedly fell short of the self-denial and asceticism which Wesley and Whitefield recommended. Yet, these High Church divines clearly shared the Methodists’ concerns about these seemingly sinful diversions. Such conclusions reinforce those relatively recent works that have challenged the extent to which the Church of England had declined – both morally and spiritually – by the time of the so-called ‘Great Awakening’. Nevertheless, by the late 1730s, Methodism had gained a reputation for its apparent anti-clericalism. Thus, it was no coincidence that, from this point onwards, evangelicals were attacked for their ascetic and perfectionist teachings. Initially, such criticisms appear to contradict the charges of antinomianism and solifidianism, which, as we saw in the previous chapter, often featured in attacks on Whitefield, and, to a lesser degree, Wesley. As this chapter has

⁸⁵ [G. Lavington], *The Enthusiasm of Methodists and Compared. Part II* (London, 1749), p. 154.

shown, some divines, such as Joseph Trapp, saw a direct link between asceticism, anti-clericalism and antinomianism. More specifically, it was feared that, once asceticism turned into hypocrisy, such a rigorist regime would eventually be devoid of all morals. In other words, Anglican divines did not view asceticism as socially and politically dangerous until it was being taught and practiced by those who seemed to oppose the established Church. Evangelicals were certainly not the only individuals who propagated seemingly subversive doctrines and practices. As the following chapter will show, Latitudinarian and Dissenting attacks on Methodism often contained a variety of heterodox opinions which, to orthodox High Churchmen, were socially and politically dangerous.

Chapter Four

Original Sin and Hell

Introduction

In his doctoral dissertation on pamphlet opposition to Methodism during the eighteenth century, Donald Kirkham rightly describes original sin as a ‘fundamental doctrine’ of the early Methodists.¹ In one of his earliest printed sermons, Whitefield described one’s ‘original Corruption’ as enough to ‘sink you into Hell’.² Such Augustinian sentiments were also present in John Wesley’s works. As Isabel Rivers convincingly argues, Wesley viewed original sin as the ‘essential underpinning of Christianity’.³ This certainly becomes clear when one reads his lengthy treatise, *The Doctrine of Original Sin* (1757), which was a belated response to the rational Dissenter John Taylor’s *The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination* (1740). In his treatise, Taylor had reduced original sin to ‘DEATH’, which ‘entered into the World by *Adam*’s Sin’, and was ‘common to...*all Men*, good and bad, the righteous as well as the wicked’.⁴ To Taylor, the notion ‘*that Lust proceeds from Original Sin*’ made no sense because it failed to explain where the ‘Lust of our first Parents’ had come from. Taylor facetiously asked his readers if one needed to ‘feign an *Original Sin*, a prior Corruption of Nature’ to explain Eve’s lust. Taylor was convinced that the

¹ Kirkham, ‘Pamphlet Opposition’, p. 121.

² G. Whitefield, *The Danger of Man Resulting from Sin, and his Remedy, by Christ Considered* (London, 1740), p. 8.

³ Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, I, p. 227. (see pp. 227-34 for a thorough discussion on the centrality of original sin in Wesley’s theology).

⁴ J. Taylor, *The Scripture-Doctrine of Original Sin Proposed to Free and Candid Examination* (London, 1740), p. 27.

‘original Cause of Sin’ was ‘Man’s choosing to follow the Appetites of the Flesh’.⁵ Taylor’s sentiments were abhorrent to Wesley. By denying that ‘*Man is by Nature foolish and sinful*’, Taylor had implied that there was no need to be ‘renewed in Knowledge or Holiness’. To Wesley, Taylor’s beliefs were nothing more than ‘old *Deism in a new Dress*’ because they appeared to render Christianity obsolete.⁶ As was noted in Chapter Two, the charge of ‘Deism’ was something that Whitefield had invoked against the late Tillotson. By ‘old *Deism*’, Wesley was probably referring to the anti-Augustinian ‘neo-Stoic moral philosophy championed by Shaftesbury and Hutcheson.’⁷

Original sin was a matter of contention in the Arminianism versus Calvinism debate between Wesley and Whitefield. In his response to Wesley’s anti-Calvinist sermon, *Free Grace* (1740), Whitefield described original sin as a Calvinistic doctrine, which could not be reconciled with Arminianism. To Whitefield, it made no sense that Wesley saw ‘GOD’s Justice in imputing *Adam*’s Sin to his Posterity’, but refused to see any justice in the notion that God might ‘pass by’ those whom he had not predestined to be saved.⁸ For much of his life, Wesley combated the misconception that, as an Arminian, he rejected original sin. Such defensiveness is evident from his later piece, *The Question, What is an Arminian? Answered* (1770), where he accused his Calvinist critics of confusing ‘*Arminians* with *Arians*’. Wesley was particularly keen to plead ‘Not guilty’ to the charge of denying ‘*Original Sin*’, which, he noted, had been

⁵ Ibid., p. 127.

⁶ Wesley, *Doctrine of Original Sin*, pp. v-vi. For more on Wesley’s attack on Taylor, see H.B. McGonigle, *Christianity or Deism?: John Wesley’s Response to John Taylor’s Denial of the Doctrine of Original Sin* (Derby, 2012).

⁷ J. Robertson, *The Case for Enlightenment: Scotland and Naples 1680-1760* (Cambridge, 2005), p. 318.

⁸ G. Whitefield, *A Letter from the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield, to the Reverend Mr. John Wesley, in Answer to His Sermon, Entitled Free Grace* (Boston, 1740), p. 23.

‘asserted’ by Arminius in ‘more strong, more clear and express terms’ than any ‘man that ever lived’, including Calvin himself.⁹

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to speak of a ‘Methodist’ doctrine of original sin because such a classification would ignore the theological differences between Wesley and Whitefield’s respective soteriologies. When one examines the topic of grace, it becomes clear that Wesley adhered to a doctrine of original sin which was significantly more optimistic than the total depravity described by Whitefield and other Calvinist evangelicals. Although both Wesley and Whitefield spoke of grace as something which was irresistible, their meanings differed. To Whitefield, irresistible grace meant God’s saving grace, which only applied to the elect. Wesley, on the other hand, spoke of an irresistible prevenient grace which was universal. This grace, according to Wesley, enabled humans willingly to follow Christ. Evidently, such a notion was incompatible with the total depravity described by Whitefield. Theoretically, Wesley adhered to total depravity in the sense that he viewed humanity’s *natural* state as completely corrupt. In practice, however, he believed that prevenient grace prevented anybody from being born into this totally depraved state of nature. Importantly, Wesley was careful to stress that this universal grace was a gift from God, not an innate ‘natural conscience’ (he detested such a ‘vulgar’ title because of its Pelagian connotations).¹⁰ Kirkham states that ‘contemporaries were repulsed by the evangelicals’ emphasis on man’s depravity’. Apparently, this was why ‘anti-Methodist authors made much of this point’ in their polemics. However, Kirkham supports this point by naming only a small handful of polemicists who combated the Methodists’ views on original sin, reflecting his tendency to conflate those who opposed the likes of Wesley and Whitefield. By focusing on commonalities, Kirkham neglects many of the

⁹ [J. Wesley], *The Question, What is an Arminian? Answered* (London, 1770), pp. 4-5.

¹⁰ Collins, *Theology of John Wesley*, pp. 70-74; P.R. Meadows, ‘The Journey of Evangelism’, in W.J. Abraham and J.E. Kirby (eds), *The Oxford Handbook of Methodist Studies* (Oxford, 2009), p. 420.

nuances of anti-Methodism. Such an approach leads to the erroneous assumption that anti-Methodist authors were largely unanimous in their grievances.¹¹

This chapter seeks to illustrate these theological nuances by exploring the differing ways in which anti-Methodist polemicists treated original sin. Such disparities will be further highlighted by discussing the responses – or, more appropriately, the lack of responses – to Methodism’s emphasis on the eternity of hell torments. Attention will be drawn to Thomas Whiston’s *Important Doctrines*, a 1740 polemic, which was briefly explored in Chapter Two. Whiston advertised this tract as an attack on the Methodists and their perceived ally, William Law. However, as this chapter will argue, anti-Methodism was merely a smokescreen which enabled Whiston to display his loyalty to the established Church, while he advanced various heterodox views which were disagreeable, not only to Methodists, but also to numerous High Churchmen, who similarly despised evangelical ‘enthusiasm’. Whiston’s controversial opinions included his rejection of the Augustinian doctrine of original sin, along with his subtle show of support for the annihilationist views which his uncle, William Whiston, had recently expressed in *The Eternity of Hell Torments* (1740). By linking the younger Whiston’s anti-Methodist tract with the older Whiston’s annihilationist treatise, these discussions will continue to reintegrate these early anti-Methodist polemics into the wider theological controversies of the age.

Original Sin and Anglican Orthodoxy

Original sin was not a topic that featured regularly in the early polemical attacks on Wesley and Whitefield. In England, most of these works were written by such orthodox

¹¹ Kirkham, ‘Pamphlet Opposition’, pp. 121-23.

High Churchmen as Daniel Waterland, who had previously defended this Augustinian doctrine in his response to Tindal's *Christianity as Old as the Creation*. In this work, Waterland questioned why Tindal appeared to be 'offended, that God should *cause Mankind to fall by the Folly of Adam, which infinite Wisdom could not but foresee*'. To Waterland, Tindal's treatment of Genesis was a 'crude Censure', because it implied that the 'unsearchable Counsels, Works, and Ways of God' should be judged by human standards. Waterland also contested Tindal's suggestion that humanity shared affinities with pre-lapsarian Adam. Compared to the former, the latter had been '*naturally* less prone to Evil' and 'less subject to sinful Appetites', even though Adam had obviously been 'capable of sinning' while he was in his pre-lapsarian state. One simply could not find such a degree of '*Perfection*' amongst Adam's fallen 'Posterity'.¹²

Nevertheless, Kirkham's claim that 'eighteenth-century Anglicans were more optimistic about humanity than their Methodist contemporaries' is correct in the sense that their Augustinianism was a significantly watered down version of what Wesley and Whitefield believed.¹³ James Bate, the rector of St. Paul's, Deptford, was one High Church divine who adopted such a stance. Like Waterland, Bate was a High Church opponent of Methodism, who also defended original sin during his ministry. In a 1752 publication, which he expanded in 1766, Bate attacked the late Conyers Middleton's rejection of the literal interpretation of Adam's fall. Humans, according to Bate, entered this world as '*Devils*' and 'Brutes', and were 'fitted only for Misery'. Bate claimed that anybody who doubted their 'own corrupted Nature' would quickly change their mind by 'casting an Eye upon *African* or *American* Heathenism.' Yet, Bate diverged from evangelicals in the sense that, like most contemporary High Churchmen, he adhered to an Arminian soteriology which placed sanctification before any initial justification.

¹² Waterland, *Scripture Vindicated*, pp. 21-22.

¹³ Kirkham, 'Pamphlet Opposition', p. 121.

Thus, Bate refused to believe that all pre-justification works were corrupted by original sin. As George Bull had done nearly a century earlier, Bate argued that prevenient grace was followed by works. While these pre-justification works were ‘more or less imperfect’, they were still an essential aspect of one’s initial sanctification.¹⁴

Admittedly, it seems that, when original sin was not under attack by such heterodox authors as Tindal and Middleton, High Churchmen often neglected it in their sermons and tracts. Such apparent neglect may have been because Anglican divines viewed this Augustinian doctrine as a widely-accepted supposition, which required little explanation. More plausible, however, is the possibility that these divines avoided preaching about original sin because they feared that such a pessimistic topic would contradict their lessons in humanity’s potential for goodness. During the late 1730s – when anti-clerical sentiments were particularly rife – Dissenters at both ends of the theological spectrum used Article IX as a symbol of the established Church’s apparent hypocrisy regarding subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles.¹⁵ In 1737, the evangelical Dissenter, Jonathan Warne, published *The Church of England Turn’d Dissenter at Last*. In this satirical piece, a Dissenter introduces the Church of England’s Reformed

¹⁴ J. Bate, *An Essay towards a Rationale of the Literal Doctrine of Original Sin* (London, 1752), p. 52; *A Rationale of the Literal Doctrine of Original Sin; Or a Vindication of God's Permitting the Fall of Adam, and the Subsequent Corruption of Our Human Nature* (London, 1766), pp. 91-92. For Bate’s anti-Methodist polemics, see *Quakero-Methodism: Or, A Confutation of the First Principles of the Quakers and Methodists* (London, 1739); *Methodism Displayed*.

¹⁵ According to the 1571 edition of the Thirty-Nine Articles, Article IX – which was entitled ‘Of originall or birth sinne’ – stipulated the following: ‘Originall sinne standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vaynely talke) but it is the fault and corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the ofspring of Adam, whereby man is very farre gone from originall ryghteousness, and is of his owne nature enclined to evyll, so that the fleshe lusteth alwayes contrary to the spirite; and therefore in every person borne into this worlde, it deserveth Gods wrath and damnation. And this infection of nature doth remayne, yea in them that are regenerated, whereby the luste of the fleshe, called in Greke φρόνημα σαρκός, which some do expounde the wisdom, some sensualitie, some the affection, some the desyre of the fleshe, is not subject to the lawe of God. And although there is no condemnation for them that beleve and are baptized: yet the Apostle doth confesse that concupiscence and luste hath of it selfe the nature of synne.’ See T. Bennet, *An Essay on the Thirty Nine Articles of Religion, Agreed on and Revised in 1562, 1571* (London, 1715), pp. 41-45. For more on Anglican discussions on the Thirty-Nine Articles during the eighteenth century, see J.D. Walsh, ‘The Thirty-Nine Articles and Anglican Identity in the Eighteenth Century’, in C. d’Haussy (ed.), *Quand Religions et Confessions se Regardent* (Paris, 1998), pp. 61-70.

tradition to his neighbour, a lay Anglican, who is particularly anxious to hear what is meant by 'Original Sin...the IXth Article of our Church.' The Dissenter instructs his neighbour by quoting from Archbishop Ussher (1581-1656) and William Beveridge's writings on the subject. The lay Anglican responds by claiming that this is more than he has ever 'heard concerning Original Sin' from his 'Parsons', who 'seldom or never mention it.'¹⁶ On the other hand, an early Dissenting opponent of Whitefield claimed that, by preaching about original sin, the 'Methodists of the Church of England' had revived an 'absurd' and 'gainful' doctrine, which most 'false swearing' Anglicans viewed as 'obsolete'. Nevertheless, the Dissenter still praised Whitefield for his 'steady Integrity' and 'conscientious Regard' for 'the solemn Obligations' to which he had subscribed upon his ordination.¹⁷

Like these Dissenting authors, Whitefield alleged that most Anglican divines were guilty of rejecting original sin. Such sentiments are clear from a letter, dated 9 July 1739, which Whitefield wrote to the bishop of Gloucester, Martin Benson (who had ordained him two years earlier). This letter was in response to a previous one from Benson, which had 'admonished' Whitefield for his itineration and advised him to peruse an enclosed copy of Henry Stebbing's recently published *Caution Against Religious Delusion*. Whitefield responded by attacking Stebbing's sermon for its failure to mention 'a Word of Original Sin, or the dreadful Consequences of our Fall in *Adam*'. Whitefield was convinced that, 'like other polite Preachers', Stebbing was guilty of rejecting original sin.¹⁸ The following month, Stebbing's piece, along with Joseph Trapp's recent series of 'righteous over-much' sermons, generated an item in the *Gentleman's Magazine* by an anonymous supporter of Whitefield, who claimed that the

¹⁶ Warne, *Church of England Turn'd Dissenter at Last*, pp. 25-28.

¹⁷ E.B., *Expostulatory Letter to the Reverend Mr. Whitefield*, pp. 3-4.

¹⁸ Whitefield, *Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal, During the Time He was Detained in England*, pp. 17-19.

‘generality of Clergy of the Church of *England*’ had ‘departed from the Doctrines of the Reformation’. Such Reformation doctrines included the ‘Doctrine of original Sin, and the Imputation of *Adam*’s Transgression to his Posterity’, which contemporary clerics had allegedly ‘cast by with a Sneer, and reckon’d too grating to the Ears of a polite modern Auditory’.¹⁹

In the wake of Bishop Gibson’s 1739 *Pastoral Letter*, an anonymous author observed that Whitefield had a theological advantage over his clerical opponents because his ‘Scheme of the *New Birth*, or Regeneration’ was built on the ‘*Calvinistical* Doctrine of *Original Sin*’. The author noted that this doctrine formed the ninth of the Thirty-Nine Articles, having originally been derived from the passage: ‘Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me’ (Psalm 51:5). The author added that this doctrine had traditionally been central to the sacrament of baptism, which transferred infants from a ‘State of *Nature* into a State of *Grace*’ and ‘*deliver’d*’ them from God’s ‘*Wrath*’.²⁰ In his response to this piece, Thomas Church agreed that the established Church still ‘held’ and ‘frequently mention’d’ original sin in its ‘Offices of *Baptism*’. However, Church strongly denied the author’s implication that this doctrine was a ‘peculiar Tenet of *Calvinism*’. Rather, it had been ‘held by the earliest Writers of the Church’, whose exegesis of Psalm 51:5 prefigured Calvin’s by well over a millennium. To support this point, Church directed his readers to William Spencer’s 1658 translation of Origen’s theological attack on the Greek philosopher, Celsus. Origen appeared to prefigure the later writings of Augustine by speaking of an inherent sinfulness, which resulted from the fall of Adam.²¹ It is clear from these discussions on Waterland, Bate and Church that High Church divines remained committed to an

¹⁹ *Gentleman’s Magazine*, IX (1739), p. 415.

²⁰ *A Letter to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London, Occasion’d by His Lordship’s Late Pastoral Letter, and the Revd Mr. Whitefield’s Answer* (London, 1739), pp. 11-12.

²¹ Church, *Explanation and Defense*, pp. 29-30.

Augustinian conception of original sin, which – despite being less severe than the total depravity described by Calvinist evangelicals – considered humanity to be in a fallen and corrupted state. Thomas Whiston was one clergyman who did not share this view.

‘Destructive of Human Liberty’?

On 4 March 1740, a tract was published, entitled *The Important Doctrines of Original Sin, Justification by Faith, and Regeneration*. This work was advertised as an attack on ‘THE METHODISTS’ and William Law.²² Thomas Whiston, an Anglican divine, was the author of this work. Little is known about Whiston’s life and ministry. From his obituary, which appeared in a July 1795 edition of the *Gentleman’s Magazine*, we know that Whiston was born in either 1712 or 1713. He was the son of Daniel Whiston, a graduate of Clare Hall, Cambridge, who served as a curate in Somersham, Huntingdonshire, for most of a career which had almost ended before it began. Because of his anti-Trinitarianism, Daniel had faced fierce opposition from the local ‘High Church squire’ during his initial curacy in Horseheath, Cambridgeshire. However, Daniel’s career survived, thanks to the intervention of his friend and fellow Arian, Samuel Clarke, who successfully lobbied the Duchess of Marlborough for assistance. Daniel’s brother was the considerably more prominent William Whiston, whose time as a Cambridge don had been cut short in 1710, when his openly Arian views led to his dismissal as Lucasian Professor of Mathematics.²³

Like his father and uncle before him, Thomas Whiston also matriculated at Cambridge, where he graduated BA from Trinity College in 1735. He was ordained

²² Whiston, *Important Doctrines*, unpaginated title page.

²³ *Gentleman’s Magazine*, LXV (1795), p. 617; R.F. Scott (ed.), *Admissions to the College of St John the Evangelist in the University of Cambridge*, Volume 3: *July 1715–November 1767* (Cambridge, 1903), p. 714. For William Whiston’s life and career, see J. E. Force, *William Whiston: Honest Newtonian* (Cambridge, 1985).

deacon in 1736, and priest in 1738. In 1742, he was appointed vicar of Orby, Lincolnshire. Intriguingly, it remains unclear exactly what Whiston was doing when he published his *Important Doctrines* in 1740. Although the title page named him as the author, it contained no further information relating to his occupation.²⁴ While this work marked Whiston's debut as an author, he also edited a critical pamphlet on the life of the Jewish freethinker, Uriel Acosta (c.1585-1640). On 4 March 1740, the *General Evening Post* ran a 'This Day is publish'd' advertisement for both of these works, which had been printed for a 'J. Whiston' of 'Boyle's Head in Fleet-street', where they were each being sold at one shilling.²⁵ The bookseller to whom the advertisement referred was William Whiston's son, John.²⁶ With the brief exception of Kirkham, historians have largely ignored Whiston's *Important Doctrines*.²⁷ While Luke Tyerman mentioned it in his biography of John Wesley, this was only a passing description, which formed part of his hagiographical condemnation of anti-Methodist publications. Dismissing Whiston as somebody who was 'unknown to fame', Tyerman refused to scrutinise the piece any further, and claimed that 'an analysis of its contents would weary the reader without instructing him'.²⁸

In fact, Whiston's *Important Doctrines* warrants exploration because it provides an example of an Anglican clergyman who viewed anti-Methodism as a platform which enabled him to publicly display his loyalty to the established Church while he advanced a range of heterodox views in the process. Whiston probably adopted this strategy because he felt that no High Churchman would have dared to attack the views expressed in an anti-Methodist tract, as this might have been interpreted as a sign of

²⁴ 'Whiston, Thomas (CCed Person ID 80010)', *CCed*, <http://theclergydatabase.org.uk> (accessed 6 August 2016).

²⁵ *General Evening Post*, 4 March 1740.

²⁶ M. T. Davis, 'Whiston, John (1711–1780)', *ODNB*.

²⁷ Kirkham, 'Pamphlet Opposition', pp. 121–23.

²⁸ Tyerman, *Life and Times of the Rev. John Wesley*, I, p. 325.

allegiance to the likes of Wesley, Whitefield and Law. Importantly, Law's response to Trapp's *Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger* was published only one month before Whiston's *Important Doctrines*.²⁹ Thus, it would have seemed that, by attacking Law, Whiston was coming to the aid of a respected High Churchman and Oxford poet. It is also possible that Whiston adopted this cautious approach because he was determined to avoid the kind of brush with the establishment that had nearly cost his father his career, and caused his uncle to lose his professorship. Finally, Whiston may have been attempting to draw on existing prejudices when he advertised this work as an anti-Methodist tract. Polemical attacks on Wesley and Whitefield were commonplace during this period, so it would have been plausible to assume that a theological tract was likely to sell better if it appeared to focus on these figures.

So, what were Whiston's heterodox views? First, he followed his father and uncle's example by exhibiting anti-Trinitarian sentiments. More specifically, he attacked Law's notion that 'being created in the Image of God is to be understood [as] the Image of the Holy Trinity, "where Father, Son and Holy Ghost each brought forth their own Nature in a creaturely Manner."' Whiston described Law's 'Doctrine of the Trinity in the Soul' as something which was 'never thought of nor mentioned from our Lord's Crucifixion, even to the present Time by any but himself [Law].' Whiston was careful to add that he had no desire to 'argue against the Doctrine of the Trinity'. Such a debate, according to Whiston, was beyond both his and Law's 'weak Apprehension'. Yet, Whiston noted that it seemed 'odd and uncommon, to make the *Christian New Birth* insist upon a Doctrine, that was never fully agreed upon in the Christian Church.' Here, Whiston was subtly implying that he viewed the Trinity as an adiaphorous

²⁹ For Law's response to Trapp, see *Earnest and Serious Answer to Dr. Trapp's Discourse*. We know from 7 February 1740 edition of the *London Daily Post and General Advertiser* that Law's work was first published on this date.

doctrine.³⁰ More prominent, however, was Whiston's lengthy attack on the Augustinian doctrine of original sin.

Indeed, Whiston argued that, by placing so much emphasis on original sin in their sermons, 'MR *Law*' and 'the Methodists' were guilty of 'making fallen Man a Devil as to his Soul, as well as a Brute to his Body'.³¹ Such Augustinian sentiments were repugnant to Whiston, who believed that sufficient punishment for Adam's transgression could be found in the process of 'Man' being 'chang'd into a mortal, corruptible, frail Being, liable to Pains, Accidents, and Diseases, and all the black Artillery of Death'.³² Whiston also noted the existence of a 'great Diversity of Passions and Humours, and a greater natural Inclination in one to Evil than another'. While Whiston was cautious of attributing this disparity of sinfulness to a 'physical Cause', he believed this to be a far more plausible explanation than original sin. To Whiston, it was a 'Contradiction in Terms' to view this 'hellish Tincture in the Soul' as something which 'should be spread unequally among Mankind'.³³ Thus, he refused to view sin as something 'inwardly rooted and grafted' in one's 'Nature'. Such a notion, according to Whiston, was 'destructive of human Liberty' because it provided people with an excuse for their 'Lusts and Passions', and rendered the concept of 'voluntary' or 'actual Sin' non-existent.³⁴

Later in this work, Whiston attacked the Methodist doctrine of regeneration. Rather than experiencing a sudden '*New-Birth*' which resembled Wesley's Aldersgate experience, Christians only encountered one form of regeneration during their lifetime, and this was through 'Baptism of *Water*'.³⁵ The importance of baptismal regeneration

³⁰ Whiston, *Important Doctrines*, p. 11.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³³ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

was an issue which was often raised by opponents of Methodism. It was the central topic in one of the earliest anti-Methodist publications – a 1738 sermon by Tipping Silvester, a High Church divine and Fellow of Whitefield's alma mater, Pembroke College, Oxford.³⁶ A couple of months before the publication of Whiston's *Important Doctrines*, Daniel Waterland had published his anti-Methodist tract, *Regeneration Stated and Explained*, in which he stressed the importance of being 'born of water and of the spirit' (John 3:5).³⁷ Yet, Whiston radically diverged from these orthodox clerics in the sense that, where Silvester and Waterland meant infant baptism, Whiston was referring to the baptism of an 'adult Person'.³⁸

So, not only was Whiston implying that the baptismal practices of various Dissenting groups were valid, he was also suggesting that the Church of England should adopt such practices. Given Waterland's previous engagement in the lay baptism controversy, one can assume that he would have found such a view particularly repugnant. By rejecting the Augustinian doctrine of original sin, and favouring adult baptisms over infant baptisms, Whiston was clearly launching an attack, not only on Methodism, but also on orthodox Anglicanism. Importantly, Whiston's attack on original sin needs to be viewed as an aspect of the anti-clerical and anti-subscriptionist sentiments which had characterised the 1730s, and were clearly still prevalent in 1740. Intriguingly, Whiston's method of deception had previously been used by Samuel Chandler and several other Dissenters, who had preached a series of anti-Catholic sermons at Salter's Hall in 1735. In some of these sermons, which were subsequently

³⁶ Silvester, *Scripture Doctrine of Regeneration Stated*.

³⁷ D. Waterland, *Regeneration Stated and Explained According to Scripture and Antiquity in a Discourse on Tit. III. 4, 5, 6* (London, 1740), p. 3.

³⁸ Whiston, *Important Doctrines*, p. 55.

published, these Dissenters had disguised what were blatantly attacks on the established Church as attacks on the Papacy.³⁹

Whiston's failure to cite any authors in these discussions means that one can only surmise who inspired his heterodox interpretation of original sin. A denial of an inherent state of sinfulness was consistent with the teachings of Pelagius (354-420), though scholars are divided on the issue of whether Pelagius saw 'any causality between Adam's sin and his death'.⁴⁰ Whiston's views on this latter point may have stemmed from a reading of Chrysostom (c.349-407), who similarly defined original sin as universal mortality.⁴¹ Later exponents of this view included such seventeenth-century theologians and philosophers as Jeremy Taylor and John Locke. The latter claimed in his *Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695) that 'Death came on all Men by *Adam's* sin'.⁴² Also, Whiston probably consulted his uncle on the issue of baptism. In his *Primitive Infant-Baptism Reviv'd* (1712), William Whiston described the full immersion believers' baptism as a practice which predated infant baptism, and was fully endorsed in the Gospels. Later, when baptism started to be seen as something 'wholly for the *Remission of Sins*', it was obvious that those who were only a 'few Years or Months old' had committed no 'actual Sins'. As a result, people started to believe that infants 'must have *Original Sin* to obtain that pardon'. Thus, the 'Doctrine of *Original Sin*...was plainly deriv'd from some Reasonings about the *Baptism of Infants*'. The older Whiston failed to see why '*Original Sin*, which was involuntary,

³⁹ J.E. Bradley, 'Anti-Catholicism as Anglican Anticlericalism: Nonconformity and the Ideological Origins of Radical Disaffection', in N. Aston and M. Cragoe (eds), *Anticlericalism in Britain c.1500-1914* (Thrupp, 2000), pp. 78-80.

⁴⁰ R. Dodaro, *Christ and the Just Society in the Thought of Augustine* (Cambridge, 2004), p. 88.

⁴¹ F.R. Tennant, *The Sources of the Doctrines of the Fall and Original Sin* (Cambridge, 1903), pp. 325-26.

⁴² J. Locke, *The Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures* (London, 1695), p. 4. For Taylor's discussions on original sin, see *Deus Justificatus. Two Discourses of Original Sin, Contained in Two Letters to Persons of Honour, Wherein the Question is Rightly Stated, Several Objections Answered, and the Truth Further Cleared and Proved by Many Arguments Newly Added or Explain'd* (London, 1656).

should properly need Forgiveness'.⁴³ Whiston went on to reiterate these points many years later in *The Eternity of Hell Torments*, where he attacked the 'absurd' notion that God would inflict his '*wrath, and damnation*' on an unbaptised infant, who had yet to commit any '[actual, or wilful] *sin*'.⁴⁴

Another possible source of inspiration was the crypto-Arian divine, Daniel Whitby (1638-1726), who had rejected original sin in a 1711 piece which was originally published in Latin, and subsequently translated into English by Henry Heywood, a General Baptist minister, in 1739.⁴⁵ Upon its initial publication, Whitby's treatise was swiftly attacked by Jonathan Edwards (1629-1712), the Principal of Jesus College, Oxford. Edwards opened what was to be his final work by quoting Article IX, along with Canon V, the latter of which condemned 'Impugners' of the Thirty-Nine Articles.⁴⁶ In his response to Edwards, Whitby described original sin as something which contradicted 'the Liberty of the Will of Man to chuse the Good, and to refuse the Evil'. To Whitby, viewing sinfulness as a 'Necessity' merely freed 'Men from all Fault'. Such sentiments clearly bore a striking resemblance to Thomas Whiston's argument that original sin merely justified immorality.⁴⁷

While it remains unclear whether Whitby influenced Whiston's rejection of original sin, there is no doubt that his writings influenced the anonymous author of a later anti-Methodist work, entitled *A Plain and Familiar Dialogue between a Steady*

⁴³ W. Whiston, *Primitive Infant-Baptism Reviv'd: Or, an Account of the Doctrine and Practice of the Two First Centuries, Concerning the Baptism of Infants ; in the Words of the Sacred and Primitive Writers Themselves* (London, 1712), pp. 29-30.

⁴⁴ W. Whiston, *The Eternity of Hell Torments Considered: Or, a Collection of Texts of Scripture, and Testimonies of the Three First Centuries, Relating to Them* (London, 1740), p. 63.

⁴⁵ D. Whitby, *Tractatus de Imputatione Divina Peccati Adami Posteris ejus Universis in Reatum* (London, 1711); *The Guilt of Adam's Transgression not Imputed to his Posterity. A Treatise Concerning Original Sin*, ed. and trans. H. Heywood (London, 1739).

⁴⁶ J. Edwards, *The Doctrine of Original Sin, as it was Always Held in the Catholick Church, and Particularly in the Church of England, Asserted and Vindicated from the Exceptions and Cavils of the Reverend Dr. Daniel Whitby* (Oxford, 1711), p. A2.

⁴⁷ D. Whitby, *A Full Answer to the Arguments of the Reverend Dr. Jonathan Edwards, for the Opinion of St. Austin Concerning the Imputation of the First Sin of Adam, for Guilt to All his Posterity* (London, 1712), p. 27.

and a Wavering Christian (1749). In this fictional dialogue, the Steady Christian (who is the protagonist) criticises ‘*Confessions of Faith, Creeds, and Canons*’, suggesting that the author was probably a Dissenter.⁴⁸ The Wavering Christian, on the other hand, describes himself as a keen follower of ‘Mr. *George Whitefield*’.⁴⁹ As a means of correcting the Wavering Christian’s belief in the ‘*Imputation of original Sin*’, the Steady Christian quotes the following passage from Whitby:

Chrysostom and *Theophylact* assert, "That it is not lawful that one Person should be punished, because another has offended"...They prove, "that *God* is neither accustom'd, nor willing to revenge the Sins of *Parents* upon their *Children*, from the celebrated Passage in *Ezekiel*, The *Son* shall not bear the *Iniquity* of his *Father*. Since then they think it absurd to suppose Persons to *sin*, and be liable to *Punishment* by their Birth.⁵⁰

An earlier anti-Methodist tract by the Dissenter, Caleb Fleming, had similarly argued that there was no justice in the notion that one should be held accountable for the sins of a parent. In his anonymously edited *A Fine Picture of Enthusiasm* (1744), Fleming described it as ‘*absurd and monstrous*’ to believe that ‘*all Men* were looked upon by God as guilty of their *first Parent's Crime*, and as deserving *Death, eternal Death*, for it’.⁵¹ It is fair to assume that Fleming’s attack on original sin was really targeted at the established Church – an institution with which he had previously crossed swords. In 1738, Fleming had advanced anti-Trinitarian sentiments in an anonymously written

⁴⁸ *Plain and Familiar Dialogue*, pp. 10-11.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

⁵¹ [C. Fleming], *A Fine Picture of Enthusiasm, Chiefly Drawn by Dr. John Scott, Formerly Rector of St. Giles's in the Fields* (London, 1744), pp. 29-30.

attack on the Test Acts, which he directed at Edward Cobden, the rector of St. Augustine and St. Faith, London.⁵²

Yet – apart from its discussions on original sin – the contents of Fleming’s *Fine Picture of Enthusiasm* would have been agreeable to most High Churchmen. For example, Fleming commenced this piece with a dedication to Bishop Gibson, whom he had previously attacked in a 1732 polemic against the Test Acts.⁵³ Furthermore, a large portion of Fleming’s tract was a reproduction of an earlier critique of ‘enthusiasm’ by John Scott (1639-1695), a respected High Churchman.⁵⁴ Such caution reflects a trend in Fleming’s writings, which, by the 1740s, had become far less hostile towards the established Church. Because of his dwindling congregation’s limited ‘financial resources’, this was a ‘time of poverty’ for Fleming and his family. Thus, he may have felt that overt attacks on the established Church only appealed to a limited readership.⁵⁵

While Fleming’s post-1740 works were neither orthodox nor conformist, it is fair to say that they were far less antagonistic towards the established Church than his earlier polemics had been. It may appear strange that Fleming defended the practice of infant baptism in his *A Plea for Infants: Or, the Scripture Doctrine of Water-Baptism Stated* (1742). Despite his denial of original sin, Fleming believed that infant baptism was important because it enabled parents to provide a ‘visible’ representation of their desire for the child to be a lifelong partaker in the ‘advantages’ one found in ‘the church of Christ’.⁵⁶ One pamphleteer who attacked Fleming on this point was Ebenezer Hewlett, another anti-Trinitarian polemicist, who – as we saw in Chapter Two – also

⁵² [C. Fleming], *A Letter to the Revd. Dr. Cobden, Rector of St. Austin's and St. Faith's, and of Acton, and Chaplain in Ordinary to his Majesty, Containing an Exact Copy of a Pastoral Epistle to the Protestant Dissenters in his Parishes, with Remarks Thereon* (London, 1738), pp. 25-26.

⁵³ [Fleming], *Fine Picture of Enthusiasm*, p. iii-vi; [Idem], *An Answer to the Dispute Adjusted. Being a Confutation of Those Reasons Offer'd to Prove, that No Time is a Proper Time for the Repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts* (London, 1732).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1-15.

⁵⁵ G. M. Ditchfield, ‘Fleming, Caleb (1698–1779)’, *ODNB*.

⁵⁶ [C. Fleming], *A Plea for Infants: Or, the Scripture Doctrine of Water-Baptism Stated* (London, 1742), pp. 62-63.

attacked Methodism in print. Hewlett sided with the Quakers in his 1745 response to Fleming, and denied that there was any scriptural precedent for the practice of baptism – both infant and adult. We know from the title page of Hewlett's response that he was aware that Fleming had written *A Plea for Infants*, even though Fleming had characteristically written his piece anonymously. Evidently, publishing a work anonymously did not ensure that one would not be exposed as the author later. This may explain why Fleming made such an effort to ensure that his anti-Methodist work resembled something which largely conformed to Anglican orthodoxy.⁵⁷

Original sin was a topic which Hewlett had previously discussed in his 1744 polemic, *The Support of Popery Discovered, the Methodist, Calvinist, and Deist Unmask'd, the Arian, Arminian, and Socinian Reprov'd*. In this work, Hewlett attacked the Methodists for teaching such an 'unjust' doctrine, which encouraged people to see their 'Guilt and Misery' as something 'more caused by God and *Adam* than themselves'.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, the Methodists were not the sole target of Hewlett's attack on original sin. Indeed, he commenced this piece by stating that he desired to correct a recent sermon on '*Adam's* Guilt' by Samuel Wilson, a London Particular Baptist pastor. Wilson is not known to have had any affiliation with the Methodists. This information is significant because it reinforces the point that these polemical attacks on Methodism sometimes overlapped with other theological disputes. In this instance, anti-Methodism overlapped with an ongoing dispute between Dissenters. The fact that Hewlett incorporated the Methodists into these discussions is intriguing because it suggests that he viewed Methodism as a form of Dissent.⁵⁹ Several scholars have argued that there was a direct correlation between the decline of 'Old' (Reformed) Dissent and the rise of

⁵⁷ E. Hewlett, *A Refined Quaker's Remarks on Baptism: In Answer to Mr. Caleb Fleming's Pamphlet, Intituled A Defence of Infant Baptism* (London, 1745).

⁵⁸ E. Hewlett, *The Support of Popery Discovered, the Methodist, Calvinist, and Deist Unmask'd, the Arian, Arminian, and Socinian Reprov'd* (London, 1744), pp. 17-18.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

evangelicalism. While there is no denying that rational Dissent was growing during this period, it is clear from Hewlett's text that Old Dissent was still very much alive during the 1740s. Evidently, there was no neat transition from Old Dissent to evangelicalism.⁶⁰

As with Fleming, Hewlett's literary career did not prove to be a financially rewarding one. He is said to have claimed that his books only brought him 'poverty, disgrace, and loss of friends'. Hewlett's last known publication appeared in 1747. This abrupt end may have been due to Hewlett's death, the date of which remains unknown.⁶¹ Fleming, who died in 1779, dedicated the remainder of his career to tackling what he believed to be heresies and errors. Such apparent heresies included mortalism, which taught that, upon death, a person's 'consciousness' is 'suspended for ages' until Judgement Day.⁶² Radically more controversial, however, was the doctrine of universal reconciliation, which taught that all souls would eventually be saved.

Heaven and Hell

The 'first formal exposition' of universalism appeared in the writings of Origen, who argued that 'the end and consummation of all things' would eventually be 'returned' to the 'beginning' described in Genesis 1:1. Unsurprisingly, many later theologians – including Augustine – condemned Origen's universalism, which they viewed as a

⁶⁰ See J.D. Walsh, 'Origins of the Evangelical Revival', in G.V. Bennett and J.D. Walsh (eds), *Essays in Modern English Church History, in Memory of Norman Sykes* (New York, 1966), pp. 132-62; Idem, 'Methodism and the Origins of English-Speaking Evangelicalism', in M.A. Noll, D.W. Bebbington and G.A. Rawlyk (eds), *Evangelicalism: Comparative Studies of Popular Protestantism in North America, the British Isles and Beyond, 1700-1990* (New York, 1994), p. 29; G.F. Nuttall, 'Methodism and the Older Dissent: Some Perspectives', *Journal of the United Reformed Church History Society*, 2 (1981), pp. 259-74; H.D. Rack, 'Survival and Revival: John Bennet, Methodism, and the Old Dissent', in Noll, Bebbington and Rawlyk, *Evangelicalism*, pp. 1-23.

⁶¹ G. Goodwin, 'Hewlett, Ebenezer (fl. 1737-1747)', rev. A.J. Levin, *ODNB*.

⁶² C. Fleming, *A Survey of the Search after Souls, by Dr. Coward, Dr. S. Clarke, Mr. Baxter, Dr. Sykes, Dr. Law, Mr. Peckard and Others* (London, 1758), p. 291. For more on this topic, see B.W. Young, 'The Soul-Sleeping System'; Politics and Heresy in Eighteenth-Century England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 45 (1994), pp. 64-81.

heterodox and subversive doctrine.⁶³ Nevertheless, these theologians failed to completely eradicate universalism, which went on to be championed during the seventeenth century by the Digger, Gerrard Winstanley (1609-1676), the Cambridge Platonist, Peter Sterry (1613-1672), and Oliver Cromwell's chaplain, Jeremiah White (1629-1707), whose universalist work was published posthumously in 1712.⁶⁴ In 1743, a universalist work by the French Augustinian priest, Pierre Cuppé, was translated into English. The anonymous translator described *Heaven Open to All Men* as an 'Antidote' to the 'Enthusiastick Rhapsodies of Those who call Themselves *Methodists*'. Evidently, this individual automatically associated the doctrine of eternal torment with the Methodists, suggesting that, by the middle decades of the eighteenth century, relatively few clergymen were addressing hell in their sermons.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, it would be erroneous to assume that the sentiments contained in *Heaven Open to All Men* were agreeable to orthodox High Churchmen. A copy of this work was purchased by a George Bryant of Deptford, who subsequently lent it to James Bate, the rector of nearby St. Paul's, Deptford. On 12 December 1748, Bate composed a letter to Bryant, entitled 'Heaven Impossible to be Open to all Men', in which he condemned Cuppé's 'false Philosophy, dishonest Sophistry, and real or affected ignorance of the true sense of Scripture'. Bate stressed that 'some men' simply rendered 'themselves incapable of Salvation'. Such defiance, according to Bate, was an 'evil that

⁶³ L.M. Blanchard, *Will All Be Saved? An Assessment of Universalism in Western Theology* (Milton Keynes, 2015), pp. 55-62.

⁶⁴ G. Winstanley, *The Myserie of God Concerning the Whole Creation, Mankinde* (London, 1649). For Sterry and White's universalism, see L. Hickman, 'Love is All and God is Love: Universalism in Peter Sterry (1613-1672) and Jeremiah White (1630-1707)', in G. MacDonald (ed.), *"All Shall Be Well": Explorations in Universalism and Christian Theology, from Origen to Moltmann* (Eugene, Ore., 2011), pp. 95-115.

⁶⁵ P. Cuppé, *Heaven Open to All Men: Or, a Theological Treatise, in Which, Without Unsettling the Practice of Religion, is Solidly Prov'd, by Scripture and Reason, That All Men Shall Be Saved, or, Made Finally Happy* (London, 1743), p. v.

God himself cannot prevent without working...contradictions'.⁶⁶ It was for this reason that those beyond salvation were forced to endure the 'very depth of Eternal Misery'.⁶⁷

In addition to universalism, the doctrine of eternal torment was threatened by another heterodox view: annihilationism. During the 1650s, the relatively lax surveillance of the Interregnum had enabled annihilationism to enter the public sphere in the form of pamphlets by the Socinian, John Biddle (1615-1662), and the Baptist, Samuel Richardson (fl. 1646).⁶⁸ Some years later, John Tillotson preached his controversial sermon on hell. As was noted in Chapter Two, a diverse range of individuals – including John Edwards, Daniel Waterland and George Whitefield – feared that this sermon either wittingly or unwittingly encouraged annihilationism. While Tillotson's pupil and protégé, Thomas Burnet (1635-1715), supported annihilationism, this information was not widely known until the posthumous publication of his *De Statu Mortuorum & Resurgentium* (1720). Since the 'doctrine of eternal torment' was 'seen as necessary to good government', it is unsurprising that Burnet had never intended to publicise his annihilationist views.⁶⁹ In 1739, a small portion of this lengthy work was republished as *Hell Torments Not Eternal*. According to one advertisement, this piece provided a remedy for the 'Sick-Dreams' which 'Mr. Whitefield' had recently advanced in his sermon, *The Eternity of Hell Torments*.⁷⁰ The

⁶⁶ J. Bate, Letter: 'Heaven Impossible to be Open to all Men', Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 9363, fols. 1-2.

⁶⁷ Ibid., fol. 24.

⁶⁸ J. Biddle, *A Twofold Catechism: The One Simply Called A Scripture Catechism; The Other A Brief Scripture Catechism for Children* (London, 1654); S. Richardson, *Of the Torments of Hell: The Foundation and Pillars Thereof Discovered, Searched, Shaken and Removed* (London, 1658). Richardson's polemic was republished in 1720 and subsequently translated into French by the Atheist philosopher, Baron d'Holbach (1723-1789). See *L'enfer détruit ou examen raisonné du dogme de l'éternité des peines, Ouvrages traduits de L'Anglois* (Londres, 1769). I am grateful to John Coffey for this reference.

⁶⁹ P.C. Almond, *Heaven and Hell in Enlightenment England* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 160; For more on the background and content of Burnet's posthumous work, see D.P. Walker, *The Decline of Hell: Seventeenth-Century Discussions of Eternal Torment* (London, 1964), pp. 156-66. For wider discussions on this topic, see P.C. Davies, 'The Debate on Eternal Punishment in Late Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century English Literature', *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 4 (1971), pp. 257-76.

⁷⁰ *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, 1 June 1739.

anonymous author of an anti-Methodist tract entitled *Methodists Impostors* (1740) similarly attacked Whitefield by championing ‘the learned Dr Burnet’s Arguments, proving from the Attributes of divine Mercy, that *Hell Torments* are not *eternal*.’⁷¹ The fact that both of these sources associated hell-fire preaching with Whitefield reinforces the notion that, in the years preceding his ministry, hell had become a neglected topic in sermons.

In his *Grounds and Reasons of Christian Regeneration* (1739), William Law followed Whitefield’s example by arguing that it was ‘impossible’ for the soul to be ‘annihilated through the Goodness of God’. Apparently one could not be saved ‘without the Mediation of the Son of God...in the Soul’.⁷² Law’s argument was subsequently attacked by Thomas Whiston, who was ‘shock’d and amazed’ by the notion that ‘an All-perfect Being’ with the power to ‘create any Being out of nothing’ did not also have the power to ‘reduce any Being...to it’s [sic] primitive Nullity’. To Whiston, any denial of God’s power of ‘*Annihilation*’ entailed a denial of the Lord’s ‘Power to create’.⁷³ It is clear from his stance on this topic that Whiston intended to show his support for annihilationism, albeit in a relatively subtle manner. Rather than stating that the annihilation of damned souls *did* occur, Whiston was arguing that God *could* utilise his almighty powers to obliterate tormented souls if he so wished. Despite being Law’s main antagonist, Joseph Trapp would have found Whiston’s sentiments equally

⁷¹ *Methodists Impostors: Or, Wickliffe, Whitefield, Wesley, Stonehouse, Seagrave and Seward, Detected and Exposed*, 2nd edn (London, 1740), p. 24.

⁷² W. Law, *The Grounds and Reasons of Christian Regeneration Or the New Birth* (London, 1739), p. 15. By the end of his life, Law’s views on the afterlife had radically changed. In a posthumously published work, Law described hell as a rehabilitative tool, which ‘melted *all Arrogance* into Humility’. According to Law, come ‘Judgement Day’, the ‘Misery’ which these souls had endured would end, thus enabling them to embrace the ‘*all-working, all-redeeming* Love of God’. This theological transition probably resulted from Law’s enthusiasm for the work of the German mystic, Jakob Boehme (1575-1624), who had also been a Universalist. See W. Law, *An Humble, Earnest, and Affectionate Address to the Clergy* (London, 1761), pp. 172-73; Blanchard, *Will All Be Saved?*, p. 92.

⁷³ Whiston, *Important Doctrines*, p. 17.

repugnant. Trapp's belief in eternal damnation can be discerned from one of his poems, in which he described hell as a '*consummate, and eternal Woe*'.⁷⁴

Annihilationism also arose in Whiston's edited volume on Uriel Acosta, which appeared in print at the same time as his *Important Doctrines*. In one section of this work, Whiston reproduced a critical response to the sceptical Acosta by the Dutch Arminian theologian, Philipp van Limborch (1633-1712). Whiston drew his readers' attention to a passage in Limborch's 'Defence of Christianity', which stated that God will 'proportion the Punishment to the Nature and Degree of the Crime'. In the footnote, Whiston noted that, from this passage, one could 'infer, Mr *Limborch* was against the absolute Eternity of Hell Torments'.⁷⁵ Therefore, Whiston was displaying Limborch as both a champion of Christianity and a supporter of annihilationism. Thus, Whiston's work on Acosta reinforces the notion that he viewed attacking the Church of England's enemies – be it 'enthusiasts' on the one hand or freethinkers on the other – as a suitable forum in which he could voice his controversial views, while he displayed his loyalty to the established Church.

Significantly, Whiston's *Important Doctrines* was published only two months after his uncle's *The Eternity of Hell Torments*.⁷⁶ In the latter polemic, William Whiston supported annihilationism by citing numerous biblical passages. In one section, he reflected on the verse '*Wo unto that man by whom the son of man is betrayed. Good were it for that man if he had never been born*' (Mark 14:21). From this passage, the older Whiston observed that, since 'such mens sins shall *never be forgiven, even in the world, or age to come*', there was only one logical outcome for them: 'Utter

⁷⁴ J. Trapp, *Thoughts upon the Four Last Things: Death; Judgment; Heaven; and Hell* (London, 1749), p. 101.

⁷⁵ [T. Whiston], *The Remarkable Life of Uriel Acosta, an Eminent Freethinker* (London, 1740), p. 61.

⁷⁶ The original advertisement for *The Eternity of Hell Torments* appeared in the *Daily Gazetteer* on 4 January 1740.

destruction' or 'annihilation.'⁷⁷ John Whiston, who published many of his father's later polemics, was also responsible for the publication of *The Eternity of Hell Torments*. When John advertised the publication of his cousin's two 1740 works in the *General Evening Post*, he reminded his readers that copies of *The Eternity of Hell Torments* were still available.⁷⁸ The second page of *Important Doctrines* also contained an advertisement for the older Whiston's work.⁷⁹ The fact that these works were published so close together is significant because it suggests that Thomas Whiston's subtle support for annihilationism was at least partly intended as a means of bolstering his uncle's recent work. While William Whiston's *The Eternity of Hell Torments* attracted critical responses from such orthodox divines as Abraham Oakes, William Dodwell and Matthew Horbery, the younger Whiston's *Important Doctrines* attracted no responses at all.⁸⁰

There were several possible reasons for this apparent silence. First, orthodox readers may have refrained from attacking Thomas Whiston because they feared that this would be construed as a sign of support for the Methodists. Second, Whiston was a relatively junior figure in the ecclesiastical controversies arena. Therefore, orthodox divines may not have deemed the younger Whiston to be worthy of a response. Finally, the fact that *Important Doctrines* only went through one edition implies that it did not sell well. Thus, the absence of a response may simply have been due to a severely limited readership. Such a commercial failure would explain why Thomas Whiston

⁷⁷ Whiston, *The Eternity of Hell Torments*, p. 40.

⁷⁸ *General Evening Post*, 4 March 1740.

⁷⁹ Whiston, *Important Doctrines*, unpaginated advertisements page.

⁸⁰ See A. Oakes, *The Doctrine of Hell-Torments Distinctly and Impartially Discussed. The Second Edition. To which is Prefix'd, a Preface Inscribed to the Rev. William Whiston, M.A. Concerning his Eternity of Hell-Torments Considered* (London, 1740); *The Scripture Account of the Eternity, or Endless Duration, of the Joys of Heaven, and the Torments of Hell, Stated, Explained, and Vindicated. By Way of Reply to Mr. W. Whiston's Late Book, Entitled, The Eternity of Hell Torments, Considered, &c.* (London, 1742); W. Dodwell, *The Eternity of Future Punishment Asserted and Vindicated. In Answer to Mr Whiston's Late Treatise on that Subject* (Oxford, 1743); M. Horbery, *An Enquiry into the Scripture-Doctrine Concerning the Duration of Future Punishment...Occasion'd by Some Late Writings, and Particularly Mr. Whiston's Discourse of Hell-Torments* (London, 1744).

refrained from engaging in theological controversies after this early burst of publishing. The only later works that he published were a couple of relatively uncontroversial patriotic polemics.⁸¹

Conclusions

Despite the absence of a response, Whiston's *Important Doctrines* remains a significant source for a couple of reasons. First, this text provides us with an example of an author who utilised anti-Methodism as a forum to attack Anglican orthodoxy with a range of heterodox views. Evidently, Whiston's method of disguise resembled that of Richard Challoner, who – as we saw in Chapter Two – used anti-Methodism as forum to launch a subtle attack on Protestantism. Whiston's controversial opinions included his rejection of the Augustinian doctrine of original sin, along with his subtle show of support for his uncle's annihilationism. Such views were disagreeable, not only to Methodists, but also to such anti-Methodist High Churchmen as Daniel Waterland, James Bate and Joseph Trapp. Therefore, this text highlights the theological disparities amongst anti-Methodist Anglicans, and provides further evidence to suggest that, theologically speaking, Methodism had much in common with High Church Anglicanism. All of this, in turn, has ramifications for social historians of religion. Since the 1970s, we have seen such scholars as Walsh and Hempton successfully deflate E.P. Thompson's Weberian conclusions by emphasising the socially radical nature of early Methodism. Wesley and Whitefield's clerical opponents, according to these historians, were socially conservative individuals, who associated Methodists with Levellers, Diggers and other

⁸¹ See T. Whiston, *A Sermon Preached at Wisbech, Sunday, March 11. 1743. On the Present Posture of Our Affairs, and the Intended Invasion* (London, 1744); J. Christian, *A Political Discourse Upon the Different Kinds of Militia, Whether National, Mercenary, or Auxiliary*, ed. and trans. T. Whiston (London, 1757).

egalitarian sects from the previous century. In most cases, this was undoubtedly true. However, rather than fitting within this framework, Whiston's polemic presents us with something of a paradox.

Indeed, Whiston claimed to be helping society by rejecting original sin, which he viewed as an open invitation for immoral behaviour. But, by doing this, he was also attacking the baptismal practices of the established Church, and bolstering the plight of Baptists and other Dissenting groups who rejected infant baptism. Furthermore, Whiston subtly rejected the Methodists' belief in eternal torment – a doctrine which was seen to discourage immorality and vice – in favour of annihilationism, which was widely viewed as an invitation for anarchy and subversion. In this instance, it was clearly the anti-Methodist Whiston who posed the greater potential risk to the political and social status quo. Thus, from Whiston's *Important Doctrines*, we can see that one should not too readily equate anti-Methodism with social control. Finally, these discussions on Whiston, along with those on Ebenezer Hewlett and Caleb Fleming, have reinforced the notion that one should not view early anti-Methodist literature in isolation. Rather, one needs to appreciate that these attacks on Wesley and Whitefield sometimes overlapped with, and were informed by, theological controversies surrounding such issues as original sin, infant baptism, hell, and subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles.

Chapter Five

Anti-Methodism and Irreligion

Introduction

If there was one charge which eighteenth-century Methodists faced more than any other, it was the charge of ‘enthusiasm’. Often, this charge was levelled at Methodists by High Churchmen, who – as we shall see in the final chapter – were simply reiterating earlier attacks on the ‘enthusiasm’ of seventeenth-century Puritans and Quakers. Nevertheless, Anglican clergymen were certainly not the only individuals who deployed the charge of ‘enthusiasm’ in their polemics. Indeed, ‘enthusiasm’ was something which eighteenth-century Deists often attacked too. When referring to ‘Deism’, one must note that this term did not denote any coherent or united movement. As Paul Hazard notes, there was not ‘one deism, but several, all different, all mutually opposed, and even at daggers drawn with one another’.¹ Where the third Earl of Shaftesbury viewed benevolence as an innate characteristic of human nature, Bernard Mandeville and Lord Bolingbroke advocated the Hobbesian notion that one is governed by self-love. Similarly, where William Wollaston and Jacob Ilive believed in the immortality of the soul, others, such as Shaftesbury and Thomas Chubb, rejected this view.² To complicate matters further, out of all the individuals whom we now know as ‘Deists’, Peter Annet is the only person who is thought to have referred to himself as such (this was in an anonymous polemic, so its authorship remains uncertain).³

¹ P. Hazard, *European Thought in the Eighteenth Century: From Montesquieu to Lessing* (New Haven, 1954), p. 393.

² R. Stromberg, *Religious Liberalism in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1954), p. 66; M.J. McClymond and G.R. McDermott, *The Theology of Jonathan Edwards* (Oxford, 2012), pp. 52-53. For Ilive’s theology, see Herrick, *Radical Rhetoric*, ch. 9.

³ [P. Annet], *Deism Fairly Stated, and Fully Vindicated from the Gross Imputations and Groundless Calumnies of Modern Believers* (London, 1746).

Similarly, Matthew Tindal never claimed to be a ‘Deist’, though he did implicitly identify himself as a ‘Christian Deist’, who used reason to decide whether a scripture doctrine was valid or invalid.⁴ In fact, some of these authors – such as Charles Blount, John Toland and Anthony Collins – wrote about ‘Deists’ and ‘Deism’ in a detached, albeit fairly sympathetic, manner.⁵

If anything, ‘Deism’ was often little more than a derogatory slur. To quote James Force, it was ‘one of the dirty words of the age’.⁶ Wayne Hudson, Diego Lucci, and Jeffrey Wigelsworth concur and argue that the term was often used as a means of ‘conveying fear on the part of those who used it rather than specific traits of the accused.’⁷ This is not to say that contemporaries did not attempt to define ‘Deism’. While Samuel Clarke was aware that no ‘consistent Scheme of Deism’ existed, he defined Deists as those who ‘*profess to believe* only so far, as ‘tis discoverable by the Light of Nature alone; without believing any Divine Revelation’.⁸ Yet, it is insufficient for historians to define ‘Deism’ as a rejection of divine revelation. Of course, all Deists were virtually unanimous in their rejection of ‘special revelations’, which defied the

⁴ Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, pp. 368, 371.

⁵ Blount claimed that ‘Deism is a good manuring of a man’s Conscience, yet certainly if sowed with Christianity it will produce the most profitable Crop’. Elsewhere, Blount described the Deist as somebody who believed in ‘one Supream infinite and perfect Being’. The Deist, according to Blount, knew that one could not win favour with God by observing images and any other ‘External’ rituals. Blount noted that ‘Deism’ was reminiscent of the religion of the Pythagoreans, who had similarly eschewed any form of image worship. See C. Blount, *The Oracles of Reason* (London, 1693), pp. 87-96; W. Hudson, *The English Deists: Studies in Early Enlightenment* (London, 2009), ch. 4. Toland concluded his *Christianity Not Mysterious* by saying that it was the ‘Contradictions and Mysteries unjustly charg’d upon Religion’ which caused ‘so many to become *Deists* and *Atheists*.’ See J. Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious, or, A Treatise Shewing That There is Nothing in the Gospel Contrary to Reason, Nor Above It and That No Christian Doctrine Can Be Properly Call’d a Mystery*, 2nd edn (London, 1696), p. 173. Collins attacked those Anglican divines who ridiculed ‘*Deists*’ and ‘*Scepticks*’ by creating fictional dialogues between Deists and ‘Orthodox’ characters. Unsurprisingly, the latter character usually had little trouble in convincing their adversary that their sceptical views were entirely wrong. Such tactics, to Collins, merely showed that one was unwilling to engage in serious debate. See A. Collins, *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (London, 1724), pp. xlviii-xlix.

⁶ J.E. Force, ‘Biblical Interpretation, Newton, and English Deism’, in R.H. Popkin and A. Vanderjagt (eds), *Scepticism and Irreligion in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (Leiden, 1993), p. 282.

⁷ W. Hudson, D. Lucci, and J.R. Wigelsworth, ‘Introduction: Atheism and Deism Revived’, in W. Hudson, D. Lucci, and J.R. Wigelsworth (eds), *Atheism and Deism Revalued: Heterodox Religious Identities in Britain, 1650-1800* (Burlington, VT, 2014), p. 3.

⁸ S. Clarke, *A Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God, the Obligations of Natural Religion, and the Truth and Certainty of the Christian Revelation* (London, 1706), pp. 37, 40.

natural order. Yet, this does not mean that Deists rejected the concept of ‘divine revelation’ per se (though what they understood by the concept would have shocked most contemporary Christians). As Wigelsworth has shown in a recent essay, both Annet and Morgan believed that one’s reason was a gift from God, which enabled humans to receive revelation by observing God’s providential control over the ‘orderly construction of the universe’. While this term was not in use at the time, modern theologians have described this form of revelation as ‘general revelation’ or ‘natural revelation’.⁹ Therefore, it would be more accurate to define ‘Deists’ as individuals who were guided by reason and nature, rejected special revelation, and opposed priestly religion.

Returning to the theme of ‘enthusiasm’, this was a charge which Deists often deployed in their attacks on ‘priestcraft’. Lord Shaftesbury was one Deist who discussed ‘enthusiasm’ at length. In his *A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm* (1708), Shaftesbury – like many of the authors of his day – described ‘enthusiasm’ as an irrational overpowering of the passions. Shaftesbury’s discussions on ‘enthusiasm’ were at least partly triggered by his observations of the mystical French Prophets, who had recently arrived in England to seek asylum from Roman Catholic persecution. Yet, in what was blatantly intended as an attack on Anglican ‘priestcraft’, Shaftesbury also claimed that those who attempted to combat religious ‘enthusiasm’ with civil coercion were guilty of ‘enthusiasm’ themselves.¹⁰ Later, more radical, Deists used ‘enthusiasm’ as a stick to beat all Christians with. In *The History and Character of St. Paul*, which

⁹ J.R. Wigelsworth, “‘God always acts suitable to his character, as a wise and good being’: Thomas Chubb and Thomas Morgan on Miracles and Providence”, in Hudson, Lucci, and Wigelsworth, *Atheism and Deism Revalued*, p. 169.

¹⁰ Intriguingly, Shaftesbury also differed from most contemporary authors in the sense that he did not believe that ‘enthusiasm’ was always a negative thing. Rather, he believed that such an overpowering of the passions was a positive thing when it cultivated sociability and artistry. J.E. Myers, “‘Supernatural Charity’: Astell, Shaftesbury and the Problem of Enthusiasm”, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 37 (2014), pp. 299-314. For the French Prophets, see L. Laborie, *Enlightening Enthusiasm: Prophecy and Religious Experience in Early Eighteenth-Century England* (Manchester, 2015).

was published during the 1740s, Peter Annet denied that Paul's experience on the road to Damascus had been the work of God. To Annet, Paul was either an 'impostor', who had deliberately fabricated his conversion, or an '*enthusiast*' with an 'overheated imagination'.¹¹

Historians have – quite rightly – seen the rise and expansion of evangelicalism during the 1730s as something which was at least partly a reaction to Deism. As John Walsh argues, 'it can be no coincidence that the Evangelical Revival took off' around the same time that Deism 'reached a high-water mark of popularity.'¹² Thus, it is unsurprising that, until relatively recently, scholars have tended to describe eighteenth-century evangelicalism as a 'Counter-Enlightenment' movement, which was intent on stalling any progress towards 'modernity'. In his classic survey of eighteenth-century England, J.H. Plumb claimed that the 'intellectual attitude of the day' was 'absolutely absent' from early evangelicalism – a point which he supported by referring to Wesley's belief 'in witches' and demonic 'possession'.¹³ More recently, Jonathan Israel has similarly argued that – because of his 'fervent' belief in 'miraculous healings as well as providence, visions, witchcraft, and ghosts' – Wesley was a 'leading precursor of Counter-Enlightenment in the transatlantic, English-speaking world.'¹⁴

On the other hand, several more recent scholars have sought to bridge this traditional divide between eighteenth-century evangelicalism and the 'Enlightenment'. Admittedly, for historians of Whitefield, this has not been an easy task. In a recent article, Frank Lambert concedes that Whitefield's ministry largely embodied the so-called 'Counter-Enlightenment'. As Lambert notes, Whitefield launched controversial attacks on such rationalistic theologians as Tillotson and the professors at Harvard and

¹¹ [P. Annet], *The History and Character of St. Paul, Examined: In a Letter to Theophilus, a Christian Friend* (London, n.d.), p. 16.

¹² Walsh, 'Methodism' and the Origins of English-Speaking Evangelicalism', p. 23.

¹³ Plumb, *England in the Eighteenth Century*, pp. 94-96.

¹⁴ Israel, *Democratic Enlightenment*, p. 43.

Yale. Nevertheless, Lambert also stresses that, compared to such ‘radical revivalists’ as James Davenport, Whitefield’s approach was still relatively rational. Like such evangelical ‘moderates’ as Jonathan Edwards and Samuel Blair, Whitefield appealed to both reason and scripture when attempting to distinguish true conversions from false conversions.¹⁵ Evidently, neither ‘Enlightenment’ nor ‘Counter-Enlightenment’ are accurate categorisations when describing Whitefield’s ministry and teachings. This, in turn, begs the question of whether such categorisations should be used at all.

Those historians who have focused on Wesley have found it considerably less difficult to reconcile his theology and ministry with the so-called ‘Enlightenment’. For instance, David Hempton notes that Wesley’s abolitionist work, *Thoughts upon Slavery* (1774), was a ‘spirited defence of natural rights’.¹⁶ Others have described the ways in which empiricism governed many aspects of Wesley’s ministry. Phyllis Mack describes empiricism as something which governed Wesley’s interpretation of dreams. As Mack convincingly argues, Wesley believed that ‘the proof of a dream’s divinity could only be the dreamer’s own reformed habits and change of heart.’¹⁷ Deborah Madden similarly states that Wesley’s reliance on empiricism can be discerned from his medical self-help book, *Primitive Physick* (1747), which was largely derived from his own trial-and-error experimentations.¹⁸ In his landmark biography of Wesley, Henry Rack notes that, while Wesley believed in ‘apparitions and witches’, he was careful to ensure that

¹⁵ F. Lambert, ‘Whitefield and Enlightenment’, in Hammond and Jones, *Life, Context, and Legacy*, pp. 64-81.

¹⁶ D. Hempton, *Religion of the People: Methodism and Popular Religion 1750-1900* (London, 1996), p. 80. See also Hempton’s more recent *Methodism*, pp. 41-42.

¹⁷ Mack, *Heart Religion*, p. 226.

¹⁸ D. Madden, ‘Experience and the Common Interest of Mankind: The Enlightened Empiricism of John Wesley’s *Primitive Physick*’, *Journal for Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 26 (2003), pp. 41-53; Idem, *A Cheap, Safe and Natural Medicine: Religion, Medicine and Culture in John Wesley’s Primitive Physic* (Amsterdam, NY, 2007).

accounts of such activities were also supported by ‘Lockean empiricist arguments’.¹⁹ To the empirical Wesley, the Anglican divine and natural philosopher Joseph Glanvill’s (1636-1680) description of ‘aerial and astral spirits’ amounted to pure speculation and ‘stark nonsense’. Wesley believed that such information was only accessible to ‘inhabitants’ of the ‘invisible world’.²⁰ Nevertheless, Rack still distances Wesley from some aspects of the ‘Enlightenment’. For example, Rack claims that, during Wesley’s lifetime, ‘Deism and evangelicalism really operated in different worlds’.²¹

It would certainly be logical to assume that somebody like Wesley – a man who contested the 1735 Witchcraft Act, and based his conversion experience on a sudden feeling – would have operated in a different world from such an individual as Thomas Chubb, who denied the miracles of Jesus. Rack’s ‘different worlds’ stereotype is prevalent throughout the secondary literature. While intellectual and religious historians have devoted much attention to Methodism and irreligion in their studies of eighteenth-century theological controversies, it is unusual to see these two seemingly opposite extremes being scrutinised in the same work. Leslie Stephen’s *The History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century* (1876) is a rare example of a work which discusses both Methodism and Deism at length. However, Stephen largely ignored any connections between evangelical ‘enthusiasts’ and rational Deists. The exception to this is Stephen’s brief reference to Wesley’s attack on Conyers Middleton, though Middleton’s views have been convincingly described by recent scholars as a melding of ‘anti-dogmatic Protestantism’ and ‘freethinking’, rather than Deism.²²

¹⁹ For Rack’s discussions on Wesley’s empiricism, see Rack *Reasonable Enthusiast*, pp. 383-88 (see p. 387 for quotation); Idem, ‘A Man of Reason and Religion? John Wesley and the Enlightenment’, *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, 1 (2009), pp. 2-17.

²⁰ Curnock, *Journal*, V, p. 311.

²¹ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 174.

²² For Stephen’s discussion on the Wesley/Middleton debate, see *History of English Thought*, II, pp. 413-14. For two recent essays which question the traditional notion that Middleton was a Deist, see Ingram, ‘Weight of Historical Evidence’, pp. 85-109; Young, ‘Conyers Middleton’, pp. 235-65.

This chapter offers a fundamental reappraisal of the relationship (and perceived relationship) between Methodism and irreligion during the middle decades of the eighteenth century. More specifically, it will show that discussions on irreligion featured prominently in the early printed attacks on Methodism. This, in turn, will provide us with a greater a sense of the ways in which anti-Methodism was informed by various other theological controversies during this period. Crucially, by showing that attacks on evangelicalism often mirrored attacks on irreligion, this chapter argues that such categorisations as ‘Enlightenment’ and ‘Counter-Enlightenment’ are unhelpful when describing contemporary perceptions of Deism, which, like Methodism, was often associated with madness, melancholia and ‘enthusiasm’. As with the previous chapters, a recurring theme throughout this section will be literary disguises. It will be shown that freethinkers sometimes disguised themselves as religious ‘enthusiasts’ in their polemical attacks on the established Church. Such deception, as these discussions will show, only fuelled the common opinion amongst both Anglican and Dissenting clergymen that evangelical ‘enthusiasm’ complemented Deism. Paradoxically, however, it was not unknown for Deists to attack Methodism in print. Nevertheless, in at least one instance, anti-Methodism was merely a smokescreen which enabled a Deist to launch a subtle attack on priestly religion. As the closing section will show, Peter Annet disguised what was clearly an attack on the established Church as an anti-Whitefield polemic.

Madness and Melancholia

One of the earliest examples of freethinkers being associated with madness can be found in the scholar and clergyman Robert Burton’s 1621 treatise *The Anatomy of*

Melancholy. In this work, Burton described ‘true religion’ as a state in which a person recognised that ‘the true God’ was ‘the way to heaven, [and] the mother of all vertues’.²³ To Burton, such a state was physical as well as spiritual. More specifically, Burton believed that ‘true religion’ was maintained by a correct balance of humors in the body. Spiritually speaking, a person’s deviation from ‘true religion’ was due to diabolic action. Physiologically speaking, it was due to an abnormality known as ‘melancholia’, which resulted from an imbalance of humors. Thus, Burton viewed melancholia as a soul-sickness, which resulted in despair and an inability to love and fear God in the correct measure. On the one extreme, melancholia was exhibited by those who viewed themselves as ‘more divine and sanctified then others’. This included ‘all superstitious Idolators, Ethnickes, Mahometans, Jewes, Hereticks, Enthusiasts, Divinators, Prophets, Sectaries, and Schismaticks.’ On the other extreme, melancholia could be found amongst ‘impious Epicures, Libertines, Atheists, Hypocrites, [and] Infidels’. In other words, those ‘carnall minded men, that attribute all to naturall causes’, and ‘acknowledge no supream power’.²⁴ Thomas Woolston was one notable example of a Deist who faced allegations of madness. In his *Pastoral Letter* (1728), Bishop Gibson claimed that Woolston’s ‘infidelity’ was as a sure sign that his adversary was suffering from a ‘deprav’d mind’.²⁵ Another author scoffed that, for the 1689 Toleration Act to be serviceable to Woolston, it would need to include ‘provisional Clause, for proper Accommodations for such as fall into your way of thinking in *Moor-*

²³ R. Burton, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (Oxford, 1621), p. 716.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 715, 773. For more on the perceived relationship between Atheism and melancholy, see J. Hankins, ‘Monstrous Melancholy: Ficino and the Physiological Causes of Atheism’, in S. Clucas, P. Forshaw and V. Rees (eds), *Laus Platonici Philosophi: Marsilio Ficino and His Influence* (Leiden, 2011), pp. 25-44.

²⁵ Gibson, *Bishop of London's Pastoral Letter...Occasion'd by Some Late Writings in Favour of Infidelity*, p. 8.

fields' – the location of the lunatic asylum, Bedlam.²⁶ Some claimed that, because of their melancholia, freethinkers were more likely to commit suicide.

In 1700, John Adams, rector of St Alban, Wood Street (and future provost of King's College, Cambridge), published *An Essay Concerning Self-Murther*. In this work, Adams described those individuals who rejected 'Revelation' and chose to be 'misled' by their 'pompous Boasts of Reason, Courage, Honour and Liberty'. Such actions, according to Adams, often caused these individuals to lose their 'Health', along with their 'Good Conscience'. This, in turn, sometimes led them 'to seek for Ease in *Self-murther*.'²⁷ It is possible that Adams's argument was inspired by the relatively recent death of Charles Blount. In 1693, Blount had died of a self-inflicted knife wound because the law forbade him to marry his late wife's sister (whether Blount had intended to kill himself remains uncertain).²⁸ Many years later, the Irish Anglican divine, George Berkeley, described a similar relationship between freethought and suicide in his anti-Deist work, *Alciphron* (1732). This work takes the form of a fictional dialogue between several characters, including a couple of freethinkers, and a defender of Christianity (Crito). At one point, Crito claims that 'as the Minute Philosophy prevails, we daily see more examples of Suicide.'²⁹ In his *English Malady* (1733), the Newtonian physicist, George Cheyne, also attributed the '*late frequency and daily Encrease of wanton and uncommon Self-murderers*' to the activities of 'Infidels' and their 'Disciples'.³⁰

²⁶ A.B., *A Letter to Mr. Woolston, Occasion'd by His Late Defence of His Discourse, in Answer to the Bishops of St. David's and London, &c. From a Deacon of the Church of England* (London, 1729), p. 13.

²⁷ J. Adams, *An Essay Concerning Self-Murther: Wherein is Endeavour'd to Prove that it is Unlawful According to Natural Principles* (London, 1700), p. A3.

²⁸ D. Pfanner, 'Blount, Charles (1654–1693)', *ODNB*.

²⁹ G. Berkeley, *Alciphron: or, The Minute Philosopher. In Seven Dialogues. Containing an Apology for the Christian Religion, Against Those who are Called Free-thinkers*, 2 vols. (London, 1732), I, p. 117.

³⁰ G. Cheyne, *The English Malady, Or, a Treatise of Nervous Diseases of All Kinds, as Spleen, Vapours, Lowness of Spirits, Hypochondriacal, and Hysterical Distempers, &c.* (London, 1733), p. iii.

Religious ‘enthusiasm’ was also widely viewed as a melancholic phenomenon. The final segment of William Hogarth’s 1733 painting *A Rakes Progress* depicts a corridor in Bedlam. Inhabiting one cell is a naked man, who is surrounded by popish imagery.³¹ Anti-Methodist polemics often contained allusions to Bedlam. The most notable example of this was the undated satirical cartoon, *Harlequin Methodist*. In this scene, Whitefield is dressed as the humble servant, Harlequin, with Bedlam clearly visible in the background.³² In 1745, Mary Hill similarly claimed that Methodists were ‘*brain-sick* in the fond estimation of their own opinions’.³³ Thus, it was often alleged that, like Deism, Methodism encouraged self-harm and suicide. In a 1743 letter to his father in Scotland, an anonymous ‘gentleman’ of New England claimed that some of Whitefield’s followers had ‘hanged themselves’, while others had apparently ‘cut their own Throats’.³⁴ An item which appeared in an August 1743 edition of the *Norwich Gazette* reported that a local Methodist preacher was responsible for the recent suicide of a mentally unstable woman.³⁵ Another newspaper item, which appeared in *The Entertainer* on 22 October 1754, described the recent death of a ‘*Tom Sullen*’. After he had ‘spent the whole day with a Methodist preacher’, Sullen had apparently ‘retired to his lodgings, said his prayers, went to bed, slept well, awaked early in the morning, settled his affairs, loaded a pistol, and blew his brains out’.³⁶ Several years later, *The Universal Museum* described a female Methodist convert of Newcastle whose ‘fit of religion’ had caused her to ‘cut off both her ears, her nose, both lips, both breasts,

³¹ W. Hogarth, ‘A Rake’s Progress (1734)’, *Sir John Soane’s Museum London*, <http://www.soane.org/collections-research/key-stories/rakes-progress> (accessed 11 June 2017).

³² *Harlequin Methodist*.

³³ Hill, *Essay on Schism*, p. 20.

³⁴ A.M., *The State of Religion in New-England: Since the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield’s Arrival There. In a Letter from a Gentleman in New-England to His Friend in Glasgow* (Glasgow, 1742), p. 85.

³⁵ G. Minois, *History of Suicide: Voluntary Death in Western Culture*, trans. L.G. Cochrane (Baltimore, 1999), p. 219.

³⁶ *The Entertainer*, 22 October 1754, p. 48.

stabbed herself under the breast and cut her throat'. Remarkably, the woman had apparently survived the experience.³⁷

Admittedly, evangelical preachers played their own part in fuelling the common belief that religious 'enthusiasm' encouraged suicide. For example, Jonathan Edwards's widely published 1737 account of a recent revival in Northampton, Massachusetts, described how one member of Edwards's flock had committed suicide because he was 'exceedingly concern'd about the State of his Soul.'³⁸ In the final part of his *Enthusiasm of Methodists*, George Lavington highlighted an entry in Wesley's published journal, which described how one evangelical convert's battles with Satan had caused him to sink 'into the Depth of *Despair*', making him 'tempted to Self-murder, to hang, or drown himself'.³⁹ Evidently, both Deists and Methodists faced similar charges of madness and melancholia. With this similarity in mind, it does not take a huge leap of the imagination to see why the two groups were often associated with each other by Anglican and Dissenting polemicists. Linked to these allegations of madness were charges of 'enthusiasm'. Of course, we have seen that attacks on evangelicals were littered with references to 'enthusiasm'. More surprising, however, is the fact that similar charges of 'enthusiasm' often featured in attacks on irreligion.

The 'Immediate Inspiration of God'

The Cambridge Platonist, Henry More (1614-1687), described affinities between such seemingly disparate groups as Quakers and Hobbesian materialists. To More, all these individuals shared a common dependence on their imagination, and a 'common

³⁷ *The Universal Museum, or, Gentleman's and Ladies Polite Magazine of History, Politicks and Literature for 1763*, 2 vols. (London, 1763), II, p. 556.

³⁸ J. Edwards, *A Faithful Narrative of the Surprising Work of God in the Conversion of Many Hundred Souls in Northampton*, 2nd edn (London, 1738), p. 118.

³⁹ [Lavington], *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared. Part III*, p. 8.

disregard for illuminated rationality.⁴⁰ In the second edition of his *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* (1662), More claimed that, while ‘*Atheism* and *Enthusiasm*’ seemed ‘so extremely opposite one to another’, the two agreed ‘in many things’. The Atheist, on the one hand, possessed a ‘pretence to Wit and natural Reason’ which confirmed the ‘*Enthusiast*’s’ belief that reason was ‘no guide to God.’ On the other hand, by ‘boldly dictating the careless ravings of his own tumultuous Phansy for undeniable Principles of Divine knowledge’, the ‘*Enthusiast*’ confirmed the Atheist’s suspicion that the ‘whole business of Religion and Notion of a God’ was ‘nothing but a troublesome fit of over-curious *Melancholy*.’⁴¹ In a subsequent work, entitled *Philosophiae Teutonicae Censura* (1679), More addressed the mystical teachings of Jakob Boehme (1575-1624). While More admired Boehme’s spirituality, he feared that Boehme’s ‘unreflective reliance on the imagination’ could easily be interpreted as a form of Atheism.⁴²

William Law – who, ironically, went on to become a follower of Boehme’s teachings – described a similar relationship between ‘enthusiasm’ and irreligion. In *The Case of Reason* (1731) – which was a response to Tindal’s *Christianity as Old as the Creation* – Law claimed that those who followed reason alone fell into the ‘grossest errors’. More specifically, Law believed that, when reason was unchecked by divine revelation, it paved the way for false religion and libertinism. Thus, it was ‘truly reason that made *Medea* kill her children, that made *Cato* kill himself, that made pagans offer human sacrifices to idols...[and] made *Mahomet* pretend a revelation.’ So, in Law’s mind, it was reason which produced such ‘enthusiasts’ as Muhammad and the ‘fanatic’ Lodowicke Muggleton (1609-1698). Of course, both Muhammad and Muggleton had claimed that they *were* guided by divine revelation, though Law evidently believed

⁴⁰ D.C. Fouke, *The Enthusiastical Concerns of Dr. Henry More: Religious Meaning and the Psychology of Delusion* (Leiden, 1997), p. 181.

⁴¹ H. More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus; Or, a Brief Discourse of the Nature, Causes, Kinds, and Cure of Enthusiasm*, 2nd edn (London, 1662), pp. 1-2.

⁴² Fouke, *Enthusiastical Concerns of Dr. Henry More*, p. 181.

none of it to be true. From this, we can see that Law viewed *false* revelation as a form of corrupted reason.⁴³ The fact that Law viewed reliance solely on reason as the root cause of ‘enthusiasm’ is intriguing because it contradicts the definition of ‘enthusiasm’ which Samuel Johnson subsequently advanced in the first edition of his *Dictionary*. Indeed, Johnson defined ‘enthusiasm’ as a ‘vain belief of private revelation’ which was ‘founded neither on reason nor divine revelation’. Evidently, Law differed in the sense that he viewed ‘enthusiasm’ as a vain belief of private revelation which was founded on *reason alone*.⁴⁴ Therefore, Law believed that religious ‘enthusiasts’, such as Muslims and Muggletonians, were on the same footing as those who totally rejected religion, such as the ‘libertine’ John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester (1647-1680). To Law, all these individuals and groups were governed by one thing: selfish human reason.⁴⁵

Daniel Waterland subsequently advanced a similar argument in his 1740 attack on the evangelical New Birth, *Regeneration Stated and Explained*. In this work, Waterland noted that the word ‘*Inspiration*’ was abused by many, who used it to ‘boast...in an extravagant Way’ and portray ‘their own presumptions’ as the ‘Dictates of the Spirit’. To support this point, Waterland cited Thomas Bennett (1673-1728), along with the Non-Juror, Charles Leslie (1650-1722), as two authors who had previously attacked the Quakers’ tendency to use the word ‘Inspiration’ in their descriptions of the Inner Light. Waterland also directed his readers to a 1678 work by the Anglican clergyman and controversialist, William Clagett (1646-88), which criticised the Puritan divine John Owen’s seemingly antinomian use of the word ‘Inspiration’. As we shall see in the final chapter, references to seventeenth-century

⁴³ W. Law, *The Case of Reason, or Natural Religion, Fairly and Fully Stated. In Answer to a Book, Entitul'd, Christianity as Old as the Creation* (London, 1731), p. 159.

⁴⁴ S. Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London, 1755), s.v. ‘Enthusiasm’.

⁴⁵ Law, *Case of Reason*, p. 159.

Quakers and Puritans were a common characteristic of anti-Methodist pamphlets. Thus, there was nothing unusual about Waterland's utilisation of these earlier texts.⁴⁶

More surprising, however, was Waterland's subsequent reference to several Deistic texts. One such text was *The Infallibility of Humane Judgement* (1719) by J. [William] Lyons, a freethinker, who had befriended Benjamin Franklin during the latter's early stint in London. This work, which resulted in a period of imprisonment for Lyons, had described one's own intuition as an 'Emanation of Light from above', a 'Ray of the Divinity', an 'Image of GOD' and a 'Spirit of Truth'.⁴⁷ Waterland went on to cite Tindal's *Christianity as Old as the Creation*. He drew attention to a section where his late adversary had described 'intuitive Knowledge' as a form of '*divine Inspiration*'. Elsewhere in the text, Tindal had described intuition as 'that uniform Light, which shines in the Minds of all Men, and enables them to discern whatever they do discern'. Such '*Inspiration*', according to Tindal, came 'immediately from God' and could not be 'acquir'd by any human Deduction'.⁴⁸ Finally, Waterland cited an anonymously written pamphlet, entitled *A Demonstration of the Insufficiency both of Reason and Revelation* (1731). It is no coincidence that this work was published shortly after Tindal's *Christianity as Old as the Creation*. At one point, the author responded to one of Tindal's critics by defending his scepticism of '*written Revelation*'. Waterland highlighted the concluding section of this text, where it was stated that one needed to discard both '*Reason and Revelation*' in favour of the 'IMMEDIATE INSPIRATION of GOD'.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Waterland, *Regeneration Stated and Explained*, p. 40.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 41; [J. Lyons], *The Infallibility of Humane Judgment; Its Dignity and Excellency*, 2nd edn (London, 1721), p. 44. For more on Franklin's friendship with Lyons, see J.A.L. Lemay, *The Life of Benjamin Franklin*, Vol. I, *Journalist, 1706-1730* (Philadelphia, 2006), pp. xii, 270-71, 274, 286-89.

⁴⁸ Waterland, *Regeneration Stated and Explained*, p. 41; Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, p. 182.

⁴⁹ Waterland, *Regeneration Stated and Explained*, p. 41; *A Demonstration of the Insufficiency both of Reason and Revelation* (London, 1731), pp. 20-21, 48.

It may initially seem odd that Waterland cited these three Deistic texts in his anti-Methodist work. Yet, when one reflects on these authors' references to an internal 'Light', 'Spirit', or 'Inspiration', one can discern striking similarities to the language of Quakers. As was noted in Chapter One, Waterland had already alluded to affinities between religious 'enthusiasts' and Deists in his 1734 defence of Trinitarian orthodoxy. One might assume that Waterland's description of such affinities was nothing more than a polemical strategy. Yet, from the annotations contained in Waterland's personal copy of *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, we can see that he held these suspicions in private. In one margin, Waterland observed that Tindal's 'reason' amounted to nothing more than 'Dreams'.⁵⁰ Elsewhere, he noted that Tindal's references to a 'Light within' were 'most like Quakerism'.⁵¹ John Henley, an Anglican clergyman of London, who was famed for being a powerful orator, had printed similar observations regarding *Demonstration of the Insufficiency both of Reason and Revelation*. In his *Deism Defeated* (1731), Henley described the anonymous author of this work as 'an *Infidel in a Quakers Coat*; James Naylor translating *Spinoza*'.⁵²

So, why did Waterland cite these Deistic texts in his attack on the evangelical New Birth? Like Law, he appears to have conflated rational sceptics with religious 'enthusiasts' because both groups seemed to use their own whims and fancies – be it Tindal's 'intuition' on the one hand or Wesley's 'heart-warming' Aldersgate experience on the other – to justify their own selfish actions. In other words, Waterland believed that both Deists and Methodists were free to '*make*' or '*call*' whatever they wished '*immediate Inspiration*'. This, in turn, would set any man 'loose...to follow his *own*

⁵⁰ Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, [Waterland's annotated copy] Bodleian Library, shelf mark 4° Rawl. 92, p. 179. I am grateful to Brian Young for this reference.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 292.

⁵² J. Henley, *Deism Defeated, and Christianity Defended; or, the Evidence for Christianity Set in a New Light and Proved to Amount to Certainty* (London, 1731), p. 35.

Devices’ and ‘bring every Rule’ to his ‘own Way and Will’.⁵³ Tindal was probably being playful when he described intuitive knowledge as a form of divine inspiration. Indeed, adopting the language of religious ‘enthusiasts’ was a common rhetorical strategy amongst freethinkers. For example, this strategy was deployed by Woolston, who posed as a Quaker called ‘Aristobulus’ in a 1720 attack on ‘priestcraft’. In this work, ‘Aristobulus’ condemned the ‘scorn and contempt’ which clergymen had continually displayed towards his Quaker brethren, whom he sarcastically described as a ‘most Learned Society’. These sentiments were directed particularly at the Anglican cleric and Hebraist, Thomas Bennett, who had published his *Confutation of Quakerism* fifteen years earlier.⁵⁴ More deceptive, however, was Henry Dodwell the younger’s *Christianity Not Founded on Argument* (1741).

On the surface, Dodwell’s work appears to be an attack on rational religion. However, the extremity of Dodwell’s sentiments make it very hard to believe that this work was intended to be anything other than ironical and satirical in tone. Dodwell’s biographer notes that this work was probably intended as a parody of Law’s *Case of Reason*, which had fallen short of arguing that there was no room at all for reason in Christianity.⁵⁵ It is also possible that Dodwell was subtly attacking such evangelicals as Wesley and Whitefield. Throughout *Christianity Not Founded on Argument*, Dodwell argued that humans could not be governed by fallen reason. Dodwell even went so far as to say that speculative reason needed to be ‘suppress’d’ by the civil magistrate. Such suppression, in turn, would prevent ‘those unhappy Divisions and hateful Animosities’ which arose ‘from a fatal and ill-judged Indulgence to that restless Spirit of

⁵³ Waterland, *Regeneration Stated and Explained*, p. 41.

⁵⁴ [T. Woolston], *A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Bennet* (London, 1720), pp. 8-9.

⁵⁵ See J.A. Herrick, ‘Dodwell, Henry (1706–1784)’, *ODNB*; In his recent article on this text, and the controversy it generated, Diego Lucci concurs with the notion that Dodwell was parodying Law. See D. Lucci, ‘Henry Dodwell the Younger’s Attack on Christianity’, in Hudson, Lucci, and Wigelsworth, *Atheism and Deism Revalued*, pp. 209-28.

Contradiction and Confusion.’ Dodwell was sure that there was ‘no one Lesson that the holy Writings’ had ‘taken more Care to inculcate in the strongest Terms, than this of denying our Reason to give our Faith Scope.’⁵⁶ Also, many of the arguments which Dodwell advanced were blatantly contradictory. For example, at one point, he described faith as something which individuals received through the Holy Spirit. But how, in Dodwell’s mind, did one discern a genuine faith from a false faith? To Dodwell, this was something which could only be achieved by reflecting on the ‘innumerable Passages throughout the whole Scripture’.⁵⁷ Yet, elsewhere in this work, Dodwell argued that one could not rely on the ‘Credit of ancient Miracles, or the Genuineness of distant Records’. In other words, Dodwell was stating that the scriptures alone provided a ‘very slender and insufficient Ground’ for faith. Rather, before one even began to read the scriptures, one needed to possess a faith which was grounded in the Holy Spirit.⁵⁸ Such contradictory arguments clearly did not make any sense, and one can assume that this was quite intentional.

Dodwell’s work attracted responses from a diverse range of individuals. Most of these responses were hostile towards Dodwell’s tract, which they interpreted as a satirical attack on Christianity. Shortly after its publication, Wesley claimed that the aim of *Christianity Not Founded on Argument* was to ‘render the whole of the Christian Institution, both odious and contemptible.’⁵⁹ Several years later, James Bate likened Dodwell’s method of disguise to Satan’s ability to ‘transform himself into an Angel of Light’.⁶⁰ By this point, Bate had already attacked Methodism in print. Therefore, the Dodwell controversy illustrates the fact that Methodists could sometimes be found

⁵⁶ [H. Dodwell], *Christianity Not Founded on Argument, and the True Principle of Gospel-Evidence Assigned: In a Letter to a Young Gentleman at Oxford* (London, 1741), p. 84.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 56-57.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 59-61.

⁵⁹ J. Wesley, *An Earnest Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion*, 2nd edn (Bristol, 1743), p. 17.

⁶⁰ J. Bate, *Infidelity Scourged: Or, Christianity Vindicated* (London, 1746), p. 159.

fighting on the same side as their critics. As we shall see in the next chapter, Wesley's intervention in the Middleton controversy was a similar – albeit more complex – instance in which Wesley fought alongside his High Church opponents. Unlike Wesley, at least one evangelical author took Dodwell's work seriously, and largely approved of it. Indeed, Robert Seagrave concurred that 'Human Reason' was 'corrupt', which, in turn, rendered it incapable of 'discerning in the Scriptures *a Stamp of Divinity*.'⁶¹ Yet, Seagrave diverged from Dodwell's seemingly outright dismissal of reason from faith, and argued that Christians needed to differentiate corrupted human reason from '*right Reason*'. Unlike the former, which Dodwell had condemned, 'right reason' was something which all Christians had received through a 'Gift of Grace'.⁶² A couple of years before Dodwell published *Christianity Not Founded on Argument*, an anonymous author had deployed a similar method of deception in a work which – on the surface – appeared to be a pro-Whitefield tract.

A 'Deist in London'?

You well know we have for some time past been polite enough to become Deists, to make a Jest of Christianity, and to look upon Religion only as a political Scheme to keep Mankind in Awe. These Opinions open'd the Way for both of us to give an unbounded Liberty to our Passions; and to become finish'd Rakes. But now I look back with Horror upon Vice, and am perfectly convinc'd we have been travelling full Speed in the high Road to eternal Damnation.⁶³

⁶¹ R. Seagrave, *Christianity How Far It Is, and Is Not, Founded on Argument* (London, 1743), p. 10.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.

⁶³ *The True Character of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield, in a Letter from a Deist in London to his Friend in the Country* (London, 1739), pp. 2-3.

These were the words of a 'Deist in London', whose letter to a 'Friend in the Country' was published as *The True Character of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield* on 2 June 1739.⁶⁴ One may wonder exactly what had caused the author to make this 'sudden Alteration' to his religious stance. Apparently, it was his attendance at one of Whitefield's open-air services, where he experienced the evangelical New Birth. Throughout the rest of this text, the 'Deist' attempts to defend his new-found role model, whom he describes as somebody who has endured 'all Manner of Evil...said against him'.⁶⁵ Elsewhere in this text, the 'Deist' reflects on a life-threatening illness from which he has suffered recently, but before his alleged conversion. He laments that, rather than experiencing any 'Hopes' and 'Fears' regarding 'Heaven and Hell', he had an 'easy' and 'uncertain' brush with death, which he describes as being typical of the 'obstinate Deist.' Before his 'conversion', the 'Deist' was adamant that the only eternity after death was the process of turning to 'Mould in a Church-yard', which would then be 'remov'd to nourish some Tree, and become Part of a Peach...thence, after many Changes, to be a Part of a Ship, or a House, and so on, to an eternal Revolution.' Evidently, the author's intention here was to mock Deists for their alleged disbelief in the immortality of the soul – a generalisation which, as we have seen, was not totally accurate.⁶⁶

In a manner which echoes Whitefield, the 'Deist' attacks the established clergy for seeking 'Pluralities', wallowing in 'Luxury', and prostituting the 'Holy Sacrament' to known adulterers.⁶⁷ While the author makes a brief reference to 'Dr. Codex' (Edmund Gibson), it is Joseph Trapp whom he displays as Whitefield's main antagonist.⁶⁸ Such a reference to Trapp is unsurprising, given that this work was published shortly after Trapp had preached his 'Righteous Over-Much' sermons across

⁶⁴ *London Daily Post and General Advertiser*, 2 June 1739.

⁶⁵ *True Character of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield*, pp. 3-4.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6, 13-14.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

London and Westminster.⁶⁹ Where the author describes Whitefield as somebody who ‘propagates the Tidings of Peace through Jesus Christ’, he depicts Trapp as a preacher of ‘political Sermons’, who ‘sows religious Discords, and keeps up Party-divisions, occasion’d by our Great Grand-fathers’.⁷⁰ Later on in this piece, the author likens Trapp’s preaching to the performance of a ‘Stage-Player, or rather of a *Merry-Andrew*’. The ‘Deist’ justifies such a comparison by describing Trapp’s ‘*Whining*’ voice, along with his ‘Extravagancy of Expression...and such furious Gestures of Head, Arms, and Body’. Trapp’s ‘agitated’ state is subsequently described as something which may have become ‘habitual’ after he wrote his 1704 tragedy, *Abra-Mule*. On the other hand, the ‘Deist’ suggests that Trapp may feel that he is being influenced by the same kind of ‘Spirit which had influenced the French Prophets’.⁷¹ The fact that anti-Methodist Anglicans often likened Whitefield both to a stage performer and a French Prophet suggests that the author intended to convey a sense of humorous irony by attacking Trapp with these same criticisms.

This appears to be a pro-Whitefield text on the surface, and one can understand why some scholars have interpreted it as such.⁷² Yet, a closer examination of this piece casts doubt upon this. A perusal of the final few pages reveals a humorous and, in some instances, somewhat bawdy tone – the latter of which would have been uncharacteristic of a genuine follower of Whitefield. For example, the author describes a Deistic rake whose high living has left him so poverty-stricken that he has ‘scarce a Pair of Breeches to hide his Nakedness’.⁷³ Elsewhere, the ‘Deist’ refers to another rake, whose female

⁶⁹ We know that Trapp’s *Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger* was first published on 5 June 1739 from an advertisement which appeared in the *London Daily Post* on this date.

⁷⁰ *True Character of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield*, p. 11.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

⁷² F. Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity: George Whitefield and the Transatlantic Revivals, 1737-1770* (Princeton, 1994), p. 180; McNelly, *Textual Warfare*, p. 3; Idem, ‘Whitefield and His Critics’, in Hammond and Jones, *Life, Context, and Legacy*, p. 152.

⁷³ *True Character of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield*, p. 29.

acquaintances range from the author's own 'Lady, down to the Cynder-Wench.'⁷⁴ Such bawdiness leads one to question whether any of this work was intended to be taken seriously. When one examines the author's apparent praise for Whitefield, much of this appears to be worded in a sarcastic manner. For instance, the author rejects reason in an outright manner. In one section, the 'Deist' argues that Whitefield's 'reasoning far exceeds that of many profess'd Orators'. He admits that Whitefield may have been 'ignorant at College', but stresses that this is no longer the case because the itinerant has been instructed by the 'Holy Spirit...which exceeds human Learning, as the Sun exceeds the most dark and horrible Caverns'.⁷⁵ Later in the text, the 'Deist' concedes that such stories as the Gospels' accounts of Jesus's birth in a stable appear 'strange' to 'human Reason'. However, he then adds that the only reason why these stories appear strange to humans is because the Bible is beyond the comprehension of our 'weak Capacities'.⁷⁶ The 'Deist' advances a similarly flippant explanation for why Christians are required to submit themselves to seemingly immoral ministers. Indeed, the author merely quotes from Article XXVI of the Thirty-Nine Articles, which denies that the 'most evil' ministers hinder the purity of the sacraments over which they preside. After advancing these simple explanations for Christianity's validity, the author advises his friend that he has 'no Excuse to remain any longer a Deist'. He then urges his friend to 'sling' himself 'into the Arms of Jesus Christ; who is always ready to receive a true penitent Sinner.'⁷⁷

We have seen that impersonating a religious 'enthusiast' was a strategy which had previously been deployed by Woolston, and was subsequently utilised by Dodwell. The author's portrayal of Whitefield as a rational and learned individual is reminiscent

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 30.

⁷⁵ Ibid., p. 5.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 10-11.

⁷⁷ Ibid., pp. 26-27.

of Woolston's sarcastic admiration for 'learned' Quakers. Moreover, his outright (and blatantly sarcastic) dismissal of reason seems strikingly similar to the satirical arguments which Dodwell subsequently advanced. Strangely, it is also clear that the author intended to ridicule Deism. Of course, we have seen that hardly anybody described themselves as 'Deists' during this period. It is also important to remember that Anthony Collins, along with several other individuals who were labelled as 'Deists' by their contemporaries, wrote about Deism in a detached manner. In other words, it is possible that the author despised Deism, despite displaying some of the irreligious hallmarks of it. Evidently, the author's theological stance is ambiguous to say the least. Indeed, this work was clearly intended as a blatant attack on Deism and Anglican 'priestcraft', and a subtle attack on Whitefieldian 'enthusiasm'.

While it is pointless to speculate on the authorship of this text, it is intriguing that the author shared many of Henry Fielding's grievances. Indeed, Fielding – whom one can best describe as an anti-clerical Latitudinarian⁷⁸ – is known to have attacked rakish Deists,⁷⁹ evangelical 'enthusiasts',⁸⁰ and clerical luxuries (more specifically, Trapp's endorsement of them)⁸¹ in his works. Also, the author's apparent belief in the

⁷⁸ Fielding admired several Latitudinarian authorities. Patrick Müller notes that Fielding's 'library contained a large stock of theological tracts, including the sermons of Chillingworth, Hoadly, Tillotson, Stillingfleet, Cudworth, and Clarke'. See P. Müller, *Latitudinarianism and Didacticism in Eighteenth-century Literature: Moral Theology in Fielding, Sterne, and Goldsmith* (Frankfurt am Main, 2009), p. 231. Furthermore, in an item, which appeared in the *Champion* on 22 January 1740, Fielding recommended the teachings of 'Tillotson, and Clark' as 'Antidotes' to the hedonistic philosophy of such Epicureans as Mandeville.

⁷⁹ In *Joseph Andrews* (1742), the character of Mr Wilson recounts how he turned to gambling after he fell into the company of Deists. It has been argued that this character was supposed to represent Fielding's own flirtations with Deism during the 1730s. See Battestin, *Henry Fielding Companion*, p. 147; R. Paulson, 'Henry Fielding and the Problem of Deism', in R.D. Lund, *The Margins of Orthodoxy: Heterodox Writing and Cultural Response 1660-1750* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 260.

⁸⁰ For Fielding's references to Whitefield and Methodism, see Battestin, *Henry Fielding Companion*, pp. 160-61, 241-42. Battestin attributes a 1739 item in *The Craftsman* to Fielding. The item in question has already been discussed in the introductory section of this study. As has been noted, more recent scholarship has denied that Fielding ever wrote for this periodical. See Lockwood, 'Did Fielding Write for the Craftsman?', pp. 86-117.

⁸¹ In his satirical novel, *Shamela* (1741), the worldly Parson Williams follows Trapp's example by preaching 'Be not Righteous over-much' from Ecclesiastes 7:16. This is to show that the 'Bible doth not require too much Goodness of us'. See H. Fielding, *An Apology for the Life of Mrs. Shamela Andrews: In which, the Many Notorious Falshoods and Misrepresentations of a Book called Pamela, are Exposed and*

immortality of the soul – or, at the very least, an afterlife – is consistent with Fielding’s theology.⁸² Yet, the author’s sentiments do not correspond fully with Fielding’s. When one reads the *True Character of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield*, it certainly appears that the author is attempting to portray Deists and evangelicals as two seemingly opposite extremes, which are equally mad. Fielding, on the other hand, does not appear to have shared such a view. This is clear from Fielding’s 1741 novel, *Joseph Andrews*, in which he ridiculed those who saw affinities between freethinkers and evangelicals.⁸³

Although the *True Character of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield* only went through one edition, there is evidence to suggest that it was read by at least one Anglican clergyman. In one of his early attacks on Methodism, Josiah Tucker referred to the charge of Deism which Whitefield had recently hurled at him and various other ministers. Tucker attempted to defend both himself and his brethren by referring to the anti-Deist publications of such prominent divines as John Conybeare and Joseph Butler. Whitefield apparently dismissed these works because they only defended the ‘*outward* or the *Historical Part* of Religion; and that the Authors knew nothing of the *internal* and *saving Faith*.’ Tucker scoffed that, if he was in fact a Deist, he would not be such a ‘strenuous Opposer of Mr. *Whitefield*’, whom the Deists seemed ‘strongly inclin’d to favour’. To support his claim that the Deists ‘foment[ed] the Division’ caused by

Refuted (London, 1741), p. 24. For Fielding’s other attacks on Trapp, see *Champion*, 5 April 1740; *The History of Tom Jones, a Foundling*, 6 vols. (London, 1749), VI, p. 195.

⁸² In his *Journey from this World to the Next* (1743), Fielding detailed a soul’s journey into heaven. While many of those who arrive at heaven’s gates are described as only requiring ‘farther Purification’, those who committed ‘heinous Crimes’ in their mortal state are ‘tumbled immediately into the Bottomless Pit’. This work implies that Fielding viewed a place in heaven as something which any moral person could be certain of achieving. See H. Fielding, *Miscellanies, by Henry Fielding Esq*; Vol. II: *A Journey from this World to the Next, &c.* (London, 1743), p. 54. For more on this work, see R.M. Janes, ‘Henry Fielding Reinvents the Afterlife’, *Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, 23 (2011), pp. 495-518.

⁸³ In this novel, the character of Barnabas, a punch-drinking clergyman, claims that “the Principles of Toland, Woolston, and all the Free-Thinkers, are not calculated to do half the Mischief, as those professed by this Fellow [Whitefield] and his Followers.” The moral and virtuous Parson Adams then responds by saying that, while he strongly disagrees with Whitefield’s seemingly antinomian teachings on justification, he agrees with his moral critique of clerical luxuries. See H. Fielding, *The History of the Adventures of Joseph Andrews, and of His Friend Mr. Abraham Adams*, 2 vols. (London, 1742), I, p. 120.

Whitefield, Tucker advised his readers to ‘See some late Pamphlets from that Quarter’. While Tucker did not provide the titles of any of these ‘late Pamphlets’, it is certainly possible that *The True Character of the Rev. Mr. Whitefield* – which had been published a little over a month before Tucker voiced these sentiments – was one of them.⁸⁴ If so, Tucker was clearly aware that, rather than being a genuine follower of Whitefield, the ‘Deist in London’ was merely pretending to cheer the itinerant on in order to ridicule him. However, if Tucker was referring to this work, he must have overlooked the fact that the author was blatantly ridiculing Deism too. Numerous authors of various denominations similarly argued that evangelicalism complemented Deism in one way or another.

‘Spiritual’ and ‘Sensual’ Enthusiasts

In 1749, an anonymous author of Dublin satirically portrayed Methodists and Deists as soldiers for the same cause. Indeed, *A Letter from the Deists, to the Chief Rulers Amongst the Methodists* (1749) describes an attempt by the ‘Deists’ to enlist the Methodists in their fight against Christianity. The ‘Deists’ note that their differing tactics actually complement each other. In other words, where the aim of the ‘Deists’ is to ‘strip’ religion of faith, the Methodists are keen to ‘rob Religion of *Good Works*’. As with the ‘Deist in London’, it is difficult to ascertain the author’s religious stance. Elsewhere in the text, the ‘Deists’ make condemnatory remarks about the established Church, Roman Catholicism, and Protestant Dissent. At the very least, however, the author appears to have approved of Christianity’s moral teachings. Indeed, at one point,

⁸⁴ J. Tucker, ‘A More Particular Reply by Mr. Tucker, the Author of the Queries’, in *A Compleat Account of the Conduct of that Eminent Enthusiast Mr. Whitefield* (London, 1739), pp. 36-37. We know that this anonymously edited work was published on 14 July 1739 from an advertisement which appeared in the *Weekly Miscellany* on this date.

the ‘Deists’ instruct the Methodists that their attacks on moral preaching are futile because such lessons are agreeable to the teachings of Jesus. Several Anglican clergymen perceived a similar relationship between evangelical ‘enthusiasm’ and Deism, though, unlike this author, they did not view this as something to joke about.⁸⁵

In 1739, Joseph Trapp claimed that, despite their differences, ‘all the Enemies of the *Christian Religion*’ would ‘by the Devil’s Policy, and their own Inclinations, unite in one Body against the *establish’d Church*’. More specifically, Methodist ‘*Enthusiasts*’, along with all the ‘*Protestant Hereticks, Schismatics*’, ‘*false Teachers...Free-thinkers, Infidels, Deists, and Atheists*’, were all doing the work of the ‘*PAPISTS*’. As we shall see in the final chapter, Trapp was neither the first nor the last person to accuse Protestant ‘enthusiasts’ of working for the Papacy. Yet, his claim that ‘*Free-thinkers, Infidels, Deists, and Atheists*’ were also working alongside Whitefield in this papal alliance seems contradictory to say the least. One would expect that, because of their regular condemnation of ‘priestcraft’, these freethinkers were universally viewed as the antithesis of Roman Catholicism.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, High Churchmen had long feared that, like Protestant ‘enthusiasts’, Deists merely voiced anti-Catholic sentiments as a means of disguising their true allegiance to Rome. For example, in his copy of *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, Waterland scrutinised Matthew Tindal’s praise for the ‘blessed Revolution’ of 1688. To Waterland, such patriotism was contradictory, given that Tindal had ‘a mind to disturb this happy settlement’ by inciting ‘confusions’. Waterland also feared that Tindal – who had previously ‘embraced’ Roman Catholicism – intended to ‘bring in popery again’.⁸⁷ In 1733, an anonymous item in the *Weekly Miscellany*, similarly alleged that ‘the *Papists* actually encourage the Growth of *Irreligion*, to favour the Point of *Infallibility*’. Once people

⁸⁵ *A Letter from the Deists, to the Chief Rulers Amongst the Methodists* (Dublin, 1749), pp. 3-5, 8.

⁸⁶ Trapp, *Nature, Folly, Sin, and Danger*, pp. 64-67.

⁸⁷ Tindal, *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, [Waterland’s annotated copy] p. 139.

‘tired’ of the ‘endless Mazes of Deism, and the infinite Uncertainty of *Natural Religion*’, they would reject the ‘Miseries of having *no Religion*’ and embrace the ‘Infallibility’ of Roman Catholicism. Apparently, this was why ‘*Jesuits*’ often went ‘masqu’d under the Character of *Deists*’.⁸⁸ Some years later, in the wake of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion, the Archdeacon of Sudbury, John Chapman, declared that ‘*Voluptuaries and Moral Philosophers*’ were aiding the plight of the ‘*Jesuits*’.⁸⁹ Others saw religious ‘enthusiasm’ as something which naturally led to scepticism and doubt. In 1671, Joseph Glanvill argued the following:

Now *Enthusiasm* is a *false conceit of inspiration*; and all the bold and mistaken pretensions to the *Spirit* in our days, are of this sort. What particularly *Religion* hath suffer'd from it, would be too long to describe upon this occasion; It will be enough to say, in an Age that hath so much and such sad experience of it, that *Enthusiasm*, (I.) By crying up the *excesses*, and *diseases* of *Imagination* for the greatest height of *godliness*. And (II.) By the disparagement of *sober Reason*, as an enemy to the Principles of *Faith*; I say, by these two ways it hath introduc'd a *Religion* that is Phantastical, and made way for all imaginable follies, and even *Atheism* it self.⁹⁰

Many years later, Hume advanced a similar argument regarding ‘enthusiasm’ and its alleged relationship with irreligion. Unsurprisingly, the sceptical Hume despised both ‘superstition’ and ‘enthusiasm’. Nevertheless, he viewed the latter as far less threatening than the former, which had ‘priestly power’ on its side. Although such

⁸⁸ *Weekly Miscellany*, 5 May 1733.

⁸⁹ J. Chapman, *Poperie the Bane of True Letters: A Charge Delivered to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of Sudbury, at a Visitation on May 12, &c. 1746* (London, 1746), pp. 24-25. Many years later, Edward Gibbon claimed in an early draft of his *Memoirs* that it was Conyers Middleton’s heterodox writings on miracles which caused him to convert to Roman Catholicism. See D. Womersley, ‘Gibbon, Edward (1737–1794)’, *ODNB*.

⁹⁰ J. Glanvill, *Philosophia Pia, or, A Discourse of the Religious Temper and Tendencies of the Experimental Philosophy Which is Profest by the Royal Society to Which is Annexed a Recommendation and Defence of Reason in the Affairs of Religion* (London, 1671), pp. 56-57.

‘fanatics’ as the ‘*levellers*...in ENGLAND’ and the ‘*covenanters* in SCOTLAND’ often produced ‘cruel desolations in human society’, it usually took very ‘little time’ for these groups to ‘exhaust themselves’. Once this ‘enthusiasm’ was ‘spent’, the absence of a ‘sufficient authority’ would lead these individuals to ‘naturally...sink into the greatest remissness and coolness in sacred matters’, leaving ‘the air more calm and serene than before’.⁹¹

Eighteenth-century Anglicans on both sides of Atlantic similarly predicted that evangelical ‘enthusiasm’ would ultimately lead to a decline in religion, though, unlike the sceptical Hume, they did not find this a pleasing prospect. In the wake of Whitefield’s 1739 visit to Philadelphia, Archibald Cummings, the commissary of Pennsylvania, informed Bishop Gibson that the ‘polite Freethinkers’ of Philadelphia ‘flocked about him [Whitefield], applauding his manner, well pleased with his reproaches thrown at random against the regular clergy’.⁹² Some years later, Cummings’s fears were echoed by Theophilus Evans, who stated that

Enthusiasm very often ends in *Atheism*: Fiery Zealots, such as imagine themselves the peculiar Favourites of Heaven, when they begin to cool, grow remiss in Duties, and by Degrees abandon all Thoughts of Religion and plunge in all Manner of Vice and Immorality.⁹³

The fact that these fears transcended denominational as well as spatial boundaries can be discerned from the example of Nathaniel Appleton, the Old Light Congregationalist minister of the First Church in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In 1743, Appleton claimed that Deism ‘commonly rises up after any remarkable Turn of *Enthusiasm*’. More

⁹¹ [D. Hume], ‘Essay XII: Of Superstition and Enthusiasm’, in [D. Hume] (ed.), *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*, 4th edn (London, 1753), I, pp. 109-11.

⁹² LPL, FP VII, fols. 246-7: Cummings to Gibson, 17 November 1739.

⁹³ Evans, *History of Modern Enthusiasm*, p. i.

specifically, there was a risk that some critics of evangelicalism would begin to doubt the events described in ‘CHRIST’S, and in the Apostles Days’, for which they would be able to find ‘mechanical’ (irreligious) explanations. As we shall see in the following chapter, it was similarly feared that Wesley’s accounts of modern-day miracles would cause people to doubt the miracles described in the New Testament.⁹⁴ In 1744, Caleb Fleming defined the Methodist as a ‘*Spiritual Enthusiast*’, who relied on ‘internal and extraordinary Illuminations’ for guidance. Moreover, Fleming claimed that ‘where it [enthusiasm] spreads, there is great Danger of the Spread of what is improperly called *Deism*’, which he described as a ‘Sort of *Enthusiasm*...a *Sort of Madness*, a *Disorder of the Imagination*’. It was for this reason that Fleming labelled the Deist as a ‘*Sensual Enthusiast*’, who claimed that ‘*Sense* must mark out the Extent of Evidence’. Intriguingly, one of the ‘sensual’ enthusiasts to whom Fleming referred was Peter Annet, who, by this point, had already attacked Methodism in print.⁹⁵

Peter Annet’s *Judging for Ourselves* (1739)

Peter Annet was born in Liverpool in 1693. He originally trained to be a Dissenting clergyman, but became disillusioned with organised religion shortly afterwards. Annet

⁹⁴ N. Appleton, *Faithful Ministers of Christ, the Salt of the Earth, and the Light of World* (Boston, 1743), pp. 32-33. In *Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, McClymond and McDermott argue that ‘overt deistic views’ did not appear in American publications until after the Revolution (pp. 52-53). Nevertheless, Cummings and Appleton’s accounts, along with several others, provide evidence to suggest that some colonists viewed Deism as a clear and present danger long before the Revolution. For example, in 1732, Timothy Cutler stated in a letter to the secretary of the SPG that an alarming number of colonists were reading old issues of John Trenchard and Thomas Gordon’s Deistic Republican newspaper, *The Independent Whig*. See Bod MS A.24 (USPG Papers), fol. 130: Cutler to the Secretary, 24 April 1732. In 1735, a Philadelphia newspaper claimed young colonists were particularly susceptible to Deism. See *American Weekly Museum*, 9-16 October 1735. In 1737, John Wesley claimed to have encountered Georgia’s ‘first convert to Deism’. See Hammond, *John Wesley in America*, p. 163n20. Finally, during his 1740 tour of Philadelphia, Whitefield described an encounter with a ‘Mr. Brockden’, who was a ‘notorious Deist’. See Whitefield, *Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield’s Journal...to his Arrival at Falmouth*, p. 64. These anecdotes do not support Norman Fiering’s claim that the ‘deist controversy in England...caused hardly a ripple in Massachusetts’. See N. Fiering, ‘The First American Enlightenment: Tillotson, Leverett, and Philosophical Anglicanism’, *The New England Quarterly*, 54 (1981), p. 332.

⁹⁵ [Fleming], *Fine Picture of Enthusiasm*, pp. 29-30.

subsequently became a schoolmaster in London, where he delivered two lectures on 25 January and 1 February 1739 at Plaisterers Hall. These lectures were quickly published as *Judging for Ourselves; Or Free-thinking, the Great Duty of Religion* (1739). According to James Herrick, Annet wrote this piece as a means of combating ‘the religious bigotry of the revivalists’. While Herrick is correct in the sense that Annet despised religious ‘enthusiasm’, his description ignores the wider agenda of this tract.⁹⁶ At first glance, *Judging for Ourselves* certainly appears to be nothing more than an attack on Whitefieldian enthusiasm, which shares many similarities with the anti-Methodist publications of Anglican divines. Throughout this piece, Annet condemned the ‘Infection of Enthusiasm’ and ‘Enthusiastic Delusions’ of ‘this Time’, which, he was careful to add, was only ‘*of Mushroom growth in the Church of England*’.⁹⁷

Moreover, Annet may have been referring to Trapp’s 1739 anti-Whitefield sermons when he deterred his readers from being ‘*over-much Righteous*’ (Ecclesiastes 7:16).⁹⁸ Like much of the early anti-Methodist literature, this work singled out Whitefield as the primary mover of evangelical ‘enthusiasm’. In one section, Annet attacked the Whitefieldian ‘Doctrines of *Free Grace* and the *New Birth*’. He also utilised the popular anti-Whitefield charge of sexual deviance by claiming that the itinerant had the ability to make ‘*some tender Matrons sigh and groan*’.⁹⁹ What was less in keeping with orthodoxy was Annet’s command that Whitefield should ‘quit the

⁹⁶ Herrick, *Radical Rhetoric*, p. 126.

⁹⁷ P. Annet, *Judging for Ourselves; Or Free-thinking, the Great Duty of Religion* (London, 1739), pp. iii, v, 8.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 24. Whether Annet’s reference to the ‘over-much Righteous’ was directly influenced by Trapp is unclear. Since no original advertisement for *Judging for Ourselves* can be found, its initial date of publication remains unknown. Yet, Annet’s preface is dated 8 May 1739, so the book must have been published after this date. We know from Whitefield’s *Journal* that Trapp had preached one of his ‘righteous over-much’ sermons on 29 April 1739, which the itinerant attended. Thus, it is possible that Annet’s utilisation of Ecclesiastes 7:16 derived from his attendance at one of the various anti-Whitefield sermons which Trapp preached throughout London and Westminster in 1739. For Whitefield’s account of going to listen to Trapp ‘preach most virulently against’ him, see Whitefield, *Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield’s Journal, from his Arrival at London*, p. 89.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 25.

wretched Tale of *Adam's Fall*'. As we saw in the previous chapter, such a blatant rejection of original sin often featured in the anti-Methodist tracts of heterodox Anglicans and rational Dissenters.¹⁰⁰

At other points, Annet strongly implied that Whitefieldian 'enthusiasts' were not the sole target of his rage. In addition to naming the Methodists, the title page claimed that this work was also addressed to 'all *Faith-Mongers*, and *Bigots*'. One can assume that Annet viewed the Church of England as an institution which fell within the latter two categories.¹⁰¹ Elsewhere in this piece, Annet attacked those 'who from their *Fidelity* and *Honesty* to the *Interest* of *Mammon*, have no other left'. This reference to 'Mammon' could be interpreted as an attack on Whitefield's fundraising for his Bethesda orphanage in Georgia, which many anti-Methodist polemicists believed to be non-existent. Yet, Annet's subsequent description of those who '*monopolize the whole Market* to themselves' and 'oblige Men to pay for what they do not *want*, nor *use*' was clearly an attack on tithe payments.¹⁰²

In fact, the real argument which Annet was attempting to convey in this work was that, for Christianity to be restored to its primitive and 'natural' state, it needed to discard its external institutions, laws and rituals, and replace them with rational thought, which was the only reliable guide for humanity. Like Tindal before him, Annet claimed that his intention was not to 'set up any *new Religion*'. Rather, he intended 'to illustrate the *old* which was from the Beginning'. By the 'old' religion, Annet meant humanity in its original and primitive state, before it had been corrupted by priestly religion.¹⁰³ Yet, where Tindal had included a diverse range of Christian authorities on the title page of his *Christianity as Old as the Creation*, Annet took a more daring step. The title page of

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. i.

¹⁰² Ibid., p. 25. A more explicit attack on tithe payments was made by the anonymous author of the 1739 polemical play, *The Mock-Preacher*. This text will be discussed further in the final chapter.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 1.

Judging for Ourselves only contained one quotation, which was taken from the bishop of Chichester Francis Hare's *Difficulties and Discouragements Which Attend the Study of the Scriptures* (1714). In this witty defence of Samuel Clarke's seemingly Arian beliefs, Hare (writing anonymously under the pseudonym 'a Presbyterian of the Church of England') had ridiculed Clarke's opponents by posing as an unashamedly despotic and unlearned High Churchman, who imparts his knowledge onto a young clergyman. However, the passage which Annet included was taken from Hare's concluding remarks, where he condemned the fictional speaker's sentiments. Annet quoted Hare's claim that orthodox High Churchmen exhibited the 'Principles of Popery' by instructing their followers to '*take the Sense of the Scriptures upon Content*' and deterring them from using their '*own Eyes*'.¹⁰⁴ As with Tindal, Annet deployed the New Testament in his attack on revealed religion. The title itself was based on the passage: 'Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?' (Luke 12:57).¹⁰⁵

Thus, while Annet advertised *Judging for Ourselves* as an anti-Methodist tract, his primary target was clearly the Church of England. The fact that Annet adopted such a façade suggests that he was deliberately trying to avoid a polemical confrontation with Anglican clerics, whom one might expect to have been reluctant to attack such a work, lest it be construed as a sign of support for Whitefield. Since this work marked Annet's debut as an author, such cautious damage limitation was possibly down to a lack of confidence on his part. He may have feared that a more explicit assault on priestly religion would lead to judicial action under the Blasphemy Act of 1697. Eight years earlier, Woolston had died while still incarcerated for his controversial writings. So, Annet's seemingly cautious approach may explain why *Judging for Ourselves*

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. i; R.D. Lund, *Ridicule, Religion and the Politics of Wit in Augustan England* (Farnham, 2012), p. 181. Convocation censured Hare for publishing this polemic. See A. Starkie, *The Church of England and the Bangorian Controversy, 1716-1721* (Woodbridge, 2007), p. 6.

¹⁰⁵ Annet, *Judging for Ourselves*, p. 1.

failed to generate a single response. On the other hand, it is possible that Anglican divines simply did not consider the debut work of a layman and schoolmaster to be worthy of a response.¹⁰⁶

Assuming Annet was lacking in confidence when he wrote *Judging for Ourselves*, he must have overcome these fears. This is clear from his later writings, which were much more daring. In his next work, *The Resurrection of Jesus Considered; In Answer to the Tryal of the Witnesses* (1743), Annet came to the defence of the late Woolston, who had come under attack by Thomas Sherlock for questioning the reliability of the eyewitness accounts of Jesus's resurrection. Although Annet published this piece anonymously under the pseudonym 'a MORAL PHILOSOPHER', he was soon exposed as the author, resulting in his dismissal as a schoolmaster.¹⁰⁷ Annet would later refer to Whitefield (albeit in passing) in a sequel to *Resurrection of Jesus Considered*, where he mentioned the itinerant, along with the French Prophets, as part of his wider condemnation of religious imposture. Evidently, the Methodists no longer served a purpose to Annet, whose Deistic views had, by this point, gained the attention of orthodox Anglicans.¹⁰⁸ In 1763, Annet was tried and 'sentenced to one year's hard labour, a month at Newgate, and to stand twice in the pillory with the label 'Blasphemer' around his neck'.¹⁰⁹ He died in 1769. Importantly, when Annet sided with Woolston, he entered a long-standing theological dispute: the miracles debate. The following chapter will explore anti-Methodism in the context of this theological skirmish.

¹⁰⁶ D. Nash, *Blasphemy in the Christian World: A History* (Oxford, 2007), p. 64.

¹⁰⁷ Herrick, *Radical Rhetoric*, p. 127.

¹⁰⁸ [P. Annet], *The Resurrection Reconsidered. Being an Answer to the Clearer and Others. By Way of Dialogue Between the Considerer and His Friend* (London, 1744), pp. 57-58, 70-71.

¹⁰⁹ Nash, *Blasphemy in the Christian World*, p. 65.

Conclusions

Discussions on irreligion played a crucial role in the early printed attacks on Methodism. We have seen that numerous clergymen saw a relationship between evangelical ‘enthusiasm’ and Deism. To Daniel Waterland, Methodists and Deists were simply variations on the same form of ‘enthusiasm’ because both groups seemed to allow their own forms of ‘inspiration’ to go unchecked by the joint scrutiny of reason, revelation and antiquity. The fact that Waterland’s observations were subsequently echoed by Caleb Fleming, a Dissenter, suggests that these fears transcended denominational boundaries. Furthermore, we have seen that some, such as Fleming, feared that evangelical ‘enthusiasm’ fuelled scepticism, and plunged ‘reasonable’ Christians into melancholic Deism. The belief that evangelicalism encouraged doubt is something which the next chapter will explore further in the context of the miracles debate. These observations may initially seem surprising, given that intellectual historians of the ‘Enlightenment’ have tended to associate eighteenth-century Deism with ‘modernity’ and ‘secularisation’. Evangelicals, on the other hand, have often been placed in the ‘anti-modern’ or ‘Counter-Enlightenment’ camp. However, these are categorisations that one can only use with the benefit of twentieth- or twenty-first-century lenses.

In fact, these categorisations are unhelpful when thinking about Waterland and other authors who combated both Deism and Methodism in print. Anti-Methodist High Churchmen would certainly have viewed evangelical ‘enthusiasts’ as anachronistic relics who belonged in the previous century. So, in this sense, it is fair to say that these clergymen would have viewed themselves as ‘modern’. On the other hand, these divines would hardly have viewed their anti-Deist writings as attacks on ‘modernity’.

Rather, these clergymen would have believed that, by attacking Deism, they were simply attacking another form of melancholic madness, which – like Methodism – was widely believed to encourage self-harm and suicide. Therefore, these discussions ultimately shed new light on the ways in which both Methodists and Deists were perceived by their Anglican and Dissenting opponents. Paradoxically, however, Deists sometimes attacked evangelicalism as part of their wider assaults on priestly religion. Indeed, we have seen that Peter Annet used anti-Methodism as a platform to launch an implicit assault on the priestly religion of the established Church. Evidently, Annet was deploying a method of deception which, as we have seen in the previous chapters, was often used by heterodox authors.

Chapter Six

Miracles and Demons

Introduction

In *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (2006), Jane Shaw describes the miracles debate as a skirmish which began with a ‘revival of miracles’ during the Interregnum. It was during this period that ‘radical sectarians claiming apostolicity announced that they could heal the sick and raise the dead.’¹ The French Prophets ensured that such ‘extravagant miracle claims’ continued into the ‘new century’, though their cause suffered when they wrongly predicted that Thomas Emes, a deceased millenarian and quack doctor, would rise from the dead on 25 May 1708 – an event which apparently attracted around twenty thousand onlookers.² Such accounts of failed miracles provided ammunition for opponents of evangelicalism in Britain and its American colonies.³ According to Shaw, the opposite extreme in this debate was occupied by ‘deists and

¹ J. Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England* (New Haven, 2006), p. 2.

² Ibid., p. 19. In his recent monograph, *Enlightening Enthusiasm*, Lionel Laborie provides compelling evidence to suggest that the Emes affair was not nearly as damaging for the French Prophets as historians have traditionally claimed.

³ Theophilus Evans subsequently referred to the story of Emes in his *History of Enthusiasm* (see second edition, pp. 105-6). On 3 May 1742, the *Boston Weekly Post-Boy* featured an item from a correspondent in Charleston, South Carolina, which had been written over a month ago. The main topic of discussion in this piece was the recent activities of the planter, Hugh Bryan, who was also a close friend of Whitefield. Acting under the orders of the ‘Spirit’, Bryan had arrived at a river ‘50 miles from *Charlestown*’, where he had attempted to re-enact Moses’s parting of the waves. After plunging into the river ‘up to the Chinn’, Bryan was saved from drowning by his brother, who ‘had pursued him as fast as he could’. Following this event, which was the subject of ridicule across the colonies, Bryan renounced his ‘enthusiasm’ and claimed that he had been under a ‘Delusion of Satan’. This article subsequently appeared in an anti-evangelical pamphlet which was compiled by an ‘A.M.’ (who was probably Alexander Malcolm, an Anglican minister of Marblehead, Massachusetts) and published in Glasgow. See A.M., *State of Religion in New-England*, pp. 70-71. For other primary sources relating to this incident, see J.H. Easterby (ed.), *The Colonial Records of South Carolina: The Journal of the Commons House of Assembly, May 18, 1741-July 10, 1742* (Columbia, 1953), p. 381; *South Carolina Gazette*, 6 March 1742. For more on Bryan, see H.H. Jackson, ‘Hugh Bryan and the Evangelical Movement in Colonial South Carolina’, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 43 (1986), pp. 594-614; L.E. Schmidt, “‘The Grand Prophet,’ Hugh Bryan: Early Evangelicalism’s Challenge to the Establishment and Slavery in the Colonial South’, *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 87 (1986), pp. 238-50.

sceptics', who believed that individuals had been falsifying miracles throughout history.⁴ In his essay 'Of Miracles' (1748), David Hume claimed that such extraordinary testimonies were 'chiefly' found 'amongst ignorant and barbarous Nations'. While one also encountered 'civiliz'd People' who believed in miracles, it was their 'ignorant and barbarous Ancestors' from whom they had 'receiv'd them'.⁵ Hume noted that religious leaders 'with the best Intentions in the World' had often falsified miracles 'for the sake of promoting so holy a Cause'.⁶ Others, such as Alexander of Abonoteichus (c.105-c.170), had merely sought personal gain by inflicting their 'Impostures' upon an 'extremely Ignorant and stupid' people.⁷ According to Shaw, the divide between these two extremes was occupied by 'middle way Anglicans', who followed the example of Joseph Glanvill by arguing that 'miracles were plausible, but only with great evidence'. Shaw argues that this stance became the 'orthodox position' within the established Church, but adds that some 'still held the view that miracles had ceased with biblical times'.⁸ Shaw's categorisations are problematic for a couple of reasons.

First, Shaw's definition of the 'orthodox' Anglican position on miracles is inaccurate. While some clergymen were open to the possibility of modern miracles, many (if not more) believed that these extraordinary occurrences – which had ameliorated the suffering of Christians during three centuries of Roman persecution – ceased to serve any purpose once Christianity had a civil magistrate on its side in the form of Constantine. The post-Constantinian cessation of miracles was something which High Churchmen regularly addressed in their sermons. James Bate exemplified

⁴ Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England*, p. 4.

⁵ D. Hume, 'Essay X: Of Miracles', in D. Hume (ed.), *Philosophical Essays Concerning Human Understanding* (London, 1748), p. 187.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 188.

⁸ Shaw, *Miracles in Enlightenment England*, pp. 3-4, 143.

this view in a 1739 anti-Methodist tract, where he stated that, after the Crucifixion, miracles had continued for

About Three Hundred Years; or till the ten Persecutions were past, and the Empire became Christian, and Christianity became a Civil Establishment, having Kings for its nursing Fathers, and Queens for its nursing Mothers. Before this Period, it was nursed by the extraordinary Providence of God.⁹

Yet, High Churchmen did not have a monopoly on this doctrine of cessation. As we shall see, the ‘utterly idiosyncratic’ William Warburton, who was the bane of several prominent High Churchmen, also subscribed to the belief that miracles had continued until the end of the fourth century.¹⁰ Also, Shaw’s description of an ‘Anglican middle way’ underestimates the extent of the internal disputes which occurred between clerics who were neither Deists nor ‘enthusiasts’. This chapter will show that there were, in fact, several different ‘middle way’ positions among contemporary Anglicans. Such disparities become clear when one considers the differing ways in which clergymen responded to Wesley and Whitefield’s writings on miracles. Moreover, this chapter will seek to reintegrate these attacks on Wesley and Whitefield into the theological controversies of the mid-eighteenth century by showing that anti-Methodist polemics formed part of a much wider debate on miracles, which engaged Deists, heterodox Anglicans and High Churchmen. Furthermore, this section will continue the previous chapters’ discussions on the complex relationship between anti-Methodism and anti-heterodoxy by considering the ways in which evangelicalism’s emphasis on the supernatural was seen to encourage scepticism and doubt. These discussions will close by considering William Warburton’s *The Doctrine of Grace* (1763). While historians

⁹ Bate, *Quakero-Methodism*, pp. 24-25.

¹⁰ Ingram, ‘Weight of Historical Evidence’, pp. 90, 105.

have noted that this work was an attack on both Wesley and the late Conyers Middleton, virtually no scholarly attention has been devoted to explaining what Warburton perceived the relationship between these seemingly opposite extremes to be.¹¹

Methodism and Miracles

In his *Pastoral Letter* (1739), Bishop Gibson condemned Whitefield for his numerous accounts of being ‘guided in an extraordinary Manner, by immediate *Impulses* and *Impressions* of the Spirit of God.’ Gibson cited various extracts in Whitefield’s published *Journal* which described ‘sudden and surprizing Effects as wrought by the *Holy Ghost*, in consequence of their [the Methodists’] preaching’. These extracts included an account of how one young man in Whitefield’s congregation had experienced a ‘thorow Renovation...in his Heart’. To Gibson, such ‘*extraordinary* operations’ were ‘those, by which the Apostles and others...were enabled to work Miracles, and speak with Tongues, in Testimony that their Mission and Doctrin [sic] were from God.’ Gibson added that, while these ‘*extraordinary*’ occurrences had ‘long since ceased’, the ‘ordinary Gifts and Influences of the Spirit’ continued. Unlike the former, however, the latter were ‘of a more private Nature’ and were only ‘*discernible*’ by their ‘*Fruits and Effects*’.¹² In his response to Gibson, Whitefield stressed that, since he ‘never did pretend to these *extraordinary* Operations of working Miracles, or speaking with Tongues’, he was ‘no *Enthusiast*’. Rather, he could ‘only lay Claim to the ordinary Gifts and Influences of the *Spirit*’. While Whitefield agreed that these

¹¹ See Madden, *Cheap, Safe and Natural Medicine*, pp. 91-92; J.W. Barbeau, ‘Enthusiasts, Rationalists and Pentecost’, in J.W. Barbeau and B.F. Jones (eds), *Spirit of God: Christian Renewal in the Community of Faith* (Downers Grove, IL., 2015), pp. 86-87.

¹² Gibson, *Pastoral Letter...Enthusiasm on the Other*, pp. 19-20, 33; G. Whitefield, *A Journal of a Voyage from Gibraltar to Georgia* (London, 1738), p. 23.

‘ordinary Gifts’ were not ‘discernible to *others*’, he disagreed with Gibson’s implication that such gifts were ‘no otherwise discernible to ourselves’. Instead, one was fully able to ‘discern these...Influences of the Spirit in *himself*, when there is no Opportunity of discovering them to others.’¹³

John Wesley had experienced such internal ‘Influences’ on 24 May 1738, when his attendance at a religious society meeting on Aldersgate Street, London, led to his ‘heart-warming’ evangelical conversion.¹⁴ In *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (1745), Wesley responded to each of the various charges which he often encountered from his opponents. One charge related to Wesley’s inability to ‘*prove by Miracles*’ that his spiritual ‘Credentials’ were genuine. Like Whitefield, Wesley strongly denied that he had the ability to ‘work *Miracles*’. Rather, Wesley believed that such occurrences as his Aldersgate experience needed to be backed up ‘in the *ordinary Way*’ by ‘Scripture and Reason; and, if need be, by Antiquity’. Evidently, Wesley diverged from Daniel Waterland and other contemporary High Churchmen in the sense that he seemed less inclined to appeal to the early Church Fathers (though, as we shall see, Wesley did go on to defend the Fathers at length in his attack on Middleton). Furthermore, while Wesley admitted to recounting incidents which seemed to ‘go beyond the ordinary Course of Nature’, he added that it was impossible to conclude whether these occurrences were ‘supernatural’ or not.¹⁵

Wesley’s knowledge of the supernatural began at an early age. While he was away at Charterhouse between December 1716 and January 1717, his father’s rectory in Epworth, Lincolnshire, was reportedly haunted by a poltergeist, whom one of Wesley’s

¹³ G. Whitefield, *The Rev. Mr. Whitefield's Answer, to the Bishop of London's Last Pastoral Letter* (London, 1739), pp. 11-12.

¹⁴ For a detailed account of Wesley’s Aldersgate experience, see Chapter Four in Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*.

¹⁵ J. Wesley, *A Farther Appeal to Men of Reason and Religion* (London, 1745), pp. 122-23.

siblings nicknamed ‘Old Jeffery’.¹⁶ Many years later, Wesley lamented that ‘most of the men of learning in Europe have given up all accounts of witches and apparitions, as mere old wives’ fables.’ To Wesley, this was tantamount to ‘giving up the Bible’.¹⁷ His sentiments were shared by the evangelical Jacobite, Sir James Erskine of Grange, who was one of the fiercest critics of the 1735 Witchcraft Act in Scotland.¹⁸ Such beliefs certainly put Wesley and other evangelicals at odds with the ‘educated level of society’, who were quick to attack and ridicule them on this point.¹⁹ William Hogarth’s *Credulity, Superstition and Fanaticism* is probably the most famous example of such an attack. In this scene, Hogarth depicted Whitefield as a crypto-Jesuit preacher, surrounded by witches and demons.²⁰ Others, such as Thomas Church, attacked entries in Wesley’s published journal, which described his alleged encounters with demoniacs.

For instance, the entry for 5 December 1738 described a visit to an Oxford workhouse, where Wesley found one woman ‘screaming and tormenting herself continually’. According to Wesley’s account, the woman was ‘raving mad’ because she was ‘under the open Bondage of Satan’. However, as soon as he began to pray for her, she was ‘still’. A later entry detailed a visit to Bristol, where Wesley encountered another sick woman, whom he believed to be possessed by a ‘Preternatural Agent’. “She is not a Christian. She is mine” were the words which Satan apparently spoke to Wesley via the afflicted woman. Shortly afterwards, the woman named two of her

¹⁶ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 59. See also D. Wright, *The Epworth Phenomena, to Which Are Appended Certain Psychic Experiences Recorded by John Wesley in the Pages of His Journal* (London, 1917).

¹⁷ Curnock, *Journal of the Rev. John Wesley*, V, p. 265.

¹⁸ For Erskine’s views on witchcraft, see I. Bostridge, ‘Witchcraft Repealed’, in J. Barry, M. Hester and G. Roberts (eds), *Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 309–34; J. Coffey, ‘Evangelical Revival in Enlightenment Britain: James Erskine of Grange and the Pietist Turn’, in A. Cross, P. Morden, I. Randall (eds), *Pathways and Patterns in History: Essays on Baptists, Evangelicals, and the Modern World in Honour of David Bebbington* (London, 2015), pp. 187–214.

¹⁹ Rack, *Reasonable Enthusiast*, p. 431. For the decline of supernatural beliefs among the clergy and the educated laity, see K. Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Harmondsworth, 1973). For the persistence of these beliefs at local levels, see O. Davies, *Witchcraft, Magic and Culture, 1736–1951* (Manchester, 1999).

²⁰ Hogarth, ‘Credulity, Superstition, and Fanaticism (1762)’.

neighbours and claimed that their possession was imminent. Wesley quickly visited these two individuals and found that it was not long before they also started experiencing ‘violent Convulsions all over their Bodies’. After an intensive period of prayer, in which Wesley and his followers ‘pour’d out’ their ‘Souls before GOD’, both individuals were ‘healed’ in ‘Body and Soul’. Nevertheless, the original woman’s condition remained largely unchanged.²¹ Wesley would subsequently claim that, rather than ‘*supposing these Recoveries Miraculous*’, he had simply ‘set down the Facts just as they were’ and passed ‘no Judgement upon them’.²² Yet, when one reads Wesley’s journal, it certainly seems as though he was attempting to portray these extraordinary recoveries as exorcisms which were precipitated by his own prayers. This was exactly how Thomas Church interpreted Wesley’s accounts of these instances.

The Middleton Debate and Related Controversies

Unsurprisingly, Church was disturbed by Wesley’s description of modern demoniacs. He noted that – as any ‘sober reasonable Person’ knew – such behaviour could be explained by several medical factors, including ‘Obstructions’ and ‘Irregularities of the Blood and Spirits’. Church also feared that, since ‘False Miracles tend to lessen and to destroy our Belief of true ones’, Wesley’s accounts merely encouraged doubt amongst ‘sober reasonable’ individuals, who would begin to apply reason to the demoniacs described in the New Testament.²³ We know from Chapter One’s discussions on Church’s clashes with Arthur Ashley Sykes that defending the New Testament’s accounts of demoniacs was a role in which Church had been engaged for some time.

²¹ J. Wesley, *An Extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley’s Journal, from August 12, 1738, to Nov. 1, 1739* (Bristol, 1742), pp. 15, 93-96.

²² J. Wesley, *An Answer to the Rev. Mr. Church’s Remarks on the Reverend Mr. John Wesley’s Last Journal* (Bristol, 1745), p. 44.

²³ T. Church, *Remarks on the Reverend Mr. John Wesley’s Last Journal* (London, 1745), pp. 68-69.

Thus, Church was concerned that Wesley's accounts of modern-day demoniacs might cause people to follow Sykes's example, and attribute the New Testament demoniacs to mental and physical illnesses. Such a transition, in turn, might lead people to follow Woolston's example, and question whether any miracles had happened at all. As was noted in the previous chapter, the Dissenter, Caleb Fleming, had similarly feared that evangelical 'enthusiasm' naturally led to doubt and scepticism. Thus, these discussions on Thomas Church reinforce the notion that similar fears regarding the relationship between 'enthusiasm' and scepticism transcended denominational boundaries.

Shortly after his skirmish with Wesley, Church defended the post-apostolic Fathers in his response to Middleton's *Free Inquiry*.²⁴ Henry Stebbing and George White were two other anti-Methodist High Churchmen who publicly opposed Middleton's treatment of the Fathers.²⁵ In his 1748 attack on Methodism, White unfavourably compared evangelicals to Roman Catholics because of their emphasis on 'extraordinary Inspiration'. According to White, such miraculous occurrences had only been 'necessary' for the first '4000 [i.e. 400] years' of Christianity, when it had been 'impossible' to combat the 'prejudices' of the age 'without putting Nature out of its proper Channel'. While White's tract was primarily targeted at Methodists and other 'enthusiasts', he noted that these discussions formed part of a much wider controversy which encompassed Middleton. More specifically, White directed his readers to his recently published response to Middleton's *An Introductory Discourse to a Larger Work Concerning the Miraculous* (1747), which was a precursor to his *Free Inquiry*.²⁶

²⁴ See Church, *Vindication of the Miraculous Powers*.

²⁵ For their attacks on Middleton, see H. Stebbing, *Observations on a Book, Intituled, An Introductory Discourse to a Larger Work, &c* (London, 1747); G. White, *Theological Remarks on the Reverend Dr. Middleton's Late Introductory Discourse and Postscript* (London, 1747).

²⁶ White, *Sermon Against the Methodists*, pp. 14-15. Intriguingly, White was raised as a Roman Catholic, and subsequently educated at the English Catholic college at Douai, France. However, in 1741, White left France, and renounced his Roman Catholicism. Shortly afterwards, he was ordained an Anglican priest. See Snape, 'Anti-Methodism in Eighteenth-Century England', pp. 265-66.

The fact that these same individuals attacked both Middleton and Wesley suggests that Shaw's description of an Anglican 'middle way' is problematic. Like Middleton, both Church and White were neither Deists nor 'enthusiasts'. Yet, these High Churchmen evidently disagreed with Middleton on much. Clearly, they were attempting to pave their own 'middle way' between Middleton and Wesley by supporting the occurrence of miracles between the second and fifth centuries, while rejecting their continuation after this point.

On the other hand, George Lavington paved a different 'middle way' by following the tradition of Joseph Glanvill, who had been open to the possibility of modern-day miracles if no rational explanation could be found. In the third part of his *Enthusiasm of Methodists*, Lavington largely followed Church's example by attacking the Methodists' accounts of recent miracles and demonic possessions. Nevertheless, Lavington conceded that Wesley's description of a woman with extrasensory perception could not be explained by rational means, and noted that similar instances had been described in Glanvill's *Saducismus Triumphatus* (1681) and Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702).²⁷ Evidently, there was no stance on miracles which unified anti-Methodist Anglicans. To complicate matters further, it sometimes appeared that Wesley was fighting on the same side as his critics. In the previous chapter, it was noted that Henry Dodwell's *Christianity Not Founded on Argument* attracted critical responses from Wesley and such anti-Methodist divines as James Bate. Wesley – as with Church, Stebbing and White – was also a staunch critic of Middleton. In his journal entry for 2 January 1749, Wesley wrote the following:

²⁷ [Lavington], *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared. Part III*, pp. 56-58.

I had designed to set out with a friend for Rotterdam; but, being much pressed to answer Dr. Middleton's book against the Fathers, I postponed my voyage, and spent almost twenty days in that unpleasing employment.²⁸

The book in question was Middleton's *Free Inquiry*, which had been published only a few weeks earlier.²⁹ Wesley's response to Middleton was subsequently published anonymously as *A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Conyers Middleton* (1749). In this work, Wesley defended post-apostolic miracles by responding to Middleton's various charges. For example, he addressed Middleton's claim that these alleged miracles had been 'committed' not to 'bishops' or 'martyrs' but to 'boys', 'women' and 'obscure laymen'. Wesley scoffed that Middleton had decided to 'talk in his sleep' – an insult which he justified by noting that both Cyprian and Dionysius had been bishops of Carthage and Alexandria respectively, while Justin had obviously been a martyr. When it came to the issue of why 'boys' and 'women' were endowed with these gifts, Wesley cited Joel 2:28: 'I will pour out my Spirit, saith the Lord, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy'. Finally, Wesley noted that Middleton had only cited 'one ante-Nicene writer' (Origen) to support his claim that 'obscure laymen' were empowered with these miraculous gifts.³⁰

By attacking Middleton, Wesley appeared (at least on the surface) to be siding with several divines with whom he had previously crossed swords. Several scholars have seen Wesley's *Letter* as evidence of his enduring respect for the early Church Fathers.³¹ Wesley's apparent decision to cancel a trip to Rotterdam to complete this

²⁸ Curnock, *Journal of the Rev. John Wesley*, III, p. 390.

²⁹ For the initial publication advertisement, see *General Evening Post*, 13 December 1748. For some reason, the publisher prematurely put 1749 as the publication year on the front page of the first edition.

³⁰ [J. Wesley], *A Letter to the Reverend Dr. Conyers Middleton* (London, 1749), pp. 79-80.

³¹ T.A. Campbell, 'John Wesley and Conyers Middleton on Divine Intervention in History', *Church History*, 55 (1986), p. 44; J.W. Barbeau, 'John Wesley and the Early Church: History, Antiquity, and the Spirit of God', in G. Kalantzis and A. Tooley (eds), *Evangelicals and the Early Church: Recovery, Reform, Renewal* (Eugene, Ore., 2012), pp. 65-67; Hammond, *John Wesley in America*, pp. 200-1.

work, coupled with the fact that he usually avoided theological controversies, certainly suggests that protecting the reputations of the Fathers was very important to him. Yet, while this certainly formed an integral part of Wesley's agenda, the final dozen pages of this lengthy work suggest that he wished to voice an additional message, which scholars have largely neglected. It was during these concluding remarks that Wesley bemoaned the many 'men of understanding' who – despite their willingness to defend the 'traditional evidence of Christianity' – still neglected its 'internal evidence'. By 'internal evidence', Wesley was referring to such instances as his own miraculous 'heart-warming' conversion.³² These sentiments were evidently intended as an attack on such clergymen as Stebbing and Church, who defended apostolic and patristic miracles, but dismissed modern-day accounts of God using his supernatural powers. Orthodox divines had encountered this criticism before from Thomas Chubb, who, theologically, was the complete opposite to Wesley. In a 1740 polemic, Chubb scoffed that contemporary 'Reverend Doctors of Divinity' were often 'both for and against a thing'. Chubb named Stebbing as one hypocritical clergyman who was willing to appeal to '*reason and common sense*' when '*waging war with Mr. Whitefield*', but equally willing to dismiss these same rational tenets 'upon other occasions...when other, and perhaps contrary, purposes are to be served'.³³

Wesley continued his conclusion by taking an even more controversial step. At one point, he stated that it would be an 'advantage to the Christian cause' if these clergymen went 'over to those whom they are now contending with' because the distinction between 'real Deists and real Christians' would then be less blurred.³⁴ Thus, one should not view Wesley's *Letter* as an example of him siding with his old High Church opponents. Rather, this publication enabled him to assert his respect for the

³² [Wesley], *Letter to the Reverend Dr. Conyers Middleton*, pp. 224-25.

³³ T. Chubb, *An Enquiry into the Ground and Foundation of Religion* (London, 1740), p. 140.

³⁴ [Wesley], *Letter to the Reverend Dr. Conyers Middleton*, pp. 225-26.

patristic miracles, and attack some of his old High Church adversaries in the process. Such aggression was certainly uncharacteristic of the normally diplomatic Wesley. Indeed, Wesley's blunt assessment of contemporary clergymen was reminiscent of earlier polemical attacks on the established Church by Whitefield and his Calvinist allies.³⁵ Ironically, Whitefield had radically toned down his contempt towards the established clergy by this point.³⁶ The fact that Wesley was behaving out of character may go some way in explaining why he published his *Letter* anonymously. Whether Middleton was aware that Wesley wrote the *Letter* remains unknown. Assuming Middleton was oblivious to its authorship, his reading of the final dozen pages of the *Letter* would have made him aware that the author was an 'enthusiast'. Middleton's *Free Inquiry* contained a reference – albeit a very brief one – to such 'modern Fanatics' as Methodists, Moravians and French Prophets.³⁷ Brian Young sees this fleeting reference as evidence that Middleton would not have considered a religious 'enthusiast' to be worthy of a response.³⁸ While it could be argued that Middleton's death the following year prevented him from writing such a reply, the fact that he managed to compose a joint response to Church and William Dodwell, another orthodox opponent,

³⁵ At the beginning of his ministry, Whitefield attacked contemporary clerics for teaching '*That the Spirit of God is a good Conscience*'. Whitefield described such a message as '*Deism* refin'd' and noted that contemporary '*Deists* laugh at us, when we pretend to be against their Notions, and yet use no other Reason for our differing from them, than what is agreeable to *Deists* Principles'. See G. Whitefield, *The Folly and Danger of Being Not Righteous Enough* (London, 1739), p. 9. Jonathan Warne had voiced similar sentiments in a 1731 tract. In this piece, Warne lamented that many clerics had forsaken the 'Scheme of the Protestant Reformation' in favour of lessons on 'Reason' and 'Nature'. While Anglican divines claimed to be 'Defenders of Reveal'd Religion', the majority had 'fallen upon the Use of Weapons, of the same treacherous Composition, with those in the Hand of the Deist'. See [J. Warne], *A Remonstrance Address'd to the Clergy. Shewing, Where the Charge of Deism (without Returning to the Old Divinity) Will Necessarily Terminate* (London, 1731), pp. 4-5.

³⁶ For Whitefield's gradual change in character during the 1740s, see Chapter Ten in Stout, *Divine Dramatist*. See also B.S. Schlenther, 'Whitefield's Personal Life and Character', in Hammond and Jones, *Life, Context, and Legacy*, pp. 12-18.

³⁷ Middleton, *Free Inquiry*, p. 197.

³⁸ Young, 'Conyers Middleton', p. 259.

certainly suggests that combating Wesley's *Letter* did not feature very highly on Middleton's priority list, if at all.³⁹

Notwithstanding the absence of a response from Middleton, Wesley's *Letter* was attacked by John Kirkby, the rector of Blackmanstone, Kent. Kirkby had previously served as chaplain to a young Edward Gibbon, whose father had dismissed him after only a few months of service because of his alleged failure to refer to George II in his prayers during the 1745 Jacobite rebellion.⁴⁰ Throughout *The Impostor Detected* (1750), Kirkby failed to name Wesley as the author of the *Letter*. While this suggests that Kirkby was oblivious to its authorship, it is clear from his early reference to the 'Seducers called METHODISTS' that he had correctly identified the author as a member of this 'diabolical' group.⁴¹ Kirkby's attack centred on Wesley's controversial closing remarks, where he appeared to be cheering on Deists. Throughout this piece, Kirkby portrayed the author of the *Letter* as a 'Chameleon', who, along with his Methodist friends, was collaborating with the Deists to form a 'Force against Christianity'. Though their strategies varied, their intentions were the same. While the Deist used rational means to portray the 'Devil' as 'nothing but an empty Name, or mere Bugbear', the Methodist reduced Christianity to 'madness' by 'making his diabolical Illusions and Suggestions pass for the Operations of the Holy Ghost'.⁴² Elsewhere in this polemic, Kirkby portrayed Wesley as somebody who 'agrees with Dr. Middleton in abusing' the 'primitive Fathers'. This was a reference to Wesley's brief concession that the Fathers were not above making 'mistakes' and 'ill-drawn conclusions' from time to time. When one compares this statement to Thomas Church's

³⁹ Middleton's response to Church and Dodwell was published posthumously as *A Vindication of the Free Inquiry into the Miraculous Powers* (London, 1751).

⁴⁰ I.M. Tieken-Boon van Ostade, 'Kirkby, John (c.1705–1754)', *ODNB*.

⁴¹ J. Kirkby, *The Impostor Detected; Or, the Counterfeit Saint Turn'd Inside Out* (London, 1750), unpaginated title page.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 22, 40–41.

similar admittance of the occasional 'Error' amongst the Fathers, Wesley's concession does not appear to be particularly controversial at all. Indeed, both Church and Wesley agreed that these errors should not obscure the 'reverence' which the Fathers were due.⁴³

More convincing, however, was Kirkby's dismissal of the numerous biblical quotations in Wesley's *Letter*, which he justified by arguing that it was common practice for 'Enemies of Christianity' to express themselves 'in Scripture Terms'.⁴⁴ Kirkby certainly had a point here. As was noted in the previous chapter, it was not unusual to see Deists citing the scriptures at length. There was clearly an element of disguise and subtlety in Wesley's *Letter*, which, despite being advertised as simply an attack on Middleton, was also intended as an attack on anti-evangelical High Churchmen. Wesley may have adopted this polemical manoeuvre because he felt that none of his opponents would dare to attack a pamphlet which was critical of Middleton. If this was Wesley's motivation, we can see from Kirkby's response that it backfired. Wesley went on to become further embroiled in Middleton's heterodoxy several years later, when William Warburton published his *Doctrine of Grace*. Historians have noted that this work was an attack on both Wesley and the late Middleton.⁴⁵ Yet, virtually no scholarly attention has been devoted to explaining what Warburton perceived the relationship between these seemingly opposite extremes to be. This chapter will close by considering what Warburton perceived this relationship to be.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 51; [Wesley], *Letter to the Reverend Dr. Conyers Middleton*, pp. 232-33; Church, *Vindication of the Miraculous Powers*, pp. 159-61.

⁴⁴ Kirkby, *Impostor Detected*, p. 1.

⁴⁵ See Madden, *Cheap, Safe and Natural Medicine*, pp. 91-92; Barbeau, 'Enthusiasts, Rationalists and Pentecost', pp. 86-87.

Warburton's *Doctrine of Grace* (1763)

Warburton advertised his *Doctrine of Grace* as a response to the 'Insults of INFIDELITY' and the 'Abuses of FANATICISM'.⁴⁶ The former was a reference to Warburton's late friend turned adversary, Middleton. Unsurprisingly, the latter point concerned religious 'enthusiasm' – in particular, that of Wesley. Although Warburton had previously ridiculed Methodism in some items of personal correspondence and his unpublished 'True Methodist' manuscript, *The Doctrine of Grace* marked his first public attack on evangelicalism.⁴⁷ Given that Warburton was relatively late in publishing an anti-Methodist tract, it comes as no surprise that there was nothing particularly original about his discussions on Wesley. Indeed, this section – which formed the bulk of the second volume – consisted mainly of lengthy reiterations of the old charge of 'enthusiasm'. Warburton also followed Thomas Church's example by citing examples of 'spiritual *madness*' in Wesley's journal. For example, Warburton scoffed at Wesley's admiration for a 'Mrs. Johnson', who, upon encountering a '*mad woman*', had 'ordered all the medicines to be thrown away, and exhorted the Patient to *look unto Jesus*.'⁴⁸

Warburton's attack on Middleton concerned his posthumously published 'Essay on the Gift of Tongues' (1752). Given that a decade had elapsed since the publication of this work, one may wonder why Warburton was so slow in responding to Middleton's 'Essay'. Of course, Warburton had been engaged in battling freethought for most of his ministry. In his discussions on Warburton's *The Alliance Between*

⁴⁶ W. Warburton, *The Doctrine of Grace: Or, the Office and Operations of the Holy Spirit Vindicated from the Insults of Infidelity, and the Abuses of Fanaticism*, 2 vols. (London, 1763).

⁴⁷ In addition to a 1738 letter to Middleton (discussed in Chapter One), Warburton also referred to Wesley and Whitefield in a 1738 letter to Thomas Birch (discussed in Chapter Three). See Nichols and Nichols, *Illustrations*, II, pp. 94-96; Snow, 'Methodist Enthusiasm', pp. 34, 39.

⁴⁸ Warburton, *Doctrine of Grace*, II, pp. 209-10.

Church and State (1736), Hugh Trevor-Roper convincingly argues that Warburton ‘saw in the deist controversy a means of self-assertion and self-advancement’.⁴⁹ It is also possible that Warburton – who was appointed Dean of Bristol in 1757 and bishop of Gloucester in 1759 – had written his 1754-1755 attacks on the recently deceased Bolingbroke as a means of gaining preferment.⁵⁰ While *The Doctrine of Grace* can be seen as a continuation of Warburton’s public assault on heterodoxy, it is unlikely that preferment was on his mind when he wrote this piece. Indeed, Warburton had already risen to the position of bishop by this point. For most clergymen, this was the pinnacle of one’s career. Admittedly, some dioceses were more prestigious than others, and it is possible that Warburton sought translation (something which, ultimately, never happened). Yet, even if this was so, it is unlikely that attacking a deceased theologian’s ten-year-old publication would have caused that much excitement within the established Church. Furthermore, Warburton had already attacked Middleton over a decade earlier in his *Julian*.

So, what were Warburton’s motives when he wrote *The Doctrine of Grace*? While it is impossible to answer this question with any certainty, it is plausible to assume that, by distancing himself from Middleton on the one hand and Wesley on the other, Warburton was attempting to affirm his orthodoxy, and assure his readers that he had not plunged into the opposite extreme of ‘enthusiasm’. As we shall see, Warburton’s concluding remarks referred to the importance of steering a ‘middle way’ between the two extremes which Middleton and Wesley seemed to occupy.⁵¹ Also, by launching a public assault on Methodist ‘enthusiasm’, it would have appeared that Warburton was siding with several High Churchmen whom he had previously angered

⁴⁹ Trevor-Roper, ‘From Deism to History’, p. 112.

⁵⁰ W. Warburton, *A View of Lord Bolingbroke's Philosophy; In Four Letters to a Friend*, 2 vols. (London, 1754-55).

⁵¹ Warburton, *Doctrine of Grace*, II, p. 327.

– most notably, Henry Stebbing, who was still living at the time. Finally, and most importantly, it must be noted that Warburton's promotion had been opposed by most, if not all, of the episcopal bench, who viewed him as theologically unsound and obnoxious. Thus, it seems highly likely that *The Doctrine of Grace* was Warburton's attempt to distance himself from the maverick polemicist which had characterised his early ministry.⁵²

When compared to his *Free Inquiry*, Middleton's posthumous 'Essay' was decidedly more controversial, which may explain why he refrained from publishing it. Indeed, where Middleton had left the New Testament well alone in the former work, his discussions in the 'Essay' focused on first-century miracles. More specifically, Middleton addressed 'the gift of tongues', which 'was first conferred by Christ on his Apostles about ten days after his Ascension, in a public and solemn assembly of all the Disciples in *Jerusalem*, on the feast of *Pentecost*'. This gift provided the apostles with 'a faculty of speaking *new and strange languages*', and enabled them to 'convince all those different nations, then residing in *Jerusalem*, that they were authorised and commissioned by a divine power, to preach the Gospel of *Jesus*.'⁵³ Evidently, Middleton did not doubt that the apostles had been empowered with the gift of tongues. So, what were his provocative sentiments on this matter? Middleton argued that '*the gift of tongues*' was not of a 'stable or permanent nature'. Rather, it was 'adapted to peculiar occasions, and then withdrawn again, as soon as it had served the particular purpose, for which it was bestowed.' Middleton was convinced that, had the apostles maintained this gift, their writings would have been in the eloquent '*Platonic stile*'. Instead, they wrote in a language which was 'utterly rude and barbarous, and abounding

⁵² Young, 'Warburton, William'.

⁵³ C. Middleton, 'An Essay on the Gift of Tongues', in *The Miscellaneous Works of the Late Reverend and Learned Conyers Middleton, D.D. Principal Librarian of the University of Cambridge* (London, 1752), II, p. 79, 82-83.

with every fault, which can possibly deform a language.’ Middleton added that one could also find this argument in the writings of Erasmus, who had similarly described the apostles’ language as ‘rough’, ‘unpolished’ and ‘sometimes even plainly...absurd’.⁵⁴

Warburton, on the other hand, was adamant that the apostles were permanently endowed with this gift. To support this point, he cited Paul’s statement from 1 Corinthians 14:18: ‘I thank God that I speak with tongues more than you all.’ To Warburton, the fact that Paul was ‘using the *present time*’ was sufficient evidence that he ‘boasted of it as then in his possession.’⁵⁵ When it came to the apostles’ apparent lack of eloquence, Warburton stated that it was ‘repugnant to reason and experience’ to believe that an ‘inspired knowledge of *strange tongues*’ would include ‘all the native peculiarities’ or ‘*elegancies*’.⁵⁶ Most importantly, Warburton feared that Middleton’s ‘new interpretation’ – which made the gift of tongues ‘so transitory, and the power conferred by it so momentary’ – reduced the apostles to ‘modern Fanatics’. Warburton supported this argument by citing an extract from Shaftesbury’s *Letter on Enthusiasm*, which detailed an encounter with a ‘Gentleman’ who had uncontrollably uttered ‘prophecy in a pompous latin stile’. Therefore, Warburton believed that Middleton’s argument had two adverse effects. On the one hand, it encouraged Christians to doubt the validity of New Testament miracles. On the other, it provided both inspiration and scriptural sanction for ‘enthusiasts’.⁵⁷ Thus, on the latter point, Warburton was implying that Middleton’s rationalism played into the hands of such individuals as Wesley. From the earlier discussions on Caleb Fleming and Thomas Church, we know that rational excesses were often seen to be the result of ‘enthusiastic’ excesses.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 89-91.

⁵⁵ Warburton, *Doctrine of Grace*, I, pp. 19-20.

⁵⁶ Ibid., I, p. 59.

⁵⁷ Ibid., I, pp. 16-17.

Initially, it appears that Warburton was arguing the opposite to this. Yet, Warburton's concluding remarks suggest that he would also have agreed with Fleming and Church on this point.

In his conclusion, Warburton outlined a 'history of Fanaticism'. To Warburton, the relationship between rationalism and 'enthusiasm' was a vicious cycle, which revolved around two types of 'extravagance' – one of the 'Unbeliever', the other of the 'Fanatic'. When somebody attempted to counter one of these extravagancies, it often resulted in them falling into the opposite extreme. Thus, some were 'drawn in to depreciate and to degrade *human Reason*, when their Adversaries had too extravagantly advanced it.' Others 'advanced it [reason] as extravagantly, when their Adversaries were in an humour to vilify and disgrace it.'⁵⁸ Later on, Warburton lamented that 'several Opposers of this late revived fanaticism' had returned to 'the old *latitudinarian* excesses.'⁵⁹ Clearly, Warburton was describing evangelical 'enthusiasm' when he referred to 'fanaticism'. But to whom was he referring when he attacked 'latitudinarian excesses'? A clue to this puzzle can be found in a 1742 letter which Warburton wrote to Zachary Pearce. In this letter, Warburton addressed Pearce's charge that he had been unduly deferential to Middleton in his *Divine Legation*. It is clear from Warburton's sentiments below that, by this point, he regretted his previous association with Middleton:

That I pretend to plead no other merit in what I have written than the pure & honest design of serving Christianity in general & the Church of England in particular, & that I should hope my accidentally falling into sentiments of persons & things different it may be from his Grace's will not be imputed to me as a crime but rather as a misfortune to my self. That if I be so happy as to

⁵⁸ Ibid., II, pp. 315-16.

⁵⁹ Ibid., II, p. 327.

understand I have his Grace's favourable opinion of me I shall go on with alacrity in my last Vol. where I shall endeavour to show the reasonableness & truth of all those great principles of Christianity as taught in the Church of England (& which give so much great offence not only to Infidels but the *latitudinarian* [my emphasis] part of our Brethren those who would make no more of Christianity than a republication of the Religion of Nature) on such foundations as I hope will remain unshaken.⁶⁰

Four years earlier, in a draft letter to Warburton, Pearce had similarly complained about Middleton writing 'in the latitudinarian way'.⁶¹ From these two examples, we can conclude that, when Warburton referred to 'latitudinarian excesses' in his *Doctrine of Grace*, he was at least partly attacking Middleton's rationalism. Of course, there were several other divines to whom he may also have been referring. Earlier on in his conclusion, Warburton had attacked Arthur Ashley Sykes's recent anti-Trinitarian work, *The Scripture Doctrine of the Redemption of Man by Jesus Christ* (1756). Thus, it is possible that he viewed Sykes as one of these rational extremists.⁶² While Warburton did not name him, it is also possible that he was subtly attacking Francis Blackburne, the archdeacon of Cleveland, who had recently condemned the severity in which Warburton addressed his opponents. Significantly, Blackburne had also used his attack on Warburton as an opportunity to support mortalism.⁶³

Clearly, Warburton viewed these 'latitudinarian excesses' as a reaction to evangelical 'enthusiasm'. Initially, this seems problematic because, at the time of writing, neither Sykes nor Blackburne had devoted any serious attention to Methodism

⁶⁰ Westminster Abbey Muniment Room and Library, Muniment 64787: Warburton to Pearce, December 1742.

⁶¹ Westminster Abbey Muniment Room and Library, Muniment 64780: Pearce to Warburton, 30 March 1738. I am grateful to Robert Ingram for providing me with this and the above reference.

⁶² Warburton, *Doctrine of Grace*, II, p. 326.

⁶³ F. Blackburne, *Remarks on Dr. Warburton's Account of the Sentiments of the Early Jews Concerning the Soul* (London, 1757). For more on Blackburne's mortalism, see Young, 'Soul-Sleeping System'.

in their publications.⁶⁴ We have also seen that Middleton barely devoted a cursory glance to Methodism in his *Free Inquiry*. If anything, it seems that these Latitudinarian divines did not view combating evangelical ‘enthusiasm’ as a worthy use of their time. Nevertheless, a later publication by Blackburne would at least partly confirm Warburton’s suspicion that evangelical ‘enthusiasm’ merely opened the door for ‘latitudinarian’ heterodoxy. In a 1769 attack on subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles, Blackburne facetiously defended the Methodists against the charge of being ‘*new dissenters*’. To Blackburne, such a charge was unfair because the Methodists were ‘equally *orthodox*, and equally *sincere* conformists as they who accuse them of heterodoxy and irregularity’. Blackburne went on to scoff that, ‘between them’, the Methodists had ‘brought a sufficient number of fluctuating interpretations, to convince any man of common sense and common honesty, of the inutility of subscription to our established forms.’⁶⁵

Conclusions

Rather than viewing early anti-Methodist literature in isolation, one needs to appreciate that these attacks on Wesley and Whitefield were part of a much wider debate on miracles and demoniacs. It has been shown that several of Wesley’s opponents, including George White, Thomas Church and William Warburton, engaged in the Middleton controversy. Evidently, these clergymen were attempting to pave a middle

⁶⁴ In his 1757 response to Warburton, Blackburne had referred, albeit very briefly, to Wesley’s discussions on the Resurrection, and how it contradicted the Sadducees’ belief that there was no separate existence after death. See Blackburne, *Remarks on Dr. Warburton’s Account*, pp. 63-64. Around the same time that Warburton published his *Doctrine of Grace*, Blackburne attacked Wesley’s apparent neglect of the moral law. Again, this was a very brief reference. See *A Short Discourse on the Study of the Scriptures. Delivered to the Clergy of the Archdeaconry of Cleveland, at the Visitation Held in the Year 1763* (York, 1763), p. 17n*. I am grateful to Grayson Ditchfield for these references.

⁶⁵ F. Blackburne, *Occasional Remarks Upon Some Late Strictures on The Confessional. Part II* (London, 1769), p. 123n.

way between Wesley's 'enthusiasm' and Middleton's heterodoxy. These discussions have also reinforced the previous chapter's point that some Anglican divines viewed evangelicalism as something which either wittingly or unwittingly aided Deism by encouraging doubt, and eroding the powers of the established Church. This point has been illustrated in the discussions on John Kirkby, who viewed Wesley's *Letter* to Conyers Middleton as an example of an 'enthusiast' cryptically cheering Deism on. Others, such as Church and Warburton, feared that such 'enthusiastic' excesses merely led to rational excesses, thus reducing Christianity to outright madness. Such conclusions, in turn, also reinforce the notion that one should not view Methodism and anti-Methodism in terms of 'Counter-Enlightenment' versus 'Enlightenment'.

Chapter Seven

Uses of History

Introduction

i) A ‘Historical Revolution’?

The history of history has long been a contested field. This is particularly true of the arguments and methodologies of ecclesiastical historians between the Reformation and the nineteenth century, which have been interpreted in various ways by twentieth- and twenty-first-century scholars. Scholars have often described the post-Reformation period as a period of progress for historical scholarship. To quote Paulina Kewes, Whig historians have ‘prized accounts of the past that seemed to them to aspire to impartiality, factual accuracy, and a secular outlook—in short, that pointed the way toward modernity.’¹ F. Smith Fussner has even gone so far as to claim that a ‘historiographical revolution’ occurred ‘between about 1580 and 1640 in England and that it helped to create those historical attitudes and questionings that we recognize as our own.’ Fussner goes on to describe the seventeenth century as a ‘century of well-marked transition’, in which an ‘intellectual revolution’ occurred. This ‘revolution’, in turn, meant that ‘older scholastic forms of thought were replaced by a new ‘scientific’ ideal.’² Of course, when one reads the works of ecclesiastical historians from the Restoration era, it is easy to see why scholars have argued that this period witnessed a

¹ P. Kewes, ‘History and Its Uses’, in P. Kewes (ed.), *The Uses of History in Early Modern England* (San Marino, 2006), p. 1.

² F.S. Fussner, *The Historical Revolution: English Historical Writing and Thought, 1580-1640* (London, 1962), p. xxii.

rise in historical objectivity. In the second volume of his *History of the Reformation* (1681), Gilbert Burnet argued the following:

I know the Duty of an *Historian* leads him to write as one that is of neither Party, and I have endeavoured to follow it as carefully as I could, neither concealing the faults of the one Party, nor denying the just Praises that were due to any of the other side; and have delivered things as I found them, making them neither better nor worse than indeed they were.³

Yet, as both Joseph Preston and Daniel Woolf have argued, there was nothing particularly objective about Burnet's approach. Indeed, while Burnet 'sought to ward off bias by taking refuge in original sources and documentation', he 'failed to develop a method of criticism or to realize that bias could be displayed in the process of selectivity.'⁴ Nevertheless, some of those historians who eschew the Whig notion of a 'historical revolution' still believe that, by the early decades of the eighteenth century, the writing of history had become 'less overtly polemical'. For example, Kewes claims that, because 'a host of immediate political dangers, such as the Jacobite threat' had receded, 'there was less "use" for partisan historiography' during this period. Due to the 'cultural cachet of politeness and urbanity', the 'scurrility typical of partisan history' had apparently fallen 'out of fashion' by the 1720s.⁵ This chapter will explore the uses of history in eighteenth-century anti-Methodist polemics. It will be shown that these authors often attempted to convey a sense of objectivity by citing a diverse range of primary sources. Ultimately, though, these discussions will seek to challenge the extent to which historical writing underwent a noticeable change during this period. More

³ G. Burnet, *The History of the Reformation of the Church of England*, 3 vols. (London, 1679-1715), II, unpaginated preface.

⁴ J.H. Preston, 'English Ecclesiastical Historians and the Problem of Bias, 1559-1742', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 32 (1971), p. 213; D. Woolf, 'Historical Writing in Britain from the Late Middle Ages to the Eve of Enlightenment', in J. Rabasa, M. Sato, E. Tortarolo, and D. Woolf (eds), *The Oxford History of Historical Writing*, Vol. 3, 1400-1800 (Oxford, 2012), p. 486.

⁵ Kewes, 'History and Its Uses', p. 25.

specifically, it will be argued that the historical writings of anti-Methodist polemicists were decidedly partisan, and, in many cases, reminiscent of the polemical historiography which had characterised the seventeenth century.

ii) Anti-Popery and ‘Modernity’

As an individual, George Whitefield has gained much scholarly attention. Within the last twenty-five years, numerous historians have associated him with ‘modernity’. Harry Stout, Frank Lambert and, more recently, Peter Hoffer, have all emphasised the ways in which Whitefield, with the help of his publicist, William Seward, utilised the consumer market by advertising future open-air services, and publishing sermons and journals. According to Stout, Whitefield’s approach was comparable to the publicity campaigns of twentieth-century ‘comedians, movie stars, athletes, or evangelists like...Billy Graham.’⁶ Yet, as novel as Whitefield’s publicity campaigns may have been, placing too much emphasis on his ‘modern’ approach can lead to the implication that anybody who opposed him was ‘traditional’ or ‘anti-modern’, and obscure the various characteristics of his ministry which many contemporaries viewed as backward. Jacob Blosser has gone some way in rectifying this problem in his essay on Whitefield’s turbulent relationship with Alexander Garden. As Blosser argues, both Whitefield and Garden had differing ideas of what constituted ‘modern’. As far as Whitefield was concerned, he was a modern-day Luther or (more appropriately) Calvin, battling against an established church which had regressed to a popish pre-Reformation state by neglecting the doctrine of justification by faith, and favouring a message of moral works instead. Garden, on the other hand, viewed himself as a rational opponent

⁶ Stout, *Divine Dramatist* (for quotation, see pp. xiii-xiv); Lambert, *Pedlar in Divinity*; P.C. Hoffer, *When Benjamin Franklin Met the Reverend Whitefield: Enlightenment, Revival, and the Power of the Printed Word* (Baltimore, 2011).

of Whitefield's 'Civil War-era lunacy'. Although Blosser acknowledges that Garden also charged Whitefield with popery, he concludes that comparisons to seventeenth-century Protestant sectarians formed a more integral part of the commissary's anti-Whitefield polemic. While Blosser is to be commended for demonstrating the subjectivity of the term 'modernity', he fails to fully explain why Garden made these seemingly contradictory comparisons to both seventeenth-century Protestant 'enthusiasts' and Roman Catholics.⁷ This chapter will address this issue by exploring the ways in which Protestants used anti-Catholicism as a polemical weapon against other Protestants.

In a 1738 publication, Whitefield described a recent stay in Gibraltar. It was there that Whitefield encountered a number of locals who departed from the '*Simplicity of CHRIST*' by attending a '*Romish Chapel*', where they went '*Whoring after their own Inventions!*' Whitefield went on to describe such worship as '*Pageantry, Superstition, and Idolatry*'.⁸ It was far from unusual to see such anti-Catholic sentiments being expressed during the eighteenth century. In *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, Linda Colley identifies a 'common commitment to Protestantism' and a dedication to 'self-preservation, anxiety, and defiance' against the Roman Catholic 'other' as integral elements of eighteenth-century British national identity. Colley's argument is correct in the sense that anti-Catholic sentiments were particularly virulent across the British Atlantic world throughout the 'long' eighteenth-century.⁹ Roman Catholics were not covered under the terms of the 1689 Toleration Act, and it was not until 1791 that they were legally entitled to worship freely. Between the late 1730s and 1750, Britain was engaged in a series of overlapping conflicts with France and Spain,

⁷ J.M. Blosser, 'Constructing Modernity: Historical Imagery and Religious Identity in Charleston's Great Awakening', *South Carolina Historical Magazine*, 106 (2005), pp. 212-34.

⁸ Whitefield, *Journal of a Voyage*, pp. 2, 12.

⁹ L. Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, 2nd edn (Reading, 2005), pp. xvi, 18.

the two leading Roman Catholic powers. These conflicts included the War of Jenkins's Ear (1739-48), a conflict against Spain that was largely a competition for imperial supremacy in the Caribbean, and the War of the Austrian Succession (1740-8), which extended into North America, where British colonists were pitted against French colonists and their Native American allies. These conflicts, along with the possibility of an invasion by the popish Jacobite Pretender, only intensified anti-Catholic sentiments amongst British Protestants.¹⁰

Yet, Colley's implication that there was a united Protestant front in eighteenth-century Britain is problematic. Crucially, such an implication ignores the strong divisions which existed between different groups of Protestants in Britain. From the Sacheverell riots of 1710, one can see that animosity towards Dissenters could be just as potent a force as anti-Catholicism. Further attacks on Dissenters occurred in the wake of George I's ascension in 1714. To many opponents of the 'Whig/Hanoverian cause', the toleration of Dissenters was even more abominable than the toleration of Roman Catholics.¹¹ Furthermore, the fact that Protestant groups often charged other Protestant groups with popery is further evidence that no united Protestant front existed in Britain. As Peter Nockles convincingly argues, 'there were numerous varieties of anti-Catholicism' throughout the eighteenth century.¹²

¹⁰ C. Haydon, 'I Love My King and My Country, but a Roman Catholic I Hate': Anti-Catholicism, Xenophobia and National Identity in Eighteenth-Century England', in T. Claydon and I. McBride (eds), *Protestantism and National Identity: Britain and Ireland c.1650-c.1850* (Cambridge, 1998), p. 44.

¹¹ C. Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in Eighteenth-Century England* (Manchester, 1993), p. 101; P.K. Monod, *Jacobitism and the English People, 1688-1788* (Cambridge, 1989), pp. 170-77. It is also important to note that not all British Protestants were virulently anti-Catholic. For instance, William Wake held the 'unprotestant' belief that the French Gallican Church bore a 'confessional resemblance to the established church of England' because it adhered to the belief that monarchical power was independent of the power of the pope. See B.W. Young, 'A History of Variations: The Identity of the Eighteenth-Century Church of England', in Claydon and McBride, *Protestantism and National Identity*, pp. 108-9.

¹² P. Nockles, 'Emissaries of Babylon' or 'Brothers in Christ'? Charles Wesley and Anti-Catholicism', *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, 2 (2010), p. 19.

Latitudinarians and Dissenters often conjured up images of popish tyranny when they levelled the charge of ‘priestcraft’ against High Churchmen,¹³ who, in turn, often accused Dissenters of being schismatic agents of Rome.¹⁴ The fact that there was no homogeneous form of anti-Catholicism is something which one can discern from eighteenth-century anti-Methodist polemics. While the charge of popery was something which many of Wesley and Whitefield’s opponents utilised, the nature of these charges often varied, depending on the political and theological stance of the author concerned. High Church Tories, such as Zachary Grey, tended to describe Methodists as crypto-popish Puritans. On the other hand, ‘ultra-Protestant’ Whigs, such as George Lavington, were more likely to compare Methodists to medieval friars and Counter-Reformation Jesuits. Sometimes, this anti-popish rhetoric incorporated discussions on other, non-Christian, religions. This chapter will commence by exploring these references to Judaism, Islam, and ancient paganism.

Non-Christian Religions

i) Islam and Judaism

In 1543, Martin Luther claimed that

Jews, Turks, papists, radicals abound everywhere. All of them claim to be the church and God’s people in accord with their conceit and boast...Even if they

¹³ B.W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England: Theological Debate from Locke to Burke* (Oxford, 1998), p. 51; Bradley, ‘Anti-Catholicism as Anglican Anticlericalism’, pp. 67-92; S. Taylor, ‘The Bowman Affair: Latitudinarian Theology, Anti-Clericalism and the Limits of Orthodoxy in Early Hanoverian England’, in Cornwall and Gibson, *Religion, Politics and Dissent*, pp. 35-50.

¹⁴ For an example of such a polemic, see the anonymously written *Papists of All Sorts Working with Dissenters of All Sorts, for the Subversion of the Establish'd Church* (London, 1717).

do not all pursue the same course, but one chooses this way, another that way, resulting in a variety of forms, they nonetheless all have the same intent and ultimate goal, namely, by means of their own deeds they want to manage to become God's people.¹⁵

Numerous other Protestant polemicists echoed Luther's condemnation of Judaism and Islam. Thus, by the mid-eighteenth century, the process of likening Roman Catholics to Jews and Muslims was already a well-established form of anti-popish rhetoric. In his *A Discourse Concerning the Idolatry Practised in the Church of Rome* (1671), Edward Stillingfleet likened Ignatius Loyola to 'Mahomet' because both individuals had claimed to experience a 'Vision' of 'God the Father'.¹⁶ Moreover, there was a common stereotype that Roman Catholics were willing to tolerate and align themselves with any number of heretical religious groups if they felt it would lead to an increase in their political power. In the wake of Titus Oates's fabricated 'Popish Plot' to assassinate Charles II, one anonymous pamphleteer wrote an imaginary conversation between a Jesuit and the Pope. When asked whether an alliance with the Turks would require him to be 'Christ's, or Mahomet's Vicar', the Pope replies that, to increase his 'power', he will deny neither.¹⁷ The fact that this stereotype contradicted popular attacks on papal infallibility is further evidence of the paradoxical and self-contradictory nature of early modern anti-Catholicism. The most influential post-Restoration work on Muhammad was *The True Nature of Imposture Fully Displayed in the Life of Mahomet* (1697) by Humphrey Prideaux, who served as Dean of Norwich from 1702 until his death in 1724. In this work, Prideaux noted that Muhammad's 'Imposture' began at

¹⁵ M. Luther, *On the Jews and Their Lies by Martin Luther (1483 - 1546)*, ed. B. Delmont (Raleigh, NC, 2010), pp. 38-39.

¹⁶ E. Stillingfleet, *A Discourse Concerning the Idolatry Practised in the Church of Rome, and the Hazard of Salvation in the Communion of It*, 2nd ed. (London, 1671), p. 280.

¹⁷ *A Consultation Between the Pope and a Jesuit, Concerning the Way How to Introduce Popery into England*, (London, 1679).

About the same time that the *Bishop of Rome*, by virtue of a Grant from the wicked Tyrant *Phocas*, first assumed the Title of *Universal Pastor*, and thereon claimed to himself that *Supremacy*, which he hath been ever since endeavouring to usurp over the *Church of Christ*.¹⁸

From this observation, Prideaux concluded that '*Antichrist*' had set up two camps in the world – 'one in the *East*' (Islam) and 'the other in the *West*' (Roman Catholicism).¹⁹ Heterodox authors, on the other hand, advanced relatively positive assessments of Islam. To sceptics, such as Pierre Bayle and Voltaire, Muhammad was a 'rational reformer', who – unlike such wonder-workers as Moses and Jesus – had 'made no claim to miraculous powers.'²⁰ Several late seventeenth-century anti-Trinitarians, including Stephen Nye and Arthur Bury, viewed Muhammad as a noble proponent of monotheism. Nye conceded that Muhammad had been 'pretending himself to be a Prophet'. Yet, he defended the prophet's actions as a necessary means of tackling Trinitarian corruption and restoring a monotheistic 'Belief of *the Unity of GOD*.'²¹ Bury similarly defended Muhammad's status as an 'Impostor' by describing him as a 'Reformer' of 'Polytheism' and 'such Corruptions.'²² Others praised Muhammad's tolerance towards other religions. In *An Account of the Rise and Progress of Mahometanism* (1671), the Erastian, Henry Stubbe, advanced the controversial argument that – despite his imposture – Muhammad's use of the sword was justified because it replaced post-Constantinian Christianity's polytheistic Trinitarianism with a

¹⁸ H. Prideaux, *The True Nature of Imposture Fully Displayed in the Life of Mahomet* (London, 1697), p. 16.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 16.

²⁰ J.I. Israel, *Enlightenment Contested: Philosophy, Modernity, and the Emancipation of Man 1670-1752* (Oxford, 2006), p. 617.

²¹ S. Nye, *A Letter of Resolution Concerning the Doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation* ([London], [1695]), p. 18.

²² A. Bury, *The Naked Gospel* ([London], 1690), Preface.

monotheistic civil religion, and restored the ‘tolerant conditions’ of the ‘Noachic laws’, which was ‘the foundation of all true religions.’²³ In his *Dictionnaire* (1697), Bayle claimed that Muslims had always been more tolerant than Christians. Bayle believed that, if the ‘Ottoman Near East’ had been ruled by Christians instead of the Turks, no ‘trace of the Greek Church’ would have remained, and Islam ‘would have been obliterated’. Under Muslim rule, however, Christianity had been ‘fully tolerated’ in this region.²⁴

Various High and Low Church divines subsequently referred to Muhammad’s teachings on toleration, though, unlike Bayle and Stubbe, these clergymen did not view this as something to be admired. In his discussions on Article XVIII: ‘Of obtaining Eternal Salvation only by the Name of Christ’, Gilbert Burnet attacked the ‘*Alcoran*’ for teaching ‘that all Men in all Religions are equally acceptable to God, if they serve him faithfully in them.’²⁵ Henry Stebbing went on to cite this passage from Burnet in a 1720 attack on Bishop Hoadly’s calls for the comprehension of Dissenters (paradoxically, this was something which would have been agreeable to the Whig Burnet). Stebbing claimed that Hoadly might as well have ‘transcribed *his doctrine from the Alcoran!*’²⁶ Here, Stebbing was clearly using Muhammad as a means of attacking Hoadly’s seemingly liberal theology. As we have seen, Whitefield went on to adopt a similar strategy in his attack on the late Tillotson.

Despite – or perhaps because of – Whitefield’s open hostility towards Islam, his opponents sometimes associated his seemingly irrational and licentious behaviour with

²³ H. Garcia, *Islam and the English Enlightenment, 1670-1840* (Baltimore, 2012), p. 52; See also J.R. Jacob, *Henry Stubbe, Radical Protestantism and the Early Enlightenment*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 64-77; J.A.I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and Its Enemies 1660-1730* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 120-24.

²⁴ Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, p. 618.

²⁵ G. Burnet, *An Exposition of the Thirty-Nine Articles of the Church of England*, 2nd edn (London, 1700), p. 171.

²⁶ H. Stebbing, *An Appeal to the Word of God for the Terms of Christian Salvation: Or, a Discourse, Proving that Sincerity, Exclusive of the Method of Religion which a Man Follows, is not Sufficient to Entitle Him to the Kingdom of Heaven* (London, 1720), p. xv.

Muhammad. In 1741, an anonymous pamphleteer condemned Whitefield for describing ‘*Reason and Revelation* as contrary to and destructive of each other’. Such a notion, according to this author, could be found within the pages of ‘the *Alcoran* of *Mahomet*’.²⁷ Three years later, an anonymous ‘Gentleman’ of Whitefield’s alma mater, Pembroke College, Oxford, mockingly urged him to ‘boast of a very extraordinary Intercourse and Familiarity with the Deity’, and quipped ‘*did not* MAHOMET [do] *the same?*’²⁸ Later on in this text, the ‘Gentleman’ described Whitefield’s ability to attract a ‘*giddy sensual Herd*’ as ‘*Mahomet-like*’.²⁹ Similar comparisons were made by at least one anti-Whitefield author on the other side of the Atlantic. In a 1742 polemic, John Caldwell, an ‘Old Light’ Congregationalist of Boston, compared Whitefield and other ‘New Light’ evangelicals to that ‘Impostor’ Muhammad, who had ‘pretended to teach nothing but by immediate Influence of the divine Spirit’.³⁰

Wesley subsequently met with similar allegations. In the first volume of his *Enthusiasm of Methodists*, Lavington noted that Wesley’s practice of casting lots was reminiscent of Saint Francis of Assisi, who also made decisions by opening the scriptures at random. Lavington went on to argue that, ‘among the *Mahometans*, the *Alcoran* is so consulted by way of Lot’. Evidently, Lavington was echoing Prideaux when he described these apparent affinities between Roman Catholics and Muslims. Intriguingly, Lavington did not cite Prideaux here. Rather, he cited the Dutch Orientalist, Adriaan Reland (1676-1718), who had provided a relatively positive assessment of Islam. It is possible that Lavington’s reference to Reland was intended as

²⁷ *A Comparison Between the Doctrines Taught by the Clergy of the Church of England, and the Doctrines Taught by Whitefield, Seagrave, and Others* (London, 1741), p. 2.

²⁸ J.B., *A Letter to the Reverend Mr. Whitefield, Occasion'd by his Pretended Answer to the First Part of the 'Observations on the Conduct and Behaviour of the Methodists'* (London, 1744), p. 7.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

³⁰ J. Caldwell, *An Impartial Trial of the Spirit Operating in this Part of the World* (Boston, 1742), p. 12. For more on colonial American depictions of Islam, see T.S. Kidd, “‘Is it Worse to Follow Mahomet than the Devil?’ Early American Uses of Islam”, *Church History*, 72 (2003), pp. 766-90.

a means of showing that he had scrutinised a diverse range of sources.³¹ William Bowman – who was mentioned briefly in Chapter Three – depicted a different relationship between Islam and Roman Catholicism in his 1740 attack on Methodism. However, before discussing Bowman's sentiments on this issue, it is initially important to consider the context in which he wrote his anti-Methodist tract.

The 11 September 1740 edition of the *London Evening Post* contained a 'This Day is publish'd' advertisement for a book by Bowman, entitled *The Imposture of Methodism Display'd*. Since Bowman was the vicar of Dewsbury and Aldborough, Yorkshire, it is unlikely that his name would have meant anything to most London readers – except, perhaps, to those who possessed long memories and a keen interest in theological controversies.³² Bowman's one brief period in the limelight had come nearly a decade earlier, when he had preached a highly controversial sermon before the visiting archdeacon of York, Thomas Hayter, at the parish church in Wakefield on 25 June 1731. In this sermon, Bowman expressed several 'extreme Latitudinarian' and 'explicitly anti-clerical' views.³³ For example, he compared Anglican 'priestcraft' to the religious practices of Muhammad, whom he described as an 'Impostor'. Also, in a manner which would be echoed by Conyers Middleton some years later, Bowman scathingly dismissed the early Church Fathers. More controversial, however, was his attack on the established clergy, whom he described as 'greedy Dogs that can never have enough.'³⁴ Evidently, these sentiments bore a striking resemblance to George

³¹ [Lavington], *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd*, pp. 73-4. For an overview of Reland and his views on Islam, see Israel, *Enlightenment Contested*, pp. 615-16.

³² *London Evening Post*, 11 September 1740.

³³ S. Taylor, 'Bowman Affair', p. 36.

³⁴ W. Bowman, *The Traditions of the Clergy Destructive of Religion: With an Enquiry into the Grounds and Reasons of Such Traditions. A Sermon Preach'd at the Visitation Held at Wakefield in Yorkshire June 25. 1731* (London, 1731), pp. 3-4.

Whitefield's later condemnation of his 'pleasure-taking Brethren' within the Church of England.³⁵

In his recent article on Bowman, Stephen Taylor notes that this country parson later recanted his controversial views by publishing a written apology in 1737. While Taylor concedes that Bowman's desire to be instituted as vicar of Dewsbury may have played a part in his decision to recant his views, he also believes that Bowman's 'recantation was genuine'. This argument is based upon Bowman's 1740 anti-Methodist pamphlet, which was sparked by the activities of Inghamite itinerants in West Yorkshire. Taylor argues that this text contained 'little...to distinguish it from other anti-Methodist polemic at this time.' According to Taylor, Bowman's later conformity to orthodoxy can be discerned from this text, where he 'quoted the primitive fathers with approval, defended the apostolic succession, and, most strikingly, came to the defence of his fellow parochial ministers'.³⁶ When one reads Bowman's attack on Methodism, it becomes clear that Taylor has a point. Indeed, Bowman admiringly referred to the teachings of 'Tertullian, Origen, St. Cyprian, Firmilian' and 'Eusebius' to support his case for the validity of apostolic succession. Bowman noted that these Fathers had 'unanimously' agreed that the 'Government of Christ's Church was committed to the three distinct Orders of Bishops, Priests, and Deacons' – something which 'was first settled by Christ and his Apostles'.³⁷ Also, where Bowman had likened High Church 'priestcraft' to Muhammad in his 1731 sermon, his anti-Methodist work followed the example of earlier Anglican attacks on religious 'enthusiasm' by comparing evangelicalism to the 'lewd and sanguinary Religion of *Mahomet*'. According to Bowman, the Methodists 'pretended to the same [divine] Authority' as

³⁵ Whitefield, *Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal, from his Arrival at London*, p. 75.

³⁶ Taylor, 'Bowman Affair', pp. 48-49. See B. Scott, 'The Dewsbury Riots and the Revd Benjamin Ingham', *Thoresby Society Publications*, 56 (1981), pp. 187-95.

³⁷ Bowman, *Imposture of Methodism*, p. 41.

Muhammad had done.³⁸ He went on to refer to Muhammad as ‘that greatest and most artful Impostor’, who ‘took an Opportunity of promulging his Religion, in such a Time of general Ignorance among the People.’ Bowman attempted to support these arguments by citing Prideaux’s *True Nature of Imposture Fully Displayed in the Life of Mahomet*, along with his earlier work, *A Letter to the Deists* (1696). The title of the former publication may have inspired the title of Bowman’s anti-Methodist tract, to which it was strikingly similar.³⁹ Yet, Bowman’s discussions on Islam diverged from Prideaux on one crucial point. About halfway through this work, Bowman combated the Methodists’ emphasis on their own infallibility with the following statement:

VARIOUS have been the Opinions of Mankind, in different Ages, and under different Dispensations, concerning the Means of obtaining Salvation. The Heathen Philosophers have laid it down as a Rule, that the Honour and Glory of God is better promoted by Variety and different Methods of Worship, than by Unity and Unanimity...*Mahomet* has declared in his Alcoran, that whatever Religion a Man is of, he is equally acceptable to God, if he sincerely and faithfully serves him.⁴⁰

Bowman enthusiastically reported to his readers that Muhammad’s actions had been ‘espoused’ by ‘several good-natured and charitable Christians’, who refused to copy the ‘pretended Infallibility’ of the ‘*Roman Catholics* and *Methodists*’. Since Bowman failed to support this statement with a citation, one can only speculate who inspired his sentiments on this topic. Given that such a positive depiction of Muhammad had its roots within the pages of various heterodox texts, Bowman’s reluctance to cite his

³⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

³⁹ Ibid., pp. 12-13, 71

⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 45-46

source is unsurprising.⁴¹ Thus, while *The Imposture of Methodism* shared many similarities with the anti-Methodist works of various High Churchmen, one should be cautious of overstating the extent to which Bowman had conformed to Anglican orthodoxy by the time he came to write this piece. Evidently, his sentiments on Islam resembled those of Stubbe and other heterodox authors. Since Bowman had not included such praise for Islam in his 1731 sermon, it is possible that he developed this heterodox stance over the course of the 1730s. Thus, Bowman's piece further illustrates the theological disparities amongst Anglican opponents of Methodism. It also highlights the differing ways in which these clergymen utilised history as a means of supporting their theological arguments. The fact that Bowman's locality had recently witnessed an influx of Inghamite itinerants, along with some food riots, suggests that – like anti-Methodist High Churchmen – maintaining the social and ecclesiastical status quo had come to rest heavily on his mind. Yet, Bowman's tract remains a paradoxical source. On the one hand, it displays Bowman's new-found support for the doctrine of apostolic succession. On the other hand, its praise of Islamic toleration potentially could have been read by Dissenters and Latitudinarians as a subtle attack on the Test Acts. Therefore, Bowman's piece reinforces the point that one should not too readily view anti-Methodism as simply a forum for social control.⁴²

Twenty-two years after the publication of *The Imposture of Methodism*, the enthusiastic excesses of evangelicals and Roman Catholics were unfavourably compared again to rational and tolerant Muslims. The scene in Hogarth's *Credulity, Superstition, and Fanaticism* contains a Muslim character who is gazing through the church window at the emotional excesses which are being generated by the crypto-Jesuit preacher. From the look on the Muslim's face, one can clearly tell that he finds

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 46.

⁴² See Scott, 'Dewsbury Riots', pp. 187-95.

such madness highly amusing.⁴³ As Ronald Paulson has argued, Hogarth ‘can best be called a Deist.’ Thus, it is unsurprising that Hogarth portrayed Muslims in a similar manner to heterodox authors.⁴⁴ More surprising, however, was Hogarth’s inclusion of a Jewish character, whom one can see in the bottom left-hand corner of the illustration. The character is standing before a Bible, which is opened at a page in the Old Testament containing an image of a sacrificial altar. Next to the book is a knife, which is inscribed with the word ‘Bloody’. Here, Hogarth was probably alluding to Abraham’s sacrifice of Isaac – a story which, to the Deist, Thomas Morgan, epitomised an ‘irrational enthusiastic Perswasion’.⁴⁵ Evidently, Hogarth had ‘absorbed the Jew into the bloody-mindedness of Christianity, or at least its enthusiast versions.’⁴⁶ Yet, he was certainly not the first individual who associated Judaism with popish ‘enthusiasm’. We have seen that Luther did so in his *On the Jews and Their Lies* (1543). Lancelot Addison, who served for a time as a chaplain in Tangier, had made similar comparisons in *The Present State of the Jews* (1675). For example, when he discussed the use of the tzitzit amongst Moroccan Jews, Addison claimed that ‘no fewer miracles’ had been ‘ascribed’ to ‘this religious utensil’ than the ‘cowle of St. Francis’. Amongst its various powers, the tzitzit supposedly deterred ‘evil angels’ and ‘sorceries’. In this instance, the similarities to Hogarth’s sentiments are striking.⁴⁷

In other instances, it was claimed that the origins of Roman Catholicism could be traced back to ancient paganism. The most notable example of such ‘pagano-papism’ during the eighteenth century was undoubtedly Middleton’s *Letter from Rome*, which

⁴³ Hogarth, ‘Credulity, Superstition, and Fanaticism (1762)’.

⁴⁴ R. Paulson, *Hogarth: High Art and Low, 1732-1750* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 60.

⁴⁵ [T. Morgan], *The Moral Philosopher*, Vol. II, *Being a Farther Vindication of Moral Truth and Reason* (London, 1739), p. 129.

⁴⁶ R. Paulson, *Hogarth's Harlot: Sacred Parody in Enlightenment England* (Baltimore, 2003), p. 287.

⁴⁷ L. Addison, *The Present State of the Jews: (More Particularly Relating to the Those in Barbary) Wherein is Contained an Exact Account of their Customs, Secular and Religious* (London, 1675), p. 100. For more on Addison’s descriptions of ‘Popish Jews’, see W.J. Bulman, *Anglican Enlightenment: Orientalism, Religion and Politics in England and its Empire, 1648-1715* (Cambridge, 2015), pp. 117-21.

went through at least five editions between 1729 and 1742. Yet, as Middleton readily acknowledged, he was certainly not the first Protestant author to voice this argument.⁴⁸ Many years earlier, the philosopher and ejected minister, Theophilus Gale (1628-1678), had, controversially, argued that pagan philosophy had corrupted Justin Martyr, Clement of Alexandria, and other Greek Fathers. Such error, according to Gale, had festered in the Church unchecked until the Reformation.⁴⁹ Pagano-papism was a rhetorical strategy which Bishop Lavington subsequently adopted in his attack on Methodism.

ii) Pagano-Papism

Towards the end of the third volume of his *Enthusiasm of Methodists*, Bishop Lavington compared Methodist ‘enthusiasm’ to the ‘*Heathen Mysteries*, wherein the profound Secrets of Paganism were couched.’ To Lavington, the ‘most remarkable’ of these mystery religions was the Eleusinian mysteries.⁵⁰ As was noted in Chapter One, the Eleusinian mysteries was something on which Warburton had written at length in his *Divine Legation*. Thus, it is unsurprising that Lavington quoted extensively from Warburton in his discussions on this topic. Nevertheless, he disagreed with Warburton’s relatively optimistic assessment of the mysteries. Indeed, Lavington concluded that – contrary to Warburton’s claim that the ‘Evil’ of polytheism was ‘*remedied by the Mysteries*’ – these initiations ‘*promoted*’ such ‘Evil’.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Middleton, *Letter from Rome*, unpaginated preface.

⁴⁹ P. Harrison, ‘Religion’ and the Religions in the English Enlightenment (Cambridge, 1990), p. 144; T. Gale, *The Court of the Gentiles. Part III. The Vanity of the Pagan Philosophie Demonstrated* (London, 1677), pp. 131-34.

⁵⁰ [Lavington], *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared. Part III*, pp. 306-308.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 340.

Lavington noted that the lesser mysteries involved a series of '*Preparatory Ceremonies*', including '*Fastings, Night-watching, Confession to the President of the Mysteries*' and a '*Variety of [ex]cruciating Lustrations.*' Once a person was 'initiated into the greater' Mysteries, they 'underwent more tremendous Rites'. More specifically, they were subjected to 'strange *Visions and Spectacles*', along with the '*Howlings of Men, Women, and Children*', resulting in 'the most dismal Agonies of Body and Mind; Coldness, Sweats, Terrors' and 'the utmost Tortures, Despair and Madness.'⁵² To Lavington, this seemingly horrific outpouring of emotions was reminiscent of the evangelical New Birth, which he described as 'the *Initiation of the Methodists.*' Lavington highlighted an extract in Wesley's journal which described how the itinerant had '*sweated*', '*trembled*' and '*fainted*' because of his new-found relationship with Christ. Such '*Madness*', to Lavington, was reminiscent of Plutarch's description of the '*Despondency and Despair*' which accompanied the Eleusinian mysteries.⁵³

Lavington also referred to 'the *Mystagogue (Chief Priest of the Mysteries)*', who was responsible for '*explaining the Mysteries, and all the Representations that passed in the Initiating Ceremony*'. This spiritual leader's actions were subsequently compared to Wesley's 'Examination of what his Initiated had suffered'.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Lavington introduced sexual imagery into these discussions by claiming that those initiated into the greater mysteries worshipped 'the *Male and Female Parts*'.⁵⁵ He expanded on this theme by including the testimony of Apuleius (c.124-c.170), who had been ordered to strip naked following his initiation.⁵⁶ Lavington compared this account to an extract in Wesley's journal, which described a female member of one of his societies, who often

⁵² Ibid., pp. 308-9.

⁵³ Ibid., pp. 320-21.

⁵⁴ Ibid., pp. 327-28.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 330.

⁵⁶ Ibid., pp. 323-24.

‘exposed herself before all the Congregation.’⁵⁷ Given Lavington’s strong emphasis on sexual imagery, it is no wonder that Lord Chesterfield would later refer to him as the ‘Baudy Bishop’.⁵⁸ Evidently, Lavington viewed the Eleusinian mysteries as nothing more than ‘*Pagan Methodism*’ – an early version of the lewd and ‘enthusiastic’ excesses which one allegedly found at Methodist class meetings and Love Feasts.⁵⁹

Elsewhere, Lavington noted that Julian the Apostate had been initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries. To Lavington, the Methodists’ apparent desire to replace baptismal regeneration with the ‘*New Birth*’ resembled the actions of Julian, who had similarly ‘set up the *New Birth* of the *Mysteries Platonic*, against that of *Baptism*’.⁶⁰ Julian had long been a staple feature in discussions on heretical rulers. This was especially true during the period immediately after the Exclusion Crisis, when one could find both Tory and Whig pamphleteers comparing Julian to James, Duke of York, in their publications. Tory divines (and future Non-Jurors), such as George Hickes, argued that, since Julian’s heretical religious beliefs had not prevented him from being a fair ruler, there was no reason why a Roman Catholic should not ascend the throne.⁶¹ On the other hand, Whig divines, such as Samuel Johnson, justified their resistance theory by describing Julian as a proto-popish tyrant, and highlighting instances where Christians defied his regime.⁶² Therefore, when Lavington referred to Julian, he was deploying a familiar form of anti-Catholic rhetoric.

Returning to Lavington’s discussions on the Mysteries, he closed by comparing their initiations to St. Patrick’s Purgatory, a Roman Catholic pilgrimage site on Station

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 333.

⁵⁸ Haydon, ‘Lavington, George’, *ODNB*.

⁵⁹ [Lavington], *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared. Part III*, p. 338.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 302.

⁶¹ [G. Hickes], *Jovian: Or, An Answer to Julian the Apostate* (London, 1683).

⁶² [S. Johnson], *Julian the Apostate: Being a Short Account of His Life; The Sense of the Primitive Christians about His Succession and Their Behaviour Towards Him. Together with a Comparison of Popery and Paganism* (London, 1682).

Island in the northwest of Ireland. Upon entry into one section of the site – which Lavington referred to as ‘the *horrible Station of Devils*’ – a person was apparently seized by ‘*Evil Spirits*, and afflicted with *various Torments*’. However, these ‘*infernal Punishments*’ ceased once the person carried out their ‘*Confession and Penitence*’.⁶³ Lavington further conveyed these horrors by citing the Irish hagiologist Thomas Messingham’s (c.1575-c.1638) description of a twelfth-century soldier, who was forced to enter ‘*St. Patric’s Purgatory*’, and ‘undergo the most *grievous of Penances*’ because of ‘his *wicked Life*’. Once inside, the soldier apparently encountered several ‘*Devils*’, who subjected him to various ‘*Tortures*’, which included throwing him into a fire, dragging him ‘about with *Iron Hooks*’ and piercing him ‘with *Iron Nails*’. Following this ordeal, the soldier was greeted by a vision of ‘the *Saints*’, and subsequently became a monk. To Lavington, this ‘*Methodistico-Monkish Story*’ was no different to the self-inflicted hardship that the Methodists spoke of enduring. Lavington noted that, where Wesley had detailed his determination to avoid laughter and speaking ‘*of worldly Things*’, Whitefield had similarly described being locked in a closet by Satan.⁶⁴

So, what conclusions can we draw from Lavington’s writings on paganism? First and foremost, these discussions reinforce the notion that, rather than viewing anti-Methodism in isolation, one needs to appreciate that these attacks on evangelicals often overlapped with other theological controversies. In this instance, Lavington was clearly using his anti-Methodist polemic as an opportunity to contest Warburton’s relatively optimistic assessment of the mysteries. Rather than viewing these ancient rituals as an elite understanding of monotheism, Lavington saw them as an early version of the licentious superstitions which one allegedly found amongst Roman Catholics and, subsequently, Methodists. Importantly, Lavington’s disagreement with Warburton –

⁶³ Lavington, *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared. Part III*, p. 342.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 343-50.

who subsequently attacked Wesley in his *Doctrine of Grace* – illustrates further the theological disparities amongst these early Anglican opponents of Methodism. However, if Lavington's intention had been to anger Warburton, he appears to have failed. In a letter to his friend, Richard Hurd, dated 5 July 1752, Warburton wrote the following:

The Bishop of Exeter's book against the Methodists is, I think, on the whole, composed well enough (though it be a bad copy of Stillingfleet's famous book of the *Fanaticism of the Church of Rome*) to do the execution he intended. In pushing the Methodists, to make them *like* every thing that is bad, he compares their fanaticism to the ancient mysteries; but as the mysteries, if they had ever been good, were not, in the Bishop's opinion, bad enough for this purpose, he therefore endeavours to shew, against me, that they were abominations even from the beginning. As this contradicts all antiquity so evidently, I thought it would be ridiculous in me to take any notice of him.⁶⁵

There was some validity in Warburton's belief that Lavington had merely reiterated much of what Stillingfleet had stated in his 1671 attack on Roman Catholicism, which was actually entitled *A Discourse Concerning the Idolatry Practised in the Church of Rome*. However, Lavington's pagano-papism represented a divergence from Stillingfleet. While Stillingfleet had described 'the modern Church of Rome' as similar 'to Paganism in the practice of it', he fell short of claiming that there was a direct link between ancient paganism and Roman Catholicism.⁶⁶ In fact, pagano-papism was a rhetorical strategy which many Anglican divines avoided because they feared that it could be taken to imply that the post-apostolic Fathers had been corrupted by paganism. Intriguingly, some perceptive clergymen had always viewed Middleton's *Letter from*

⁶⁵ [W. Warburton], *Letters from a Late Eminent Prelate to One of His Friends*, 2nd edn (London, 1809), pp. 117-18.

⁶⁶ Stillingfleet, *Discourse Concerning the Idolatry Practised in the Church of Rome*, unpaginated preface.

Rome as a subtle attempt to reduce the post-apostolic Fathers to popish pagans. This fear was ultimately confirmed many years later, when Middleton published his *Free Inquiry*.⁶⁷ Yet, Middleton, as we have seen, had ensured that his *Letter from Rome* did not come across as a blatant attack on the post-apostolic Fathers by noting instances where the Fathers had condemned Roman paganism. Lavington similarly described instances where such Fathers as Tertullian, Origen, Eusebius, and Chrysostom had condemned pagan mysteries.⁶⁸ Despite their obvious similarities, it remains unclear whether Middleton's *Letter from Rome* directly influenced Lavington's writings on ancient paganism and its alleged relationship with Roman Catholicism. At no point did Lavington refer to Middleton in his discussions. This is unsurprising, given that he was writing around the same time that Middleton's *Free Inquiry* was being attacked by numerous clerics, including Warburton. Thus, Middleton would not have been a particularly popular figure to be associated with at that time.

Thus, one thing which linked these discussions on Islam, Judaism, and paganism was the constant claim that these religions exhibited a popish form of 'enthusiasm'. But when exactly was this 'popish' corruption believed to have started within the church? Anglican divines had traditionally believed that the onset of this corruption began during the reign of Emperor Constantine (307-337), who was the first civil magistrate to convert to Christianity. It was during Constantine's reign that Christianity was first introduced to wealth and political power. Of course, nobody believed that such a spiritual and moral decline happened overnight. In fact, Church of England divines had always had a generally favourable view of the fourth-century church. This can be discerned from their enthusiasm for the works of Augustine, whose

⁶⁷ Trevor-Roper, 'From Deism to History', pp. 79-80.

⁶⁸ [Lavington], *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared. Part III*, pp. 192, 248-49, 386.

ministry began towards the end of this century. Indeed, these divines had often combated Protestant schismatics by citing Augustine's writings against the Donatists.⁶⁹

Donatism and the Early Church

On 27 April 1741, Zachary Grey's *Short History of the Donatists* appeared in print. The purpose of this polemical history was to compare the Methodists to the Donatists. But what exactly was Donatism, and how did it come about? At the beginning of the fourth century, the Roman emperor, Diocletian, launched a particularly brutal regime of persecution against North African Christians. Because many of these Christians were unwilling to endure the tortures of martyrdom, they were forced to comply with their oppressors' wishes by worshipping the pantheon of Roman gods, and surrendering scriptures to the secular authorities, who subsequently burned them. Some of these compliant Christians – who were known derogatively as 'traditors' – also betrayed their brethren to the Romans. Upon Diocletian's abdication in 305, these persecutions quickly abated. However, a certain level of stigma continued to be attached to those Christians who had been traditors. In 311, Caecilian was consecrated bishop of Carthage. One of the three bishops who consecrated him was Felix, the bishop of Aptunga. Controversially, Felix had allegedly surrendered scriptures to the Romans during the time of persecution. Felix's previous actions led to fierce debates on whether the church's various rites and sacraments (the Lord's Supper, baptism, ordination etc.) could be practiced validly by those who had lapsed during Diocletian's persecutions. As a result of this, a group of around seventy bishops created a synod, and declared that Felix's previous apostasy rendered Caecilian's consecration invalid.

⁶⁹ S.J. Barnett, 'Where Was Your Church Before Luther? Claims for the Antiquity of Protestantism Examined', *Church History*, 68 (1999), p. 22.

By the end of 311, these rigorists had responded by electing their own ‘pure’ bishop of Carthage, Majorinus. It was not long before towns and settlements were split down the middle, with some residents pledging their allegiance to the ‘Catholic’ Caecilian, and others choosing to side with the schismatic Majorinus, who was subsequently replaced by Donatus Magnus. In February 313, the new emperor, Constantine I, issued the Edict of Milan, which decriminalised Christianity. Yet, his tolerant regime did little to relieve the tensions between the rival bishops of Carthage. In fact, Constantine only fuelled these tensions by providing financial relief to the Catholics, while he ignored the plight of the schismatics. Donatist communities responded with vigorous and sometimes violent protests. Attempted crackdowns by Constantine and the Catholic bishops only fuelled the Donatists’ cause. Towards the end of the century, the Donatists encountered their most formidable opponent. In 391, Augustine was ordained priest. Shortly afterwards, he began his vigorous and ultimately victorious campaign against the Donatists. Indeed, Augustine went to great lengths to disseminate his belief – which was shared by most Catholic theologians – that it was a priest’s clerical status, and not his overall character, which rendered his celebration of the sacraments valid. Augustine’s political influence increased significantly in 395, when he was consecrated bishop of Hippo. Ultimately, he became convinced that the only effective remedy for the Donatist schism was civil coercion.⁷⁰

Throughout the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, Donatism was used as a polemical weapon against separatism. Amongst Roman Catholic divines, it was a rhetorical stick to beat Protestantism with. During the early years of the continental Reformation, both John Fisher (c.1469-1535) and Thomas More (1478-1535) claimed

⁷⁰ J. Chapman, ‘The Donatists’, in *The Catholic Encyclopaedia* (New York, 1909), *New Advent*, <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/05121a.htm> (accessed 25 August 2016).

that Lutheranism was a modern form of Donatism.⁷¹ During the English Reformation, Church of England divines often referred to the Donatists in their attacks on separatist Protestants. Towards the end of the Elizabethan period, ‘Brownist’ separatists were charged with Donatism by numerous divines, including Richard Alison (*fl.* 1590) and George Gifford (c.1548-1600). Both Alison and Gifford were Puritans, who shared the Separatists’ belief that the Elizabethan Church was only ‘half reformed’. However, they stopped short of formally separating from the established Church.⁷² By the Restoration era, ‘Puritanism’ had become synonymous with separatism. Indeed, under the terms of the Act of Uniformity (1662), all incumbents were required to undergo episcopal ordination, and adhere to the rites and ceremonies prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer. Unsurprisingly, many, but – as Hampton has shown – not all, Reformed divines were unable to follow these new rulings.⁷³

On 24 August 1662, over 2,000 ‘Puritan’ ministers departed from the Church of England, and became Dissenters. In addition to the various legal restrictions which Restoration Dissenters faced, they were also subjected to a torrent of printed attacks from such Anglican divines as Thomas Long (1621-1707) and Samuel Parker (1640-1688). Amongst their various rhetorical weapons, these anti-Dissenter polemicists often utilised the old charge of Donatism.⁷⁴ In *The History of the Donatists* (1677), Long claimed that Dissenters were ‘the most natural off-spring of those *Donatists*, who so perpetually vexed the good *Constantine*, and made Havock of the Churches of

⁷¹ J. Fisher, *The Sermon of Ioh[a]n the Bysshop of Rochester Made Agayn the P[er]nicious Doctryn of Martin Luther* (London, 1521), p. 20; T. More, *The Second Parte of the Co[n]futation of Tyndals Answere in Whyche Is Also Confuted the Chyrche that Tyndale Deuyseth. and the Chyrche Also that Frere Barns Deuyseth* (London, 1533), p. 387.

⁷² J. Hoover, ‘“They bee Full Donatists”: The Rhetoric of Donatism in Early Separatist Polemics’, *Reformation & Renaissance Review*, 15 (2013), p. 162.

⁷³ See Chapter One in Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*.

⁷⁴ In his landmark essay on Augustinianism in Restoration England, Mark Goldie provides us with some insightful discussions on the charge of Donatism, and how Anglican polemicists utilised it in their attacks on Dissent. See M. Goldie, ‘The Theory of Religious Intolerance in Restoration England’, in O.P. Grell, J.I. Israel and N. Tyacke (eds), *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 331-68.

Africa'.⁷⁵ Parker went on to make similar comparisons in his *Religion and Loyalty* (1684), which was a lengthy (and blatantly polemical) history of the early church. For example, Parker claimed that Donatus was the '*I.O.* of that Rebellious and Schismatical Age.' '*I.O.*' was a reference to John Owen (1616-1683), a Nonconformist minister, who had served as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Oxford during the Interregnum.⁷⁶ These anti-Dissenter polemicists shared one key similarity with those sixteenth-century anti-Separatist polemicists who were mentioned earlier. Indeed, all of these divines had relied on the same sources – namely the anti-Donatist works of Augustine and Optatus, the fourth-century bishop of Milevis.

Like earlier anti-separatist divines, Zachary Grey's discussions on Donatism were heavily reliant on the works of Augustine and Optatus. Amongst Grey's various criticisms of Donatism, he was particularly keen to highlight alleged instances of them aligning themselves with heretical individuals and groups, who shared their hostility towards the Catholics. For example, Grey described how Constantius II had become the 'sole Emperor' following the slaying of his brother, Constans, in 350. Immediately afterwards, Constantius had 'professed himself an *Arian*', thus making him an 'enemy to the *Catholic Church*'. As a result of this, the Donatists had apparently 'joined with the *Arians* and other *Heretics* in order to distress her [the Catholic Church].' Grey also noted that the Donatists had been 'very liberal in their Thanks to *Julian* [the Apostate]', who had attempted to 'destroy *Christianity*' during his reign (361-63) by 'encouraging divisions', and allowing 'the Bishops of the *Arian* and *Donatist* Factions, to follow their different Opinions in God's Worship'. As a means of thanking Julian, the Donatists had 'pulled down those Crosses which had been erected in publick Places, at the Cost and

⁷⁵ T. Long, *The History of the Donatists* (London, 1677), sig. A3.

⁷⁶ S. Parker, *Religion and Loyalty, or, A Demonstration of the Power of the Christian Church Within Itself the Supremacy of Sovereign Powers Over It, the Duty of Passive Obedience, or Non-Resistance to all Their Commands: Exemplified Out of the Records of the Church and the Empire from the Beginning of Christianity to the End of the Reign of Julian* (London, 1684), p. 308.

Charge of the Emperor *Constantine*; and set up *Julian*'s Image in their Place.'⁷⁷ As we have seen, Anglican divines often argued that the Methodists were either intentionally or unintentionally aiding Deists by attacking the established clergy. Thus, it is probable that Grey was implicitly alluding to this when he discussed the Donatists' alleged collaboration with such heretics as Julian. Some of Grey's other allusions to Methodism were considerably more explicit.

Towards the end of the main body of the text, Grey noted that there were various '*Sects* which sprung from that *schismatical Monster* [Donatism]'. These various offshoots of Donatism included the relatively 'moderate' Luciferians, who had reluctantly separated from the Catholic Church when it started admitting former Arians who had renounced their apostasy. The Luciferians stood in stark contrast to the 'most desperate' Circumcellians. These 'zealots', according to Grey, often claimed 'that they were inspired by God to act and suffer extraordinary Things'. However, while the Donatists were 'much divided amongst themselves', they always 'united their Forces whenever an Opportunity of aggrieving the *Catholics* offered itself'. In the footnotes, Grey observed that the Methodists were also 'much divided amongst themselves.' He predicted that 'this silly sect' would eventually 'crumble like the *Donatists* into [a] Variety of Sects, and receive different Denominations from their Leaders. Namely, the *Wesleys, Whitefield, Ingham, De Lamotte, Rogers, Seward, and Howel Harris*.'⁷⁸ Grey closed this piece with an appendix, which placed accounts of the Donatists' alleged transgressions alongside accounts of Wesley and Whitefield behaving in a seemingly

⁷⁷ [Z. Grey], *A Short History of the Donatists. With an Appendix, In Which the Proud and Hypocritical Pharisee and Schismatical Donatist are Compared with the Rev. Mr. George Whitefield and the Methodists* (London, 1741), pp. 16-17.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 26-27. Charles Delamotte (c.1714-86) had accompanied Wesley on his Georgia mission. Delamotte went on to become very active within the Fetter Lane Society, and eventually settled in Hull, where he assisted Benjamin Ingham's Yorkshire mission. He ultimately joined the Moravians. Regarding 'Rogers', it remains unclear to whom Grey was referring. Grey's reference to William Seward implies that he was unaware that Seward had died the previous year (1740), when he was stoned by a mob in the Welsh border town of Hay-on-Wye.

similar manner. Grey noted that the Donatists had ‘pretended to Visions of Angels’, and likened this to an account in Wesley’s journal of a sick ‘young Man’ who had claimed that an angel had approached his bedside, and warned him of his imminent death. Grey went on to cite another extract in Wesley’s journal, where the itinerant described a ‘*noble Company of Women*’ amongst his followers. This, according to Grey, was further evidence that Wesley was following the example of the Donatists, who had also ‘tampered with the weaker Sex’. Grey also observed that, where the Donatists ‘spoke evil of the *Catholic* Bishops and Clergy’, Whitefield regularly displayed contempt towards the established clergy, whom he had been known to refer to as ‘*Priests of Baal*’ and ‘*Wolves in Sheeps cloathing*.’ Finally, where the Donatists had ‘rejected the *Liturgy* made use of by the *Catholics*’, Whitefield had similarly admitted that he preferred his ‘own *extempore* Effusions to the Liturgy of the Church of *England*.’⁷⁹ Of course, Grey was well aware that Wesley and Whitefield professed to be ‘Members of the established Church.’ However, as far as Grey was concerned, their seemingly anti-clerical actions, along with their apparent sympathy for Dissenters, rendered them separatists in all but name.⁸⁰

So what can we discern from Grey’s *Short History of the Donatists*? It is clear that, when Grey compared the Methodists to the Donatists, he was adopting a well-established form of anti-separatist rhetoric, which Church of England divines had been deploying since the later years of Elizabeth’s reign. Thus, Grey’s discussions on Donatism should not be viewed in isolation from these earlier polemics. Rather, one needs to view this work as a continuation of a longstanding anti-separatist tradition

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp. 39-41, 44, 46, 48. Grey quoted from the following texts to support his descriptions of the Methodists’ alleged transgressions: *An Extract of the Rev. Mr. John Wesley’s Journal from his Embarking for Georgia to his Return to London* (Bristol, 1740), p. 16; *Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield’s Journal, from His Arrival at London*, pp. 7, 17, 42, 75; *Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield’s Journal, from His Embarking After the Embargo*, pp. 31-32, 34, 39, 43,

⁸⁰ Ibid., pp. 34, 51-52.

within the Church of England. More complex, however, was the issue of how Anglican clergymen were supposed to treat the history of the medieval church. This topic will now be explored in the context of anti-Methodist polemics.

Medieval History and High Church ‘Fanaticism’

i) The Medieval Church

“Where was your church before Luther?” was the question which Protestants often faced from Roman Catholic polemicists. In early modern England, the responses to this question often varied considerably. Reformed authors tended to turn to historical examples of individuals or groups who had defied the Papacy before Luther, and suffered because of it. The fact that none of these ‘proto-Protestants’ had ever referred to a doctrine of ‘justification by faith’ was usually swept under the carpet. One such ‘proto-Protestant’ was the Czech priest, Jan Huss (c.1369-1415), who was burned at the stake for his opposition to the practice of indulgences. Unsurprisingly, however, English Reformers were more likely to turn to John Wycliffe (1320-1384). Wycliffe had been a vocal opponent of the doctrines of purgatory and transubstantiation, and, like Huss, had also attacked the sale of indulgences. Furthermore, Wycliffe had spoken out against the abuses of the clergy, and argued that such individuals needed to be deprived of their temporalities by the lay powers.⁸¹

⁸¹ Barnett, ‘Where Was Your Church before Luther?’, pp. 14-41; A. Hudson and A. Kenny, ‘Wyclif [Wycliffe], John (d. 1384)’, *ODNB*.

In his *Acts and Monuments* (1563), John Foxe described Wycliffe as a ‘morning starre’ of the Reformation.⁸² Foxe believed that it was because of ‘God’s providence’ that Wycliffe ‘sprang & rose up’. Through him ‘the Lorde wolde firste waken and rayse up agayne the worlde, whiche was over muche drowned and whelmed in the depe streames of humaine traditions.’⁸³ Gilbert Burnet would go on to compose a similar epitaph in the first volume of his *History of the Reformation* (1679). In this piece, Burnet praised Wycliffe and his followers for their ‘ingenious words’, which enabled them to ‘draw the people to follow them and defend them by strong hand, and in great routs.’⁸⁴ Low Church and Dissenting historians continued to venerate Wycliffe well into the eighteenth century. For example, John Lewis, the Whig Low Church incumbent of Margate, described Wycliffe as a ‘great Reformer’ in *The History of the Life and Sufferings of the Reverend and Learned John Wickliffe, D.D.* (1720).⁸⁵ The Dissenting historian, Daniel Neal, subsequently praised Wycliffe by repeating Foxe’s ‘Morning-Star of the Reformation’ epitaph in the first volume of his *History of the Puritans* (1732).⁸⁶

Yet, the seemingly anti-clerical Wycliffe did not fare so well in the historical works of seventeenth-century Laudians and eighteenth-century Non-Jurors. In 1659, Peter Heylyn, who had served as chaplain to Charles I, claimed that Wycliffe’s grievances with the clergy had merely been the ‘Fancies of a private Man’. Heylyn added that Wycliffe’s ‘Opinions were so far from truth, so contrary to peace and civil Order, so inconsistent with the Government of the Church of *Christ*, as [to] make them

⁸² J. Foxe, *Actes and Monuments of These Latter and Perillous Dayes* (London, 1563), p. 85. For an overview of the historiography of Wycliffe, see J. Crompton, ‘John Wyclif: A Study in Mythology’, *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 42 (1966-67), pp. 6-34.

⁸³ Foxe, *Actes and Monuments*, p. 87.

⁸⁴ Burnet, *History of the Reformation of the Church of England*, I, p. 25.

⁸⁵ J. Lewis, *The History of the Life and Sufferings of the Reverend and Learned John Wickliffe, D.D.* (London, 1720), p. vi.

⁸⁶ D. Neal, *The History of the Puritans or Protestant Non-Conformists, from the Reformation to the Death of Queen Elizabeth*, 4 vols. (London, 1732-38), I, p. 3.

utterly unworthy to be look'd on as a part of the *Gospel*.⁸⁷ Following the 1688 Revolution, Wycliffe became the target of several Non-Jurors. To these divines, his seemingly anti-clerical sentiments were reminiscent of the Williamite regime, and the deprivation of Non-Juring bishops which had resulted from it.⁸⁸ While Jeremy Collier saw some 'Gold in his [Wycliffe's] *Mine*', he noted that this was 'not without a Mixture of coarser Ingredients.' Collier was particularly disturbed by Wycliffe's argument that 'Temporal Lords' should be empowered to discipline clerics in the event of their 'Misbehavior.'⁸⁹

Matthias Earbery, another Non-Juror, expanded on these discussions in *The Pretended Reformers* (1717). This tract largely consisted of Earbery's translation of a work by the French Roman Catholic historian, Antoine Varillas (1624-1696), which had attacked such 'proto-reformers' as Wycliffe and Huss. In the preface, Earbery devoted numerous pages to outlining what the chronicler, Thomas Walsingham, had described as Wycliffe's main doctrines. Such beliefs included: 'God cannot transfer perpetual Dominion to one Man, and to his Heirs'; 'Temporal Lords may lawfully take away the Temporals from an offending Church'; 'It is against the old and new Law, that Clergy-Men should have temporal Possessions'; 'There can be no Lord, nor no Bishop, while they continue in a mortal Sin'.⁹⁰ To Earbery, such sentiments were tantamount to 'Blasphemy'. While Earbery was willing to concede that 'Temporal Lords' *could* take

⁸⁷ P. Heylyn, *Examen Historicum: or, a Discovery and Examination of the Mistakes, Falsities and Defects in some Modern Histories Occasioned by the Partiality and Inadvertencies of their Severall Authours* (London, 1659), p. 65.

⁸⁸ For the Non-Jurors' views on the Church's independence from the state, see Chapter Four in Cornwall, *Visible and Apostolic*.

⁸⁹ J. Collier, *An Ecclesiastical History of Great Britain, Chiefly of England: From the First Planting of Christianity, to the End of the Reign of King Charles the Second*, 2 vols. (London, 1708-14), I, p. 564. For a further discussion on Collier's use of Reformation history, and how it differed from Gilbert Burnet's approach, see A. Starkie, 'Contested Histories of the English Church: Gilbert Burnet and Jeremy Collier', in Kewes, *Uses of History*, pp. 329-45. See also T. Claydon, *Europe and the Making of England 1660-1760* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 99-101.

⁹⁰ A. Varillas, *The Pretended Reformers: Or, the History of the Heresie of John Wickliffe, John Huss, and Jerom of Prague*, ed. and trans. M. Earbery (London, 1717), pp. xiii-xix.

away the 'Goods of the Church', he added that it was impossible for them to do so without committing the kind of 'Sacrilege' which the clergy had witnessed during 'Henry VIII's Reign'.⁹¹ Importantly, one needs to view Earbery's anti-Wycliffe sentiments as an aspect of the Bangorian controversy, which also engaged William Law and various other Non-Jurors. More specifically, Earbery was implicitly (but not subtly) displaying Wycliffe as a historical example of somebody who shared Hoadly's Erastianism.⁹²

So, how did neo-Laudians, such as Heylyn and Collier, attempt to explain the pre-Reformation origins of the Church of England? While there was no consistent stance on this issue, some of these divines turned to Joseph of Arimathea. According to the Gospel accounts, Joseph had assumed responsibility for Jesus's burial after the Crucifixion. Medieval mythology claimed that Joseph had travelled to Glastonbury during the first century, and founded a church there. The Joseph legend was often described as a precursor to the Christian conversion of Lucius, the legendary second-century King of Britons. Bede (672-735) and several other medieval chroniclers claimed that Lucius had written to Pope Eleutherius (d. 189) to inform him that he wished to convert to Christianity, and to request that some Christian missionaries be sent to Britain. In *The History of Episcopacy* (1642), Heylyn claimed that Joseph's evangelism set the scene for Lucius's subsequent conversion. Crucially, Heylyn was keen to stress that Lucius's reign witnessed the formation of an episcopal church in Britain, which was independent and free from papal interference.⁹³ Many years later,

⁹¹ Ibid., p. xxiii. Some years earlier, Henry Dodwell, another Non-Juror, had published a history of the Reformation. Like Collier and Earbery, Dodwell was fiercely critical of Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries. However, the bulk of Dodwell's wrath was directed at Thomas Cranmer's seemingly Erastian regime, which resulted in the deprivation of such Roman Catholic bishops as Edmund Bonner. See R.D. Cornwall, 'Divine Right Monarchy, Henry Dodwell's Critique of the Reformation and Defense of the Deprived Nonjurors Bishops', *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 68 (1999), pp. 37-66.

⁹² A thorough account of the Bangorian controversy can be found in Starkie, *Church of England and the Bangorian Controversy*.

⁹³ [P. Heylyn], *The Historie of Episcopacie*, 2 vols. (London, 1642), I, pp. 50-51, 54-55.

Collier voiced a similar interpretation in his *Ecclesiastical History*. While Collier did not give much credence to the Joseph of Arimathea legend, he believed that ‘Christianity got [a] Footing’ in Britain during the ‘Apostolical Age’. Like Heylyn, Collier placed much emphasis on Lucius’s alleged formation of an independent episcopal church.⁹⁴ Of course, the Lucius-Eleutherius legend – which Church of England divines had been using since Henry VIII’s break with Rome – was not without its flaws. As Roman Catholic authors were quick to point out, it was the Papacy to whom Lucius had apparently turned when he decided that he wished to convert to Christianity.⁹⁵

Unsurprisingly, neo-Laudians were considerably more optimistic about the medieval church than Burnet and others who followed the Foxean tradition. A prime example of such neo-Laudian medieval scholarship was *Anglia Sacra* (1691) by Henry Wharton, who had served as chaplain to Archbishop William Sancroft before his ejection. Throughout this work, which was derived from a wealth of medieval chronicles, Wharton defended the spirituality of the pre-Reformation church.⁹⁶ In a subsequent work, Wharton criticised Burnet’s claims of objectivity, and attacked his seemingly unfair treatment of medieval monasticism. In one instance, Wharton scrutinised Burnet’s claim that sixteenth-century reformers had described Christ Church Priory, Canterbury, as ‘little *Sodom*’ during the time of its dissolution. First, Wharton observed that Burnet had failed to support this statement with any primary literature. Second, Wharton argued that Thomas Goldwell, the last prior of the abbey, was a ‘learned, grave and religious Person’. Wharton observed that, since Archbishop

⁹⁴ Collier, *Ecclesiastical History*, I, pp. 7-18.

⁹⁵ For more on the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century controversies surrounding the Lucius legend, see F. Heal, ‘What Can King Lucius Do for You? The Reformation and the Early British Church’, *English Historical Review*, 120 (2005), pp. 593-614; Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft*, pp. 57-61.

⁹⁶ For an overview of Wharton’s life and scholarship, see D.C. Douglas, *English Scholars* (London, 1943), pp. 175-96.

Cranmer had allowed Goldwell to remain at the new cathedral as a prebendary, it seemed unlikely that Goldwell had presided over a community which was reminiscent of Sodom.⁹⁷ In another work, in which he defended pluralities, Wharton claimed that serious corruption within the medieval English church began ‘in the Thirteenth Age’, when ‘the Mendicant Orders arose and chiefly infested the Church’. Wharton noted that, like seventeenth-century Puritans, the mendicant orders had ‘pretended an extraordinary Call from God to reform the World, and correct the Faults of the Secular Clergy.’⁹⁸ Zachary Grey subsequently included this extract from Wharton in his *Short History of the Donatists*.⁹⁹

Collier was similarly sympathetic towards the medieval church. Like Wharton, he devoted much of his efforts to defending monasticism, which the Church of England had ‘not declar’d against’ in ‘any of her *Articles*.’¹⁰⁰ Collier also sided with Thomas Becket in his discussions on Becket’s clashes with Henry II. While Collier fell short of viewing Becket as a saint, he praised him for opposing Henry’s erosion of the Church Courts.¹⁰¹ By defending Becket, Collier was going against the Foxean tradition. In his *Acts and Monuments*, Foxe had described Becket as a popish tyrant, who had no right to challenge the monarch.¹⁰² Many years later, a similar attack on Becket appeared in Lavington’s *Enthusiasm of Methodists*.

⁹⁷ [H. Wharton], *A Specimen of Some Errors and Defects in the History of the Reformation of the Church of England* (London, 1693), pp. 47-48.

⁹⁸ [H. Wharton], *A Defence of Pluralities, or, Holding Two Benefices with Cure of Souls, as Now Practiced in the Church of England* (London, 1692), p. 9.

⁹⁹ [Grey], *Short History of the Donatists*, p. vi.

¹⁰⁰ Collier, *Ecclesiastical History*, I, p. 65.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, I, pp. 348-75.

¹⁰² See M. Phillpott, ‘Anglo-Norman and Plantagenet Kingship in John Foxe’s Acts and Monuments’, pp. 11-12, *John Foxe’s The Acts and Monuments Online*, <https://www.johnfoxe.org/phillpott-kingship.pdf> (accessed 19 February 2017).

ii) Anti-Methodist Uses of Medieval History

Throughout his three-part polemic, Lavington devoted much attention to medieval Catholicism and its apparent similarities to Methodism. As we have seen, Lavington saw similarities between Wesley and St Francis's asceticism, and their tendency to cast lots when making decisions. Another point of comparison was itinerant preaching. Lavington noted that, like Wesley, St Francis had 'appointed *Preachers for every Province*; and sent them out to their respective Places...whether *Clerics or Laymen*, whoever of them had the *Spirit of God*'. In terms of source material, Lavington's discussions on St Francis mainly derived from the works of such Franciscan scholars as Bonaventure (1221-1274) and Bartholomew of Pisa (d. 1401). In fact, while Lavington occasionally cited such anti-Catholic authors as Stillingfleet, most of his citations consisted of Roman Catholic hagiographical works. Lavington's use of such source material suggests that he was attempting to portray his work as an objective and non-partisan piece of historical scholarship.¹⁰³

Towards the end of the final volume of his treatise, Lavington listed 'the most *nasty, ridiculous, crack-brain'd, nay wicked Saints, Murtherers, Traytors and Rebels*'. Unsurprisingly, this list included St Francis, along with Ignatius of Loyola, who also featured heavily throughout the work. Nevertheless, while the bulk of Lavington's discussions focused on continental papists, he did not completely ignore the medieval English church. Indeed, Becket's name could also be found amongst this list of popish tyrants.¹⁰⁴ Ironically, Wesley subsequently advanced a similarly negative assessment of Becket in his *Concise History of England* (1776).¹⁰⁵ Lavington's discussions on the

¹⁰³ [Lavington], *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared. Part II*, p. 129.

¹⁰⁴ [Lavington], *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared. Part III*, p. 274.

¹⁰⁵ J. Wesley, *A Concise History of England, from the Earliest Times, to the Death of George II*, 4 vols. (London, [1776]), I, pp. 138-53. Wesley claimed that, after Becket's death, the clergy had attempted 'to

medieval English church also included an attack on St Guthlac of Crowland (673-714), whom he likened to the late William Seward because both individuals had claimed to experience visions of Satan.¹⁰⁶ Elsewhere, Lavington claimed that, like Wesley, St John of Bridlington (1319-1379) had been a 'Miracle-Monger'.¹⁰⁷ However, Lavington's lengthiest reference to medieval England concerned the activities of thirteenth-century Franciscans. Citing the chronicler, Matthew Paris (c.1200-1259), Lavington claimed that, like the Methodists, the Franciscans had antagonised diocesan priests. More specifically, the Franciscans had

Procured from *His Holiness the Pope* the Privilege of *Preaching*, hearing *Confessions*, and enjoining *Penances*, in *England*; to the great Injury of the Parochial Ministers...The Itinerants flushed and exalted hereby, demanded to *Preach and Confess* everywhere, without Contradiction; and to be received as *Angels of God*: They *saucily and impudently* proclaimed the *Established Clergy* to be blind Leaders of the Blind...Hence *Men and Women* lost all due Respect for their *Proper Pastors*.¹⁰⁸

Several years later, Thomas Green, the vicar of Wymeswold, Leicestershire, similarly cited Paris's account in his attack on itinerant Methodist preachers.¹⁰⁹ However, both Lavington and Green were adopting a problematic line of attack here. Throughout their anti-Methodist works, these divines conveyed a determination to place the mendicant orders at the centre of the medieval church. Yet, by citing Paris's chronicle, they were

magnify his sanctity, to extol the merits of his martyrdom, and to hold him out as the fittest object of the veneration of the people' (p. 152). Wesley was careful to add that Henry had not been responsible for Becket's assassination (pp. 152-53). For more on Wesley's discussions on the Becket controversy, see T. W. Smith, 'Authority and Liberty: John Wesley's View of Medieval England', *Wesley and Methodist Studies*, 7 (2015), pp. 17-18.

¹⁰⁶ [Lavington], *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared. Part II*, p. 70.

¹⁰⁷ [Lavington], *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared. Part III*, p. 77.

¹⁰⁸ [Lavington], *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared. Part II*, pp. 169-70.

¹⁰⁹ T. Green, *A Dissertation on Enthusiasm; Shewing the Danger of Its Late Increase, and the Great Mischiefs It Has Occasioned, Both in Ancient and Modern Times* (London, 1755), pp. 168-69.

following Wharton's example, and implying that thirteenth-century Franciscans were a fringe group, who were not representative of the medieval church.¹¹⁰

Where Lavington and Green viewed the Methodists as backward medieval papists, many of their supporters argued the opposite, and claimed that Wesley and Whitefield's ministries represented the beginning of a new Reformation. At least one of Whitefield's supporters viewed him as a modern-day Wycliffe. To the anonymous author of a 1740 polemic, entitled *The Parallel Reformers*, Whitefield's similarity to the 'pious and Illustrious' Wycliffe was something to be admired. Indeed, the author noted that, like Whitefield, Wycliffe had been a 'man of good Natural abilities' and 'Astonishing Eloquence'. Parallel illustrations of Whitefield and Wycliffe formed the centrepiece of this pamphlet. A lengthy tribute to both 'Reformers' followed these images. Citing Burnet's *History of the Reformation*, the author noted that 'Wickliff & his followers' were 'like Mr. Whitefield and his followers' in the sense that both parties 'preached not only in Churches, but also in the open fields, Church yards and Markets without Liscence from the ordinary'. Whitefield was praised for his preaching against the 'degeneracy of our modern Divines with respect to' such doctrines as 'Original Sin' and 'Works before Justification'. Wycliffe was similarly described as somebody who 'exposed the absurd Doctrines, vicious lives and Insolent behaviour of the Clergy'. The author also claimed that this polemic 'improved' an item which had recently appeared in the 30 June 1740 edition of the *Daily Advertiser*.¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ In a recent article, Chris Wilson discusses Lavington and Green's use of medieval sources. See C. Wilson, 'The Medieval Church in Early Methodism and Anti-Methodism', *Studies in Church History*, 49 (2013), pp. 198-99.

¹¹¹ *The Parallel Reformers; or the Renowned Wickliff and the Reverend Mr. Whitefield Compared; Shewing by Many Parallel Instances ye Great Resemblance Between Those Pious Divines in Respect of Christian Zeal and Fortitude* (London, [1740]). Yet, Wycliffe was not venerated by all evangelicals. Joseph Milner, an evangelical Anglican, was particularly keen to distance the 'scholastical' Wycliffe from sixteenth-century reformers in the fourth volume of his *History of the Church of Christ* (London, 1794-1809). See J.D. Walsh, 'Joseph Milner's Evangelical Church History', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 10 (1959), p. 180.

As with *The Parallel Reformers*, this newspaper item – which had been written by a correspondent from Boston, Massachusetts – described a ‘vast Resemblance between *Wickliffe* and *Whitefield*’. The colonist noted that, along with the fact that both individuals had been born and were ‘*beloved alike*, in the same Country’, they had both been ‘educated *and* [were] *respected alike* in the same University’. However, it was here that any similarity to *The Parallel Reformers* ended. Indeed, the colonist proceeded to describe Wycliffe and Whitefield as ‘Apostates from the same *Church of England*’, and

Champions in the same *Diabolical Heresy*; even that *Heresy* that was at first broached by him: The one a most erroneous Deformer of the Doctrines of the Church; the other a most pernicious Rectorer [sic] of Calvinistical Fanaticism; the one labouring to reduce the Church to his vile Tenets, the other attempting, with his Agents to inslave the present Race of Mankind; and such as the Apostle assures us formerly attempted to *deceive the very Elect*.¹¹²

The colonist’s sentiments were subsequently quoted by the anonymous author of *Methodists Impostors*, a 1740 polemic, which was briefly discussed in Chapter Four. On the front page of this work, the author claimed to have ‘detected and exposed’ various ‘impostors’, including ‘*Wickliffe*’, Whitefield and Wesley. The author went on to attack the notion that all true Christians were required to ‘suffer *Persecution*.’ This, apparently, had ‘been the Cant of all the Apostates that ever infested the Christian Church’, including ‘*Wickliffe* and his Bare-footed Gang of *Lollards*’, Muggletonians, Quakers and Methodists.¹¹³

¹¹² The author was unable to trace any existing copies of this edition of the *Daily Advertiser*. The above quotations appeared in *Methodists Impostors*, p. 4.

¹¹³ *Methodists Impostors*, p. 4.

Yet, the bulk of *Methodists Impostors* focused almost entirely on Wycliffe. In fact, the main body of the work was a truncated copy of Earbery's preface to *The Pretended Reformers*. Thus, this text provides us with yet another example of an author who used anti-Methodism as a forum for an entirely separate agenda. Indeed, *Methodists Impostors* was clearly a Non-Juror polemic disguised as an attack on Methodism. The author probably advertised this work as an anti-Methodist tract to draw on existing prejudices. This, in turn, would have widened its readership, and improved its sales. Such deception is unsurprising, given that the plight of the Non-Jurors would have been a relatively stale issue by 1740. The fact that *Methodists Impostors* went through two editions certainly suggests that it sold relatively well.

Intriguingly, Mrs Barbara Blackmore, a Non-Juror of London, had already compared Wesley and his followers to 'the Whicliffs (sic) and the Lollards' in a letter, dated 11 May 1739, to Thomas Brett, a Non-Juring divine. Therefore, either of these individuals may have written *Methodists Impostors*.¹¹⁴ On the other hand, it is possible that Earbery himself was the author of this work, which was published several months before his death on 3 October 1740.¹¹⁵ Since Earbery had already been arrested for 'seditious libel' on several occasions, it would certainly have made sense for him to exercise caution by anonymising this work (especially if his health was waning by this stage). Yet, we have seen in the previous chapters that anonymising a work did not guarantee that its authorship would not be revealed. This does beg the question: why would Earbery have taken such a risk in the first place? The obvious answer is 'money'. Indeed, Earbery's biographer has noted that he 'lived apparently by his writing'.

¹¹⁴ Bod MS. Eng. th. c. 34, fol. 445: Blackmore to Brett, 11 May 1739.

¹¹⁵ We know that *Methodists Impostors* was published in July 1740 from a 'Register of Books' for that month, which appeared in the *Gentleman's Magazine*, X (1740), p. 360.

Therefore, one can assume that Earbery was plagued by financial concerns until the day he died.¹¹⁶

As was noted in Chapter Four, *Methodists Impostors* closed with an endorsement of the late Thomas Burnet's annihilationist work, which the author described as an antidote to Whitefield's recent sermon on the eternity of hell torments.¹¹⁷ Intriguingly, Earbery had been the first person to translate Burnet's *De Statu Mortuorum & Resurgentium* (1720) from Latin into English. Both John Findon and Alexander Pettit have suggested that Earbery's decision to translate this heterodox work was primarily governed by his precarious financial situation.¹¹⁸ This explanation is certainly plausible, though one should not dismiss the possibility that Earbery agreed with Burnet's annihilationist views. In his annotations, Earbery provided a rather non-committal assessment of Burnet's annihilationism. Nevertheless, he did occasionally provide hints that he agreed with Burnet.¹¹⁹ Of course, various Non-Jurors – including

¹¹⁶ In 1717, Earbery had published a controversial polemic entitled *The History of the Clemency of Our English Monarchs*. This work was largely written in response to the execution of some Preston Jacobites, who had participated in the 1715 rebellion. Earbery cited numerous historical examples of monarchs who had shown mercy to rebels. As Alexander Pettit has argued, it is unsurprising that Earbery referred to 'Charles I's magnanimity toward his rebellious subjects and Charles II's grace upon his restoration' (p. 107). Earbery's publication was particularly ill-timed. Indeed, Parliament decided to pardon those surviving rebels around the same time that this work was published. Earbery was subsequently indicted, causing him to flee to Paris, where he continued to attack the Hanoverian monarchy in print. He returned to England, but was arrested for his seemingly seditious publications in 1722. However, for reasons which are not clear, the case against Earbery appears to have collapsed. By this time, Earbery seems to have resigned himself to the fact that the Stuart monarchy was never going to be restored. While Earbery remained as hostile as ever towards the Revolution Settlement, his later polemical attacks were targeted at Whig politicians, and less focused on the monarchy. This is not to say that his later writings were not controversial. Earbery was arrested again in December 1732 for a polemical attack on Robert Walpole. He was jailed until June 1733, though his trial dragged on until 1738. See A. Pettit, *Illusory Consensus: Bolingbroke and the Polemical Response to Walpole, 1730-1737* (Newark, NJ, and London, 1997), pp. 105-14; J. Findon, 'Earbery, Matthias (1690-1740)', *ODNB*.

¹¹⁷ *Methodists Impostors*, p. 24.

¹¹⁸ Findon, 'Earbery, Matthias'; Pettit, *Illusory Consensus*, p. 110.

¹¹⁹ For example, Earbery noted that Burnet had pleaded 'hard for Annihilation', without 'considering that Annihilation itself is an Eternal Punishment'. Earbery also admitted to sharing Burnet's 'Horours of Eternal Punishment' - a doctrine which was shocking to 'Human Nature'. However, Earbery fell short of explicitly endorsing annihilationism. Instead, he concluded that there was 'something in the Eternal Laws of Justice' which was 'too deep for us to penetrate'. See T. Burnet, *De Statu Mortuorum & Resurgentium Tractatus. Of the State of the Dead, and Of Those That Are to Rise*, ed. and trans. M. Earbery, 2nd edn, 2 vols. (London, 1728), II, pp. 114-15.

Henry Dodwell,¹²⁰ William Law,¹²¹ and Archibald Campbell¹²² – were known to support heterodox views on the afterlife. Freed as they were from the Churches of England and Scotland, these theologians were able pursue ideas which would have been considered an anathema to many in the established Churches. Therefore, it is possible that, like these other Non-Jurors, Earbery wavered from the ‘orthodox’ doctrine of eternal torment.

Yet, while it seems highly possible that Earbery wrote *Methodists Impostors*, it is merely conjecture to attribute this text to him or any other individual. It is ironic that, both in *Methodists Impostors* and in Mrs Blackmore’s letter to Brett, we see Wesley being ‘named and shamed’ by somebody with Non-Juring sympathies. Indeed, one can only assume that, in these instances, the authors were unaware of Wesley’s various links with the Non-Jurors. Such ignorance is unsurprising, since Wesley was still very much in Whitefield’s shadow at that time. So, what were the connections between Wesley and the Non-Jurors?

iii) Non-Juror and High Church ‘Fanaticism’

If we begin with Wesley’s early years, it is now well known that his mother, Susanna (1669-1742), supported divine hereditary monarchy, and sympathised with the plight of the Non-Jurors. Her views on this subject created tension between Susanna and her husband, Samuel Wesley, who viewed the Revolution of 1688 as a form of divine

¹²⁰ Dodwell argued that, upon Judgement Day, the souls of ignorant heathens would be saved if they had lived a moral life. Those wicked heathens who failed to meet this criterion would be annihilated. This, apparently, was because their souls would be rendered mortal by their unbaptised state. See Almond, *Heaven and Hell*, pp. 60-67.

¹²¹ Law supported universalism towards the end of his life. See *Humble, Earnest, and Affectionate Address*, pp. 172-73.

¹²² Campbell, who briefly served as bishop of Aberdeen, embraced the doctrine of purgatory. See Almond, *Heaven and Hell*, pp. 77-79.

providence. George Hickes, the Non-Juring bishop of Thetford, sympathised with Susanna's dilemma, though he ultimately told her to concede to her husband's wishes.¹²³ While John Wesley remained loyal to the Hanoverian succession throughout his life, this did not stop him from associating with Non-Jurors, and embracing some of their teachings. As was discussed in Chapter Three, Wesley had initially been a follower of William Law's writings on asceticism, though he subsequently distanced himself from these texts around the time of his Aldersgate conversion. To recap, this was because he was suspicious of Law's seemingly excessive emphasis on works. However, Wesley's early association with Law was by no means the extent of his links with the Non-Jurors. We know from Geordan Hammond's 2014 monograph that, during Wesley's Oxford and Georgia years, he was heavily influenced by the sacramental writings of several 'Usager' Non-Jurors, including Jeremy Collier and Thomas Deacon, a Manchester Jacobite. During these early years, Wesley was also influenced by John Clayton, who was a tutor at Brasenose College, Oxford, until 1732. While Clayton supported the theology of the Usagers, he was not a Non-Juror himself. Rather, he was a 'Jacobite conforming High Churchman'.¹²⁴ By 1733, Clayton was living in Manchester, where he was connected to Deacon and other local Jacobites. During that year, Wesley visited Clayton in Manchester on two occasions.¹²⁵ So, what formed the basis of this Usager faction?

The Usagers were firm believers in the teachings and practices of the early Church Fathers. Of course, they were aware that the Fathers were not unanimous on many topics, and, in such cases, caution was advised. However, in instances where

¹²³ For an overview of Samuel and Susanna's differing attitudes towards the Revolution, and the effect it had on their marriage, see R. Walmsley, 'John Wesley's Parents: Quarrel and Reconciliations', *PWHS*, 29 (1953), pp. 50-57; Hammond, *John Wesley in America*, pp. 16-17.

¹²⁴ Hammond, *John Wesley in America*, pp. 30, 54-61. For the quotation, see p. 30n97.

¹²⁵ H. Broxap, *A Biography of Thomas Deacon: The Manchester Non-Juror* (Manchester, 1911), pp. 75-76.

virtually *all* the Fathers agreed on certain teachings or practices, the Usagers believed that their example needed to be followed. Such unanimity had extended to such practices (or ‘usages’) as mixing water and wine in the chalice, and praying for the dead. While both practices had been included in Thomas Cranmer’s first Book of Common Prayer (1549), they were omitted from his second Prayer Book (1552) and all subsequent versions of it. Thus, the Usagers wished to see a return to the 1549 Prayer Book. On the other hand, those Non-Jurors who aligned themselves with the ‘non-Usager’ faction – which included Charles Leslie and William Law – were strongly against resurrecting these seemingly popish practices. To the non-Usagers, the practice of praying for the dead seemed like an endorsement of the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory.¹²⁶

Archibald Campbell was one Usager Non-Juror who did believe in purgatory. Yet, other Usagers were keen to assert their rejection of this doctrine. For example, Collier claimed that prayers for the dead enabled Christians to share communion with the souls of the righteous. He added that, because ‘supreme Happiness’ was ‘not to be expected till the Resurrection’, departed souls had to endure a ‘State of imperfect Bliss’ during the ‘Interval between Death and the End of the World’. Therefore, Collier hoped that the ‘Church might therefore believe [that] her Prayers for good People might improve their Condition, and raise the Satisfactions of this *Period*.’ However, Collier strenuously denied that the ‘Assistance of the Living’ would alter the ultimate destination of departed souls.¹²⁷ Deacon was equally open in his hostility to the doctrine of purgatory. Like Collier, he claimed that prayers for the dead merely enabled the

¹²⁶ For a detailed account of the usages controversy, see Chapter Three in H. Broxap, *The Later Non-Jurors* (Cambridge, 1924). For a concise but informative account of this episode, see M.M Davis, ‘“Ask for the Old Paths”: Johnson and the Nonjurors’, in J.C.D. Clark and H. Erskine-Hill (eds), *The Politics of Samuel Johnson* (Basingstoke, 2012), pp. 113-17.

¹²⁷ J. Collier, *Reasons for Restoring Some Prayers and Directions, as They Stand in the Communion-Service of the First English Reform'd Liturgy, Compiled by the Bishops in the 2d and 3d Years of the Reign of King Edward VI* (London, 1736), pp. 18-20.

living to ‘maintain communion’ with and improve the condition of the ‘faithful departed’, who would remain in a ‘state of bliss between death and the resurrection.’¹²⁸

Wesley’s endorsement of this practice can be discerned from his *Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week*. This work – which was first published in 1733, and went through multiple editions – included such prayers as: ‘Forgive all who are mine Enemies, and so reconcile them to me and Thyself, that we all, together with those that now sleep in Thee, may awake to Life everlasting’, and ‘By thy Infinite Mercies, vouchsafe to bring us, with those that are dead in Thee, to rejoice together before Thee’. The fact that these prayers for the dead were taken from a 1740 edition of Wesley’s *Collection* is significant because it tells us that Wesley remained committed to this practice in the years following his Aldersgate experience.¹²⁹ Unfortunately for Wesley, this did not go unnoticed by one of his fiercest critics. In the second volume of his *Enthusiasm of Methodists*, Lavington charged Wesley with propagating a practice which, apart from being the ‘*Foundation of Purgatory*’, was also ‘one of the *Favourite Manchester-Doctrines of Mr. Deacon*’. Thus, by encouraging people to pray for the dead, Wesley was ‘leading Men *certainly into Jacobitism, and probably into Popery*.’¹³⁰ As Collier and Deacon had done many years earlier, Wesley vehemently denied that he supported the doctrine of purgatory. In his response to Lavington, he stressed that his prayers were for the ‘faithful departed’, and not for ‘those who die in their Sins’.¹³¹

Since many of the early anti-Methodist authors were High Church Tories, it is unsurprising that relatively few of them adopted Lavington’s ‘ultra-Protestant’ strategy,

¹²⁸ T. Deacon, *The Doctrine of the Church of Rome Concerning Purgatory Proved to be Contrary to Catholick Tradition, and Inconsistent with the Necessary Duty of Praying for the Dead, as Practised in the Ancient Church* (London, 1718), pp. xi-xii.

¹²⁹ J. Wesley, *A Collection of Forms of Prayer for Every Day in the Week*, 5th edn (London, 1740), pp. 12, 17, 36.

¹³⁰ [Lavington], *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared. Part II*, pp. 166-67.

¹³¹ Wesley, *Second Letter to the Author of the Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar’d*, p. 52.

and charged Wesley with being too 'High Church'. Nevertheless, some of Wesley's earlier opponents had condemned him and his followers on these grounds. The 1732 item in *Fog's Weekly Journal* had claimed that the Oxford Methodists' seemingly monastic lifestyle was 'owing to Enthusiastick Madness'.¹³² In a 1738 letter to Thomas Birch, William Warburton had similarly claimed that Wesley exhibited a form of 'fanaticism' which was reminiscent of Hickes and Collier.¹³³ Furthermore, in 1743, one anonymous anti-Methodist author used the testimony of a Georgia colonist to portray Wesley as a High Church fanatic. The colonist claimed that, during his time as minister in Savannah, Wesley had attempted 'to re-establish Confession, Penance, Mortifications' and the 'mixing [of] Wine with Water in the Sacrament'. It was also claimed that, while Wesley had 'received and caressed' communicants who were 'suspected to be Roman Catholicks', he had 'damned all Dissenters of whatever Denomination'. Apparently, these Dissenting colonists 'were never admitted to communicate with him [Wesley] until they first gave up their Faith and Principles entirely'.¹³⁴

To any Whig/Dissenting readers, the colonist's description of Wesley would have seemed frighteningly reminiscent of the late Henry Sacheverell. Like Wesley, Sacheverell had also faced charges of 'enthusiasm' and fanaticism. In *The Modern Fanatick* (1710), William Bisset, a Whig divine of Northamptonshire, described Sacheverell as a '*High Church Fanatick*', who had been overpowered by

¹³² *Fog's Weekly Journal*, 9 December 1732.

¹³³ Nichols and Nichols, *Illustrations*, II, pp. 94-96.

¹³⁴ An Impartial Hand, *The Progress of Methodism in Bristol: Or, the Methodist Unmask'd. Wherein the Doctrines, Discipline, Policy, Divisions and Successes of that Novel Sect are Fully Detected, and Properly Display'd, in Hudibrastick Verse* (Bristol, 1743), pp. 65-71. This testimony first appeared in: *A True and Historical Narrative of the Colony of Georgia in America, from the First Settlement Thereof Until this Present Period* (Charles-Town, 1741), pp. 41-42. This work was subsequently published in London, and, presumably, this was how the author of *The Progress of Methodism* encountered it.

‘*Enthusiasm*’.¹³⁵ During the ‘righteous over-much’ controversy of the late 1730s and early 1740s, such evangelicals as Richard Finch and Robert Seagrave similarly used the image of Sacheverell as a symbol of High Church tyranny. Finch followed the example of Defoe’s *Shortest Way with the Dissenters* by ironically informing Joseph Trapp that he supported ‘persecution, or the use of such *wholesome Severities* which Dr. Sacheverell has long ago recommended’. To Finch, such measures were exactly what ‘the present time and state of things’ required.¹³⁶ While Seagrave did not mention Sacheverell by name, he alluded to the late divine’s controversial polemic by claiming that Trapp and other ‘corrupt’ High Churchmen were causing ‘*Perils amongst false Brethren*’.¹³⁷

Many years later, Sacheverell was depicted negatively in Wesley’s *Concise History of England*. In this work, Wesley described Sacheverell as a man ‘of narrow intellects, and warm imagination’, who was guilty of subjecting Dissenters to ‘seditious libels’. Intriguingly, Wesley also claimed that Sacheverell’s 1710 defence speech before the House of Lords had been written by ‘the Rector of Epworth, in Lincolnshire’ – in other words, his father, Samuel Wesley.¹³⁸ Whether this was true or not remains unknown. The older Wesley was certainly a close associate of Sacheverell.¹³⁹ In fact, it was through his father that John Wesley encountered Sacheverell personally. It would be an understatement to say that their meeting was not a pleasant one. Hoping to send his son to Oxford, Samuel had introduced the young John to Sacheverell, who was an influential figure at the university. Sacheverell’s assessment of the aspiring scholar was

¹³⁵ W. Bisset, *The Modern Fanatic. With a Large and True Account of the Life, Actions, Endowments, &c. of the Famous Dr. Sacheverell* (London, 1710), p. 38.

¹³⁶ [R. Finch], *A Congratulatory Letter to the Revd. Dr. Trapp: Occasioned by His Four Sermons Against Enthusiasm* (London, 1739), p. 9.

¹³⁷ R. Seagrave, *An Answer to the Reverend Dr. Trapp's Four Sermons Against Mr. Whitefield. Shewing the Sin and Folly of Being Angry Over-Much* (London, 1739), p. 13.

¹³⁸ Wesley, *Concise History of England*, IV, pp. 72-76.

¹³⁹ H. Rack, ‘Wesley, Samuel (1662-1735)’, *ODNB*.

not a positive one. To Sacheverell, the young Wesley ‘was too young to go to the University’. Moreover, Sacheverell did not believe that Wesley could possibly have known ‘Greek and Latin yet’. Therefore, he instructed Wesley to ‘go back to school.’ Wesley would later describe how he ‘looked at him [Sacheverell] as David looked at Goliath, and despised him in my heart.’ Therefore, if we return to Wesley’s *Concise History*, one can assume that its negative depiction of Sacheverell must have at least partly stemmed from Wesley’s personal dislike of the late divine. Yet, it is also fair to say that the ‘catholic’ Wesley would have genuinely sympathised with those Dissenters who had suffered at the hands of pro-Sacheverell mobs.¹⁴⁰

Intriguingly, when Whitefield’s Dissenting opponents charged him and his followers with ‘enthusiasm’, they sometimes compared them to Sacheverell and his supporters. In January 1745, the staunchly anti-evangelical *Boston Evening-Post* reprinted a short item which had previously appeared in a Scottish newspaper. The author of this piece, who appears to have been a member of the Kirk, claimed that Whitefield encouraged ‘religious Nonsense, vain curiosity, Fondness for Novelty...and Enthusiasm’. To the author, such commotion was reminiscent of *Sacheverel’s* [sic] *Cavalcades in England*.¹⁴¹ A couple of months later, the same newspaper ran another attack on Whitefield, this time by an Old Light Congregationalist. The correspondent alleged, that because of Whitefield’s recent visit to Boston, Massachusetts, congregations were now split down the middle. Apparently, such ‘enthusiasm’ had ‘never been seen since the triumphant march of Dr. *Sacheverell’s* Mob.’¹⁴² We have seen that, during his lifetime, Sacheverell had faced similar charges of ‘enthusiasm’ from Whig/Dissenting polemicists. Since Whitefield could hardly have been described

¹⁴⁰ C.T. Winchester, *The Life of John Wesley* (New York and London, 1906), p. 16.

¹⁴¹ *Boston Evening-Post*, 7 January 1745. The author has been unable to trace the Scottish newspaper in which this item originally appeared.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*, 15 April 1745.

as a ‘High Churchman’, it may initially seem odd that some of his Dissenting opponents compared him to Sacheverell. However, it must be remembered that Whitefield was a rigid adherent of the Church of England. This, in turn, meant that he supported episcopacy, which was a bugbear to many Dissenters. Therefore, Sacheverell provided anti-Whitefield Dissenters with a historical example of an episcopal ‘enthusiast’.

High Churchmen also came under attack in the first anti-Methodist play, *The Mock-Preacher* (1739). While the authorship of this polemical play remains unknown, it is evident from one scene that the playwright was critical of both Whitefield and High Church Anglicans. Throughout this farce, the Mock Preacher (Whitefield) is portrayed as a self-interested trickster, who is pocketing the donations for his non-existent orphanage in Georgia. However, he is not the only self-interested character in this play. The reader is also introduced to two clergymen, who are called ‘Part’ and ‘Namirreb’. When spelt backwards, these words become ‘Trap’ and ‘Berriman’. Evidently, the former is supposed to represent Joseph Trapp, who, in the public’s eye, was Whitefield’s main antagonist at the time. Indeed, this piece was written amidst the ‘righteous over-much’ controversy, which is alluded to at the end of the play, when the Mock Preacher is on trial.¹⁴³ The latter is supposed to represent William Berriman, a noted theologian and Boyle lecturer, who had published attacks on the rational Dissenter, Samuel Chandler, and the Methodists.¹⁴⁴

In one scene, Namirreb and Part share their concerns about the Mock Preacher’s activities. Their main concern is the detrimental effect that it might have on their own

¹⁴³ *The Mock-Preacher*, pp. 27-28. See also S. Lewis, ‘*The Mock-Preacher* (1739): More than Just an Anti-Methodist Play?’, *PWHS*, 59 (2014), p. 185n47.

¹⁴⁴ A.B. Grosart, ‘Berriman, William (1688-1750)’, rev. A.J. Levin, *ODNB*. Berriman attacked the Methodists in a 1739 sermon, which was subsequently published as *A Sermon Preach’d to the Religious Societies in and about London at their Quarterly Meeting in the Parish Church of St. Mary le Bow on Wednesday, March the 21st. 1738-9* (London, 1739). The author has been unable to trace the publication date for Berriman’s anti-Methodist sermon. However, we know that *The Mock-Preacher* was printed on 16 June 1739, which was nearly three months after Berriman preached his sermon. See *London Evening Post*, 16 June 1739.

finances. The playwright's contempt for tithe payments is evident at the beginning of the scene, when Namirreb voices his fear that, because the Mock Preacher's followers are giving all of their money to him, they will be unable to 'pay their proper Pastors'.¹⁴⁵ Namirreb goes on to state that the 'Scriptures being translated into *English*, has made every ignorant Upstart turn Preacher, and Coblers [sic] are become Commentators.' Part concurs with his colleague, and claims that 'Religion ought to be couch'd under Mysteries.' Namirreb agrees, and argues that the 'Laity should mind their temporal Affairs only, and trust their Souls with us.'¹⁴⁶ These clerics then go on to praise 'Archbishop *Laud*', whom Part describes as 'that glorious Martyr'. They also pay tribute to the 'blessed and immortal Memory' of 'Queen *Anne*', and lament that, 'Had she liv'd, the *Convocation* would have taken these Affairs in hand.'¹⁴⁷ Around the same time that *The Mock-Preacher* was published, another anti-Methodist writer had called for the Convocation to take action against Whitefield, before facetiously adding 'But I forget, a Convocation now is an *Inquisition!*'¹⁴⁸ Ironically, Part has no qualms about likening the relatively powerful Convocation of Queen Anne's reign to the persecuting regimes of Roman Catholic nations, and proudly calls for a 'Protestant Inquisition.' Evidently, the author's intention was to portray High Churchmen as popish tyrants, who were just as driven by greed as Whitefield.¹⁴⁹

This section has sought to highlight the complexities of these early anti-Methodist polemics. The anonymously written *Methodists Impostors* has provided us

¹⁴⁵ *The Mock-Preacher*, p. 20.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-21.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22. Jeremy Gregory notes that, while Convocation 'had a negligible part to play in voicing Church interests' after the Restoration, the period between 1701 and 1717 (which covers all of Queen Anne's reign) was an exception to this rule. See J. Gregory, 'Archbishops of Canterbury, their diocese, and the shaping of the National Church', in J. Gregory and J.S. Chamberlain (eds), *The National Church in Local Perspective: The Church of England and the Regions, 1660-1800* (Woodbridge, 2003), p. 32.

¹⁴⁸ *A Letter to Robert Seagrave, M.A., Occasioned by His Two Late Performances: One Entitled, an Answer to Dr. Trapp's Four Sermons. The Other Called, Remarks on the Bishop of London's Pastoral Letter* (London, 1739), p. 37.

¹⁴⁹ *The Mock-Preacher*, p. 21.

with yet another example of a polemicist who used anti-Methodism as a ‘Trojan horse’ to hide an entirely separate agenda. On the surface, it appears that the author’s main intention was to ridicule the Methodists by likening them to John Wycliffe – a historical figure who, ironically, was also being likened to Whitefield by pro-Methodist authors around this time. Yet, the author’s real intention was to reassert the anti-Erastian sentiments which Matthias Earbery and numerous other Non-Jurors had advanced some years earlier. Paradoxically, however, we have seen that Dissenters – along with such ‘ultra-Protestant’ Whig divines as Lavington – associated Methodist ‘enthusiasm’ with medieval saints, crypto-papist Non-Jurors, and High Church ‘fanatics’. Significantly, this suggests that there were many varieties of anti-enthusiasm during this period. Indeed, when High Church Tories attacked Methodism, they, unsurprisingly, adopted a different strategy. More specifically, they referred to historical examples of Protestant schismatics and ‘enthusiasts’.

Histories of Protestant Dissent and Crypto-Popery

i) ‘Jesuited Puritans’

We have seen that, throughout his *Enthusiasm of Methodists*, Bishop Lavington compared evangelicals to numerous historical examples of Roman Catholic ‘enthusiasts’. However, it was Ignatius Loyola, the sixteenth-century founder of the Jesuits, whom he utilised the most in his comparisons. In Chapter Three, it was noted that Lavington drew comparisons between Loyola’s self-imposed austerity and Methodist asceticism. Other points of comparison included Loyola and Whitefield’s

apparent quests for martyrdom, and their field-preaching.¹⁵⁰ Some years later, Hogarth made similar allusions to Jesuitism in his *Credulity, Superstition, and Fanaticism*. In this scene, the minister – who was probably meant to represent Whitefield – has just lost his wig, thus revealing a Jesuit's tonsure underneath. Elsewhere in this cartoon, there is another, less explicit, allusion to popish 'enthusiasm'. At the bottom of the scene, in the left-hand corner, there is a boy, who is vomiting nails and iron staples. Here, Hogarth was referring to William Perry, a young boy of Bilson (now Bilston, West Midlands).¹⁵¹ At some point around 1620, Perry had claimed that he was possessed by demons, who were causing him to vomit such objects as nails and staples. Following an investigation, however, it was revealed that Perry had plotted to fake his 'possession' with a Roman Catholic priest.¹⁵² The story of Perry also featured in an unpublished anti-Methodist work by Zachary Grey. In this piece, Grey described how some 'Jesuits' had frightened the boy with 'charms and exorcisms', which, in turn, caused him to believe that he was 'possess'd with a Devil'. Grey also noted that both Whitefield and George Fox had referred to demonic possession in their published journals.¹⁵³

Grey expanded on these comparisons in a separate piece, entitled *The Quaker and Methodist Compared* (1740). Throughout this work, Grey noted various similarities between Fox and Whitefield's journals, including their regular descriptions of prophetic decisions. To Grey, such claims were decidedly arrogant because they implied that both Fox and Whitefield's actions were governed by divine inspiration – sometimes in even

¹⁵⁰ For Lavington's discussions on martyrdom, see *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compar'd*, pp. 28-29. For his discussions on field-preaching, see *Ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

¹⁵¹ Hogarth, 'Credulity, Superstition, and Fanaticism' (1762).

¹⁵² For a contemporary account of the investigation, and Perry's confession, see R. Baddeley, *The Boy of Bilson: or, A True Discovery of the Late Notorious Impostures of Certain Romish Priests in their Pretended Exorcisme, or Expulsion of the Divell out of a Young Boy, Named William Perry* (London, 1622).

¹⁵³ Z. Grey, 'The Jesuit in Disguise', Cambridge University Library, MS Add. 3308, fol. 44.

the most obscure of circumstances. For example, an entry in Whitefield's *Journal* for 22 February 1737, described how the preacher had been staying on a ship which was docked in a Gibraltar harbour. Although Whitefield originally intended to remain 'on Board to write Letters', God showed him that this was 'not his Will', leading the preacher to go 'on Shore again'. Grey compared this extract to an entry in Fox's journal, which described how the Quaker leader had been 'lying in Bed at *Bristol*' one day, only to be told by 'the Word of the Lord' that he needed to 'go back to *London*'.¹⁵⁴ Furthermore, in his preface, Grey likened Whitefield's '*Pretences to Inspiration*' to the Quaker belief in the Inner Light.¹⁵⁵

Quakers were not the only religious group whom anti-Methodist authors associated with such spiritual pride. To the anonymous editor of *Enthusiasm No Novelty; or, the Spirit of the Methodists in the Year 1641 and 1642* (1739), such arrogance was reminiscent of mid-seventeenth-century Puritanism. This pamphlet, which was a compilation of diary entries by George Swathe, a Puritan minister from Denham, Suffolk, included Swathe's account of when he appeared to be ordering God to create a 'seasonable speedy moderate Rain' on 11 May 1642. What appears especially arrogant about this diary entry is Swathe's implication that, in return for this favour, he will reward God by recording it 'for thy praise'.¹⁵⁶ Elsewhere in this pamphlet, the editor included a diary entry which displayed Swathe's contempt for Charles I, whom he prayed that God would soon 'overthrow'.¹⁵⁷ Evidently, the

¹⁵⁴ [Z. Grey], *The Quaker and Methodist Compared, in an Abstract of George Fox's Journal, with a Copy of his Last Will and Testament, and of the Reverend Mr. George Whitefield's Journals* (London, 1740), pp. 47, 73. For the extract, as it appeared in a contemporary edition of Fox's journal, see G. Fox, *A Journal, or Historical Account of the Life, Travels, Sufferings, Christian Experiences and Labour of Love in the Work of the Ministry, of that Ancient, Eminent and Faithful Servant of Jesus Christ, George Fox*, 2 vols. (London, 1709), II, p. 104. For the extract in Whitefield's journal, see *Journal of a Voyage*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁵ [Grey], *Quaker and Methodist Compared*, unpaginated preface.

¹⁵⁶ *Enthusiasm No Novelty; or, the Spirit of the Methodists in the Year 1641 and 1642* (London, 1739), p. 24.

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 26.

inclusion of this entry was intended as a means of linking religious ‘enthusiasm’ to the treasonous sentiments which led to the Regicide several years after this entry was made.

Similar allusions were made by other opponents of Methodism. A contemporary anti-Whitefield poem contained the words ‘To hasten on impending Fate, Big with another *Forty-Eight*’. This was intended as a reference to the New Model Army’s invasion of Parliament in December 1648, which saw the removal of all MPs who had sympathies for the monarchy, setting the stage for Charles I’s swift trial and subsequent execution on 30 January 1649. From this, one can see that the author was suggesting that a similar *coup d’état* would occur under the leadership of Whitefield and other itinerant preachers.¹⁵⁸ Another author evoked similar images of an impending Regicide by comparing Whitefield’s preaching to the ‘Language of our *Reformers*, in the late *Rebellion*’, when the ‘*Monarchy* found but little *Mercy*’.¹⁵⁹ John Wilder, the rector of St Aldate’s, Oxford, also feared that the Methodists sought ‘Anarchy and Confusion: As it was effected once in the Last Century, when by a successful Rebellion begun...the Life of the Best of Kings [Charles I], was barbarously taken away’.¹⁶⁰ An anonymous ‘Gentleman’ of Pembroke College, Oxford, described Oliver Cromwell as ‘the *Whitefield of the last Century*’ and claimed that the preacher was ‘doing the same Disservice to *true Religion*’ as the ‘old *Cut-throat Saints*’ had done under the Lord Protector.¹⁶¹

A 1739 anti-Whitefield pamphlet entitled *Enthusiasm Display'd; or, The Moor-Fields Congregation* contained the line ‘What was Peters once is Wh-D now’. ‘Peters’ was intended as a reference to the seventeenth-century New Model Army chaplain,

¹⁵⁸ *The Methodists: An Humorous Burlesque Poem*, p. 17.

¹⁵⁹ *Mr. Whitfield's Doctrines Considered and Confuted, and Some Consequences Deduced from Them which Tend to Destroy the Essentials of the Christian Religion* (Ipswich, 1741), p. 5.

¹⁶⁰ J. Wilder, *The Trial of the Spirits; or, A Caution Against Enthusiasm or Religious Delusion, in a Sermon Preached Before the University of Oxford, August 5th. 1739* (Oxford, 1739), p. 21.

¹⁶¹ J.B., *Letter to the Reverend Mr. Whitefield*, pp. 22, 44.

Hugh Peter, who was executed following the Restoration because his preaching was seen by contemporary Royalists as something which had fuelled the Regicide. Thus, one can evidently discern from this piece that the anonymous author's intention was to portray Whitefield as a seditious Puritan. Interestingly, this pamphlet also contains an illustration which displays a bare-legged Whitefield surrounded by female admirers. To the left of one admirer, whom the author labelled as 'Hypocrisy', one can clearly see a Rosary on the ground. This is evidently an allusion to popery, and the Rosary's proximity to Whitefield suggests that it has fallen from his hand.¹⁶² Therefore, this satirical polemic provides us with an example of Whitefield being likened to both a subversive Puritan *and* a papist. Similar allusions were made in another 1739 anti-Whitefield pamphlet. This anonymously written text claimed that Whitefield's 'enthusiastic' and schismatic behaviour would only lead to a repeat of the 1640s, when the '*Jesuits* in Disguise' had 'ruin'd' the country by fomenting division and discord.¹⁶³

Sometimes, anti-Methodist authors deployed colonial American history when making these dual comparisons to Puritans and papists. In the second edition of his *History of Modern Enthusiasm* (1757), Theophilus Evans made several references to Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702) – a history of New England, which had originally been published in London. Evans noted that Mather's work contained an 'Abundance of Stories that tally with every Class of Popish Saints and Persecutors'.¹⁶⁴ One such episode was the Anne Hutchinson controversy, which had shaken the relatively new Massachusetts Bay Colony during the late 1630s. In 1638, Hutchinson was banished from the colony because of her defamations against the local Puritan clergy, and her seemingly antinomian teachings on 'free grace'. Hutchinson had

¹⁶² *Enthusiasm Display'd*. Like the anonymous author of this pamphlet, many contemporary historians and polemicists often erroneously referred to this individual's surname as 'Peters' rather than 'Peter'.

¹⁶³ *Compleat Account of the Conduct of that Eminent Enthusiast Mr. Whitefield*, p. 12.

¹⁶⁴ Evans, *History of Modern Enthusiasm*, p. 30.

gained many followers, and it was widely feared that her intention had been to incite schism. When Evans discussed this ‘*American Jezebel*’, he was unwilling to attribute her success as a ‘*Prophetess*’ to any ‘*Craft and Cunning*’ on her part. Rather, Evans concluded that, like Methodist preachers, she had effortlessly ‘cheated’ an ignorant crowd, who had ‘stopped their Ears like the deaf Adder to the Charms of *sober Reason*.’¹⁶⁵ After a brief discussion on Matthew Hopkins’s East Anglia witch-hunts of the 1640s, Evans proceeded to describe the infamous witch trials that had occurred in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692. Evans’s account of the trials was taken from two sources – namely Mather’s history of New England, and the second edition of Francis Hutchinson’s *Historical Essay Concerning Witchcraft* (1720), which devoted a chapter to the Salem trials as part of its attack on the prosecution of alleged witches. Evans noted that the Salem episode had resulted in ‘Executions upon Executions’, and claimed that ‘if this Spirit of Infatuation...had raged some Time longer, the whole Province might have been near depopulated.’¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 30-31. In 1743, the Boston Congregationalist, Charles Chauncy, referred to the Hutchinson incident at length as part of his attack on female evangelical preachers. See Chauncy, *Seasonable Thoughts*, pp. iii-xxx. For more on the Hutchinson controversy, see A.S. Lang, *Prophetic Woman: Anne Hutchinson and the Problem of Dissent in the Literature of New England* (Berkeley, 1987). In Chapter Four, Lang considers Chauncy’s depiction of the episode.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., pp. 70-71. Intriguingly, comparisons to the 1692 witch trials were almost totally absent from the anti-evangelical works of New England colonists. There were occasional exceptions to this rule. On 8 December 1743, the *Boston Weekly News-Letter* reproduced a short letter from a ‘very worthy Gentleman’ in Boston to ‘his Friend in London’. This item had previously appeared in the London *Daily Post* three months earlier. In this letter, the Boston colonist claimed that, ‘in some places’, the excesses of ‘*New Light Religion*’ were ‘almost as bad as it was at Salem in 1692’. Yet, we know from the manuscript sources of the Anglican minister of Salem, Charles Brockwell, and the Marblehead shopkeeper, Nathan Bowen, that colonists made such comparisons in private. In a letter to the secretary of the SPG, dated 18 February 1741, Brockwell described his fear that ‘this year for Enthusiasm’ would be ‘as memorable as was 1692 for witchcraft.’ To Brockwell, the way in which ‘the converted cry out upon the unregenerated’ was reminiscent of what the ‘afflicted did then upon the poor innocent wretches that unjustly suffered’ in 1692. In another letter to the secretary, dated 1 August 1744, Brockwell briefly compared New Light ‘Enthusiasts’ to those who instigated the ‘unhappy tragedy of 1692.’ See Perry, *Historical Collections*, III, pp. 353-54, 387. In an August 1742 diary entry, Bowen similarly observed that evangelical ‘enthusiasm’ was reminiscent of ‘thy fatal 92’. See N. Bowen, ‘Extracts from Interleaved Almanacs of Nathan Bowen, Marblehead, 1742-1799’, *Essex Institutes Historical Collections*, 91 (1955), p. 171. Of course, it is important to note that – unlike the Ann Hutchinson controversy – the Salem witch trials would still have been within living memory throughout the middle decades of the eighteenth century. There is evidence to suggest that, by the 1730s, these trials were still viewed as an embarrassing episode by New Englanders, which may explain why Chauncy and other New England opponents of

Evans was not the only anti-Methodist Anglican in England who utilised colonial American history to describe the violent ramifications of ‘enthusiasm’. Appended to Zachary Grey’s 1745 *Serious Address* was an extract from a 1741 attack on Whitefield by the commissary of South Carolina, Alexander Garden, entitled *Take Heed How Ye Hear*. More specifically, Grey included Garden’s account of the Dutartres family of South Carolina. This family had apparently ‘filled their *Heads* with many wild and fantastick Notions’ because of their interactions with a ‘strolling *Moravian, Dutch, or Swiss* Enthusiast.’ When a local ‘*Justice*’ attempted to bring charges against the family for their failure to adhere to the ‘*Laws or Ordinances of Man*’, they murdered him. The family justified their actions by claiming that they had ‘consulted their *Prophet*.’ On 29 and 30 September 1724, five members of the family were ‘tried for *Murder*, found guilty, and condemned.’ Evidently, Garden’s intention had been to link religious ‘enthusiasm’ with murder. One can assume that Grey had the same agenda in mind when he included this extract.¹⁶⁷

Given the obvious theological differences between Quakers, Puritans, and Roman Catholics, it may initially seem strange that Whitefield and his followers were often likened to all these groups – sometimes by the same author, in the same text. Yet, from these examples, one can see that anti-Methodist authors perceived these groups to have one major commonality – their alleged ability to foment ‘enthusiasm’. There was nothing novel about such associations between Puritans and Roman Catholics. In his *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Robert Burton had identified both Puritans and Roman

evangelicalism did not refer to them in their polemics. Such embarrassment can be discerned from an item in 8 January 1739 edition of the *Boston Evening-Post*, which stated that the colony’s legislature was seeking the ‘*best Information they could into the Circumstances of the Persons and Families who suffered in the Calamity of the Times, in or about the Year Sixteen Hundred Ninety Two*’ in order to compensate them for their ‘*Losses and Misfortunes*.’

¹⁶⁷ [Grey], *Serious Address*, pp. 22-29. Garden’s account of this murder originally appeared in his *Take Heed How Ye Hear: A Sermon Preached in the Parish Church of St. Philip Charles-Town, in South Carolina on Sunday the 13th of July, 1740* (Charles-Town, 1741), pp. 30-37.

Catholics as people who left their followers vulnerable to demonic intervention.¹⁶⁸ In a 1682 attack on Puritanism, Roger L'Estrange, a Tory pamphleteer and lay adherent to High Church principles, referred to 'Jesuited Puritans'. This label had also been used by the philosopher, Meric Casaubon, in his 1668 *Generall Learning* to describe those who had the ability to 'cast' their followers 'downe to the lowest pitt of despaire; and then...rayse them up againe'.¹⁶⁹ From their use of the label 'Jesuited Puritans', it is clear that both L'Estrange and Casaubon intended to portray Roman Catholics as the 'enthusiastic' teachers of these gullible Puritans. Casaubon reiterated this argument two years later by attacking the 'Jesuits' for teaching the '*Puritans of England*' how to inflict the 'horrors of a sad kind of desperation' upon their followers and put them in a 'seeming possession of heaven'.¹⁷⁰

Like Puritans, Quakers had long been described by their opponents as a sect that had been corrupted by Roman Catholic 'enthusiasm'. Ironically, it was such Puritan authors as William Prynne and Richard Baxter who made these accusations against Quakers during the Interregnum.¹⁷¹ The charge of popery went on to feature prominently in the post-Restoration anti-Quaker polemics of such Anglican divines as Edward Stillingfleet and George Hickes, and such laymen as L'Estrange.¹⁷² The most prominent anti-Quaker polemic to appear after the 'Glorious' Revolution was Charles Leslie's *The Snake in the Grass* (1696). In this work, Leslie described the 'Enthusiasm'

¹⁶⁸ Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy*, p. 768.

¹⁶⁹ R. L'Estrange, *A Memento Treating of the Rise, Progress, and Remedies of Seditions with Some Historical Reflections upon the Series of Our Late Troubles*, 2nd edn (London, 1682), p. 64; R. Serjeantson (ed.), *Generall Learning. A Seventeenth-Century Treatise on the Formation of the General Scholar by Meric Casaubon* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 153.

¹⁷⁰ M. Casaubon, *Of Credulity and Incredulity in Things Divine & Spiritual* (London, 1670), p. 151.

¹⁷¹ S.A. Kent, 'The 'Papist' Charges Against the Interregnum Quakers', *Journal of Religious History*, 12 (1982), pp. 180-90.

¹⁷² Stillingfleet, *Discourse Concerning the Idolatry Practised in the Church of Rome*, p. 275; G. Hickes, *The Spirit of Popery Speaking Out of the Mouths of Phanatical-Protestants* (London, 1680), p. 45; R. L'Estrange, *The Committee, or, Popery in Masquerade* (London, 1680). See also J. Marshall, *John Locke, Toleration and Early Enlightenment Culture: Religious Intolerance and Arguments for Religious Toleration in Early Modern and 'Early Enlightenment' Europe* (Cambridge, 2006), pp. 462-65.

of the ‘*Presbyter, Anabaptist, Independent, Quaker*’ and ‘*Muggleton*’ sects as something which ‘came chiefly from the *Church of Rome*’.¹⁷³ Significantly, *The Snake in the Grass* went on to become a point of reference for several opponents of Methodism.¹⁷⁴ In their defence, both Whitefield and Wesley regularly asserted their allegiance to both Protestantism and the Hanoverian monarchy.

ii) Foxes and Firebrands

In 1746, Whitefield published a sermon entitled *Britain’s Mercies*, which he had originally preached in Philadelphia shortly after the Pretender’s defeat in Scotland. In this sermon, Whitefield praised God’s ‘favoured’ people and attacked the ‘Popish abjured’ Pretender’s ‘Plot first hatched in Hell’ to overthrow ‘the rightful Sovereign King GEORGE’ and impose an ‘arbitrary and tyrannical Government’.¹⁷⁵ Whitefield went on to refer to numerous historical deliverances from popery, including the ‘surprising Manner of GOD’s bringing about a Reformation in the Reign of King HENRY the *Eighth*...His delivering us out of the bloody Hands of Queen *Mary*, and destroying the *Spanish invincible Armada*’.¹⁷⁶ Furthermore, Whitefield regularly portrayed himself as somebody whose main intention was to restore a backslidden

¹⁷³ C. Leslie, *The Snake in the Grass: or, Satan Transform’d into an Angel of Light Discovering the Deep and Unsuspected Subtilty which is Couched under the Pretended Simplicity of Many of the Principal Leaders of Those People call’d Quakers* (London, 1696), pp. 18-19. For more on the relationship between anti-popery and anti-Quakerism during William III’s reign, see R. Clark, ‘The Gangreen of Quakerism’: An Anti-Quaker Anglican Offensive in England after the Glorious Revolution’, *Journal of Religious History*, 11 (1981), p. 405n6.

¹⁷⁴ The second edition of this work, which was published in 1697, included a discussion on the similarities between the ‘Inspirations’ and ‘Spiritual Pride’ of both Quakers and the Flemish Catholic mystic, Antoinette Bourignon (see 1697 edition, p. xxxiv). This section was reproduced in 1749 by an anonymous opponent of Methodism, who updated it by adding John Wesley to Leslie’s critique of Quakers and Bourignon. See *An Answer to a Late Pamphlet Entitled ‘A Plain Account of the People called Methodists’, Addressed to the Revd. Mr. Wesley* (London, 1749), pp. 4-5. Daniel Waterland also cited Leslie’s *Snake in the Grass* in his *Regeneration Stated and Explained*, p. 40.

¹⁷⁵ G. Whitefield, *Britain’s Mercies, and Britain’s Duty. Represented in a Sermon Preach’d at Philadelphia, on Sunday August 24, 1746* (London, 1746), pp. 7-8.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

established church to its Reformation roots. In one of his early sermons, Whitefield chastised the majority of his fellow Anglican ministers, whom he compared to Roman Catholics by alleging that they had ‘forsaken the good old Way’ as a result of their ‘frequenting Taverns’ and indulging in ‘Billiards, Bowls, and other unlawful Games’.¹⁷⁷ In his *Journal* entry for 14 March 1740, Whitefield described how he had invoked anti-Catholicism against Alexander Garden’s threat of suspension, which he claimed he would treat as a ‘Pope’s Bull’.¹⁷⁸ In a later *Journal* entry, Whitefield compared Garden to the similarly named ‘Bishop *Gardner*’. This was a reference to Stephen Gardiner (c.1483-1555), who had served as bishop of Winchester during ‘Queen *Mary*’s Days’. Thus, by referring to Gardiner (whom Foxe described in his highly influential *Book of Martyrs*), Whitefield was portraying Commissary Garden as a popish tyrant.¹⁷⁹

Unfortunately for Whitefield and Wesley, their outspoken desire for a new Reformation failed to put an end to these allegations of popery. In fact, their opponents often claimed that such anti-popish rhetoric provided the perfect smokescreen for their true loyalty to the Papacy.¹⁸⁰ One anonymous opponent of Whitefield spoke of a ‘united Force of Papists and Dissenters’ and stated that a ‘secret Enemy is always more dangerous than a professed one’.¹⁸¹ John Maud, a vicar from Huntingdonshire, similarly

¹⁷⁷ Whitefield, *Jesus Christ the Only Way to Salvation*, p. 6.

¹⁷⁸ Whitefield, *Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal, After his Arrival at Georgia...Thither from Philadelphia*, p. 11.

¹⁷⁹ Whitefield, *Continuation of the Reverend Mr. Whitefield's Journal...to his Arrival at Falmouth*, p. 4. Ironically, Whitefield was later compared to Gardiner by an anonymous critic, who also likened the preacher to the Marian bishop of London, Edmund Bonner. See J.B., *Letter to the Reverend Mr. Whitefield*, p. 19. For more on the popularity of Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* during the eighteenth century, see Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism*, pp. 28-9; P. Nockles, ‘The Changing Legacy and Reception of John Foxe’s *Book of Martyrs* in the ‘Long Eighteenth-Century’: Varieties of Anglican, Protestant and Catholic Response, c.1760-c.1850’ in Cornwall and Gibson, *Religion, Politics and Dissent*, pp. 219-47.

¹⁸⁰ The popular anti-Methodist charge of crypto-popery becomes especially ironic when one reads of the danger that both Whitefield and John Wesley faced when they were threatened by Roman Catholic mobs during their respective visits to Ireland. In 1750, Wesley was confronted by a ‘rabble’ in Cork, who shouted ‘Now, hey for the Romans!’ at him. See Curnock, *Journal*, III, p. 471; Eight years later, Whitefield was ‘stoned, and almost killed’ by a ‘popish mob’ in Dublin because he had publically prayed that the Seven Years War would go in favour of the Protestant ‘King of Prussia’. See *Works of the Reverend George Whitefield*, III, p. 230.

¹⁸¹ *Mr. Whitfield's Doctrines Considered and Confuted*, p. 4.

argued that such ‘Propagators of Religion act under every Shape but their own, and appear to be every thing sooner than what they really are’. Maud went on to discuss the many Dissenters in his locality who still revered the ‘immortal Memory’ of Thomas Whitbread, a Roman Catholic priest of East Anglia, who was executed in 1679 for his alleged involvement in the invented Popish Plot. Despite his innocence, Maud clearly had little sympathy for Whitbread, who allegedly gained the trust of local Dissenters for his claims that the Reformation had left much ‘undone’.¹⁸²

Zachary Grey provided further ammunition for these charges of crypto-popery in his unpublished ‘Jesuit in Disguise’ and his 1745 *Serious Address*. In both pieces, Grey described numerous historical examples of Roman Catholics who allegedly masqueraded as ultra-Protestants. Many of these accounts were taken from John Nalson and Robert Ware’s *Foxes and Firebrands* (1680), and its sequel, which was published by Ware in 1682. When reading these texts, it is important to note that both authors were writing against the backdrop of Titus Oates’s fabricated Popish Plot, which gripped England and Scotland between 1678 and 1681. Nevertheless, Nalson’s suspicions of a Roman Catholic/Dissenter alliance certainly pre-dated this hysteria. In a 1677 work, Nalson had claimed that there was little ‘difference between those of the foundation of Loyola and Geneva’.¹⁸³ Grey had already cited *Foxes and Firebrands* extensively in his numerous attacks on Dissent. As a means of linking the Methodists’ seemingly ultra-Protestant sentiments with popery, Grey cited Nalson and Ware’s account of Faithful Commin – an example which Grey had previously deployed in his 1720 attack on the Dissenter, James Pierce. Despite being ‘generally reputed a zealous

¹⁸² J. Maud, *An Apology for the Clergy, in a Letter to a Gentleman of Fortune and Great Reading Lately turn'd Methodist and Hermit* (Cambridge, 1745), pp. 73-75.

¹⁸³ J. Nalson, *The Common Interest of King and People Shewing the Original, Antiquity and Excellency of Monarchy* (London, 1677), p. 257. For more on the background history of *Foxes and Firebrands* and its reception over the centuries, see D. MacCulloch, ‘Foxes, Firebrands, and Forgery: Robert Ware’s Pollution of Reformation History’, *Historical Journal*, 54 (2011), pp. 307-46.

Protestant’ for ‘speaking against Pius the Fifth, then Pope’, Commin had turned out be ‘no True Protestant, but a False Impostor’. More specifically, Commin had apparently fled to Rome in 1567 because the Elizabethan authorities exposed him as a Dominican friar. Grey noted that, like Whitefield, Commin had claimed he was guided by the ‘Spirit of Grace and Truth’.¹⁸⁴

Elsewhere in his *Serious Address*, Grey referred to a letter from an English Jesuit to an Arminian of Brussels, which also appeared in *Foxes and Firebrands*, and had allegedly been written in 1627. In this letter, the author optimistically described how English Jesuits and Arminians were allegedly working together by disguising themselves as Puritans, and spreading antipathy towards Charles I. The author claimed that, while this was going on, the spread of Arminianism amongst the ‘Projectors and Beggars of all Ranks’ would serve as a means of destroying the Puritan-dominated Parliament once they had overthrown Charles I. The author declared that the result of all this would be the implementation of a ‘Catholick Monarchy’ in England.¹⁸⁵ Given that Grey was a High Church Tory, who revered the martyred King Charles I, it is somewhat surprising that he used this example in his anti-Methodist work, and one may also wonder why Nalson and Ware chose to include the letter in *Foxes and Firebrands*.¹⁸⁶ If anything, this letter seems to confirm the suspicions of Caroline Puritans, who had believed that Arminianism would pave the way to popery (though the

¹⁸⁴ [Grey], *Serious Address*, p. 3; [J. Nalson and R. Ware], *Foxes and Firebrands*, 2nd edn (Dublin, 1682), pp. 14-30. Grey had previously defended the authenticity of this story in a 1720 polemic directed against the Dissenter, James Pierce, who had dismissed the Commin incident as a ‘forgery’. See Grey, *Vindication of the Church of England*, I, p. 32. Lavington also referred to the Commin affair to support his argument that ‘a Jesuit’s, or Enthusiast’s, declaiming against Popery’ was ‘no Test of their Sincerity’. See [Lavington], *Enthusiasm of Methodists and Papists Compared. Part II*, pp. 180-84.

¹⁸⁵ [Grey], *Serious Address*, p. 2; [R. Ware], *The Second Part of Foxes and Firebrands* (Dublin, 1682), pp. 118-25.

¹⁸⁶ See Grey’s *An Attempt Towards the Character of the Royal Martyr King Charles I* (London, 1738). Joseph Trapp was another Tory High Church opponent of Whitefield who had previously preached and published a 30 January King Charles the Martyr sermon. See J. Trapp, *A Sermon Preach’d before the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of London, at the Cathedral Church of St. Paul, on Friday, January 30. 1729* (London, 1729 [i.e. 1730]).

letter did not directly implicate Laudian clergymen in the conspiracy). Neal had previously included this letter in the second volume of his *History*. To the pro-Puritan Neal, it merely supported his argument that Caroline Puritans had been the ‘Bulwark’ against popery. However, Grey disagreed with Neal’s interpretation, and – as Nalson and Ware had originally done – claimed that the letter merely painted Caroline Puritans as gullible. Intriguingly, Grey cited both *Foxes and Firebrands* and Neal’s *History of the Puritans* when he discussed the letter in his *Serious Address*.¹⁸⁷ Richard Baxter was another Dissenting author whom Grey cited in this anti-Methodist work. More specifically, Grey directed his readers to an extract from Baxter’s *Quakers Catechism* (1655), which described how a Franciscan called Coppinger had ‘spoke[n] in a *Quaker’s-Meeting* at Bristol’ during the early 1650s.¹⁸⁸ Evidently, Neal’s willingness to cite Tory High Church sources was matched by Grey’s willingness to cite Puritan/Dissenting works. Presumably, by showing that they each consulted the same authors, both Grey and Neal were attempting to display their methodologies as objective and fair. In his response to the first volume of Neal’s *History*, Isaac Maddox had similarly ensured that he only cited those historians (such as Thomas Fuller) of whom Neal approved.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁷ [Grey], *Serious Address*, p. 2; Neal, *History of the Puritans*, II, pp. 182-84; Z. Grey, *An Impartial Examination of the Second Volume of Mr. Daniel Neal's History of the Puritans* (London, 1736), pp. 90-91. For more on Neal’s *History* and Grey’s responses to it, see Chapter Two in J. Seed, *Dissenting Histories: Religious Division and the Politics of Memory in Eighteenth-Century England* (Edinburgh, 2008).

¹⁸⁸ [Grey], *Serious Address*, p. 4. In addition, Grey quoted the anti-schismatic sentiments contained in Baxter’s 1650 work *Saints Everlasting Rest* (pp. 4-5).

¹⁸⁹ Ingram, ‘Representing and Misrepresenting the History of Puritanism’, p. 211.

Conclusions

In this chapter, it has been shown that anti-Methodist polemicists often attempted to convey a sense of objectivity by citing a diverse range of primary sources in their historical discussions. Ultimately, though, these historical discussions were decidedly partisan, and, in many cases, reminiscent of earlier High Church attacks on schism and Dissent. By comparing Grey's anti-Methodist works to his earlier anti-Dissenter polemics, these discussions have shown that Grey's treatment of both groups was virtually the same. We have seen that Grey made extensive use of the same source – namely Nalson and Ware's *Foxes and Firebrands* – both in his early attacks on Dissent, and in his later attacks on Methodism. Significantly, this suggests that Grey viewed Methodism as simply a new form of Dissent. On the other hand, 'ultra-Protestant' Whig divines, such as Lavington, used history in a different way, and argued that the Methodists and their alleged allies, the Non-Jurors, were merely the latest in a long lineage of popish 'enthusiasts'. This lineage, according to Lavington, could be traced back to the mystery religions of ancient pagans. Such pagano-papism was at least partly intended as an attack on Warburton's relatively optimistic assessment of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Thus, Lavington's disagreement with Warburton highlights the theological disparities amongst anti-Methodist Anglicans, and reinforces the notion that one should not view early anti-Methodist literature in isolation from the various other theological controversies which were being waged during this period.

Moreover, by illuminating the differing ways in which anti-Methodist authors deployed the popular charge of 'popery', this chapter has contested Colley's implication that anti-popery united Protestants in eighteenth-century Britain. The fact that Methodist and anti-Methodist authors attacked each other by referring to historic

examples of ‘popery’ is significant because it shows that there was no unifying concept of ‘modernity’ during this period. To his many High Church opponents, Whitefield’s ministry exemplified the ‘popish’ enthusiasm of the previous century. Thus, historians should avoid the teleological assumption that Whitefield was a ‘modern’ preacher. The discussions on Islam have similarly highlighted the theological and political divisions amongst anti-Methodist Anglicans. To any High Churchmen, it would have appeared that Bowman’s praise for Islamic toleration signified an anti-clerical agenda, which was reminiscent of Hoadly’s proposals for the comprehension of Dissenters. Finally, the discussions on *Methodists Impostors* have complemented the references in earlier chapters to literary disguises. On the surface, this text appears to be nothing more than a comparison between Wycliffe and Whitefield. Nevertheless, the author was clearly using anti-Methodism as a ‘Trojan horse’ to disguise what was blatantly a Non-Juror polemic.

Conclusions

This study has provided the first large-scale reintegration of anti-Methodism into the wider theological controversies of the eighteenth century. It has illuminated the multiple ways in which early anti-Methodist polemics were informed and shaped by numerous other theological controversies that were being waged during this period. Indeed, we have seen that many of the divines who launched printed assaults on evangelicalism also engaged in various other controversies. Such controversies included: pre-existing debates on faith and works, attacks on Deism, the eighteenth-century miracles debate, discussions on the eternity of hell torments, and, finally, the origins and history of the Church of England. Inevitably, engaging in these various other controversies often shaped the ways in which these divines perceived Methodism and its potential impact. In other words, these authors often had numerous theological issues on their mind when they wrote their anti-Methodist works. By reintegrating anti-Methodism into the wider theological and intellectual debates of the age, these discussions have ultimately shown that, as scholars, we need to be cautious of viewing eighteenth-century theological controversies in separate and unconnected silos. Therefore, by encouraging historians to pay greater attention to the intellectual and theological context in which eighteenth-century religious polemics were written, this study has potentially far-reaching ramifications for future scholarship. Crucially, by showing that contemporary discussions on such social issues as luxury and pleasure often overlapped with theological discussions on asceticism and self-denial, this study has bridged a divide between social and intellectual history. Evidently, both approaches complement each other well, and the discussions in Chapter Three provide an effective

model to support the notion that theological polemic was often informed and shaped by social issues (and vice versa).

These discussions – particularly those in Chapters Five and Six – have argued that the perceived relationship between Methodism and heterodoxy was much more complicated than historians have appreciated. Exploring the similarities between anti-Methodism and anti-Deism has made it clear that ‘Enlightenment’ and ‘Counter-Enlightenment’ are not helpful categories for analysing many theological debates, especially those of anti-Methodism. To orthodox High Churchmen, both Methodism and Deism were simply different forms of ‘enthusiasm’ and melancholia. Moreover, it was often feared that evangelical ‘enthusiasm’ would automatically lead to Deistic ‘enthusiasm’. On the other hand, we have seen that ‘enthusiasm’ was a charge which Deists, such as Peter Annet, hurled at evangelicals and High Church Anglicans. The highly subjective nature of what constituted ‘enthusiasm’ is something which has been illuminated further in the final chapter, where it has been shown that Methodism clearly meant different things to different people. To High Church Tories, such as Zachary Grey, Methodism was, in all but name, a new form of Dissent, which represented an ‘enthusiastic’ and ‘popish’ return to the events of the 1640s and 1650s. Other, more ‘ultra-Protestant’ divines, such as George Lavington, associated Methodist ‘enthusiasm’ with the seemingly crypto-popish High Churchmanship of the Non-Jurors. Such nuances, in turn, contribute to our understanding of the differing ways in which the charge of ‘popery’ was utilised as a polemical strategy during the eighteenth century.

Literary disguises have emerged as a recurring theme throughout these discussions. For example, while the anonymous ‘Deist’ of London’s work appears to be a pro-Whitefield tract on the surface, closer examination of this text has shown that the author’s real intention was to ridicule evangelicalism, along with High Church

Anglicanism. Additional discussions on such authors as Thomas Woolston and Henry Dodwell have shown that this polemical strategy was often utilised by heterodox theologians. Yet, this is not the only method of literary disguise which has been analysed. In fact, most of these case studies have highlighted examples of authors who used anti-Methodism as a ‘Trojan horse’ to launch a subtle attack on a much larger group. We have seen that Richard Challoner’s so-called *Caveat Against the Methodists* was really a caveat against Protestantism in general. Similarly, while Thomas Whiston’s *Important Doctrines* appeared to be an anti-Methodist tract on the surface, it is clear from Whiston’s heterodox views that this piece was really intended as an attack on orthodox Anglicanism. Finally, while Peter Annet’s *Judging for Ourselves* was advertised as an attack on Whitefield, this was clearly nothing more than a smokescreen for Annet’s real agenda, which was to launch an attack on priestly religion – in particular, that of the Church of England.

Importantly, it has been shown that anti-Methodist authors were not the only individuals who adopted this polemical strategy. Indeed, we have seen that Wesley also utilised this method of deception in his response to Conyers Middleton’s *Free Inquiry*. This work can be read as an example of Wesley joining forces with his old High Church adversaries to defend the post-apostolic Fathers against a common enemy (Middleton). Yet, it is clear from Wesley’s closing remarks that his response to Middleton was also intended as a subtle attack on those orthodox divines who rejected modern miracles. Ultimately, focusing on these various literary disguises highlights two significant things. First, it shows that the polemical strategies of Methodist and anti-Methodist authors sometimes overlapped considerably. Second, and more significantly, it tells us that, as scholars, we need to think much more carefully about who the unnamed targets of polemics may have been. Evidently, the eighteenth century was an

age of disguise, and historians need to be cautious of taking any form of polemic at face value. Therefore, by illuminating this method of deception, this study has implications for a range of disciplines, including literature, philosophy and intellectual history.

Transatlantic communication between anti-evangelical authors in England and colonial America was decidedly limited when compared to the ‘transatlantic community of saints’ which Susan O’Brien describes. Yet, it has been shown that anti-Methodism in England was sometimes informed and shaped by events in the colonies.¹ As bishop of London, Edmund Gibson’s overall view of evangelical ‘enthusiasm’ was informed not only by clergymen in England but also by those in the colonies. Because of his friendship with Timothy Cutler, Zachary Grey was also kept well-informed of colonial affairs. Furthermore, these anti-Methodist polemicists sometimes referred to colonial events in their works. For instance, in his *History of Enthusiasm*, Theophilus Evans described James Davenport’s infamous book-burning event. Similarly, in his *Serious Address*, Grey included Alexander Garden’s description of the murderous Dutartres family of the Carolinas. On the other hand, colonial attacks on evangelicalism were sometimes informed and shaped by anti-Methodist literature which had been published in England. We have seen that Weller’s *Trial of Mr. Whitefield’s Spirit* proved to be an especially popular text among colonial opponents of evangelical ‘enthusiasm’. Similarly, it has been shown that other texts, such as Stebbing’s *Caution Against Religious Delusion* and Waterland’s *Regeneration Stated and Explained*, were disseminated in the colonies. Therefore, this study makes a fundamental contribution to our knowledge of eighteenth-century transatlantic interactions. It achieves this by providing a crucial counterpoint to those recent works which have highlighted transatlantic evangelical communications and networks.

¹ O’Brien, ‘Transatlantic Community of Saints’.

Studies of anti-Methodism have often been the preserve of Methodist historians. Consequently, scholars have tended to highlight the various ways in which Wesley and Whitefield differed (or appeared to differ) from their clerical opponents. However, these discussions have shown that, on numerous points of theology, the differences between evangelicals and orthodox High Churchmen were not particularly profound. Unsurprisingly, this was more likely to be the case with Wesley, who – like his High Church opponents – was an Arminian. Of course, by the middle decades of the eighteenth century, one could not speak of ‘Arminianism’ as a homogeneous theological stance. Indeed, we have seen that Wesley was sometimes accused of either wittingly or unwittingly aiding the plight of Calvinists by denying that any sanctification occurred before justification, and speaking of a doctrine of ‘assurance’. Yet, when it came to his views on faith and works, Wesley had much in common with his High Church opponents. More specifically, he shared their belief that works were essential to one’s ultimate salvation.

Evidently, the theological divisions between evangelicals and anti-evangelicals were not always clear-cut. This point has been illuminated further by considering Whitefield’s admiration for Henry Scougal, and the hostile responses such admiration generated both from High Church Anglicans and other Calvinist evangelicals. Wesley’s rejection of the notion of total human depravity divided him from Whitefield, and brought him closer to his High Church adversaries. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to say that Wesley, along with such anti-Methodist divines as Daniel Waterland and James Bate, were considerably dissimilar to Calvinist evangelicals when it came to their views on original sin. All these individuals, as we have seen, were committed to upholding the Augustinian doctrine of original sin against such heterodox authors as Tindal and Middleton. Similarly, while evangelicals were more likely to invoke images of hell-fire

and damnation in their sermons, it would be wrong to state that High Church divines had abandoned the doctrine of eternal torment. Using the Pelagian and annihilationist sentiments contained in Whiston's *Important Doctrines* as a point of comparison, it has been shown that Methodists and orthodox High Churchmen shared similar ideas of what constituted 'heterodoxy'.

In addition, we have seen that the Methodists' teachings on asceticism and self-denial were not particularly controversial when taken alone. While it is certainly fair to say that most High Churchmen favoured a more moderate approach to recreational diversions, discussions on Edmund Gibson and Arthur Bedford have shown that many of Wesley and Whitefield's concerns about immorality were shared by some of their key clerical opponents. In fact, it was only because Whitefield combined his teachings on self-denial with a range of anti-clerical sentiments that Anglican divines started to view Methodist asceticism as a socially and politically dangerous theology. While some undoubtedly viewed the 'holy living' teachings of William Law and the Oxford Methodists as rather eccentric, there were also numerous members of the clergy and laity who viewed such teachings with admiration. Ultimately, by highlighting these various points of similarity between evangelicals and their High Church opponents, these discussions have undergirded those relatively recent works that have challenged the extent to which the Georgian clergy had given way to moral, spiritual and theological laxity.

Finally, we have seen that some of these anti-Methodist authors were members of the laity. Some of these lay authors were heterodox Dissenters, such as Ebenezer Hewlett. Others were Deists, such as Peter Annet. Yet, some were clearly of a High Church persuasion. Significantly, the example of Mary Hill has shown that these lay High Church authors were not always male. In his 2015 monograph, Robert Andrews

effectively challenges the stereotype that lay activism – both male and female – was the preserve of evangelical movements. Andrews achieves this by showing that late eighteenth-century High Churchmanship benefited from a proactive laity, who actively engaged in theological and political disputes.² Therefore, this study has gone some way in tracing the origins of this lay activism among High Church Anglicans. Yet, there is still much work to be done on the role and significance of the laity as religious polemicists throughout the ‘long’ eighteenth century.

² R.M. Andrews, *Lay Activism and the High Church Movement of the Late Eighteenth Century: The Life and Thought of William Stevens, 1732-1807* (Leiden and Boston, 2015).

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