

University of Oxford
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“[L]ord, thou keepest us at uncertaintyes that our hope might be in thee”:

Providence and Nonconformist Restoration Literature

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To my parents and husband.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation studies the nonconformist reassessment of how to think about providence, as seen in the literary publications of religious nonconformists in England during the Restoration period (1660–1687). The thesis challenges the idea that Restoration nonconformity was either insular and defeated or furtively radical, arguing that dissenters remained active through print culture but primarily for reasons of faith. This study finds nonconformists to be heterogeneous in loyalties, beliefs, experiences, and expectations. Yet, remarkably, these individuals respond to the Restoration moment by asking very similar questions about providence. Though they come to various conclusions, they share a hermeneutical humility and openness which make them reluctant to be determinist about providence's ways and willing to engage with opposing voices. Accordingly, this dissertation challenges the critical binaries of loyalist and dissident, conformist and nonconformist, and includes John Dryden as an unexpected foil and mirror to Restoration dissenters. The Poet Laureate's inclusion demonstrates the widespread relevance of nonconformists' questions about providence.

Chapter 1 reads Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis* (1667) as representative of the Stuart regime's politics of peace, which dissenting providentialism resisted, and *The Hind and the Panther* (1687) as aligned with nonconformists' revised providentialism. This chapter establishes the pivotal moments and ideologies that bookend the dissertation's dates. Chapter 2 explores how Milton's *1671 Poems* processes through scripture, as well as radical nonconformist beliefs about providence, in order to model to the reader their need to scrutinize and test ideas and beliefs to interpret aright. Chapter 3 examines the strained but symbiotic relationship between political loyalty and providence in Bunyan's conversion narratives, *Grace Abounding* (1666) and *The*

Pilgrim's Progress (1678; 1684). Chapter 4 studies the new, nonconformist reluctance to determine providential value on the basis of political loyalties in Hutchinson's biblical epic *Order and Disorder* (1679). Chapter 5 reads Baxter's *Poetical Fragments* (1681) as a simulacrum of its author's proposed, providential means to peace within the Restoration Church.

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CONVENTIONS

All quotations from contemporary works retain original spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and emphasis, unless otherwise noted. For clarity's sake, all quotations from early modern prefaces convey the author's intended emphasis rather than the printed text's inverted emphasis. Double v's are modernized with w's, and early modern abbreviations and ampersands are silently expanded, unless quoted from a modern edition that does not make these changes. If no author is listed for early modern texts, the text is anonymous. Long, early modern titles have been curtailed. Except where otherwise indicated, all biblical quotations are taken from the Authorized/King James Version.

ABBREVIATIONS

<i>AM</i>	<i>Annus Mirabilis</i>
<i>EIRC</i>	<i>Explorations in Renaissance Culture</i>
<i>ELH</i>	<i>English Literary History</i>
<i>EMLO</i>	<i>Early Modern Letters Online</i>
ESTC	English Short Title Catalogue
<i>GA</i>	<i>Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners</i>
<i>HP</i>	<i>The Hind and the Panther</i>
<i>OD</i>	<i>Order and Disorder</i>
ODNB	Oxford Dictionary of National Biography
OED	Oxford English Dictionary
<i>PF</i>	<i>Poetical Fragments</i>
<i>PL</i>	<i>Paradise Lost</i>
<i>PP</i>	<i>The Pilgrim's Progress</i>
<i>PR</i>	<i>Paradise Regained</i>
<i>RB</i>	<i>Reliquiae Baxterianae</i>
<i>RL</i>	<i>Religio Laici</i>
<i>SA</i>	<i>Samson Agonistes</i>
<i>TLS</i>	<i>Times Literary Supplement</i>

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

- Image 1:** Frontispiece to the British Museum's copy of the 1679 edition of *The Pilgrim's Progress*. 181

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INTRODUCTION

Providence in a Time of Uncertainty

In her monumental study *Providence in Early Modern England* (1999), Alexandra Walsham boldly and convincingly demonstrates that providentialism, the belief that the Creator actively and constantly intervenes in human affairs, “enjoyed near universal acceptance” in England between the Reformation and the Civil War period.¹ Medieval people had perceived the natural world as emblazoned with the supernatural, a “book” by which God revealed Himself and a “moralized universe” through which the Almighty blessed and punished His creatures.² After the Reformation extirpated intermediaries between the soul and God, English Protestants counted it their duty and privilege to discern and make sense of the workings of God all around them. To the early modern mind, every circumstance, whether calamitous, curious, or commonplace, was a potential communication from above, revealing God’s future plans, present purposes, or judgment on an individual, group, or nation. However, the proliferation of bellicose and partisan providential claims during the English Civil War, Interregnum, and early Restoration raised questions about the extent to which people could discern and interpret providence and, more troublingly, the extent to which God actually exercised authority over

¹ Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 2.

² Peter Harrison, *The Bible, Protestantism, and the Rise of Natural Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), Introduction; Robert W. Scribner, “The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the ‘Disenchantment of the World,’” *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 23, no. 3 (Winter 1993): 485, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/206099>.

human affairs.

This dissertation studies the providentialism practiced and taught in the Restoration writings of John Dryden, John Milton, John Bunyan, Lucy Hutchinson, and Richard Baxter. We know the latter four as religious nonconformists. Dryden, who was often a mouthpiece for the Restoration regime, seems the antithesis of nonconformity. Yet, I question the traditional demarcation between nonconformity and conformity, finding Dryden to be as much a juxtaposition and test of the nonconformists as he is, in surprising ways, a mirror of their uniquely nonconformist fears and hopes. Though dissimilar in theological convictions, political allegiances, family and education backgrounds, social status, professions, and experience of the Restoration, these five authors arrive at the same conclusion that earthly uncertainty acts as a catalyst for individual and collective spiritual reform. Persisting uncertainty moves people to transfer their hopes and trust from their or others' providential interpretations of earthly circumstances to God alone. I identify a revised practice of providential hermeneutics (the practice of discerning God's will) among religious nonconformists during the Restoration era that inverts the traditional order of providentialism. Since the Reformation, the English populace strove to interpret providential signs that they might know God's plans, but the writers studied in this dissertation test the process of abiding in the God behind all providential signs before evaluating the signs themselves.

The Restoration period begins with Charles II's return from exile in France and the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and the gradual reintroduction of episcopal ways between 1660–1662, following eleven years of Puritan and republican rule. The period concludes with William and Mary's overthrow of Mary's father and Charles II's younger brother, James II, in 1688, in what would become known as the "Glorious Revolution." Mark Goldie contends that

“the era saw the final attempt to coerce the English to be of one religion, and the final attempt by Anglicans to argue theologically and philosophically for the virtue of enforcing uniformity.”³ These efforts would prove futile, and “almost accidentally,” Goldie claims, religious pluralism became the predominant and permanent shape of religion in Britain when the Toleration Act of 1689 “defeated” the Restoration’s efforts for religious unity.⁴ “Dissenters” or “nonconformists” (terms which I use interchangeably) were those who, to some extent, could not conform to the national church or state on the basis of conflicting religious convictions. During the Restoration, nonconformists suffered persecution for their refusal to conform to the Church of England and for their part in—or, more often, simply association with—the “rebellion” of the Civil Wars (1642–1651), the “martyrdom” of Charles I (January 1649), and the dissolution of Britain’s longstanding monarchy and episcopacy during the Interregnum era (1649–1660).⁵

It is both misleading and fitting to label all who resisted the national church or Stuart regime “nonconformists.” The label is misleading because this group includes those who yearned to remain part of the Church of England but with the freedom to follow their consciences, and “separatists” who believed they must separate from the Church to obey God. Some demanded the national church’s reform to permit greater flexibility in doctrine or practice within the Establishment; others demanded toleration to establish new church bodies and practices. “Dissent” encompasses the politically radical and loyal, the theologically orthodox, controversial, and heretical. A recent transcription of a Canterbury diocese Catalogue, compiled in 1663 for the new Archbishop Gilbert Sheldon, reveals how divided and dissatisfied with the

³ Mark Goldie, *Roger Morrice and the Puritan Whigs: The Entering Book, 1677–1691* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2016), xxi.

⁴ Goldie, xv.

⁵ David Appleby, *Black Bartholomew’s Day: Preaching, Polemic and Restoration Nonconformity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 177; Goldie, *Roger Morrice*, xxiv.

religious settlement the Canterbury parishes remained even after the ejections of nonconformist ministers in 1662, inviting future research on dissent within the Restoration Church of England.⁶ Despite dissenters' varying convictions and aims, scholars of dissent keep finding reasons to group vastly different nonconformists. Neil Keeble, Sharon Achinstein, and George Southcombe identify in the bricolage of Christians outside the Church of England a shared literary culture, political activism, or method of engagement in Restoration print culture, respectively.⁷ In this vein, I unite four heterogeneous dissenters—as well as one loyal conformist—in a remarkably similar providentialism, which each develops in the crucible of the Restoration experience.

Scholars have long debated the extent to which Restoration dissent was active or passive, vocal or silent. Christopher Hill first framed Restoration dissent as an “experience of defeat,” the accepted failure of the Interregnum and the passive endurance of persecution.⁸ Hill is most interested in radical sectarian groups and his argument works best when applied to them; the causes of the most politically radical proved unsustainable after the Restoration, and their sects died out.⁹ However, Hill's argument falls short when applied to more moderate nonconformists. Neil Keeble's *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (1987) answers this shortcoming in Hill's study by bringing to light the vibrant literary culture that arose out of, and because of dissenters' experience of political defeat and persecution.¹⁰ This remains, in my opinion, the best study of Restoration dissent to date.¹¹

⁶ Tom Reid, ed., *The Restoration of the Church of England: Canterbury Diocese and the Archbishop's Peculiars* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2022), xxxviii.

⁷ N. H. Keeble, *The Literary Culture of Nonconformity in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1987), 23; Sharon Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent in Milton's England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 7–10; George Southcombe, *The Culture of Dissent in Restoration England: “The Wonders of the Lord”* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: The Boydell Press, 2019).

⁸ Christopher Hill, *The Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries* (London: Faber, 1984).

⁹ Hill, 17.

¹⁰ Keeble, *Literary Culture of Nonconformity*, 22.

¹¹ John Coffey, Johanna Harris, and Alison Searle follow in Keeble's steps, most recently in their edited collections, John Coffey, ed., *The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, vol. I: The Post-Reformation Era, c.*

Critics have applauded Keeble's illumination of nonconformity's remarkable cultural achievements but challenged his perception that nonconformists accepted their political defeat. Sharon Achinstein argues that Restoration dissenting writings were "embedded in significant social action."¹² Dissenters wrote not to comfort each other or find new areas for flourishing, like the appreciation of the individual (as Keeble argued), but to mobilize one another to political action.¹³ The "Good Old Cause" is an undefeated cause in Achinstein's study, blazing indefatigably in the hearts and minds of Restoration nonconformists. Achinstein strives to prove the "radical energies" of Milton's republicanism throughout the period, and Baxter's and Bunyan's "violent fantas[ies]...against their oppressors."¹⁴ Yet, her argument fails to grapple with the reality that nonconformists were often politically passive in actions and sometimes also in words after 1660. Writing may be its own kind of warfare, but it does not necessitate action.

More convincingly, George Southcombe and Mark Goldie argue that late-seventeenth-century dissenters directed their political ambitions into new avenues. Rather than to spur another rebellion, the nonconformist clergy in Southcombe's study use print to offer dissenters pastoral care and to communicate to conformists their political discontent and hopes for reform.¹⁵ The "Good Old Cause" might never rise again, but individuals like the Puritan Roger Morrice actively involved themselves in new political ambitions. Mark Goldie argues that Whiggism in the 1680s "transmuted" Puritans' "politico-religious commitments" from the Elizabethan and early Stuart eras "into new registers."¹⁶ A robust commitment to dissenting values did not require rebellion or violence.

1559–1689, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) and Johanna Harris and Alison Searle, eds., *The Puritan Literary Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024).

¹² Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent*, 3.

¹³ Keeble, *Literary Culture of Nonconformity*, 24; Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent*, 50, 84.

¹⁴ Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent*, 115, 72.

¹⁵ Southcombe, *Culture of Dissent*, 3.

¹⁶ Goldie, *Roger Morrice*, xvi.

I desire to take (what may appear to be) a few, critical steps back to Keeble's 1987 thesis and then a few steps forward to a different kind of activism and national engagement than that argued by Achinstein. The present study stands between an "experience of defeat" and unabated political activism and proposes that Restoration dissent was outwardly active for spiritual concerns. Like Keeble, I argue that dissenters felt a weighty sense of defeat and disillusionment and that few expected their political causes to resurrect. I agree that this very defeat of political ambitions (and, more specifically, the providential justifications for those ambitions) was "the condition of cultural achievement" for dissent.¹⁷ Yet, departing from Keeble, I suggest that Restoration dissent was not an insular culture, rooted in its age and circumstances but largely separate from the culture or politics of its enemies. Dissenters readily engaged with their enemies' concerns and hopes. I propose that their reason for this activism was not institutional reform, as Goldie and Southcombe argue, but spiritual awakening.¹⁸ This is not to challenge Goldie and Southcombe's convincing and masterful studies of nonconformists who toiled to evoke political change in their world. I instead hope to illuminate the reasoning behind those textual moments when dissenters did not act on their political convictions or strive after political clout.

John Coffey's question about whether Milton in the Restoration was a pacifist, quietist, or patient militant should be asked of every nonconformist, and again, of each of the texts within a canon, and sometimes even of various parts in or editions of a single text.¹⁹ Different moments in the Restoration invited explorations of different responses, and a single publication might wrestle

¹⁷ Keeble, *Literary Culture of Nonconformity*, 22.

¹⁸ Goldie argues that 1680s Puritans helped to shape "a new order of partisan politics," namely Whiggism, and Southcombe studies the ecclesial and political reforms which nonconformists championed; Goldie, *Roger Morrice*, xvi; Southcombe, *Culture of Dissent*, 24.

¹⁹ John Coffey, "Pacifist, Quietist, or Patient Militant? John Milton and the Restoration," *Milton Studies* 42 (2003): 149–74.

with fantasies of revenge and reasons for turning the other cheek. This dissertation investigates why Milton and Hutchinson could still cling to the belief that republicanism was the best form of government, yet not try to force this government's implementation in the *1671 Poems* and *Order and Disorder*, and why Baxter's *Poetical Fragments*'s and Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* can so virulently condemn contemporary persecution and simultaneously model apolitical quietism. Though Milton continued to hold freedom essential for spiritual flourishing, the *1671 Poems* does not strive to reform persecutory institutions or presume God's plans, but instead scrutinizes the possibility that God might cause liberty and truth to triumph in His own time and way. Bunyan wrestled with a deep mistrust of divine and earthly kings, who might wield their arbitrary authority to their subjects' detriment. Yet, *The Pilgrim's Progress* perseveres in hope against the apparent odds that both authority figures might eventually show favor. In the 1660s, Hutchinson so continued to value her and her regicide husband's mid-century republican endeavors that she penned a history justifying the Civil War for her progeny.²⁰ Yet, her only print publication, *Order and Disorder* (1679), so separates providence's will from politics that it extends spiritual empathy and even the possibility of salvation to royalists. Baxter so doggedly strove for the comprehension of nonconformists into the national church that he turned down Charles II's offer of a bishopric in 1660 and became one of the approximately 2,000 nonconformist ministers ejected from the Church of England in 1662.²¹ Yet, despite Baxter's unwavering conviction that the Church of England should base its membership only on Christianity's core doctrines, or "Mere Christianity" (a phrase that Baxter coined and C. S. Lewis

²⁰ Lucy Hutchinson, *Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson*, ed. James Sutherland (London: Oxford University Press, 1973).

²¹ N. H. Keeble, "Baxter, Richard (1615–1691)," ODNB, 2009, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1734>.

made famous), *Poetical Fragments* surrenders the Church's reform to God's timing and way.²²

These texts' providential reassessments certainly originate in their authors' "experience of defeat" but are, by no means, defeatist.²³ Had national liberty, the king, republicanism, or the Church of England successfully evoked national stability and spiritual peace, these authors might never have looked elsewhere for a source of providential authority to live by. The "defeat" of earthly expectations led these authors to test what it looks like and means to place their hopes on the firmer foundations of God and eternity and to stop seeking solutions to their own and society's problems in earthly authorities, even when those authorities held continued significance for them. Their texts demonstrate a refocusing on eternal concerns like God's authority, salvation, worship, heavenly rewards and community, and nearness to Christ. Far from separating these nonconformists from temporal concerns, this spiritual focus drove them to communicate to contemporaries how eternal priorities might offer meaning in a changeable, uncertain world.

John Dryden, the loyal Poet Laureate of Charles II and James II and a unrelenting scorner of Protestant dissenters, is an outlier among these persecuted Puritans, Baptist, and republicans.²⁴ Dryden is, by no means, a nonconformist in the traditional sense of the word. However, his conversion to Catholicism in the 1680s was a more radically nonconforming act than has been recognized by critics. While aligning with the beliefs of the current monarch, James II, Dryden's conversion boldly and with great self-awareness dissents from Britain's longstanding Protestant identity and from its likely return to Protestantism after James. The heir apparent, James's daughter Mary, was a loyal Protestant. Dryden, who always acted with the next regime in mind,

²² C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1952). For Baxter's development of the concept of "Mere Christianity," see Chapter 5, p. 261, *passim*.

²³ Hill, *Experience of Defeat*.

²⁴ Paul Hammond, "John Dryden (1631–1700)," ODNB, October 8, 2009, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/8108>.

as Thomas Keymer recently demonstrated, could be called a *prospective nonconformist* of the next regime in his conversion to Catholicism.²⁵

Dryden's early Restoration poetry foils the providentialism of Protestant nonconformists, but his poetry after his conversion to Catholicism aligns with the central tenets thereof. He shares their distinct turning from temporal authorities and confident readings of earthly circumstances to an eternal authority that gives hope amidst persisting, earthly uncertainty. The Poet Laureate, who emphasized the importance of a mediator between God and humanity before and after his conversion, looks to the Roman Catholic Church as this eternal authority, rather than to God directly. Yet, significantly, Dryden—like Milton, Bunyan, Hutchinson, and Baxter—sought a providential authority not tied to the age's politics or culture. Although Dryden remained a loyal Stuart until his death, he stopped looking to the monarchy to stabilize the nation after his conversion to Catholicism.

Separating providence from narrow party interests discouraged the demonization or suppression of one's enemies. If God's will was not cause-centric, a person's political or ecclesial loyalties could not indicate their righteousness or wickedness. Nonconformists' new providentialism fostered a spiritual humility that encouraged dialogue with those of very different backgrounds and beliefs. Dissenters—historically stereotyped as individualistic due to their emphasis on personal conversion—formed dynamic spiritual communities among themselves, as recently illuminated in *Church Life: Pastors, Congregations, and the Experience of Dissent in Seventeenth-Century England* (2019).²⁶ Yet, I am more interested in dissenters' engagement with those different than themselves, particularly because, as later discussed,

²⁵ Thomas Keymer, *Poetics of the Pillory: English Literature and Seditious Libel, 1660–1820* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 27–88.

²⁶ Michael Davies, Anne Dunan-Page, and Joel Halcomb, eds., *Church Life: Pastors, Congregations, and the Experience of Dissent in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).

Restoration conformist culture often eschewed the need for dialoguing. As my inclusion of John Dryden underscores, the issues that these nonconformist writers addressed were of national importance and interest, and their proffered solutions resonated beyond their dissenting communities.

Mark Goldie makes a case for the “porosity” of late-seventeenth-century Anglicanism and dissent. Goldie argues that the mixed political, religious, and social loyalties of individuals on both sides of the politico-religious divide invited engagement and fluidity between parish churches and conventicles and between conformists, nonconformists, and their texts.²⁷ My research upholds this “porosity” on a cultural, political, and even social level. The authors in this dissertation often engage positively with popular literary and intellectual cultures and count those of different political convictions among their friends. However, I agree with George Southcombe that religious identities were more stable than Goldie’s thesis of “porosity” allows.²⁸ Restoration nonconformists suffered for their refusal to compromise on spiritual matters—a refusal which cost them jobs, university educations, fines, imprisonment, social stigmatization, and the psychological pressures of sporadic and often arbitrary persecution for thirty years. Bunyan spent over twelve years in prison for refusing to stop preaching. Baxter gave up his beloved congregation at Kidderminster, Worcestershire, to stand by his spiritual and ecclesial convictions. Dryden eventually lost his esteemed poet laureateship and died in poverty. These writers were not flexible or porous in their faith.

Sharon Achinstein argues that nonconformists’ “otherworldliness,” “commitment to ‘true religion,’” and “notions of political agency” rendered them “particularly incapable of extending

²⁷ Goldie, *Roger Morrice*, xxii–xxiv.

²⁸ Southcombe, *Culture of Dissent*, 78.

tolerance to others quite unlike themselves.”²⁹ Indeed, we see intolerance throughout nonconformist writings, but also throughout contemporary thought. Despite some truly remarkable movements towards toleration, including John Locke’s great treatises, James II briefly securing Britain’s greatest official liberty predating the nineteenth century, and William and Mary’s Toleration Act of 1689, critics have come to agree that late-seventeenth-century Britain’s movement towards toleration was slow, staggered, and often regressive.³⁰ Milton’s *Samson Agonistes* ends with the violent, mass execution of pagan oppressors. Hutchinson’s *Order and Disorder* depicts God as “the great King of Terrors” riding on the waves during the Flood, actively, horrifically, drowning the world’s entire population apart from the godly Noah and his family.³¹ Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* puts our ear to the door of hell, where we hear the chilling cries of those who rejected the way of righteousness.³²

Critical abhorrence of such “intolerances” reflects the anachronistic, modern notion of tolerance as indifference or, increasingly, approval. Political equality and widespread belief in natural human rights have become insufficient marks of a tolerating society, and we see a rise in celebration and commemoration months for underrepresented groups. However, in the early modern world, toleration was inseparable from disapproval, or, in Alexandra Walsham’s words, charity and hatred were never far apart.³³ Dryden’s contemptuous bestialization of Protestant

²⁹ Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent*, 5.

³⁰ For movements towards toleration: John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558–1689* (Harlow: Pearson Education Limited, 2000), 171, 191; J. H. Burns and Mark Goldie, eds., *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 648. For John Locke’s writings on toleration: *Political Essays*, ed. Mark Goldie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), esp. 134–59. For toleration’s oft-regressive trajectory: Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel, and Nicholas Tyacke, eds., *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 2; Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 11–14; Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable Hatred: Tolerance and Intolerance in England, 1500–1700* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 300–302; Goldie, *Roger Morrice*, xxvii–xxviii.

³¹ Lucy Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, ed. David Norbrook (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), 7.447.

³² John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress: From This World to That Which Is to Come*, ed. James Blanton Wharey and Roger Sharrock, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 287.

³³ Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*. See also Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 10–11, 35.

dissenters in his pro-tolerationist poem *The Hind and the Panther* captures this paradox. A condemnation of lifestyles or worldviews should not be equated with intolerance *tout court*. Instead, the terror and violence of the examples of “intolerance” described above illustrate these texts’ teaching that all who are not saved must be damned. A wrathful Deity was all that those who rejected the loving Savior could expect of their futures, whether in this life or that to come. *Pace* Achinstein, this dissertation finds in dissenters’ depictions of violence against their enemies not a gleeful expectation of their oppressors’ downfall so much as a holy fear of God.³⁴ My research repeatedly finds nonconformists in spiritual dialogue with their enemies, and often in dialogue that is more gracious or suppliant than condemning. This dialoguing is, in a very real early modern sense, an act of toleration, as much as it is an evangelistic effort. I attribute this dialoguing not to the “porosity” of contemporary religion but to nonconformists’ revised providentialism. By making God, rather than an interpretation of God’s will, the hope for the future, these nonconformists could engage with those who interpreted God’s will differently, believing that, ultimately, only God knew what the future held.

I am especially indebted to George Southcombe’s thesis that dissenters employed print culture as the central means of engaging with conformist audiences. Southcombe argues that many nonconformist writers did not confine their texts to particular religious confessions but aimed at wider audiences, whether explicitly, by directly naming those audiences in the title or preface, or implicitly, by appropriating popular literary cultures.³⁵ Dissenting publications “contribute[d] disproportionately to Restoration print culture,” and dissenters represented 13–15% of the literate population—a remarkable amount considering that they only made up 6–10%

³⁴ Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent*, 5.

³⁵ Southcombe, *Culture of Dissent*, 22.

of the nation.³⁶ That nonconformist texts often went through multiple editions suggests that they outgrew their narrow, nonconformist audiences and successfully reached wider, conformist audiences, as well.³⁷ Richard Baxter, John Bunyan, and John Milton were bestselling authors, with Baxter being one of the most prolific writers of the seventeenth century.³⁸ *Paradise Lost* eventually so captured the imagination of conformist audiences that Dryden famously adapted Milton's epic to rhyme and opera in *The State of Innocence* (1677).³⁹ While it is tempting to focus on how such conformist responses challenge nonconformist values or styles, it is perhaps more fruitful to consider how the texts of a marginalized people group resonated with their enemies and were deemed significant enough to engage and dialogue with.

I order the following chapters chronologically by the primary texts' publication dates to mark the beginning of the texts' dialoguing through print. This is no slight against scribal publication, which Arthur Mariotti and others have demonstrated to be as public a form as print.⁴⁰ Composition dates are difficult to determine with precision, but they nonetheless invite inquiries

³⁶ Southcombe, 5, 18. For population figures: M. R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 1:491–510; Goldie, *Roger Morrice*, 22.

³⁷ Southcombe, *Culture of Dissent*, 19.

³⁸ N. H. Keeble et al., "General Introduction," in *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr Richard Baxter's Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 1–2. For multiple editions of Bunyan's and Milton's works: Richard Greaves, "Bunyan, John (bap. 1628, d. 1688)," ODNB, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/3949>; Gordon Campbell, "Milton, John (1608–1674)," ODNB, 2009, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18800>.

³⁹ John Dryden, *The Works of John Dryden*, ed. Vinton A. Dearing, vol. 12 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 79–146. For most extensive study of Dryden's adaptation: Tobias Gabel, *Paradise Reframed: Milton, Dryden, and the Politics of Literary Adaptation, 1658–1679* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2016). *PL* was not immediately successful but became a national classic by the late 1680s; Campbell, "John Milton (ODNB)," "*Paradise Lost*."

⁴⁰ Marotti argues that many early modern writers perceived no difference in the superiority or purpose of print and manuscript. Thomas Keymer notes that "scriptorial production and manuscript circulation were the default means of publication for Whig or proto-Whig satire" in the 1680s and were considered by authorities to be "quite as dangerous...as printed texts." Martin Dzelzainis claims that the period's head publisher, Roger L'Estrange, "regarded scribal publication as the more subversive medium," likely because of its ability to skirt licensing laws; Arthur F. Marotti, *Manuscript, Print, and the English Renaissance Lyric* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 146; Keymer, *Poetics of the Pillory*, 32; Martin Dzelzainis, "Managing the Later Stuart Press, 1662–1696," in *The Oxford Handbook of English Law and Literature, 1500–1700*, ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 531.

into a text's creation process, inspiration, and purpose. Scribal publication is especially valuable in considering Lucy Hutchinson's *Order and Disorder*, which was published partly in print (the first five cantos) and partly in manuscript (all twenty cantos), and Richard Baxter's *Poetical Fragments*, which includes dates of composition predating publication by nearly forty years. Yet print publication offers more insight to the authors' purposeful dialoguing with audiences beyond their nonconformist circles, considering that each of these authors submitted to Restoration licensing laws. Many dissenting texts were published clandestinely, and, sometimes, publishers who had gained the legal stamp of approval, the imprimatur, "took the imprimatur off licensed work in order to create doubt about its legality—a doubt that would have increased its commercial prospects."⁴¹ Yet, besides *Poetical Fragments*, which was published during a lapse of the Licensing Act, the primary nonconformist texts studied in this dissertation secured and displayed their imprimaturs.⁴² (Baxter was otherwise deferential to Restoration licensing laws.⁴³) The two parts of *The Pilgrim's Progress* were among the few publications that Bunyan chose to license.⁴⁴ These were not attempts to thwart the Stuart regime's legislations or tantalize potential readers with textual transgression, but purposeful submission to laws with which these authors disagreed.

I depart from Southcombe's argument regarding how Restoration nonconformist texts

⁴¹ Southcombe, *Culture of Dissent*, 10.

⁴² See the licensing details in the general notes in the English Short Title Catalogue for Milton's *1671 Poems* (ESTC R299), Dryden's *Hind and the Panther* (ESTC R233177), Hutchinson's *Order and Disorder* (ESTC R31266), and the entry for Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* in *A Transcript of the Registers of the Worshipful Company of Stationers: From 1640-1708 A.D.* (London, 1914), 3:49, <https://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/012204105>.

⁴³ Rather than to publish illegally, Baxter published little between 1662–1679 when he struggled to get licenses; N. H. Keeble, "Rewriting the Public Narrative: The Publishing Career of Richard Baxter, 1662–96," in *Textual Transformations: Purposing and Repurposing Books from Richard Baxter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 103, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780198808817.003.0006>.

⁴⁴ N. H. Keeble, "'Come Ye out from among Them, and Be Ye Separate': Bunyan and the Writing of Dissent," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Bunyan*, ed. Michael Davies and W. R. Owens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 143.

engaged with a wider audience. Though Southcombe notes the “surprising...extent to which Nonconformists turned to poetry” (and to creative genres, more broadly), he, as a historian, admits to being “uninterested in the aesthetic qualities” of nonconformists’ publications.⁴⁵ My research deems this imaginative turn essential to nonconformists’ Restoration engagement because essential to communicating their revised providentialism. As critics have noted, dissenters’ turn to creative genres (as opposed to didactic or polemical forms) skirted censorship laws, but also significant is the fact that literary devices obscure the reader’s expectations and the text’s meaning just enough to inhibit hasty interpretations.⁴⁶ While sermons and religious treatises explicitly state the speaker’s argument, literary devices like metaphor, imagery, paradox, and allegory require the reader to humor multiple, varied, sometimes contradictory meanings at once. This imaginative ambiguity mimics the era’s irresolvable providential uncertainties but removes the sting of that uncertainty. Literary ambiguity allows one to understand more, not less, to perceive meaning as broader and more evocative than black-and-white didacticism allows. The texts studied in the following chapters similarly invite readers of providence to consider interpretations of God’s will that supersede their temporal framework, partisan loyalties, or personal assumptions. These texts offer the Restoration populace a means of honestly acknowledging but also effectively responding to providential uncertainties in an age in which uncertainties tended to evoke either responses of helplessness or assertions of false surety.

The Restoration populace’s relationship with providence sprang naturally from two, long, ideological arcs spanning from the Reformation: overly confident providential readings, which, in their failure, had bred disillusionment, and a growing reliance on human agency in securing

⁴⁵ Southcombe, *Culture of Dissent*, 15, 22.

⁴⁶ For example, Nicholas von Maltzahn argues that Roger L’Estrange’s driving concern over texts with explicit meaning placed literary works “beyond immediate censure”; “L’Estrange’s Milton,” in *Roger L’Estrange and the Making of Restoration Culture*, ed. Anne Dunan-Page and Beth Lynch (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 37.

God's providential plan. The "relationship of divine providence to free human agency" is the perennial debate which Andreas Beck identifies within the reformed doctrine of providence, and this debate tipped scales dramatically in the time between the Reformation and Restoration.⁴⁷ Early Protestants in the sixteenth century demonstrated a "particular preoccupation...with the workings of providence," as they strove to discern their eternal destinies, over which the prevailing Calvinist soteriology gave them no agency.⁴⁸ When reformed England was delivered from the threats of unreformed people or nations in the Spanish Armada of 1588 or the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, the populace's providentialism gained a much-desired outlet for human agency. Protestant England began to see itself as a nation specially chosen by God, like Israel. This gave rise to a patriotic providentialism which muddled the nation's earthly destiny and souls' eternal destinies. Contemporary preachers summoned their listeners to prayer and penitence to avert God's wrath or win His favor on the nation and slurred "the language of corporate repentance and temporal deliverance" with that of "individual redemption and eternal salvation."⁴⁹ People still could not save themselves, but their penitence could deliver England. In fact, the populace's failure to respond to the Lord's warning providences was "akin to collective suicide," dooming the nation to God's hovering sword.⁵⁰ People eagerly proclaimed the evidence of God's favor or disfavor on the basis of everything from their life experiences, to scripture, to occurrences in nature.

Yet, this patriotic providentialism polarized the nation when the apparent threats were domestic. Disagreements between Laudians and Puritans in the 1630s regarding God's favored

⁴⁷ Andreas J. Beck, "God, Creation, and Providence in Post-Reformation Reformed Theology," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Modern Theology, 1600–1800*, ed. Ulrich L. Lehner, Richard A. Muller, and A. G. Roeber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 207.

⁴⁸ Walsham, *Providence*, 9.

⁴⁹ Walsham, 150–51, 155 (quotation).

⁵⁰ Walsham, 297.

way to protect and prosper the national church helped to trigger the English Civil War.⁵¹

Republican Puritans and royalist Episcopalians both trumpeted how their cause was God's cause. Both sides justified and directed their war efforts on this basis and doomed their enemies, who courted divine wrath.⁵²

The populace began to attribute great national significance and providential agency to the actions of individuals. Across factions, the conviction grew that "one Noah, Lot, or Nehemiah might ransom an entire community or nation" and "one Achan or Jonah could be the cause of its undoing."⁵³ Noah's faith stopped God from totally annihilating humankind, and Lot's delivered him and his family from Sodom and Gomorrah's decimation (Genesis 6, 19). Nehemiah's courage to petition to the king of Persia on behalf of his exiled people after receiving a divine vision initiated the return of the third wave of Jewish exiles to Israel and Jerusalem's rebuilding. Achan's secret act of disobedience led to his entire family's death, and Jonah's flight from God endangered the lives of everyone with him (Joshua 7; Jonah 1). Those privy to providence's will felt they must assert it by word and policy, pike and musket, or risk God's annihilating wrath.

Such providentialism confused political ambitions with eternal destinies. Those who resisted providence's cause or retreated into passivity directly disobeyed God's will, and disobedience to God put the soul's salvation at stake (for Arminians) or into question (for Calvinists). Blair Worden has demonstrated how "[s]oul-searching and political calculation were inseparable" for Oliver Cromwell.⁵⁴ So convinced was Charles I that his active, uncompromising

⁵¹ For these opposing providential claims: Walsham, 163.

⁵² For such providentialism among Puritans, Charles I, and Episcopal clergymen, respectively: Blair Worden, *God's Instruments: Political Conduct in the England of Oliver Cromwell* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), esp. Chapters 1–2; Richard Cust, "Charles I and Providence," in *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England: Essays in Honour of Nicholas Tyacke*, ed. Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), 199–203, 207–8; William White, *The Lord's Battle: Preaching, Print, and Royalism during the English Revolution* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2023), 8.

⁵³ Walsham, *Providence*, 303.

⁵⁴ Worden, *God's Instruments*, 6; see also Chapter 2.

support of God's cause in this life was bound to his soul's fate in the next that his decisions in the 1640s often thwarted obvious opportunities for negotiation or self-preservation.⁵⁵ Wartime Episcopal clergy presented "adherence to king and Church...as a divine imperative, a matter of conscience and salvation, that left no room for backsliding or compromise."⁵⁶ The soul's salvation had become unorthodoxly bound to the individual's backing of a specific, temporal cause, and, ostensibly, God had damned that cause's enemies.

When each of these causes failed to one extent or another in the late-1650s and 1660s, both sides began moving away from the belief that God's will could be discerned with certainty. For the restored Stuart monarchy, this uncertain providentialism was an act of political safeguarding, of distinguishing the past from the present and the monarchy's beliefs from its enemies' beliefs. The restored regime argued that the dissenting "rebels" had wielded divine providence as a weapon for radical, political ambitions, a lever to overturn the monarchy and episcopacy. Sectarians and Puritans, who claimed to understand God's specific will, were threats to the state, initiators of social unrest, and purveyors of superstition.⁵⁷ The Almighty did not communicate His secret will, and especially not to chosen "seers" or through undignified signs like runaway pigs, the shapes of clouds, or the physical deformities of newborns.⁵⁸ The world's "magnificent regularities," not its unsettling contingencies, communicated divine realities.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Cf. Cust, "Charles I and Providence," 196, 202–3, 208.

⁵⁶ White, *Lord's Battle*, 8.

⁵⁷ William E. Burns, *An Age of Wonders: Prodigies, Politics and Providence in England, 1657–1727* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 59–61.

⁵⁸ Michael Winship examines the Restoration regime's questioning of the belief that God "communicated directly with the faithful," who, as his title indicates, believed themselves to be "seers of God"; Michael P. Winship, *Seers of God: Puritan Providentialism in the Restoration and Early Enlightenment* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 33. For examples of such "undignified" providential signs: Walsham, *Providence*, 1–2 (runaway pig); *Eniautos Terastios. Mirabilis Annus, or, The Year of Prodigies and Wonders* (London, 1661), 1–37 (celestial signs); *Mirabilis Annus Secundus, or, The Second Year of Prodigies* (London, 1662), 43–44, 53 (monstrous births).

⁵⁹ Burns, *Age of Wonders*, 61.

Furthermore, nature reflected God’s character—His orderliness, rationality, beauty, and glory—not His plans for the future.⁶⁰ The Lord was no terrifying, hovering Deity, waiting to meet out vengeance on the ungodly, nor did He single out favorites, preordained for election.⁶¹ God wanted humans to be content, useful, and flourishing. Even His rebukes were gentle and amiable.⁶² The God of the universe was largely uninterested in the nation’s petty squabbles or in individuals’ lives.⁶³ His providences encouraged general, corporate goods like moral living, political loyalty, and social stability.⁶⁴ God was, above all, more distant from human affairs than previous generations had realized.⁶⁵ It thus fell to Charles II and his government to work out the details of attaining national order and flourishing.

The few critics who study providence in the Restoration period take for granted the Stuart regime’s vilification of their enemies’ providentialism, as if it were a uniquely dissenting practice. William Burns argues that radical sectarians’ belief that prodigies, or “bizarre natural phenomenon,” were signs of God’s wrath or approbation on the individual or state was untenable in the new age of reason and the cautious observations and repeated testing of the newly developed scientific method.⁶⁶ Michael Winship suggests that the seer-like providentialism of religious “enthusiasm” could hold no candle to the “rational religion” of the Stuart regime. Thus,

⁶⁰ Burns, 60–61.

⁶¹ For Restoration Anglican providentialism’s rejection of Calvinist theology: Winship, *Seers of God*, 32–33. Critics have long agreed that Calvinism declined in popularity after 1660. For an early study: Gerald R. Cragg, “The Eclipse of Calvinism,” in *From Puritanism to the Age of Reason* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1950), 13–36.

⁶² For this new perspective of God and His purposes for humankind: Alexandra Walsham, “The Happiness of Suffering: Adversity, Providence, and Agency in Early Modern England,” in *Suffering and Happiness in England, 1550–1850*, ed. Michael J. Braddick and Joanna Innes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 61.

⁶³ Winship examines how Restoration Anglican clergy questioned humankind’s ability to interpret providence, and especially discredited partisan, providential interpretations; Winship, *Seers of God*, 41.

⁶⁴ This is the argument of John Spurr’s chapter “‘Virtue, Religion, and Government’: The Anglican Uses of Providence,” in *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England*, ed. Tim Harris, Paul Seaward, and Mark Goldie (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 30.

⁶⁵ Burns, *Age of Wonders*, 68; Walsham, “Happiness of Suffering,” 62.

⁶⁶ Burns, *Age of Wonders*, 1 (quotation), 59–63.

“out of step with the times,” Puritans were forced to discard their providential practices and beliefs.⁶⁷ John Spurr claims that, *pace* the practices of the Episcopal clergy in the 1640s and 1650s (as recently delineated by William White), the Restoration Anglican clergy readily rejected reading providential signs as revelations of “the secret decrees of God” or “our individual salvation.”⁶⁸ Providences and prodigies were only the “pawns and weapons of sectarian conflict,” “clever attempts” to disseminate and authenticate “religious and political manifestos.”⁶⁹

Yet, mid-century royalists had also read providence into their political ambitions, perceived God to be indisputably on their side, and understood their eternal destinies in light of temporal providences. The views on providence promulgated by the Stuart regime were more the result of stifling uncertainty than a scientific liberation from the past’s superstitions. Less and less certain of how the Almighty moves in the world, the regime took the final step in a long tradition of early modern providentialism, in which divine and human agency had come to weigh increasingly similarly on the scale of human affairs. First, humans could only *read* the signs of personal salvation; then, the populace could also *repent* for the nation’s deliverance and actively obey for the nation’s prospering; and lastly, those in the providential-know could also *enact* God’s will for the nation. This gradual expansion of humanity’s providential role minimized God’s authority and role in human affairs. The shift in focus from personal to national eschatological concerns (or, at least, the muddling of the two) framed providence as concerned more with the temporal than eternal. With God’s specific will unclear and eternity less pressing, the Stuart regime asserted providence’s will for England’s future to be the achievement of social stability, moral reform (rather than salvific certainty), and political loyalty.⁷⁰

⁶⁷ Winship, *Seers of God*, 3, 71, 61.

⁶⁸ White, *Lord’s Battle*; Spurr, ““Virtue, Religion, and Government,”” 33.

⁶⁹ Walsham, *Providence*, 218–19.

⁷⁰ Spurr, ““Virtue, Religion, and Government,”” 30.

This revised providentialism had far-reaching effects, perhaps most significantly in how Charles II and James II's political policies and ambitions tended to abandon the theological justifications of earlier regimes and instead found justification in promises of national order and flourishing. Colin Jager highlights what he calls a "profound" "conceptual shift" in the Restoration of categorizing dissent as "a *political* rather than a theological" matter.⁷¹ Earlier generations had believed that kings and magistrates must persecute in order to rescue sinners erring from the godly fold and protect the nation from sin, heresy, and God's annihilating wrath.⁷² In the Elizabethan and early Stuart eras, the usual aspersions cast on the Protestants on the fringes of the national church were that they were legalistic or fanatical, puritanical and "too hot."⁷³ Yet, Charles II's government aimed not at dissenters' spiritual reform but "at their political neutralization."⁷⁴ "Nonconformity" rather than "heresy" became the national threat to be bridled or destroyed.⁷⁵ The monarch's role shifted from "defender of the faith" to defender of national order. Faith became a concern primarily in how it impacted national order rather than as a means to that order.⁷⁶ The Stuart regime's tactics for maintaining social stability and encouraging national success shifted from guiding the populace not to evoke God's wrath to guiding the populace to political and religious conformity.

Neil Keeble and Sharon Achinstein remark how the Stuart regime's laws and policies

⁷¹ Colin Jager, "Common Quiet: Tolerance Around 1688," *ELH* 79, no. 3 (2012): 572, <https://doi.org/10.1353/elh.2012.0021>.

⁷² For insightful studies on previous generations' spiritual justifications for persecution: Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, esp. 39–49; David Loewenstein, *Treacherous Faith: The Specter of Heresy in Early Modern English Literature and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), esp. Introduction.

⁷³ Cf. Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), 27; Walsham, *Providence*, 163–66.

⁷⁴ Jager, "Common Quiet," 572.

⁷⁵ Jager, 572.

⁷⁶ For example, John Locke argues for the separation of church and state as a means to protect the state in *An Essay on Toleration* and *A Letter Concerning Toleration*; Locke, *Political Essays*, 134–59, esp. 137–38, 144, 154; John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government and a Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 211–56, esp. 218–20.

condemned dissent as a general category and paid no heed to how heterogeneous those who took issue with the episcopacy were.⁷⁷ This umbrella approach made logistical sense. Before the proliferation of sects in the 1640s and 1650s, the state primarily needed to address “the range of practice and opinion” allowable “*within* the established church.”⁷⁸ The dissenting Godly in the Elizabethan era or in the 1630s under Archbishop Laud, for instance, desired to reform the Church of England from the inside and ignite widespread spiritual fervor and discipline.⁷⁹ Such nonconformity’s very proximity to and overlap with the lives and practices of conformists made it easier for the state to evaluate, if not to monitor. However, now there were Fifth Monarchists, Ranters, Quakers, Muggletonians, Independents or Congregationalists, Particular Baptists, General Baptists, Presbyterians, Puritans, and Roman Catholics, and these were of varying doctrines, religious practices, levels of orthodoxy, political radicalism, size, political and social activism, and friendliness towards the Church of England. Although many of these dissenting groups predated the mid-seventeenth century, the hindrances to state control during the civil wars and the dissolution of the national church during the Protectorate had given the groups twenty years to develop their identities as separate from or, at least, unregulated by the episcopacy.⁸⁰ Heresy had always been a “highly subjective and slippery” term to define, and to determine the orthodoxy of each dissenting group would prove laborious, even impossible.⁸¹ However, to recognize that each group, on some level, resisted the Church of England or monarchy allowed the Restoration regime to treat *all* dissenters as national threats.

Early Restoration legislation aimed at outward conformity. What would become known

⁷⁷ Keeble, *Literary Culture of Nonconformity*, 47; Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent*, 10.

⁷⁸ Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 160.

⁷⁹ Keeble, *Literary Culture of Nonconformity*, 7.

⁸⁰ Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 160.

⁸¹ Loewenstein, *Treacherous Faith*, 6.

as the Clarendon Code, issued between 1661–1665, was a series of penal laws crafted by the revanchist Cavalier Parliament and aimed at all religious nonconformists. These laws sought to exclude dissenters from public engagement, while simultaneously punishing involvement in dissenting communities, and were intransigent in their demands for complete adherence to newly imposed, narrowly defined standards of acceptable religious practice. The Code barred dissenters from public office; caused around 2,000 clergymen (which included one third of London’s ministers) to be ejected from their ministries for taking issue with any part of the Book of Common Prayer or Church of England; outlawed all non-parish-church religious meetings larger than a household; and forbade ejected ministers from coming within five miles of their old church.⁸² Most of the clergymen living outside of London could not secure copies of the newly revised Prayer Book before the Act of Uniformity went into effect on 24 August 1662.⁸³ Ministers thus had to choose whether or not to conform based not on evidence of the restored Church of England’s spiritual bent, ecclesial practices, or biblical orthodoxy, but on its institutional reputation.

The penal code also targeted nonconformist writing, muzzling the primary voice and form of social activity now available to dissenters. The Licensing Act of 1662 condemned

heretical seditious schismatical or offensive Bookes or Pamphlets wherein any Doctrine or Opinion shall be asserted or maintained which is contrary to Christian Faith or the Doctrine or Discipline of the Church of England or which shall or may tend or be to the scandall of Religion or the Church or the Government or Governors of the Church State

⁸² Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 166–69; Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and Politics from the Restoration until the Exclusion Crisis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 63–64; M. R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), 1:223–27; Goldie, *Roger Morice*, 15–20. Historians have supported Richard Baxter’s estimation that 1,800 clergymen were ejected. Watts and Coffey put the number just above 2,000 and Tom Reid humors a higher possibility; Watts, *The Dissenters*, 1:219; Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 168; Reid, *Restoration of the Church of England*, liv. Cf. Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr Richard Baxter’s Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times*, ed. N. H. Keeble et al. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 2:II. 101, §{132.}

⁸³ Keeble, *Literary Culture of Nonconformity*, 35.

or Common wealth.⁸⁴

This is a blatant demand for external, religious conformity to the Church of England and state, regardless of personal convictions. Schism is an equal threat to sedition and heresy.⁸⁵ Opinions are as dangerous as systematized doctrines. The Act uses the words “offensive” and “scandall” to indicate occasions for spiritual disbelief, moral lapse, or religion’s discrediting. However, this diction also raises concerns about reputation and respectability, criticizing dissent as displeasing, repugnant, or disgraceful to the wider community and its leaders.⁸⁶ The fury with which Roger L’Estrange, the Surveyor and Licenser of the Press from 1662 to 1688, waged war against nonconformist authors targeted dissent’s social repercussions rather than beliefs. L’Estrange denied nonconformist texts licenses, exercised heavy-handed censorship, composed six million words “in his attempt to crush dissent,” and championed humiliating punishments for authors and publishers.⁸⁷ “Your *Actions* indeed are *Limited*, but your *Thoughts* are Free,” L’Estrange told dissenters in 1663.⁸⁸

Yet, despite a claimed concern only for outward conformity, the Restoration regime stigmatized dissent in such a way as to urge conformity of beliefs, also. By the end of the 1650s, the word “vulgar” became associated with “enthusiasm” and “fanaticism”—two derogatory terms that more conservative members of the Church of England had long used of their hotter

⁸⁴ John Raithby, ed., “Charles II, 1662: An Act for Preventing the Frequent Abuses in Printing Seditious Treasonable and Unlicensed Bookes and Pamphlets and for Regulating of Printing and Printing Presses,” in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 5, 1628–80*, 1819, 428–35, <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/statutes-realm/vol5/pp428-435>.

⁸⁵ Early Restoration conformists commonly grouped such sins; N. H. Keeble, *The Restoration: England in the 1660s* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 125.

⁸⁶ “offensive, adj. and n.,” 3–6; “scandal, n.,” 1a–b, 3–4 (OED).

⁸⁷ Southcombe, *Culture of Dissent*, 8; Dzelzainis, “Managing the Later Stuart Press,” 533 (proposed punishments). See also Anne Dunan-Page and Beth Lynch, eds., *Roger L’Estrange and the Making of Restoration Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008); Peter Hinds, *The Horrid Popish Plot: Roger L’Estrange and the Circulation of Political Discourse in Late Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁸⁸ Roger L’Estrange, *Toleration Discuss’d* (London, 1663), 5–6.

brethren.⁸⁹ The new association fascinatingly illuminates the late-seventeenth-century's perception of nonconformity. *Fanatics* had kindled civil war, and *enthusiasm* beheaded the king; fanatics' "claim to personal inspiration by an indwelling spirit" had a "chiliastic and antinomian capacity to turn the social as well as the metaphysical world upside down."⁹⁰ But the vulgar were irrational, uneducated, and socially inferior individuals, whose lowly status and intellectual impotence posed no real, societal threat. Fanatics claimed to be the "seers of God," who, by the Spirit's revelation, were sure of their own election and God's secret will and coming wrath.⁹¹ But, what did the vulgar know? What could they prove? Fanatics were to be corrected, harnessed, even feared, but the vulgar were to be ridiculed.

This reframing encouraged uncorroborated stigmatization by downplaying the need to disprove nonconformist beliefs. William Burns demonstrates this mindset among the new body of natural philosophers in the 1660s, who did not bother to challenge the credibility of dissenters' claims that God communicated through bizarre, natural occurrences but, rather, simply denied the occurrences providential meaningfulness. Prodigies were the silly fancies of the uneducated, the poor, women, and religious and political grumblers, and had no place among the Restoration's intellectual elite.⁹² Dissent had no place with even basic rationality. Anglican satirists framed Puritans' propensity towards penitence as "the sign of mental disorder, a melancholia and morosity bordering on insanity."⁹³

Neither did dissent have a place among loyal British subjects. Sharon Achinstein argues that dissenters' "reliance on conscience" rendered them "no better than savages, unreliable as

⁸⁹ Winship, *Seers of God*, 33.

⁹⁰ J. G. A. Pocock, *Virtue, Commerce, and History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 219.

⁹¹ Cf. Winship, *Seers of God*.

⁹² Burns, *Age of Wonders*, 59–68.

⁹³ Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent*, 155.

preachers, teachers, office-holders, and citizens” in their enemies’ eyes.⁹⁴ Dissent truncated itself from true nationhood and citizenship, even from the most basic standards of civility. The state aligned orthodox Christianity with national allegiance and identified the true Church not merely with Protestantism (which the Church of England shared with all non-Episcopal Protestants, domestic and foreign) but with its formal ecclesiastical structure. Thus, the Restoration Church of England became “more emphatically English” than ever before—a truly *Anglican* Establishment.⁹⁵ (Accordingly, I apply the term “Anglican” exclusively to post-1660 Church of England members and matters.⁹⁶)

Dissenting books were publicly shamed, censored, or destroyed. The Cavalier responses to the publication of ejected ministers’ farewell sermons aimed “to strip Puritanism of any last vestiges of respectability” by feeding the public a “hearty diet of denunciation and ridicule.”⁹⁷ Book burnings included a hangman’s warning, which, Joad Raymond argues, exerted a sort of theatrical power over “the literary imagination.”⁹⁸ Dissenting rhetorical styles were ridiculed as antiquated. Whether serious or facetious, the dissenter-turned-ardent-conformist Samuel Parker proposed that Parliament should license the use of metaphor and allegory to rein in nonconformist preachers.⁹⁹ Parker targeted what conformists perceived to be the mystical, senseless, and imprecise preaching style associated with dissenters, which was so unlike the unornamented, unpedantic prose of great Anglican preachers like John Tillotson, the future

⁹⁴ Achinstein, 12. Achinstein references American dissenters here, but this is equally applicable to British dissenters.

⁹⁵ Goldie, *Roger Morrice*, xxiv.

⁹⁶ Patrick Collinson argues that critics should only apply the term “Anglican” to conformist church members during and after the English Civil War, deeming earlier applications “anachronistic.” However, the Anglican *Establishment* cannot be said to exist before the restoration of the national church in 1660; it is this *official* Anglicanism on which I base my terms; Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 26.

⁹⁷ Appleby, *Black Bartholomew’s Day*, 171, 180; also, Chapter 5, *passim*.

⁹⁸ Joad Raymond, “Censorship in Law and Practice in Seventeenth-Century England: Milton’s *Areopagitica*,” in *The Oxford Handbook of English Law and Literature, 1500–1700*, ed. Lorna Hutson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 517–18.

⁹⁹ Samuel Parker, *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie* (London, 1671), 74–75.

Archbishop of Canterbury.¹⁰⁰ Some, including Tillotson, did think “the misuse of metaphor responsible for doctrinal error.”¹⁰¹ However, Parker’s method of correction targets not beliefs but aberrant style. Parker’s proposal, Lana Cable argues, was an attempt to stigmatize dissenting writing by “subjecting it to the subtle censorship of social convention” and to render “freethinking” an “exclusive right” of the elite, the royalist, and the Anglican.¹⁰² The Restoration regime sought to silence nonconformity by framing it as a social stigma, an intellectual failure, a breakdown of civility and patriotism, an outmoded style, and an impairment to national flourishing, more than as an evil to quench or heresy to disprove. As I analyze in Chapter 1, John Dryden’s loyalist, 1667 poem *Annus Mirabilis* astutely communicates the Stuart regime’s self-glorification and methods of dealing with dissent—its valuing of conformity above belief and political above spiritual authority, its censure of the “vulgar,” and its reverence for the monarchy.

Yet, these coercions and stigmatizations secured neither nonconformist obedience nor national order and stability (as Dryden later also admitted). The Restoration regime’s theologically lackadaisical and politically confident front little mollified national anxieties. The systematic discrediting of dissent only amplified its danger in the populace’s mind, and the ferocity of persecution across the period exposed unmitigated fears of another rebellion.¹⁰³ England’s flourishing dizzyingly depended on the populace’s conformity to a changeable, divided government and evolving culture. The last Stuart kings and their Parliaments constantly

¹⁰⁰ For preaching style in Charles II’s court: Matthew Jenkinson, “Preaching at the Court of Charles II: Court Sermons and the Restoration Chapel Royal,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Early Modern Sermon*, ed. Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington, and Emma Rhatigan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 449. For criticisms of nonconformist preaching: Appleby, *Black Bartholomew’s Day*, 200–201.

¹⁰¹ Isabel Rivers, “Tillotson, John (1630–1694),” ODNB, September 24, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27449>.

¹⁰² Lana Cable, “Licensing Metaphor: Parker, Marvell, and the Debate over Conscience,” in *Books and Readers in Early Modern England: Material Studies*, ed. Jennifer Lotte Andersen, Elizabeth Sauer, and Stephen Orgel (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 245, 252.

¹⁰³ Beth Lynch, “Rhetoricating and Identity in L’Estrange’s Early Career, 1659–1662,” in *Roger L’Estrange and the Making of Restoration Culture*, ed. Anne Dunan-Page and Beth Lynch (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 13.

disagreed on whether toleration or persecution would best secure peace. Charles II promised dissenters toleration in the Declaration at Breda of 1660, but his Cavalier Parliament forced his agreement to draconian penal codes that were only occasionally suspended. To secure more support for his war efforts against the Dutch, Charles declared a royal indulgence in 1672, which Parliament promptly overturned. James II's even more liberal indulgence in 1687 evoked widespread discontent (even among its beneficiaries) and ended in his overthrow.¹⁰⁴ Furthermore, both the penal codes and moments of freedom were arbitrarily enforced. Between 1679–85, censorship laws lapsed as a distracted Parliament dealt with the Popish Plot and Exclusion Crisis, but other forms of persecution—first of Catholics and later of dissenters—increased to a ferocity unseen since the 1660s.¹⁰⁵ Some nonconformist publications were still “tried for seditious libel” during these years of alleged freedom.¹⁰⁶ What it meant to be a conformist morphed under the transition of power between Charles and James, and these kings' notorious personal lives tested their supporters' loyalty. The Church of England's exacting demands for total conformity in even gray areas of the faith perpetuated religious divisions unnecessarily by exiling from its sanctuaries moderate nonconformists who otherwise supported the Establishment. The world's contradictions, instabilities, and sufferings could not be explained by providential arguments that God dealt in regularities, exercised His authority through this changeable Stuart monarchy, and wanted human flourishing.

Furthermore, fears of divine wrath continued to be widespread, especially during moments of crisis—of which there were many. The last major epidemic of the bubonic plague decimated 20% of London's population between 1665–1666 and was immediately followed by

¹⁰⁴ Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 166–68, 172, 189–91.

¹⁰⁵ Dzelzainis, “Managing the Later Stuart Press,” 529; Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 172–73.

¹⁰⁶ George Southcombe, *English Nonconformist Poetry, 1660–1700* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), 8.

the outbreak of the Great Fire of London in September 1666, which “raged as if it had commission to devour everything that was in its way.”¹⁰⁷ Trade embargoes severed Britain from the international marketplace, giving rise to the Second and Third Anglo-Dutch Wars in 1665–67 and 1672–74. These abortive wars ended in Britain’s defeat, bled the state’s coffers, and exacerbated the populace’s growing mistrust of Charles II, who made a secret treaty with the powerful, Catholic king of France, Louis XIV, to fund the war effort.¹⁰⁸ The successive crises of the alleged Popish Plot and the Exclusion Crisis between 1679–1681 spread anti-Catholic hysteria unlike any experienced since the infamous Gunpowder Plot of 1605, and the ascension of James II, a Roman Catholic, to the throne in 1685 exacerbated these fears.¹⁰⁹ In 1688, this unstable regime ended with another revolution. True, this bloodless “Glorious Revolution” was “profoundly different” from the civil war that resulted from the “Puritan Revolution” in the 1640s.¹¹⁰ Yet, not wholly unlike Charles I, the last Stuart king was overthrown by his own people (his own family, in fact) and, like his predecessor forty years prior, exiled to France.¹¹¹

Conformists presented Restoration culture as fashionable, sociable, and rational, but the culture was glaringly self-contradictory. A rising generation of natural philosophers, who formed the Royal Society of London, set out to reform how the populace received, processed, and communicated information, stripping down the natural world to tangible facts, knowledge to

¹⁰⁷ A. Lloyd Moote and Dorothy C. Moote, *The Great Plague: The Story of London’s Most Deadly Year* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 10–11; Daniel Defoe, *The Novels and Miscellaneous Works of Daniel De Foe*, vol. 5 (London, 1869), 209.

¹⁰⁸ For helpful overview of the wars’ effects on Britain: J. R. Jones, *The Anglo-Dutch Wars of the Seventeenth Century* (London: Longman, 1996), Chapter 9. For the English populace’s growing fear of Louis XIV and concern over Charles II and James II’s partiality toward him; Mark Goldie and Charles-Édouard Levillain, “Francois-Paul de Lisola and the English Opposition to Louis XIV,” *The Historical Journal* 63, no. 3 (2020): 560, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0018246X19000025>.

¹⁰⁹ J. P. Kenyon, *The Popish Plot* (London: Heinemann, 1972); Goldie, *Roger Morrice*, Chapter 1.

¹¹⁰ Goldie, *Roger Morrice*, xv.

¹¹¹ W. A. Speck, “James II and VII (1633–1701),” ODNB, October 8, 2009, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14593>; Paul Seaward, “Charles II (1630–1685),” ODNB, May 19, 2011, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/5144>.

reason, and language to clarity and simplicity.¹¹² Yet, a new generation of poets and playwrights simultaneously transformed England's literary imagination in such a way that people now felt an affinity for the double entendre, the counterfeit, and the meaningless. Old moral standards became outmoded as popular writers paraded wit before belief, stung their enemies with satire, celebrated bawdy and atheism, and made heroes of rogues and libertines. It was, what John Spurr calls, a "masquerading age" which delighted in obfuscating reality and meaning.¹¹³

Some, particularly the intellectual elite in Charles II's court, even humored the possibility that the plot of human history was meaningless. Deism, the belief system that a Watchmaker Deity does not intervene in earthly affairs post-creation, that the natural world and all its circumstances unfold by chance, natural order, the random movement of atoms, or human agency, negated the need to make providential sense of the world. The majority of the English populace condemned deism as "atheism"—a label denoting anything from sinful living to philosophies questioning God's engagement in the world.¹¹⁴ (The word did not stretch to the denial of God's existence before the mid-eighteenth century.¹¹⁵) Early modern atheism was a disregard for God, a shrugging off of His authority and omnipotence which, its enemies argued, led to damning freedom from moral responsibility and eschatological considerations.¹¹⁶ Anglican and nonconformist clergymen's repeated warnings against "atheism and profaneness" illustrate

¹¹² Cf. Burns, *Age of Wonders*, Chapter 2; Robert E. Stillman, *The New Philosophy and Universal Languages in Seventeenth-Century England: Bacon, Hobbes, and Wilkins* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1995), Part III; Denise Tillery, "Engendering the Language of the New Science: The Subject of John Wilkin's Language Project," *The Eighteenth Century* 46, no. 1 (Spring 2005): 59–79.

¹¹³ John Spurr, *England in the 1670s: "This Masquerading Age"* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2000). Spurr borrows this phrase from William Wycherley's *The Gentleman Dancing-Master*, in *The Plays of William Wycherley*, ed. Arthur Friedman (Oxford: Clarendon, 1979), I.i.305.

¹¹⁴ Cf. Walsham, *Providence*, 30.

¹¹⁵ Beck, "God, Creation, and Providence," 197.

¹¹⁶ Walsham groups atheism with other ideologies that evaded moral responsibility and the need to discern God's mercy or judgment, and rejected God's omnipotence; Walsham, *Providence*, 20–31.

how these dangerous new mindsets seemed to be gaining national momentum.¹¹⁷

The few critics who examine Restoration providentialism admit to and brush over the fact that even those who championed the regime's new providentialism felt its inadequacies and impotence. William Burns studies the gaggle of interpretative bodies that arose in the Restoration to tender themselves as the nation's authority over investigating and interpreting alleged providential signs. Among these were the government, Anglican and dissenting clergy, natural philosophers, newspapers, and astrologers.¹¹⁸ Burns admits that "[n]one of these projects was entirely successful," but brushes past this fact without comment.¹¹⁹ He thus leaves England at the turn of the eighteenth century in much the same divisive, interpretative flux as he framed it in 1660. John Spurr acknowledges that the Restoration Anglican ministers' three decades of reframing providences merely as warnings to evoke moral reform made no lasting impact until backed by magisterial support in the 1690s.¹²⁰ A providence geared only at social stability was not a tempting enough carrot—or a fearsome enough stick—to do good or seek the nation's good. It was far easier for the populace to resort to a worldview in which God did not send warnings or approbations than to reform their lifestyles.¹²¹

Spurr, like Burns, is unsurprised that providentialism had apparently so little effect on the Restoration populace. Yet, considering that Alexandra Walsham offered providence as a—if not *the*—principal ideology driving pre-1660 England's Protestant Reformation, sense of nationhood, politics, and socioeconomic development; and publications recounting providences and prodigies as guaranteed bestsellers among early modern audiences and quick paths to

¹¹⁷ Cf. Walsham, 69; Spurr, "Virtue, Religion, and Government," 38–39; Burns, *Age of Wonders*, 20, 125.

¹¹⁸ Burns, *Age of Wonders*, 3–4; also, Chapters 1–3.

¹¹⁹ Burns, 4.

¹²⁰ Spurr, "Virtue, Religion, and Government," 16–17.

¹²¹ Spurr mentions the Anglican clergy's repeated complaints about such "atheistic" views among the Restoration populace; Spurr, 39.

success for authors and printers, I find post-1660 England's acceptance of this impotent or blasé providentialism unconvincing.¹²² I find especially unconvincing Michael Winship's argument that dissenters revised their theology of providence to align with England's intellectual elite.¹²³ Winship places the Puritans' reverence for culture above spiritual convictions which they believed determined their eternal destinies. To assume that theology bows to trends is to misunderstand what it is to be a dissenter—that is, so strongly to hold a belief to be true and essential to one's wellbeing (eternal or earthly) that one is willing to oppose societal norms to live by it.

This present study finds that nonconformists agreed with the Restoration regime that they had too quickly and too subjectively asserted providence's will in the past. Providence was much more hidden from human understanding than previous generations had believed. However, nonconformists resisted their enemies' reasoning that providential ambiguity indicated God's separation from human affairs and, subsequently, humanity's need to assert a path forward. God might be “on trial,” as Christopher Hill once put it, for much of Restoration society, but not for dissenters.¹²⁴ Instead, providential ambiguity and previous misinterpretations encouraged dissenters to adopt a stance of hermeneutical humility.

The writers surveyed in this dissertation experienced great disappointments of their earthly hopes during the Restoration era—hopes which they had deemed God's cause. Dryden's beloved Stuart kings failed him repeatedly. Milton's republic fell, and he, a magnetic force in Cromwell's Protectorate, was now a blind outcast. Despite his support of the monarchy, Bunyan

¹²² Walsham, *Providence*, 4–6, also Chapters 1, 5, and 6 (Reformation, nationhood, politics); 41–50 (success of providentialism in print); Walsham, “Happiness of Suffering,” 59–61 (socioeconomic development).

¹²³ Cf. Winship, *Seers of God*, 145.

¹²⁴ Christopher Hill, “Revolution, Restoration, and Literature,” in *Praise Disjoined: Changing Patterns of Salvation in Seventeenth-Century English Literature*, ed. William P. Shaw (New York: Peter Lang, 1991), 17.

spent twelve years in prison. Hutchinson, whom critics argue may have been a more devoted republican than even her husband, the regicide Colonel John Hutchinson, lost that regime and her husband, who narrowly escaped execution but died in prison in 1664 for a plot in which he had no involvement.¹²⁵ Baxter's great life ambition to unite English Christians in a single church collapsed by 1662, never to rally, despite another thirty years of attempts on Baxter's part. Yet, the new caution that each author took in interpreting providence went hand in hand with a deeper emphasis on relationship with God, whose character made His plans altogether trustworthy, whether or not humans could discern those plans. The reason to have hope for the future and comfort in present uncertainties was God Himself. Nonconformists' experience of political defeat and unpredictable treatment made them surprisingly well-positioned to address the period's disappointments, uncertainties, fears, and attractions to alternative ideologies or sources of authority in more meaningful ways than the era's political victors could.

The following chapters study five contemporaries' literary explorations of how to grapple with the Restoration experience. Chapter 1 examines in John Dryden's writings the long arch of political changeability and providential uncertainty across the 1660s–80s, which dictated the Restored regime's fluctuating policies of persecution and toleration. This volatility eventually led even this ardent conformist to admit the Stuart monarchy's inability to secure national stability or providential flourishing. *The Hind and the Panther* finds hope for England's future in an eternal authority that cannot be swayed by temporal flux nor tempted by earthly ambitions. Chapter 2 examines John Milton also wrestling with providence's plans for the nation. The *1671 Poems*

¹²⁵ P. R. Seddon, "Hutchinson, John (bap. 1615, d. 1664)," ODNB, September 23, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14283>. For Hutchinson's republicanism: Derek Hirst, "Remembering a Hero: Lucy Hutchinson's Memoirs of Her Husband," *The English Historical Review* 119, no. 482 (2004): 684–88; Giuseppina Iacono Lobo, "Lucy Hutchinson's Revisions of Conscience," *English Literary Renaissance* 42, no. 2 (2012): 339, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6757.2012.01108.x>.

surrenders its author's historic certainty over the methods by which God will secure national freedom and true faith. *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* work out two divergent possibilities: that nonconformists were right about God's plans to reform wicked institutions and that they were mistaken and must submit to God's alternative means of evoking faith and liberty.

Chapter 3 grapples with the struggle of royalist nonconformists to remain loyal to a monarch at whose hand they had primarily experienced persecution. John Bunyan's use of the vigorous, multivalent image of the lion, which commonly represented the king and God, poignantly demonstrates this political struggle's relevance to nonconformists' spiritual experience. God did not always send His people favorable circumstances or signs of His mercy and grace, as Restoration dissenters well knew from decades of suffering and terror. How did (and why should) subjects remain loyal to leonine kings, whether earthly or divine?

While Bunyan finds the terrifying nature of life's uncertainties helpful as a prompt to faith, Lucy Hutchinson surprisingly agrees with the Restoration culture's aversion to providential fearmongering. Chapter 4 examines how Hutchinson wrestles with what she sees as contemporaries' reasonable attraction to deism. Hutchinson's epic retelling of Genesis, *Order and Disorder*, illustrates why deism cannot resolve providential terrors but how a more profound awareness of the Creator's loving authority can. The poem's call to worship extends a spiritual olive branch to nonconformists' enemies, who might also find peace amidst uncertainties by pursuing God.

My study concludes with the period's leading nonconformist, Richard Baxter, whose conviction that all sects would be subsumed in the eternal Church led him to pursue doggedly the reconciliation of nonconformists and the Church of England. Chapter 5 addresses why the Restoration regime's enforcement of conformity, even had it been successful, threatened more

harm than benefit. Baxter's *Poetical Fragments* imagines the beneficial and beautiful coexistence of divergent practices in a national church that includes nonconformists. Long-desired peace comes not through conformity to a single ecclesiology but through a shared love for Christ and the common ground of Christian fundamentals, on which orthodox Christians already agreed.

Significantly, none of these five responses to the Restoration experience resolve providential uncertainties, even if all offer peace amidst these uncertainties. Nonconformists' allowance of uncertainty dealt far more honestly and convincingly with the contemporary experience than their enemies' glaringly false assertions of surety and promises of triumph. Nonconformists thus met the troubled Restoration populace where it was and offered a hopeful way forward.

Conclusion

This dissertation's title comes from the diaries of the ejected minister Philip Henry (1631–1696). Henry's life demonstrates well the mixed loyalties of the Restoration era. Henry's father was a courtier, and the young Philip grew up at Whitehall, Westminster. There Philip's playmates were the princes Charles and James, who "were often with him at his Father's house, and were wont to tell him what preferment he should have at Court, as soon as he was fit for it."¹²⁶ Puritans shaped Philip Henry's education as a boy and at Oxford, and during the

¹²⁶ Philip Henry, *Diaries and Letters of Philip Henry, M.A., of Broad Oak, Flintshire, 1631–1696*, ed. Matthew Henry Lee (London, 1882), qutd. 5 (uncredited source).

Restoration, Henry refused to renounce the Puritan Parliament's Solemn League and Covenant of 1643. However, a loyal royalist, Henry mourned the beheading of Charles I, which he witnessed at Whitehall in 1649 on a visit home to his father, and was "a hearty well-wisher to the return of the King," Charles II, in 1660.¹²⁷ Like Richard Baxter, Henry supported the national church and rejected separatism but took issue with the existing Book of Common Prayer, leading to his ejection from the Church of England in 1661. In the mid-1660s, Henry was appointed to collect royal aid for the Second Anglo-Dutch War; he was also arrested and fined for his nonconformity. He attended parish church services and conventicles throughout the Restoration era.¹²⁸

From 1657 until his death in 1696, Henry kept a diary of personal and national happenings, wherein, Richard Greaves claims, "He was particularly interested in recording events that could be interpreted as examples of divine providence."¹²⁹ The dissertation's title concludes a series of entries from March and April 1673, in which Henry grapples with reports that Parliament will repeal the royal indulgence of 1672. On 17 March 1673, Henry records widespread fears among dissenters that "an after reckoning must come for the use of past liberty," but prays, "the will of the lord be done, Amen!"¹³⁰ On Sunday, March 23 he records that this "precious Sabbath & Sacrament" will be "perhaps the last" before liberty is revoked, but asserts, "'tis good for us to be at such uncertaintyes for now wee receive our liberty from the hand of our Father fresh every day, which is best & sweetest of all."¹³¹ Five days later, he records the Test Act recently passed "to incapacitate Papists" but expects "A bill of ease" for Protestant

¹²⁷ Henry, 12; Matthew Henry, *The Lives of Philip and Matthew Henry*, ed. J. B. Williams (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1974), 58 (quotation).

¹²⁸ Apart from the quotations already credited, all facts about Henry's life come from Richard Greaves, "Henry, Philip (1631–1696)," ODNB, September 23, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/12976>.

¹²⁹ Greaves.

¹³⁰ Henry, *Diaries and Letters*, 262.

¹³¹ Henry, 262.

dissenters.¹³² Yet, on April 4, he admits, “In the present juncture wee are at great uncertaintyes” over whether nonconformist preaching licenses will be revoked.¹³³ Again he invokes the “will of God.”¹³⁴ On April 24, Henry returned home from an itinerant preaching trip to “a letter of encouragement that the *King* & council had order’d a letter to the Justices to forbear disturbing” dissenters. Yet, rather than celebrating this liberty as God’s will and provision, Henry celebrates the uncertainties of his experience as the will and provision of providence: “lord, thou keepest us at uncertaintyes that our hope might bee in thee.”¹³⁵

Since the times of ancient Israel, God’s people have suffered at the hands of an ungodly majority, and Henry’s prayer draws on scripture’s calls to rejoice in persecution. After suffering imprisonment, questioning, and a beating for their faith, some of the early Christians went on their way “rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His [Christ’s] name” (Acts 5:41). Peter encouraged early Christians to “think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you,” but to “rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings” (1 Peter 4:12–13). For the past century and a half, British children grew up reading the tales of the Protestant martyrs immortalized in John Foxe’s *Acts and Momuments* (1563), hearing over and over again how the martyrs joyfully embraced suffering as evidence of their salvation.¹³⁶ Suffering became so essential to Protestants’ salvific assurance in the Henrician and Marian persecutions that Protestants in peacetime under Edward and Elizabeth felt the need to imagine or pursue adversity to prove their salvation.¹³⁷ Earthly success was “the enemy of true piety” for these early

¹³² Henry, 262.

¹³³ Henry, 262–63.

¹³⁴ Henry, 262–63.

¹³⁵ Henry, 263.

¹³⁶ Keeble notes Restoration nonconformists’ continued identification with and reverence for Foxe’s martyrs; Keeble, *Literary Culture of Nonconformity*, 5.

¹³⁷ Walsham, “Happiness of Suffering,” 46–50.

Protestants.¹³⁸ Critics explore the similar tendency of Restoration dissenters to present their persecution as evidence of their godliness and purity, their chosen status, and God's coming wrath on their oppressors.¹³⁹

Yet, Henry's prayer illustrates a different facet of Restoration nonconformity, which this dissertation brings to light. Henry embraces uncertainty in a rare and much-anticipated moment of success for dissenters. He puts no stock in circumstances remaining in dissenters' favor, viewing his earthly situation as a continuing series of uncertainties. All of life's circumstances, whether favorable like this extension of liberty or unfavorable like the former persecution, become opportunities to hope in the Lord rather than in earthly authorities, ambitions, or successes. Uncertainties turn Restoration nonconformists away from discerning the signs of God's will, even away from making spiritual judgments about themselves and their enemies, to the person of God, who is "the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever" (Hebrews 13:8) and whose heavenly provisions are the "best & sweetest of all."¹⁴⁰

¹³⁸ Walsham, 51.

¹³⁹ Keeble, *Literary Culture of Nonconformity*, 187–91; Raymond Brown, *Spirituality in Adversity: English Nonconformity in a Period of Repression, 1660–1689* (Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2012), Chapter 2; Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent*, Chapter 3, esp. pp. 65–66, 73–83.

¹⁴⁰ Henry, *Diaries and Letters*, 262.

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“Th’ amended Vows of *English Loyalty*”:

Sure Authorities in Dryden’s *Annus Mirabilis* (1667) and *The Hind and the Panther* (1687)

John Dryden’s occasional poems *Annus Mirabilis: The Year of Wonders, 1666* (1667) and *The Hind and the Panther* (1687) are rarely paired. Critics typically study the poetic history of the year 1666 with other poetic, political histories, and the Catholic poem with Dryden’s Anglican apologia, *Religio Laici* (1682).¹ Yet, these latter pairings wrongly read Dryden’s conversion to Catholicism around 1685 simplistically as a conversion from the Church of England, even though *Religio Laici* more clearly defends “publick Peace” than Anglicanism (line 448).² My pairing of *Annus Mirabilis* and *The Hind and the Panther* proposes that Dryden’s real

¹ For *AM* pairings with *Absalom and Achitophel*, *Heroic Stanzas*, and Marvell’s *Last Instructions to a Painter*: Michael McKeon, *Politics and Poetry in Restoration England: The Case of Dryden’s Annus Mirabilis* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1975), 40; Keymer, *Poetics of the Pillory*, 51; Steven Zwicker, *Lines of Authority: Politics and English Literary Culture, 1649–1689* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993), Chapter 4. For *RL* and *HP* pairings: Phillip Harth, *Contexts of Dryden’s Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1968); Sanford Budick, *Dryden and the Abyss of Light: A Study of Religio Laici and The Hind and the Panther* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970); Douglas Atkins, *The Faith of John Dryden: Change and Continuity* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1980), esp. Chapters 3–6; Paul Hammond, *John Dryden: A Literary Life* (London: Macmillan, 1991), Chapter 6; Philip Connell, *Secular Chains: Poetry and the Politics of Religion from Milton to Pope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), Chapter 3.

² Citations from Dryden’s writings are taken from *The Works of John Dryden*, eds. H. T. Swedenberg, Jr., Edward Niles Hooker, and Vinton A. Dearing, 20 vols. (Berkeley: University of California, 1962–2024), hereafter abbreviated as *Works*. I cite the poems in-text by poem, part (where relevant), and line, and editorial or authorial supplemental materials in the footnotes by volume and page. All editorial references are taken from the California edition, unless otherwise stated. *Annus Mirabilis* (hereafter abbreviated as *AM*) can be found in volume 1 of *Works*, *Religio Laici* (hereafter abbreviated as *RL*) in volume 2, and *The Hind and the Panther* (hereafter abbreviated as *HP*) in volume 3.

religious-like devotion before Catholicism was not to Anglicanism, or even Protestantism, but to the Stuart monarchy. My focus on this notoriously changeable yet culturally representative poet in this dissertation's first case study of Restoration providentialism illuminates the English populace's repeatedly thwarted search for a stable, providential authority figure following the civil wars and Interregnum. Dryden's search for this figure in the 1660s, particularly in *Annus Mirabilis*, maps onto the conformist mainstream by proffering the Stuart monarchy as the only authority that can deliver England from God's wrath and secure national flourishing. Yet, contemporary events repeatedly destabilized such arguments, and *The Hind and the Panther* settles in surprisingly nonconformist territory by finding in a spiritual, eternal entity the long-sought, sure authority figure.

The 1667 and 1687 poems depict the mouthpiece for the Stuart regime wrestling with uncertainty seven years into the Restoration moment and again, twenty years later, in the aftermath of the Popish Plot, Exclusion Crisis, Charles II's death, and James II's ascension. These were moments of national crisis, which grappled with difficult histories and ominous futures. These moments particularly engage in the era's "profound interrogation of British kingship," which began with Charles I in the 1640s and peaked with James II in the 1680s, eventually resulting in the monarchy's permanent curbing in the Bill of Rights (1689).³ Dryden's poetic engagement illustrates the thinking processes bookending my dates. The 1667 and 1687 poems' driving issues—the bounds of royal authority, the monarch-subject relationship, expectations verses experience of the Restoration regime, the royal court's notoriety, the issues

³ Matthew Jenkinson, *Culture and Politics at the Court of Charles II, 1660–1685* (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2010), 4. For the redefinition of kingship in the 1640s: Glenn Burgess, "Tyrants, Absolute Kings, Arbitrary Rulers and the Commonwealth of England: Some Reflections on Seventeenth-Century English Political Vocabulary," in *Monarchism and Absolutism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Cesare Cuttica and Glenn Burgess (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), esp. 153–58.

of dissent and toleration, and the politics of peace—also permeate the nonconformist texts in the following chapters. It is remarkable that Dryden both knows and responds to dissident stances, given the great disparity of career ambitions and readership between the Poet Laureate and the pesky minority of nonconformists.

What is more remarkable is that this major canonical writer of the era which, however divisively, has been called “The Age of Dryden” comes to answer the pertinent questions of “what do we do with uncertainty?”, “how do we know what is sure?”, and “what do we put our trust in?” similarly to Restoration nonconformists.⁴ Like the nonconformist texts in the chapters following, *The Hind and the Panther* embraces temporal uncertainty and trusts in eternal authorities. Underlying *Annus Mirabilis*’s confident façade is an anxiety over and mistrust of providence, whereas *The Hind and the Panther*—a poem at peace with little else—is at peace with providence.

Annus Mirabilis is an unparalleled example of the early Restoration mindsets which ensured the era’s unbridgeable divide between dissent and the Establishment, decades of religious persecution, and the rampant belittlement of divine providence. The poem is Dryden’s successful play for the poet laureateship (which the king awarded him in 1668), and it necessitates political loyalty as the nation’s only path to both recovery from recent crises and future flourishing. However, as Dryden’s purloined title from an early-1660s series of dissident prodigies reminds us, the crises *Annus Mirabilis* addresses had evoked nationwide fear of providential wrath and skepticism over the Restoration regime.⁵ The poem’s quasi-worshipful

⁴ For the most recent iteration of the “Age of Dryden” debate: Steven Zwicker, “John Dryden and Restoration Time: Writing the Self Within Time, Through Time, Beyond Time,” in *Early Modern Histories of Time: The Periodizations of Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England*, ed. Kristen Poole and Owen Williams (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2019), 215–29.

⁵ Cf. *Eniautos Terastios; Mirabilis Annus Secundus*. There are two parts to *Mirabilis Annus Secundus* (Part I: Wing M2205; Part II: Wing M2204).

certainty over the Stuart regime must have rung implausible even to conformists in 1667. *Annus Mirabilis*'s self-contained quatrains and consistent *abab* rhyme scheme—in the fashion of William Davenant's pro-royalist epic *Gondibert* (1651)—superimpose stability onto England's recent experiences of war, pestilence, and fire, and epic potential onto a questionable king. Contrary to what contemporaries expected of a history of 1666, *Annus Mirabilis* spends over two thirds of its 304 stanzas validating England's naval war with the Dutch over trade embargoes, eulogizing the navy's heroism and victory in three battles between June–August 1666, celebrating intellectual advances in science and navigation, and prophesying Britain's victories as a mercantile state. Even the poem's most tragic, disorienting moments turn triumphant and comprehensible in their clever portrayals of Charles II and his policies as Britain's providential deliverers.

Dryden writes *The Hind and the Panther* in a comparable national moment of political and providential skepticism yet crafts no aura of stability. Composed in the winter and spring of 1686–87 in support of James II's widely criticized toleration campaign, the poem is one of the most bewildering and difficult in the English language and is (unsurprisingly) little read. Though the British sovereign was acknowledged to be the “sole source” of the law, he was expected to uphold the existing laws, enhance his judgments through wise counsel, and graciously concede authority to self-governing institutions, like university colleges.⁶ James II unconventionally strove to repeal the existing penal laws against Catholics and dissenters, rather than merely suspend their execution (as Charles's indulgences had).⁷ When Parliament and the Episcopal

⁶ Mark Goldie, “Absolutism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Political Philosophy*, ed. George Klosko (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 283 (also 290–92), <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199238804.003.0017>.

⁷ Cf. Mark Goldie, “Toleration and the Godly Prince in Restoration England,” in *Liberty, Authority, Formality: Political Ideas and Culture, 1600–1900: Essays in Honour of Colin Davis*, ed. John Morrow and Jonathan Scott (Exeter: Imprint Academic, 2008), 51.

leaders counseled James otherwise, he dismissed most of Charles's JPs and lords-lieutenant and made enemies of the Stuarts' long-term allies, the Episcopal Churchmen. He lobbied the favor of dissenters, who were a minority and the Stuarts' long-term enemies, and put Catholics and nonconformists in vacated places of authority.⁸ He even overrode Magdalen College, Oxford's self-governance by appointing an undistinguished, thirty-year-old scholar and suspected Catholic to the college's presidency.⁹

The Roman Catholic king seemed to be forging a solitary, arbitrary path troublingly like that of Protestant Europe's chief threat, Louis XIV of France. John Coffey names "remarkable" James's "complete lack of sensitivity" to widespread fears that Catholic rule and toleration would devolve into the persecution of Protestants, like it recently had in France.¹⁰ In 1685, Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes, which had ensured French Protestants' religious freedom for a century. The Huguenots, who fled France in droves, many to England's shores, were a physical reminder of Protestants' endangerment under a Catholic king.¹¹ To a wary British public, the recent Test Act's (1673) unprecedented inclusion of the royal family, Popish Plot's (1679–81) anti-Catholic hysteria, Exclusion Crisis's (1679–81) questionable legality of trying to exclude James from the succession, and Rye House Plot's (1683) and Monmouth Rebellion's (1685) violent attempts at deposition seemed increasingly justified measures to keep James and Catholicism from power.

In response to these instabilities, *The Hind and the Panther's* "Design" is twofold. First, the poem seeks to convince the Church of England to repeal the Test Act and penal codes (a

⁸ Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 188–89.

⁹ Jerome Bertram, "Farmer, Anthony (b. 1657)," ODNB, September 23, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9165>.

¹⁰ Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 189.

¹¹ Cf. C. C. Gibbs, "The Reception of the Huguenots in England and the Dutch Republic, 1680–1690," in *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, ed. Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel, and Nicholas Tyacke (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 275–306.

point made temporarily moot by the poem's publication in late May 1687, following James's Declaration of Indulgence in April that year). Second, the poem challenges those who disclaim the Duchess of York's posthumously revealed conversion to Catholicism and Dryden's earlier defense thereof.¹² As a recent Catholic convert himself and a loyal supporter of James II, it behooved Dryden personally and professionally to persuade his audience that religious toleration and Catholicism's penetration into the ruling class benefited England. Yet, he refrains. Most supporters eagerly embraced James's promise that the Declaration would evoke national peace and economic flourishing.¹³ The Declaration states, "Conscience ought not to be constrained," as doing so "destroys" "the Interest of Government...by Spoiling Trade, Depopulating Countries, and Discouraging Strangers."¹⁴ Toleration is "the truest Methods of their Peace and Our Glory," able to secure domestic and international flourishing.¹⁵ In contrast, *The Hind and the Panther's* preface opens with indulged Britain in an unjust war, in which "Conscience is the common *Word*" but people tolerate only the like-minded. That Dryden addresses the poem to the "refractory and disobedient on either side" (that is, Anglicans and nonconformists who flout James's decree) underscores the Declaration's and James's failures to do as promised.¹⁶

This instability permeates all. *The Hind and the Panther* is a jumble of allusions, fables, and characters; political and theological debates; and historical, immediate, and future concerns. The poem fluctuates without clear pattern between couplets and triplets, long and short sentences. Its three parts have inconsistent lengths, styles, and functions.¹⁷ Part I contains a

¹² Dryden, *Works* 3:121–22 (quotation from 121).

¹³ Cf. Brandon Chua, "Representing Religious Toleration in Dryden's *The Hind and the Panther* (1687)," *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660–1700* 43, no. 2 (2019): 30–32, <https://doi.org/10.1353/rst.2019.0011>; Scott Sowerby, "Of Different Complexions: Religious Diversity and National Identity in James II's Toleration Campaign," *The English Historical Review* 124, no. 506 (2009): 32–33.

¹⁴ James II, *His Majesties Gracious Declaration to All His Loving Subjects for Liberty of Conscience*, 1687, 1–2.

¹⁵ James II, 1.

¹⁶ Dryden, *Works*, 3:119.

¹⁷ For each part's style: *Works*, 3:122.

history of Christianity and its persecution. The history juxtaposes the continuity across the centuries of the Hind (who represents the Catholic Church) and her oft-persecuted children (individual Catholics) with new-fangled, schismatic, Protestant beasts, like the Baptist Boar and Presbyterian Wolf. Part II plays out contemporary religious debates over the true Church between the Catholic Hind and the Panther (the Church of England). In Part III, the two matrons make opposing but equally bleak predictions of England's future. They go to sleep having resolved nothing, and the poem's concluding prophecy of the Hind's future triumph lacks any of the definitive detail of *Annus Mirabilis's* concluding prophecy. *The Hind and the Panther's* acknowledgement, even embrace, of uncertainty seems at odds with the certainty usually inherent in spiritual conversions and political propaganda. Yet, these raw uncertainties pave the way for one of the most poignant expressions of providential surety in Restoration literature.

This chapter reconsiders how we should read Dryden, the person and the poetic canon. I avoid the many debates, contemporary and modern, over the authenticity of Dryden's conversion to Catholicism around 1685, as he put no faith in individuals or their providential interpretations.¹⁸ Dryden published *The Hind and the Panther* anonymously and devotes fewer than 100 of its 2,600 lines to his personal faith journey.¹⁹ He is not the mystery the poem is meant to uncover. As Paul Hammond notes, "[T]he single voice rarely interested Dryden."²⁰

¹⁸ Critics endlessly debate whether Dryden was a self-serving parrot of James's beliefs. Spurr argues the implausibility of Dryden taking "his cue from the royal brothers" but traces similarities between their conversions and his. Gardiner attests to Dryden's sincerity, based on his subsequent sufferings. Zwicker previously extolled Dryden's authenticity but more recently contended that Dryden's lack of "a stable, centred self" negates evidence either way; John Spurr, "The Piety of John Dryden," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Dryden*, ed. Steven Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 249; Anne Barbeau Gardiner, *Ancient Faith and Modern Freedom in John Dryden's The Hind and the Panther* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1998), 3–4; Steven Zwicker, "The Paradoxes of Tender Conscience," *ELH* 63, no. 4 (Winter 1996): 853, 863–66; Steven Zwicker, "Why Are They Saying These Terrible Things about John Dryden? The Uses of Gossip and Scandal," *Essays in Criticism* 64, no. 2 (2014): 174, <https://doi.org/10.1093/escrit/cgu004>.

¹⁹ See *HP*, I,64–149.

²⁰ Paul Hammond, *Dryden and the Traces of Classical Rome* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 145.

Dryden's lifelong concerns were rather the identity of a sure, providential authority, which could rise above the secular world of selfishness and flux, and the triumphant community cultivated by that authority.

I also build on Thomas Keymer's *Poetics of the Pillory* (2019), which shifts the critical tide from the 1990s and early-2000s reading of disillusionment or uncertainty in Dryden's trend of averting meaning.²¹ Keymer reads Dryden's ambiguities as masterful, meaningful evasions of censorship, current and future.²² Though Dryden's works were not censored, they dexterously and with slight reservation praise those currently in power without being antagonistic against possible future leaders.²³ Keymer argues that Dryden censored his writings to insure his career, his readership, and his works' durability through a politically turbulent era and because he felt genuine anxiety over transgressing "the always uncertain boundaries of acceptable expression."²⁴ By fleshing out the extreme deference that Dryden gave to national authorities over individuals (himself included), I nuance Dryden's worries over transgression. Dryden was passionate about conforming to national authorities because he deemed them, however flawed, best suited to guide England through uncertain times. Keymer's research identifies the hazards of political allegiance in an age when the authorities kept changing, and mine adds that this eventually became so problematic for Dryden that he rejected politics as the nation's highest authority.

²¹ Hammond reads Dryden's hopes for Britain as a new Roman empire as ultimately fleeting, lost in translation. Lewis and Novak see Dryden's long search for truth and certainty as ultimately abandoned in *HP*. Rosslyn posits that Dryden's 1690s turn to translation arose from a suspicion "that he could not, or did not dare, generate large structures of meaning from inside himself" because "he lacked internal coherence."; Hammond, 29; Jayne Lewis and Maximilian Novak, eds., *Enchanted Ground: Reimagining John Dryden* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 4–5, 8; Felicity Rosslyn, "Dryden: Poet or Translator?," *Translation and Literature* 10, no. 1 (2001): 28, <https://doi.org/10.3366/tal.2001.10.1.21>.

²² Keymer, *Poetics of the Pillory*, Chapter 1.

²³ Keymer, 33.

²⁴ Keymer, 37–38 (quotation from 37).

My research also builds on Corrinne Harol’s highly original study of writers who resisted the late-seventeenth-century movement towards secularization—that separation of faith and politics and disenchantment of the world, which affected every sphere of life.²⁵ She deems Dryden in *The Hind and the Panther* to be part of this “proto-conservative” movement, which I support.²⁶ The 1687 poem crafts a unique vision of the nation’s future in which faith and politics are mysteriously inseparable and yet faith is the greater authority. My study of *Annus Mirabilis*’s systematic exclusion of divine providence from national affairs additionally demonstrates Dryden’s earlier support of secularization.

And lastly, I resist reading *The Hind and the Panther* as “a fascinating risk-taking”—but ultimately incoherent—“failure.”²⁷ The poem is both deeply meaningful, in its identification of the Catholic Church’s authority, and incomplete in 1687. The poem’s final goal, national peace and stability, necessitates the nation’s reconversion to Catholicism. The text’s ambiguities, confusions, and difficulty reflect England’s resistance to Catholicism, which foils its triumphant destiny.

Annus Mirabilis

The Providential Stuarts

Strangely under-studied is Dryden’s startling decision to borrow the title for his stubbornly loyalist, 1667 poem from seditious, nonconformist publications. The anonymous

²⁵ Corrinne Harol, *The Postsecular Restoration and the Making of Literary Conservatism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023), 2.

²⁶ Harol, 13; Chapter 4.

²⁷ James Anderson Winn, *John Dryden and His World* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 423.

Mirabilis Annus tracts (1661–1662) recount prodigies recently witnessed across Britain but most often in London and foretelling providential doom unless the nation repent.²⁸ Though the author claims the prodigies cannot be credibly read against specific persons, he clearly infers Charles II's fault. The prodigies

do bode very much misery and calamity to the *prophane* and *wicked* part of the World (except a through and seasonable repentance and turning to God do Intervene) the *Mene Tekel* on the Wall did signifie evil to *Belshazzar*, who though he knew all that God had done to his *Father*, yet humbled not his heart, but lifted up himself against the Lord of heaven, and by his *presence at least* did keep up and encourage *drunken and debauched meetings*...; and saies the Text in *that same hour came forth fingers of a mans hand, &c.* So that God by a Prodigy doth sharply reprove the debauchery of this King and his concubines, with the rest of his *Associates*, and thereby also declares the sudden period and determination of his *Kingdom*.²⁹

Who could read this allusion to the book of Daniel in 1661 and not interpret the last Babylonian king as Charles II, with his already burgeoning reputation for parties and mistresses?

Belshazzar's passive encouragement of immorality reflects contemporary criticisms that Charles was too indulgent with the rakish court wits.³⁰ As Belshazzar did not remember how God had temporarily dethroned his father, Nebuchadnezzar, Charles II did not acknowledge how God dethroned his father in 1649. The recently sighted prodigies are the divine handwriting on the wall, informing Charles II that he has been found wanting and that his kingdom will be imminently overthrown, as Belshazzar's was (Daniel 5:31). Perhaps most troubling are the omitted details that Belshazzar was murdered that night and that the book of Daniel soon descends into apocalyptic prophecies (Daniel 5:30; 7–12). Neither Charles II's regime, person, nor England were safe due to the Stuart monarchy's sins.

²⁸ *Eniautos Terastios*, A2v.

²⁹ *Eniautos Terastios*, [A3v].

³⁰ Jenkinson, *Culture and Politics*, 19; also Chapter 5.

The seditious tracts and their worryingly widespread, even international, popularity demonstrated to a government still undecided on how to handle nonconformists in 1661 that nonconformity must not be tolerated.³¹ The government quickly spread counterpropaganda, arrested and imprisoned without trial suspected accomplices, and questioned those who sold and bought the tracts.³² The dissident tracts fueled Roger L'Estrange's early-1660s censorship campaign and systematic stigmatization of dissent, which won him the position of Licenser of the Press and resulted in the Licensing Act of 1662.³³ Edward Hooker reads Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis* as similar counterpropaganda aimed to incite the populace's political obedience, while Paul Hammond reads the poem as controverting nonconformists' confident providentialism.³⁴

Indeed, Dryden's insistence that his poem is "*Historical*" ("not *Epick*," which better suits its heroism, classicism, and nation-imagining) pointedly rewrites the providentialism of the dissident prodigies, which the anonymous author had named "History."³⁵ Dryden's prefatory dedication to London overwrites the tracts' ominous concentration on the metropolis and hinges the nation's restoration on Charles II's providential precedent. As Charles triumphed over "various traverses of Fortune, and the interposition of many Rivals" in his 1660 Restoration, so are London's disasters "a Prophecy of your [London's] restoration."³⁶ Dryden's dedication reframes providence as political and national rather than eschatological or individual, and the spiritual issue of sin disappears altogether:

I have heard indeed of some vertuous persons who have ended unfortunately, but never of any vertuous Nation: Providence is engag'd too deeply, when the cause becomes so general. And I cannot imagine it has resolv'd the ruine of that people at home, which it

³¹ For tracts' popularity: Burns, *Age of Wonders*, 33–35.

³² Burns, 36–37.

³³ Burns, 38; Lynch, "Rhetoricating and Identity."

³⁴ Edward N. Hooker, "The Purpose of Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis*," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 10, no. 1 (1946): 49–67; Hammond, *Traces*, 92.

³⁵ Dryden, *Works*, 1:50; *Eniautos Terastios*, [A3].

³⁶ Dryden, *Works*, 1:48–49.

has blessed abroad with such successes. I am therefore to conclude, that your sufferings are at an end.³⁷

The telling pronoun “it” reveals that Dryden’s providence is not the person of God but an intelligible pattern, a nation-building mechanism.

However, a merely anti-tolerationist or secularized reading disregards the weighty complications of political loyalty in late 1666 and early 1667. Five years of penal laws had failed to bring dissenters into conformity or secure civil peace. Conformist John Locke and nonconformist John Owen both penned persuasive defenses of toleration in 1667, and others followed.³⁸ Royalists who praised Charles in 1660 now expressed fears that the king’s profligacy and barrenness thwarted national stability and prosperity.³⁹ As Matthew Jenkinson captivantly examines, the “uncertain hope” expressed by courtiers’ early-1660s panegyrics quickly descended into equivocality and criticism as fears arose that Charles’s personal leniency and “disordered heart, family and household” threatened the monarchy’s authority.⁴⁰ Fearing the effects of *this* king being absolute (and remembering Charles I’s problematic arbitrary rule), royalists emphasized Charles II’s commitment to the law even while championing his sovereignty.⁴¹

Even royalists could now humor the possibility of divine wrath. Farfetched were the dissenting *Mirabilis Annus* tracts’ fantastical sightings of ominous, celestial ships; ghostly

³⁷ *Works*, 1:49.

³⁸ Locke’s *Essay Concerning Toleration* remained in manuscript until after his death, and Owen published *Indulgence and Toleration Considered* (London, 1667) anonymously. See also William Penn, *The Great Case of Liberty of Conscience* (n.p., 1670); Andrew Marvell, *The Rehearsal Transpros’d* (London, 1672; part two in 1673).

³⁹ Zwicker, *Lines of Authority*, 92–93. See also Samuel Pepys, “Saturday, 27 July 1667,” *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, n.d., pepysdiary.com.

⁴⁰ Jenkinson, *Culture and Politics*, 65, 4.

⁴¹ For emphasis on king’s commitment to the law: Tim Harris, “Constitutional Royalism Reconsidered: Myth or Reality?,” in *Politics, Religion and Ideas in Seventeenth- and Eighteenth-Century Britain: Essays in Honour of Mark Goldie*, ed. Justin Champion et al., *Studies in Early Modern Cultural, Political and Social History* 34 (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2019), 36; Jenkinson, *Culture and Politics*, 21.

armies; and the sounds and smells of battle in 1661, with civil war a decade past and the monarchy's remarkably peaceful restoration a recent memory—not so during the second Anglo-Dutch naval trade war (March 1665–July 1667). Unbelievable were the Egyptian-like plagues of “innumerable” frogs and spiders—less so after the Great Plague decimated London (spring 1665–mid-1666). The early-1660s sightings of apocalyptic monsters gained credence in 1666, a year which bore the apocalyptic mark of the beast (Revelation 13:18). The tracts' often-repeated prodigy of fire, including “Fire in the form of a Dart...hung directly over the City of *London*,” seemed horrifically fulfilled in the Great Fire of London in September 1666.⁴²

To counter the increasingly believable calls to save England by resisting Charles II, Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis* ambitiously argues that hope of deliverance lies in total conformity. Such “unimpeachable loyalty” to Charles II is remarkable for dissenters or royalists to express in 1667.⁴³ Making his argument while also padding his résumé for the poet laureateship, Dryden first establishes the providential need for conformity in a prefatory epistle that defends *Annus Mirabilis*'s fidelity to English poetic traditions. As poets must work with some unfavorable limitations in English poetic practices, so subjects must uphold even the Stuart monarchy's unfortunate tenets. Dryden admits, “The learned Languages [Latin and Greek] have, certainly, a great advantage of us [modern English poets], in not being tied to the slavery of any Rhyme.”⁴⁴ Milton's prefatory defense of *Paradise Lost*'s style, “The Verse,” added to the second edition in 1668, would also lament the “troublesome and modern bondage of Rimeing.”⁴⁵ Yet, while Milton overcomes this poetic bondage through the nonconformity of blank verse, Dryden never

⁴² Quotations from *Eniautos Terastios*, 40, 4. See also prodigies nos. II, IX (ships); XLV, XXIV (armies); XX, XXVIII, XL (war); VII, XIV–XVII, XX–XXII (fire). See Chapter 3 of this dissertation for the tracts' apocalyptic themes.

⁴³ Keymer, *Poetics of the Pillory*, 51.

⁴⁴ Dryden, *Works*, 1:51.

⁴⁵ John Milton, *Paradise Lost*, in *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, ed. Helen Darbishire (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 1:4.

considers the possibility of resistance to established, poetic ways. Dryden assumes “this necessity of our Rhymes,” this non-negotiable system of English poetry. Although this boundary “often confines, and more often corrupts the sense of all the rest,” English poets must avoid these pitfalls through skill, not alternative poetic methods: “in this necessity of our Rhymes, I have always found the couplet Verse most easie, ...every two lines concluding the labour of the Poet: but in Quatrains he is to carry it farther on,” “bear[ing] along in his head the troublesome sense of four lines together.”⁴⁶ The fault of bad or confusing poetry lies with the poet, not the established forms.

So too the nation’s faults lie not with its established, political ways but its subjects’ responses thereto. Dryden culminates his poetic defense with verses honoring the king’s publicly scrutinized brother and sister-in-law, which Dryden wrote and circulated in manuscript the previous year. Few dared openly to criticize Charles II until the 1670s, so early grievances were often expressed as criticism of the Duke and Duchess of York.⁴⁷ Between the couple having conceived their first child out of wedlock; James’s extramarital affairs; James’s pushing for a questionable, expensive war with Holland; and Anne Hyde’s father the Earl of Clarendon’s recent, dramatic fall from royal favor, the couple were notorious in ways not unlike the king.⁴⁸ Yet, Dryden’s “Verses to her Highness the Dutchess, on the Memorable Victory Gain’d by the Duke Against the Hollanders, June the 3. 1665” reframes providential favor as something secured not so much by the royals’ goodness as by skillful manipulation.⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Dryden, *Works*, 1:51.

⁴⁷ Zwicker, *Lines of Authority*, 97.

⁴⁸ John Miller, “Anne [Née Anne Hyde], Duchess of York,” ODNB, January 3, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14325>; Speck, “James II (ODNB)”; Paul Seaward, “Hyde, Edward, First Earl of Clarendon (1609–1674),” ODNB, October 4, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14328>.

⁴⁹ Dryden, *Works*, 1:57–58.

“Verses” sets the stage for the Battle of Lowestoft with providence undecided on the battle’s outcome:

That glorious day, which two such Navies saw,
 As each, unmatched, might to the world give Law,
Neptune, yet doubtful whom he should obey,
 Held to them both the Trident of the Sea:
 The winds were hush’d, the waves in ranks were cast,
 As awfully as when God’s people past:
 Those, yet uncertain on whose sails to blow,
 These, where the wealth of Nations ought to flow.
 Then with the Duke your Highness rul’d the day: }
 While all the brave did his command obey, }
 The fair and pious under you did pray. }
 How pow’rful are chast vows! the wind and tyde
 You brib’d to combat on the *English* side.
 Thus to your much lov’d Lord you did convey
 An unknown succour, sent the nearest way.
 New vigour to his wearied arms you brought;
 (So *Moses* was upheld while *Israel* fought.) (lines 13–29)

Uncertainty dominates the choppy, heavily punctuated opening lines of battle. The melding of the pagan god Neptune with the God of the Bible expresses uncertainty over providence’s nature and subtly limits divine providence to a manageable size, a literary flourish, a creation of the human imagination rather than the omnipotent Creator. This lesser god serves humans, seeks “whom he should obey,” and the imperfect end rhyme of “obey”/“Sea” (lines 15–16) leaves vacant the authority figure who will complete Neptune’s rhyme. In an act of poetic dominion, Dryden breaks his otherwise consistent couplets to insert a triplet about the Duke and Duchess, which thrice finishes the incomplete rhyme of “obey” (lines 21–23). This manipulation convinces Neptune’s “wind and tyde/ ...to combat on the *English* side” and secures England’s status as God’s chosen people. Before the triplet, the English Channel is only an emblem of the Red Sea, “As awfully as when God’s people passed” in Exodus 14, leaving it unclear whether

the English or the Dutch symbolize Israel (line 18). After the triplet, James is Israel's leader—another “*Moses*.” Though the English and Dutch were equally matched in men and ships at Lowestoft, the triplet's extra line makes England's forces *appear* larger than Holland's to the indecisive sea god. The Duchess's prayers transform the choppy lines into enjambments, whose overflowing sentiments smack of certainty. The end rhymes of “convey”/“way” in lines 26–27 once again fulfill the sea god's incomplete rhyme, firmly establishing the royal couple as the ones “whom [Neptune] should obey.”

Amidst these providential triumphs, Dryden allows ambiguity to remain, thereby illustrating the nation's limited providential understanding and, contingently, its need for a providential guide. Audacious is line 25's description of the Duchess's prayers as “brib[ing]” Neptune's support. Many believed that Anne's father had accepted bribes to sell Dunkirk, England's only continental holding, to the French in 1662. The London mansion that the Earl of Clarendon built soon after was assumed to be financed from the bribe and became derogatorily known as “Dunkirk-House.”⁵⁰ Yet, Anne's bribing prayers affect the nation only positively, in that they win providential favor and aid the English navy. Line 28–29's allusion to Exodus 17 suggests that the Duchess's bribery is part of providence's will. Anne's prayers act like Aaron and Hur supporting Moses's wearied arms after God conditioned Israel's victory over the Amalekites on Moses upholding his staff throughout the battle. What seems morally questionable actually reveals the Stuart royals' astute attunement to God's unintuitive will. Thus, Dryden necessitates the mediating authority of the Stuart royals, who alone understand how to secure God's favor and in whose hands providence is malleable.

And, if even providence obeys the Stuarts—including Stuarts of lesser authority and

⁵⁰ Seaward, “Edward Hyde (ODNB).”

reputation than Charles II—how much more so should British subjects obey their king? In its account of the Duke and Duchess’s diplomatic trip to Yorkshire in 1665, the second half of “Verses” expects total conformity. As the royals progress through “[t]he Stubborn North, ten thousand *Cupid’s* strong,”

Like Commons the Nobility resort
 In crowding heaps, to fill your moving Court:
 To welcome your approach the Vulgar run,
 Like some new Envoy from the distant Sun.
 And Country Beauties by their Lovers go,
 Blessing themselves, and wondring at the show.
 So when the new-born *Phoenix* first is seen,
 Her feather’d Subjects all adore their Queen.
 And, while she makes her progress through the East,
 From every grove her numerous train’s increas. (lines 45–55)⁵¹

While formerly the royals manipulated the gods, now James and his entourage are gods: the god of love and desire and a “new-born *Phoenix*,” a common symbol for both Christ and the monarchy.⁵² As is due a god, the northern subjects respond with universal adoration. “[T]he Vulgar,” the uneducated but also a common term for dissenters, respond with the same devotion as “the Nobility.” No hint of dissent remains. “[T]he Vulgar” conform so completely that they even share a sentence with “the Nobility.”

Dissent appears only once in *Annus Mirabilis* proper. The Great Fire is a “dire Usurper,” which is joined by “The Ghosts of Traitors, [which] from the *Bridge* descend,” those heads of Civil War rebels that were gruesomely displayed on London Bridge during the early Restoration (*AM* 849, 889). *Annus Mirabilis* refuses to acknowledge the complexity and nuance of

⁵¹ For *AM*’s prefatory materials, including “Verses,” the California edition restarts line numbers with each page. Lines 45–55 refer to consecutive lines, which correspond to *Works*, 1:58, lines 18–28. I reference consecutive lines in-text to better orient the reader.

⁵² *Threnodia Augustalis* (1685) reshapes these lines to remember Charles II in 1660 as “the New-born Phoenix”; Dryden, *Works*, 3:103, lines 364–80.

Restoration dissent by pinning dissent exclusively on Civil War radicalism and disaster. Perhaps *Annus Mirabilis*'s greatest triumph over dissent is in how it purloins the title of the decade's most popular, dissident prodigies and then denies Restoration dissenters a voice within its providential history.

The Phoenix

Annus Mirabilis proper's phoenix imagery takes the Stuart monarchy's providential potency to new heights by imagining the king, not Christ, as the impetus behind redemption and future flourishing. The phoenix, a mythological bird which undergoes an eternal cycle of burning itself to ashes at the end of its life and then rising anew, was a common picture for both Christ in His death and resurrection and the monarchy in its continuity through successors. The phoenix became an especially apropos and popular image of national hope after the Great Fire of London, as *Annus Mirabilis*'s dedication to London agrees: "You who are to stand a wonder to all Years and Ages, and who have built your selves an immortal Monument on your own ruins. You are now a *Phœnix* in her ashes, and, as far as Humanity can approach, a great Emblem of the suffering Deity."⁵³ Significantly, this prefatory example is the only phoenix which Dryden connects to Christ ("the suffering Deity") and the only in its dying state. There is a sense in which Dryden can see God's hand in England's disasters, but not her resurrection or flourishing. For this, he turns to the Stuart monarchy.

⁵³ Dryden, *Works*, 1:49. Cf. Janel Mueller, "The Figure and the Ground: Samson as a Nero of London Nonconformity, 1662–1667," in *Milton and the Terms of Liberty*, ed. Graham Parry and Joad Raymond (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002), 159–60.

In *Annus Mirabilis*'s Fire scene, Londoners, who "have not lost their Loyalty by fire," request that the king not forsake the city, because "he will hatch their ashes by his stay" (lines 1153, 1151). Dryden here revises the poet John Crouch's earlier presentation of the fire as London's necessary penitence for the Civil War:

Now *Loyal London* has full Ransome paid
 For that *Defection* the *Disloyal* made:
 Whose *Ashes* hatch'd by a kind *Monarch*'s breath
 Shall rise a fairer *Phoenix* after death.⁵⁴

Where in Crouch's poem Charles doles out unrequested kindness, in Dryden's the people beg for Charles's help. They recognize that their only hope is through the king's incubating presence. The king is a phoenix parent tending London, which hatches "More great then humane, now," and "New deifi'd she from her fires does rise" (lines 1177–78). Having left mortal "Humanity" behind (that is, the reason London remained in her ashes in *Annus Mirabilis*'s dedication), London rises as an eternal phoenix and triumphant deity.⁵⁵ She is a new manifestation of Charles II, whom writers welcomed at the restoration as a phoenix, miraculously and providentially raised from his martyred father's ashes.⁵⁶

London's transformation into a Caroline phoenix ensures the nation's flourishing, which, in line with Charles's economic ambitions, will occur through England becoming a prosperous mercantile state. The 1660 portrayals of Charles as a phoenix often drew on the belief that phoenixes lived on a diet of spices and died and rose again in nests of spices.⁵⁷ John Ogilby,

⁵⁴ John Crouch, *Londineses Lacrymæ. London's Second Tears Mingled with Her Ashes: A Poem* (London, 1666), 9, lines 231–34.

⁵⁵ Dryden, *Works*, 1:49.

⁵⁶ Cf. Arthur Brett, *The Restoration, or, A Poem on the Return of the Most Mighty and Ever Glorious Prince* (London, 1660), 11; Robert Twisse, *England's Breath Stopp'd* (London, 1665), 37; Simon Ford, *Parallēla Dysparallēla, or, The Loyal Subjects Indignation* (London, 1661), 45.

⁵⁷ E.g. John Crouch, *A Mixt Poem, Partly Historical, Partly Panegyricall, upon the Happy Return of His Sacred Majesty* (London, 1660), 1. For these facts about phoenixes: George Sandys, *Ouid's Metamorphoses Englished*

whom Dryden knew through Ogilby's 1650s and 1660s classical translations, links the phoenix's spice connotation to trade:

Your Sacred Person, Royal Sir, hath brought
 Home all the Wealth, that can be found, or thought
 The Riches of both *Indies* are but Poor,
 Compar'd with our renew'd *Carolean* Store.
 We'l blame that Fire no more, that scorch'd our Nest
 Of Spicy Trade, since we see You, the Best
 Of *Kings*, Rise from the Ashes of that Flame,
 That burnt our First Right *Phoenix* of Your Name.⁵⁸

Ogilby blames Civil War rebels, who "burnt our First Right *Phoenix*," for destabilizing England's economy. However, he rejoices that Charles II rises in that very "Flame" of dissent that murdered his father to ensure England's mercantile prosperity. Dryden follows Ogilby in formulating prosperity as dependent on Charles II: the "renew'd [] Store" is "*Carolean*" not British.

Dryden bookends *Annus Mirabilis* with England's exclusion from the spice trade and its anticipated attainment thereof. *Annus Mirabilis*'s opening dilemma is Holland's trade embargoes, and stanza 3 pants after trade opportunities denied England, including spices which "in hot *Ceilon*[']s Spicy Forrests grew" (line 12). The poem's first naval battle is the English interception of a Dutch trade ship bearing spices to Norway (lines 93–100). Dryden hints that this trade opportunity inherently belongs to England, as the spices betray the Dutch and give England the advantage. "By the rich scent we found our perfum'd prey," and when England opens fire, "whole heaps of Spices lights a Ball,/ And now their Odours arm'd against them flie"

(London, 1628), 428–29, which Dryden read as a schoolboy and relied on in his 1690s Ovid translations; Dryden, *Works*, 7:586 (editorial); 501–2, lines 578–611.

⁵⁸ John Ogilby, *The Relation of His Majestie's Entertainment Passing through the City of London to His Coronation* (London, 1661), 10. See Dryden's criticism of Ogilby's translations in *Sylvæ* (*Works*, 3:4).

and some of the Dutch crew “by Aromatick splinters die” (lines 101, 113–14, 116). *Annus Mirabilis*’s final lines prophetically and confidently anticipate when “A constant Trade-wind will securely blow,/ And gently lay us on the Spicy shore” (lines 1215–16).

Historians have only recently recognized how central the spice trade in Asia was to the Anglo-Dutch conflict.⁵⁹ English and Dutch merchants had competed over the lucrative trade since 1600. The Dutch retained the upper hand throughout the century largely because the English East India Company (EIC) was “undercapitalized and disadvantaged by its dependence on royal favour,” subject to inconsistent royal policy toward India, and unsupported by adequate military support.⁶⁰ The Dutch East India Company’s trading privileges were secure because it functioned independently of the state and could organize its own defense.⁶¹ However, despite a promising beginning under Elizabeth I, the English merchant company lacked adequate support under the Stuarts and fell into decline between the 1620s–60s.⁶² James I’s failure to provide military backing facilitated the executions of ten EIC officials by Dutch traders on Ambon in 1623—a story so shocking to the British public that it appeared in anti-Dutch, trade wars propaganda 30–50 years later.⁶³ Charles I self-servingly betrayed the EIC’s privileges “to wrest more revenues for the crown” by granting another group of English merchants a charter to trade in Asia.⁶⁴ Charles II’s marriage to a Portuguese princess in 1662 failed to secure the backing of Portugal—Holland’s long-term greatest threat.⁶⁵ Thus, three generations of Stuart monarchs

⁵⁹ David Ormrod and Gijs Rommelse, “Introduction: Anglo-Dutch Conflict in the North Sea and Beyond,” in *War, Trade and the State: Anglo-Dutch Conflict 1652–89*, ed. David Ormrod and Gijs Rommelse (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2020), 15.

⁶⁰ Ormrod and Rommelse, 15; Erik Odegard, “Merchant Companies at War: The Anglo-Dutch Wars in Asia,” in *War, Trade and the State: Anglo-Dutch Conflict 1652–89*, ed. David Ormrod and Gijs Rommelse (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2020), 233.

⁶¹ Odegard, “Merchant Companies at War,” 234; Ormrod and Rommelse, “Introduction,” 15.

⁶² Ormrod and Rommelse, “Introduction,” 15.

⁶³ Odegard, “Merchant Companies at War,” 235.

⁶⁴ Odegard, 233–34 (quotation from 233).

⁶⁵ Odegard, 240.

failed to support their merchants, and by the mid-1660s, the EIC had only a weak presence in Asia.⁶⁶

Annus Mirabilis's prefatory presentation of the Stuart royals as non-militaristic—fighting battles with witty manipulation and playful “*Cupid*” forces—seems like salt in the merchants’ wounds.⁶⁷ However, Dryden’s use of phoenix imagery reimagines how the Stuart monarchy will secure mercantile triumph. London’s transformation into a Caroline phoenix ensures England’s mercantile success through a providential means requiring neither force nor finances. Lines 1150–51, in which Charles “by his Auspice...hatch[es] their [London’s] ashes by his stay,” meld the divine token of “Auspice” with the sound of “spice,” thereby weaving together images of providence with England’s trade aspirations. This spice and phoenix imagery demonstrates *Annus Mirabilis*'s continuity. Edward Hooker argues that *Annus Mirabilis* frames 1666’s disasters as “momentary interruptions in the path to wealth and glory,” and Dryden’s editors criticize the Fire scene “as a kind of afterthought,” which fits unsuccessfully into the poem’s otherwise unhampered praise of “English skill, enterprise, and heroism.”⁶⁸ However, the overarching narrative of the phoenix makes contemporary disasters—and especially the Great Fire—essential stepping stones to wealth and glory. Only London’s redemptive transformation in the auspicious nest of the Caroline phoenix readies her to achieve the economic prosperity hitherto denied her. By becoming a phoenix, London requires a phoenix’s spicy sustenance, and providence, to sustain her, must give her the spice trade she has so long desired.

⁶⁶ Odegard, 240.

⁶⁷ Dryden, *Works*, 1:58.

⁶⁸ *Works*, 1:257 (editorial); Hooker, “Purpose of *Annus Mirabilis*,” 62.

The King's Prayer

Climaxing these demands for imitative conformity to Charles II, *Annus Mirabilis* makes the increasingly unpopular policy of monarchical absolutism a providential necessity. 1660s legislations foiled Charles's promises in the Declaration of Breda (4 April 1660) to extend liberty and forgiveness to dissenters. Yet, Charles's personal vision of his kingship, not Parliament's subsequent, overruling decisions, secures London's providential deliverance in *Annus Mirabilis*.

Building on the imagery of the Great Fire as a "dire contagion" in line 973, lines 1045–1080 reshape for Charles King David's prayer for mercy in 1 Chronicles 21. God answers David's prayer by offering him the choice between three punishments for Israel—famine, enemy suppression, or a divinely inflicted pestilence. Trusting that "very great are his [God's] mercies," David chooses the pestilence (1 Chronicles 21:13). That London's fire is a "dire contagion" suggests that England's king also chose to rely on God's mercy. Yet, it is not God's mercy but Charles's that saves London from annihilation. This fiery, "dire contagion" begins as a "dire Usurper" in line 849. The parallel diction blames dissenters for the plague, fire, and God's wrath. This blame diverges from 1 Chronicles 21, in which *David's* sin evokes God's wrath on innocent Israel. Dryden has Charles confess his sins, but the prayer renders the king's fault implausible. Only after three stanzas of asserting God's providence over the restoration and his commitment to healing war-torn England and to godly policies does Charles confess the possibility of personal sin. "[I]f my heedless Youth has stept astray," he prays, "On me alone thy just displeasure lay,/ But take thy judgments from this mourning Land" (lines 1057, 1059–60). The suppositional "if" and the three preceding stanzas cast doubt on Charles's youthful waywardness and make his redirection of God's "just displeasure" an act of Christ-like self-sacrifice for the rebellious nation.

This is not mere blame-shifting from king to populace. Charles stands between the people and the divine Judge, who would destroy London if not for the king's personal vision for Britain's recovery from the Civil War. Charles's Declaration of Breda opens, "If the general distraction and confusion which is spread over the whole kingdom doth not awaken all men to a desire and longing that those wounds which have so many years together been kept bleeding may be bound up, all we can say will be to no purpose," but that "we desire to contribute" to this national healing "by a full and entire administration of justice throughout the land, and by extending our mercy where it is wanted and deserved."⁶⁹ The king's prayer in *Annus Mirabilis* echoes Breda's language. Charles attests,

Be thou my Judge, with what unwearied care
I since have labour'd for my People's good:
To bind the bruises of a Civil War,
And stop the issues of their wasting bloud. (lines 1049–52)

In the next stanza, Charles, who presented "justice" and "mercy" as joint, healing balms in the Declaration of Breda, invites the divine Judge's mercy, "If mercy be a Precept of thy will" (line 1055).

However, mercy is Charles's, not God's, precept in *Annus Mirabilis*. Charles begs,

O pass not, Lord, an absolute decree,
Or bind thy sentence unconditional:
But in thy sentence our remorse foresee,
And, in that foresight, this thy doom recall. (lines 1073–76)

Where Charles sought to "bind" wounds, God "bind[s]" "doom." Where Breda extended "mercy where it is wanted and deserved," God's "absolute decree" of judgment is terrifyingly untouched

⁶⁹ Charles II, *His Majesties Gracious Letter and Declaration Sent...from Breda* (London, 1660), 9–10.

by the people's "remorse."⁷⁰ Only after Charles's prayer does "th' Almighty cast a pitying eye,/ And mercy softly touch[] his melting breast" (lines 1117–18). God adopts responses which Charles displayed from the beginning of the Fire scene, when the "shrieks of subjects pierce[d] his tender breast" and "pious tears...down his cheeks did show'r" (lines 952, 958). Charles made the "wretched" forget their grief because, the narrator parenthetically observes, "(So much the pity of a King has pow'r)" (lines 959–60). God's favor on Charles manifests strangely as imitation, as God's unfeeling eyes and breast soften, and "pity[]" and "mercy" temper God's "just displeasure" (line 1059). Breda's promised policies rescue London from its rebellious history and from God.

Annus Mirabilis's Fire scene suggests that England is safest under Charles II's kingship, not directly under God (as many dissenters desired) nor under Parliament's persecutory policies (as those wary of Charles's leniency desired). In opposition to royalists' outspoken fears of Charles's leniency, *Annus Mirabilis* loyally defends the king's mercy as essential to England's flourishing and a mark of monarchical strength. What could be stronger than the king's mercy changing God's mind? Dryden warns that dissenters were self-destructive for rejecting the mercies of their fatherly king in favor of a divine Judge. Charles's Anglican-gentry parliament, which dictated his policies and hindered Breda's promises, denied the nation its only hope of recovery: Charles II as an absolute monarch, who understood better than anyone what Britain needed to flourish.

However, this providential triumphalism has underlying fault lines. To shape this narrative of the king's unparalleled, providential authority, the poem must manage and manipulate the plague of 1665–66—the disaster which most impacted Dryden and the populace.

⁷⁰ Charles II, 10.

Over 68,000 British subjects died in the Great Plague, compared to six reported deaths in the Great Fire, and 7,000 in the Second Anglo-Dutch War.⁷¹ Dryden composed *Annus Mirabilis* at his father-in-law's home in Charlton, Wiltshire, where he went between June 1665 and the end of 1666 after the plague closed London's theaters, his main source of income and professional prestige.⁷² Yet, only the prefatory epistle's appeal to Dryden's London-based brother-in-law to prepare the poem for publication and one subtle instance of plague imagery in the Fire scene allude to these circumstances.⁷³ In describing the Fire as a "dire contagion" spreading through London, the poem contains the pestilence to a historical moment that reflects well on the king (line 973). During the plague, Charles and the royal court fled the city, leaving London's poor and helpless to fend for themselves, but, as *Annus Mirabilis* heroically depicts, Charles and James remained in London to aid the people during the Fire.⁷⁴ However, London's most deadly pestilence, with twice as many fatalities as the second most deadly epidemic in 1625, must have seemed like a glaring exception to contemporary readers, destabilizing *Annus Mirabilis*'s carefully constructed providential certainty.⁷⁵ More troublingly, the poem's providential history manipulates, minimizes, excludes, and questions God and puts a mere man, however important, in the place of God over England's future.

⁷¹ Moote and Moote, *Great Plague*, 10.

⁷² Hammond, "John Dryden (ODNB)."

⁷³ Sir Robert Howard's 1666 and 1667 activities as an MP lead me to conclude that he was in London during these years; J. P. Vander Motten, "Howard, Sir Robert (1626–1698)," ODNB, September 23, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/13935>.

⁷⁴ See Baxter's account of the brave, nonconformist ministers who remained in London during the plague to help and preach, followed by a note that Charles "removed [to Oxford] for danger of the plague"; Baxter, *RB*, 2:III. 1, 1696, §§6–7.

⁷⁵ Moote and Moote, *Great Plague*, 10–11.

An Unstable Transition

Such a person-dependent providentialism became a reason for instability after that dynamic personality died in 1685. Dryden's poem *Threnodia Augustalis* (1685) masterfully responds to Charles II's death and James II's succession to read stability into a moment of transition. *Threnodia Augustalis* primarily describes Charles's reign with metaphors of gentleness, mercy, peace, fertility, and light and James with descriptors of war, heroism, and Herculean strength.⁷⁶ These metaphors distinguish the brothers' reigns by their unique personalities, experiences, and policies. However, the poem forces a sense of temporal stability by reading back James's unique expertise onto Charles's kingship. Stanza XIII awkwardly transitions from celebrating Charles as "the New-born Phoenix," who inspires poets, to celebrating Charles as a naval hero, who rescues "a sinking State" by his "steady hand" guiding the nation's "Rudder" (lines 364, 388, 395). The two metaphors sandwich the poet's interjected prayer for Charles to "Live ever in our Thankful Hearts," but little of Charles lives on in the fearsome naval hero who "restores/ The *Fasces* of the Main" to England at *Threnodia Augustalis*'s conclusion (lines 384, 516–17).

Thus, even the continually resurrecting monarchy disrupts the nation with each royal succession by requiring conformity to a new monarch. *Threnodia Augustalis* demands "Th' amended Vows of *English* Loyalty" from Charles to James (line 505). To remain stable and successful, the populace must transfer loyalties and transform to reflect the new monarch's unique self and policies. As widely criticized, Dryden himself repeatedly played the chameleon. This indicates not a lack of selfhood, *pace* Zwicker, but, per Keymer, a thoughtful response to cultural and political flux—an attempt to safeguard personal and national security in changeable

⁷⁶ For Charles: lines 203–7, 285–91, 346–69. For James: lines 429, 510–17, 446–64.

times.⁷⁷ Yet, *Annus Mirabilis*'s need to fictionalize Charles II as omnipotent over Britain's destiny and *Threnodia Augustalis*'s incongruent superimposition of Charles onto James exposes the Stuart monarchy's undeniable instability, particularly in its 1685 transition.

By 1687, Dryden had fully transferred his providential hopes for the nation from the Stuart monarchy to the Roman Catholic Church. For the first time in Dryden's writings, we see in *The Hind and the Panther* what Bryan Berry deems "a major change in [Dryden's] view of the relation between church and state," as providential supersedes monarchical authority.⁷⁸ Annabel Patterson posits that Dryden shifted his allegiance from Charles to James as early as 1672.⁷⁹ Yet, while clearly still admiring James, Dryden's 1687 poem parrots neither James nor his toleration campaign. The poem embraces toleration as godly and nationally beneficial while displacing James from a place of providential authority. When Dryden opens with "A Milk white *Hind*, immortal and unchang'd," who has lived without alteration through changeable generations and is "fated not to dy," we see the type of stable, providential authority that he had sought but not found in the Stuart monarchy (I.1, 8). I challenge Molly Murray's claim that the various generations' love, apathy, or hatred for the Hind in I.2–7 evinces her "ambivalent future."⁸⁰ That such a history leaves the Catholic Hind "unchang'd" promises that the nation which conforms to her authority need never undergo another transformation.

⁷⁷ Zwicker, "Uses of Gossip and Scandal," 175; Keymer, *Poetics of the Pillory*, 37.

⁷⁸ Bryan Berry, "The Cost of John Dryden's Catholicism," *Logos: A Journal of Catholic Thought and Culture* 12, no. 2 (2009): 170.

⁷⁹ Annabel Patterson, "Dryden and Political Allegiance," in *The Cambridge Companion to John Dryden*, ed. Steven Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 221, see also 232.

⁸⁰ Molly Murray, *The Poetics of Conversion in Early Modern English Literature: Verse and Change from Donne to Dryden* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 154.

The Hind and the Panther

“[S]he whom ye seek am I”

This section explores how *The Hind and the Panther* undercuts the providential significance of the populace’s and Church of England’s conformity to the king and even subjugates James II to a place of secondary, providential importance while offering the Catholic Hind as a higher and very different type of authority. The 1687 poem employs many of the same literary techniques as *Annus Mirabilis* to communicate providential authority, including the creative use of triplets and imagery denoting miraculous, national transformation. However, *Annus Mirabilis*’s depictions of an earthly king replacing or even overriding divine authority, as well as of subjects’ heretically worshipful devotion to this king, gave sound reasons for the reader to mistrust and reject the poem’s calls to conformity to the Stuart monarchy. *The Hind and the Panther* replaces *Annus Mirabilis*’s tricks and manipulation with a steady certainty, which is rooted in the assurance that God Himself provides, sanctions, and protects the authority of the Roman Catholic Church.

Dryden’s 1687 poem depicts an England that is (begrudgingly) abiding by its king’s singular vision for political stability: religious toleration under James’s recent Declaration of Indulgence. However, monarchical absolutism brings no stability, as *Annus Mirabilis* foretold it would. In a parable, the Hind blames England’s continued instability on the populace’s Protestantism:

...suppose debate
Betwixt pretenders to a fair estate,
Bequeath’d by some Legator’s last intent;
(Such is our dying Saviour’s Testament:)
The will is prov’d, is open’d, and is read;
The doubtfull heirs their diff’ring titles plead:
All vouch the words their int’rest to maintain,

And each pretends by those his cause is plain.
 Shall then the testament award the right?
 No, that's the *Hungary* for which they fight;
 The field of battel, subject of debate,
 The thing contended for, the fair estate. (II.373–84)

The “dying Saviour’s” “will” and “last intent” represent scripture. The Protestant sects, with their competing claims for authority, are many “doubtfull heirs,” all interpreting scripture to prove their “int’reast” in Christ’s “fair estate.” The word “int’reast” suggests a claim to have the right to *share* in the “fair estate.”⁸¹ However, the singular “right” to be awarded in II.381 destabilizes this meaning.

The Hind’s parable unravels Dryden’s 1682 use of these images in *Religio Laici*. The Anglican apologetic criticizes medieval priests for claiming scripture as “*Their* Estate” and praises the Reformation which “the *Will produc’d* (the written Word): “Then, every man who saw the Title fair/ Claim’d a Child’s part, and put in for a Share” (lines 391–92, 394–95). The laypeople humbly claim kinship—“a Child’s part”—and seek “a Share” with all in the responsibility of reading and interpreting scripture. However, *Religio Laici* ended by recognizing how readily “every vulgar hand” abuses “the Title fair” and England’s need for a higher, arbitrating authority (namely, the Church of England) to settle “Disputes [which] the publick Peace disturb” (lines 400, 394, 448). The Hind’s reworking of *Religio Laici*’s imagery implies that Protestantism’s *sola scriptura* prevents it from ever being a nationally stabilizing authority.

The parable’s singular metaphors—“the right,” “the *Hungary*,” “[t]he field,” the “subject,” “[t]he thing,” “the fair estate”—indicate that the highest authority belongs to one recipient (II.381–84). II.382’s reference to the ongoing wars between the Hapsburg and Ottoman empires over Hungary since the 1400s elucidates this necessary singularity and England’s

⁸¹ “interest, n.,” I (OED).

dangerous resistance thereto. Ottoman advances into Europe foreboded European Christendom's fall to Islam, and Hungary was a gateway for this fear to become reality. The Turks captured Hungary's capital city, Buda, in 1541, and for the next 140 years the Habsburgs repeatedly failed to reclaim it. However, the 1680s were a major turning point. In 1683, Pope Innocent XI, whom *The Hind and the Panther* elsewhere praises, initiated the "Holy League," an alliance between the Habsburg's Holy Roman Empire and Poland-Lithuania.⁸² The banded forces facilitated multiple European victories, including Buda's recapture in 1686, and the eventual end of Ottoman expansion into Europe.⁸³ The events fascinated and terrified the British public, as indicated by the torrent of 1680s publications about Ottoman history and the Turks' threat to Christendom and innately tyrannical nature.⁸⁴

Although the Siege of Vienna in 1683 was the Holy League's most famous victory, Dryden tellingly focuses on Hungary.⁸⁵ Hungary's militant Protestant *kurucs* so resisted the Holy Roman Empire that they allied with the Turks in the early 1680s. An anonymous, satirical letter published in 1683 brings these Catholic-Protestant tensions into a post-Popish Plot context. The letter—allegedly from the Hungarian rebel leader, Count Thököly, to Titus Oates—petitions for English Protestants' support of the Turks. Thököly fondly anticipates the eventual "perfect *Unity* between the two Kirks of *Mahomet* and *Geneva*" when "the *Directory*, and the *Alcoran* shall be bound up in one Volumn, and be proclaimed *equally Religious* and *Glorious*."⁸⁶ The Hungarian rebels' and English Protestants' resistance to the lesser danger, Catholicism, threatens

⁸² Cf. *HP*, I.288.

⁸³ For relevant history: Andrew Wheatcroft, *The Enemy at the Gate: Habsburgs, Ottomans and the Battle for Europe* (London: Pimlico, 2009), 166, 190; Chapter 10, esp. pp. 215, 224.

⁸⁴ Anders Ingram, *Writing the Ottomans: Turkish History in Early Modern England* (Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 9–10; also Chapter 5, esp. p. 121.

⁸⁵ Cf. Wheatcroft, *Enemy at the Gates*, Chapters 6–8.

⁸⁶ *A Letter from Count Teckely to the Salamanca Doctor, Giving an Account of the Siege of Vienna, and the State of the Ottoman Army* (London, 1683). Cf. Ingram, *Writing the Ottomans*, 122.

Christendom's fall. The Hind's reference to "the *Hungary* for which they fight" in the context of divisive, Christian "heirs" vying over Christ's "estate" warns against the *kurucs*' self-sabotaging defiance against Catholics (II.382, 378, 374). The Hind's allusion hinges Christianity's preservation on a united, Christian force, as the Holy League secured European Christendom.

The Catholic Church—which relies on tradition over scripture and which the Hind later praises as "One in herself," "one solid shining Diamond," "One central principle of unity," "undivided," "one in faith," and "one in sanctity"—clearly avoids Protestantism's crippling divisiveness and missing arbitrator (II.526–27, 529–32). However, the Hind is uninterested in being the winning heir. Rather than acting claimant to the "fair estate," the Hind identifies the need for a "judge appointed to decide" Christ's will's meaning (II.374, 388). By inference, she, as the only one not basing her authority on *sola scriptura*, is this judge. The Hind thereby excludes herself from the unstable successions of ecclesial authority and struggles for temporal power, distinguishing herself as the singular arbitrating authority.

Yet, the Protestant Establishment does not know where to look for a stabilizing, providential authority. Deaf to the Hind's inferences, the Panther demands that her opponent reveal England's "living guide," "[t]his mighty *Moses* of the chosen crew" (II.390, 393). The words "living" and "*Moses*" expose the Panther's occasional focus. *Annus Mirabilis* likened James to Moses, whose upheld arms secured God's favor and England's victory. Now, this same "Moses" is king. However, James's power arose from the death of the previous Moses, as *Threnodia Augustalis* remembers Charles.⁸⁷ The Panther seeks only this moment's authority figure, having apparently no concept of the eternal authority proclaimed in the Hind's answering triplet:

⁸⁷ Cf. Dryden, *Works*, 3:105, lines 425–28.

The Dame, who saw her fainting foe retir'd,
 With force renew'd, to victory aspir'd;
 (And looking upward to her kindred sky,
 As once our Saviour own'd his Deity,
 Pronounc'd his words—*she whom ye seek am I.*) (II.394–98)

The Hind claims the divine name “I AM,” by which God revealed Himself to Moses in Exodus 3:14 and Jesus claimed His divinity in John 8:58 and 18:5–8. The triplet plays on the triune yet undivided nature of triplets and the Trinity.⁸⁸ Each line presents a member of the Trinity—the “kindred sky,” later associated with God’s “paternal thunder” (II.537); the “Saviour”; and humanity’s guide after Jesus’s ascension, the Holy Spirit. All are known by the name “I AM” and build toward a single action: the Hind’s revelation of her shared divinity. The Trinity embodies the type of authority which Dryden once ascribed to the monarchy: made up of different persons, visibly active in different generations, but united in purpose and name throughout history.⁸⁹ The Trinity truly shares its authority, unlike the Protestant sects, and need never transfer that authority to successive rulers, given its members’ immortality.

By using the divine name first revealed to Moses, the Hind presents herself not as his (and, by implication, James’s) replacement, but as the authority above him—as his God. While Moses’s (and the king’s) authority applies to a specific nation and historical moment, the Hind’s spans all generations post-Christ. This distinction is crucial. Dryden remains loyal to James II and would balk at the usurpation of royal authority as profoundly impious.⁹⁰ The Stuart monarchy is simply no longer the highest providential authority.

⁸⁸ Cf. Christopher Ricks, “Dryden’s Triplets,” in *The Cambridge Companion to John Dryden*, ed. Steven Zwicker (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 105.

⁸⁹ In addition to the continuity inferred by *Annus Mirabilis*’s phoenix imagery, note *Annus Mirabilis*’s depiction of old and new kings’ interconnectedness in lines 321–24.

⁹⁰ *HP* criticizes such political impiety in the “Usurper” Buzzard (III.1274).

Dryden's modern editors read the Hind's declaration of authority as a direct answer to the poem's prefatory epigraphs from Virgil's *Aeneid*, which translated are "Seek your ancient mother" and "The true goddess is revealed by her grace of movement."⁹¹ The first figures in Apollo's oracle to Aeneas, guiding Aeneas to his destined homeland, while the second refers to Aeneas's sudden recognition of his mother Venus after a span of unrecognition. The reader familiar with Virgil would interpret the first epigraph as the search for a mighty, matchless nation—a search which Dryden had long answered with England *because of* Charles II, England's new Caesar Augustus. The second epigraph pointedly casts doubt on the first, inferring the nation's failure to identify its true "mother." The Hind's declaration in II.398 pronounces the Catholic Church as the true means to England's greatness.

Yet, unlike the victories springing from Charles's providential authority in *Annus Mirabilis*, death and temporal ineffectiveness mark the Hind's revelation. The Hind's use of the name "I AM" could allude to God the Father or Son, but she associates herself with Jesus. In John 8:58–59 and 18:5–9, Jesus's self-identifications as the "I AM" lead to him being rejected, threatened, and eventually killed. God's revelation as "I AM" in Exodus 3:14, alternatively, leads to Egypt's subduing and long-enslaved Israel's emancipation.⁹² The Hind's "force" and aspiring "victory" over her "fainting foe," which initiate her declaration, seem heroic aspirations better suited to the Old Testament "I AM" (II.394–95). Such an reference could insinuate the Hind's intention forcefully to deliver England from Protestant rule. However, the Hind's declaration makes no deathblow in this verbal battle. The Panther is "amaz'd...to hear a god declar'd" in II.399–400 (as Jesus's arrestors fell back at His use of the title "I AM" in John 18:5–

⁹¹ See editorial notes for II.398 in the Longman and California editions. Cf. Virgil, *Aeneid*, ed. Elaine Fantham, trans. Frederick Ahl (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), III.96, I.405.

⁹² Cf. Exo. 3–15.

9), and she is silent and subdued for Part II's remainder. Yet, the Panther remains dumb to the Hind's arguments and a lurking threat.⁹³ In her moment of greatest glory, in a declaration which Bryan Berry calls "[t]he poem's climax," the Hind gains no apparent victory.⁹⁴ She conquers no enemies, proves no point beyond argument, and secures no safety or prosperity. Her triplet does not trick fate into defending her cause, as *Annus Mirabilis*'s prefatory triplet did, but falls unobserved and sidelined in parentheses. Part II immediately resurfaces the sectarian claimants to providential authority as if the rightful authority remains unrevealed.

Paul Hammond criticizes *The Hind and the Panther* for ultimately failing to prove its epigraphs' claim that the Catholic Church is an unerring guide that fulfills the ideals of classical Rome.⁹⁵ He and I analyze many of the same passages but come to very different conclusions. Hammond denounces the opening epigraphs as examples of "imperfect recognition" and therefore "not...an encouraging precedent for the seeker after truth."⁹⁶ He denounces the Hind's declaration of divinity as "a blatant misquotation" of scripture which "conflates" Jesus's question "Whom seek ye?" with His answer "I am he" to force a connection between the Catholic Church and Virgil.⁹⁷ (A decade later, Dryden's *Aeneis* reuses the line "*she whom ye seek am I.*"⁹⁸) And without supporting evidence, he assumes that the Hind's triplet was "awkwardly tucked by the compositor into a parenthesis," not by Dryden.⁹⁹

Yet, Hammond's oversight of the poem's purpose and audience distorts his readings. The poem's stated purpose is not to prove the Catholic Church's authority but to defend the penal codes' repeal and the validity of converting to Catholicism. The epigraphs of misrecognition and

⁹³ E.g., *HP*, II.714–21.

⁹⁴ Berry, "Cost of Dryden's Catholicism," 157.

⁹⁵ Hammond, *Traces*, 127.

⁹⁶ Hammond, 128–29.

⁹⁷ Hammond, 138. Cf. Jn. 18:4–5.

⁹⁸ Dryden, *Works*, 5:369, I.834.

⁹⁹ Hammond, *Traces*, 138.

the Hind's parenthetical and misquoted declaration reflect the defective hermeneutical capacity of Dryden's "refractory and disobedient" Protestant audience.¹⁰⁰ In the Hind's seemingly ineffective revelation, we see a truly confident and virtuous authority figure. The Hind will not force herself on the nation by usurping the Protestant Church. Her authority is secure, and she waits for the rebellious, Protestant nation to recognize its need for her and then choose to repeal the laws which resist her and thwart its own stability. She waits for the Protestant nation to convert.

In an otherwise insightful article on Dryden's ambivalent response to James's indulgence, Brandon Chua mistakenly detects no hope of achieving national Catholicism in *The Hind and the Panther*.¹⁰¹ I contend that the poem imagines England's conversion specifically through the transformative potential of the Catholic Eucharistic doctrine of transubstantiation. Dryden had long anticipated that the populace would renew or prove their loyalty to the nation's providential authority figure through their transformation into that figure's likeness. Yet, before *The Hind and the Panther*, this transformation is mere literary play: London morphs into a mythical phoenix like Charles II in *Annus Mirabilis*, and Britain morphs into a ship for its new, naval-hero king in *Threnodia Augustalis*. Based on changeable kings, these transformations last only so long as their inspiration. Yet, the Roman Catholic Eucharist offered Dryden a means by which transformation might be *real* and *substantial* (rather than only symbolic and external) and, therefore, lasting.

When the two matrons reach the Hind's home at Part II's close, the Hind describes her impoverished house as the site of an ongoing Eucharist celebration:

...this poor aboard

¹⁰⁰ Dryden, *Works*, 3:119.

¹⁰¹ Chua, "Representing Religious Tolerance," 30.

Has oft receiv'd, and yet receives a god;
 A god victorious of the stygian race
 Here laid his sacred limbs, and sanctified the place.
 This mean retreat did mighty *Pan* contain;
 Be emulous of him, and pomp disdain,
 And dare not to debase your soul to gain. (II.707–13)

To “receive the Sacraments,” to take and eat the bread and drink the wine, is common Eucharistic language that the poem uses elsewhere.¹⁰² The poem’s earlier references to “receiving” in I.410–29 and II.40–44 deride low-church symbolism and Anglican consubstantiation. That the Hind in II.708 “receives a god” indicates her Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, in which the Sacraments transform into Christ’s actual body and blood. The Sacraments begin as the demigod Hercules, who defeated the hound of the underworld, Cerberus, and somewhere during the Eucharist, become “mighty *Pan*,” the god of shepherds and herds. Both fittingly figure Christ, who conquered death and hell, is both God and man, and is “the good Shepherd” (John 10:11).

Rather than creating distance between Catholics and other Christians as Jeremy Carnes argues Dryden does in *Don Sebastian* by mystifying Catholic doctrines, the Hind invites the Anglican Panther into the transubstantiation process.¹⁰³ The Hind calls the Panther to “Be emulous of him [Pan]”—to imitate, even rival, the transubstantiated Christ in order to equal or surpass him. This command is an uncommon, syntactic usage of the word “emulous,” absent from the *OED*. The syntactic strangeness mirrors the command’s strangeness. The Panther is a predator who devours the creatures Pan protects. The Panther also craves “gold” (II.717) and

¹⁰² Cf. “receive, v.,” 12.a (OED).

¹⁰³ Jeremy Carnes, “Catholic Conversion and Incest in Dryden’s *Don Sebastian*,” *Restoration: Studies in English Literary Culture, 1660–1700* 38, no. 2 (2014): 13, <https://doi.org/10.1353/rst.2014.0016>.

cannot “pomp disdain” (II.712). The command is theologically unstable: how can even the eternal Church—let alone what Dryden sees as a fallen, earthly church—rival or surpass Christ, the church’s reason for existence?

The Hind’s bizarre command highlights the dissonance between predator and Shepherd, rendering seemingly impossible the Panther’s ability to emulate Pan. Part I divides humankind into two races: a persecutory, power-seeking race arising from Cain, and a pious, shepherding race arising from the murdered shepherd Abel, whom the poem mirrors with Christ by naming “the blessed *Pan*.” From Cain

...persecution rose, and farther space
 Produc’d the mighty hunter of his race.
 Not so the blessed *Pan* his flock encreas’d,
 Content to fold ’em from the famish’d beast:
 Mild were his laws; the Sheep and harmless Hind
 Were never of the persecuting kind. (I.282–87)

As head of the “common Hunt,” the Protestant sects, the Panther likely descends from the “mighty hunter” Nimrod (I.27). Nimrod’s tower, which sought to make man like God, resulted in God multiplying and confusing human languages (Genesis 11). So Protestantism has multiplied and confused truth. In I.470–77, the Hind comments that “*Babel* was never half so much confus’d” as the Protestant sects, who lack a “sure interpreter.” The Panther/Church of England, who resisted repealing the penal codes, cannot claim to be “never of the persecuting kind” like Pan and his flock, although she is forced temporarily into toleration by James’s Declaration.

Yet, the poem imagines the possibility of the Panther’s transformation. The triplet in the Eucharist scene in II.711–13 unites the Panther and Pan in the same expansive, poetic flourish. Dryden might have written a triplet leading from Hercules to Pan to convey how transubstantiation defies the boundaries of earthly realities, as a triplet defies the boundaries of

couplets. Instead, the triplet begins with the transubstantiated Pan and leads to a command for the Panther to emulate him. The Panther is syntactically and poetically part of the transubstantiated Pan, as even their names' similarity suggests. The presence of Pan's name within the Panther's mirrors the Anglican Eucharistic doctrine of consubstantiation, which admits the "real presence" of Christ within the Sacraments but maintains that the bread and wine retain their own natures. Yet, this partial divinity cannot ensure her authority. The Panther is "neither lov'd nor fear'd,/ A meer mock Queen of a divided Herd" that she fails to "controll" even by "lawfull pow'r," because she is only one of many Protestant authorities, "Her self a part submitted to the whole" (I.497–500). By calling the Panther to "emulate" Pan as part of her Eucharist triplet, the Hind invites the double miracle of the transubstantiated Sacraments and the transubstantiated national church.

A decade later, Dryden reworked II.707–13 for his *Aeneis*, in which King Evander commands Aeneas to "Dare to be poor...and emulate a God."¹⁰⁴ As Rome's epic destiny relies on Aeneas's alliance with Evander, who helps him defeat their common enemy, Turnus, England's epic destiny relies on the Panther's response. The Panther must choose to reject the Hind's command and remain earthly, powerful, and rich, or be consecrated by the Hind and transubstantiated into something truly divine. The poem must be "The Hind *and* the Panther" because it places its hope for England's future not on Catholics gaining control and enforcing a Catholic polity and faith, but on the national church's conversion.

This English church's transubstantiation requires it to take the Catholic Church, rather than the monarch, as its highest, providential authority. Paul Hammond judges the anonymous allusion to Hercules and the Hind's revelation of "a god" (rather than "God") as signs of

¹⁰⁴ Dryden, *Works*, 6:623, VIII.479–80.

Dryden's uncertainty over how to present Christianity as mythology's fulfillment.¹⁰⁵ Yet, the poem effortlessly presents Jesus as Pan; a different classical figure surely proved no difficulty for Dryden. II.709's "a god" limits Hercules's authority as a role possessed by many, whereas "mighty *Pan*" is a singular, specific authority. The movement from Hercules to Pan is one from demigod to god, from part human to fully divine, from warrior to shepherd, and, subtly, from James to Christ.

Threnodia Augustalis devotes nearly twenty lines to celebrating James as "*Alcides*," one of the Greek names for Hercules (lines 446–64). The poem likens the trials of James's youth to those of Hercules, by which he proved his divinity. *Threnodia Augustalis* celebrates James even in his infancy as "The future God, [who] at first was more than Man" (line 449). The implication is that when James becomes king, he becomes a god. Indeed, in *Threnodia Augustalis*'s next stanza, King James II's "Truth" is "like Heav'ns" (line 486). He ordains fate, because "For him to Promise is to make it Fate" (line 487). *Threnodia Augustalis* slightly backsteps these heretical insinuations by leaving Hercules as victor of only his second labor and, thus, still mortal. However, the Hind boldly picks up Hercules's story at his twelfth and final labor, Cerberus's defeat, by which Hercules secured immortality. It is Jesus on the cross and Jesus made continually real and present in the Roman Catholic Sacraments, rather than James as king, who secures the epic conclusion. James is essential and even bears marks of divinity, but he is not the providential authority who will lead England to victory.

In departure from *Annus Mirabilis*, the monarchy's authority in *The Hind and the Panther* is providentially limited by the king's personal foibles and political ambitions. It is unsurprising that Dryden warns the vying Protestant sects (the "doubtfull heirs"), who might

¹⁰⁵ Hammond, *Traces*, 136–38.

wield the royal indulgence for personal gain, and the national church (the Panther), which balks against its lost semblance of authority under the indulgence, against pursuing earthly power and victories (II.378). The poem raises little hope that either group knows how to pursue the common good or discern providence. We expect the poem to put more faith in James II—whom Dryden respected as Britain’s monarch, a Catholic, and simply a virtuous individual—to have a providential mindset. Yet, the Hind’s fable of the pigeons in Part III directs the poem’s warning against expecting immediate or temporal gains to the king. Dryden’s prefatory poem to *Fables, Ancient and Modern* (1700) later cautions, “Ev’n Victors are by Victories undone.”¹⁰⁶ The Hind’s fable warns how to not be “undone” by overvaluing the significance of James’s career victories. Her fable warns against a subtler (albeit more innocent) pursuit of earthly victories than that disparaged in her fair estate parable: James must not expect that his genuinely pious submission to providence will lead to Britain’s temporal success.

The fable of the pigeons initially postulates James II as providence’s earthly authority but then questions his suitability in this role. The Hind begins by resurrecting praise that *Threnodia Augustalis* gave to James in 1685 to reevaluate his succession’s stability:

Inur’d to hardships from his early Youth,
 Much had he done, and suffer’d for his truth:
 At Land, and Sea, in many a doubtfull Fight,
 Was never known a more adven’trous Knight,
 Who oftner drew his Sword, and always for the right.

As Fortune wou’d (his fortune came tho’ late)
 He took Possession of his just Estate. (III.910–16)

James’s life is one of unparalleled, even divine, heroism and self-sacrifice. He fights not only for the nation and king, as *Annus Mirabilis* also praised him, but for the divine realities of truth and

¹⁰⁶ Dryden, *Works*, 7:201, line 164.

morality—that which is “right.” III.915–16’s description of James’s succession to “his just estate” (the throne) echoes the Hind’s earlier parable, which concluded without identifying Christ’s rightful heir. That James receives “his just Estate” by the will of “Fortune” implies that he is this rightful heir, the succeeding providential authority on earth after Christ’s ascension.

However, III.915 destabilizes James’s providential authority. At face value, fortune coming “late” speaks to James’s being fifty-one years old when he became king.¹⁰⁷ Yet the line insinuates a dissonance between human expectations and providence. “Fortune wou’d” elect this precise moment for James to take “Possession of his just Estate,” making it the perfect timing in history and James’s life. However, this fortune seems so “late” that the Hind parenthetically restates the fact that “fortune came,” as if those who have wearily waited need assurance. For the king or his supporters to think that providence “came...late” reveals that their plans and expectations are occasional. They are unaware of God’s eternal agenda. Dryden spans James’s heroic youth across a triplet (III.912–14) but narrows the significance of James’s succession to a couplet (III.9.15–16). The couplet is a disillusioned revision of the triplet *Threnodia Augustalis* used to describe James’s succession: “A Warlike Prince ascends the Regal State,/ A Prince, long exercis’d by Fate:/ Long may he keep, tho he obtains it late” (lines 429–31). Two years later, gone is the triplet’s heroic expanse, James’s authoritative title, and the poet’s hope that James would “Long...keep” his throne.

Fortune’s intercession minimizes James’s divine role and exposes his narrow providential understanding. The fable continues by claiming that the king

...rack’d [not] his Tenants with increase of Rent,
Nor liv’d too sparing, nor too largely spent;
But overlook’d his Hinds, their Pay was just,
And ready, for he scorn’d to go on trust. (III.917–20)

¹⁰⁷ Cf. *HP*, III.916 (editorial).

The intercession of “Fortune” in James’s story transforms him from the most “adven’trous Knight” in history to “A Plain good Man” and simple farmer (III.915, 913, 906). “Fortune” revises James’s role from one of epic proportions and the abstract realities of truth and morality to one of prosaic, immediate cares, including finances, living conditions, and food provisions for his creature “Tenants.”¹⁰⁸ James continues to “suffer[] for his truth” but due to susceptibility, not heroism (III.911). To his own and Britain’s detriment, he believes the “shows of honest bluntness” made by “False Friends” because “He look’d into Himself, and was deceiv’d” (III.926–29). He foolishly assumes that his former “deadliest foes” now live by his personal standards of truth, righteousness, and openness (III.926). Such credulity suggests that James interprets fortune’s granting him personal success as a simultaneous deathblow against falsehood and wickedness, the forces he battled before his succession.

Though the Hind applauds James’s unfaltering honesty, she disconnects his temporal success from providence’s eternal will. This concept of providence dominates Dryden’s later writings. John West identifies that before 1687, Dryden’s writings employ the popular concept of “providential heroism,” in which providence does virtuous heroes’ bidding, particularly regarding their political aspirations. However, in and after *The Hind and the Panther*, West argues, Dryden’s “heroes wait on providence.”¹⁰⁹ Yet, in the Hind’s parable, James rushes headlong in trusting the wrong people and enforcing his policies. Far from being the awesome phoenix of *Annus Mirabilis* or the mighty naval hero of *Threnodia Augustalis*, he is—in Zwicker’s words—“a slightly dim-witted chicken farmer.”¹¹⁰ Abigail Williams argues that

¹⁰⁸ Cf. *HP*, III.939.

¹⁰⁹ John West, “Dryden’s Post-Revolutionary Theology of Providence,” in *Dryden and Enthusiasm: Literature, Religion, and Politics in Restoration England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 142, 132.

¹¹⁰ Zwicker, “Paradoxes of Tender Conscience,” 854.

Dryden's 1690s translations reject the popular assumption that an individual's or cause's success denotes God's favor.¹¹¹ In the Hind's fable, James's misinterpretation of personal success as providential disqualifies him from his providential role and excludes him from the continued unfolding of God's work in England. His temporal role and perspective render him, the best human candidate for divine authority, unqualified.

Yet, significantly, James's inability to be England's providential authority is through no fault of his kingship. The Hind presents James II (even with his foibles) as an exemplary "virtuous prince." James is an absolutist king who sacrifices personal interests for the common good. He tries to work with other political and religious leaders and mercifully protects all subjects, regardless of their beliefs. These were characteristics which political theorists had encouraged for centuries, and by which theorists had justified monarchs' absolute authority preceding the 1640s' irrevocable association of absolutism with tyranny.¹¹² The Hind significantly frames James's absolutism as the antithesis of "that Prince of Tyranny," Louis XIV (III.680). Earlier in Part III, the Hind remarked that Louis XIV's revocation of the Edict of Nantes caused French Protestants to "starv[e] at home," which necessitated their flight to more tolerant countries (III.174). James, however, feeds religious friends and foes alike. He looks after "his poor Domestick Poultry," who "from His Pious Hands receiv'd their Bread," but his actions do not favor these English Catholic clergy above the other birds on his farm (III.995–96). James and his wife's "Alms" do not "extend to those alone/ Whom common Faith more strictly made their own" but also to "A sort of *Doves*" (the Anglican clergy) whose lives contradict James's

¹¹¹ Abigail Williams, "The Politics of Providence in Dryden's *Fables Ancient and Modern*," *Translation and Literature* 17 (2008): 5, <https://doi.org/10.3366/E0968136108000034>.

¹¹² Janet Coleman, "A Culture of Political Counsel: The Case of Fourteenth-Century England's 'Virtuous' Monarchy vs Royal Absolutism and Seventeenth-Century Reinterpretations," in *Monarchism and Absolutism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Cesare Cuttica and Glenn Burgess (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), esp. 19–23.

moral and spiritual codes (III.944–46). These “*Doves*,” later identified as pigeons, “abound with Gall,” opposing the Catholic birds’ gentle contentment; “hotly Bill and breed,” opposing the Catholic priests’ celibacy; and “largely drink, because on Salt [that is, a salary] they feed,” opposing “the Roman Catholic clergy’s greater dependence on donations from the faithful” and their clergy and nuns’ “vows of poverty” (III.947, 950–51).¹¹³ Additionally, James “Small Gain from them...draws” (III.952–53). He tends to the Anglican pigeons not for common belief or personal gain, but because he is “bound by Promise” as king to protect the national church and treat them “As Corporations priviledg’d by Laws” (III.953–54). James is an exemplary monarch who upholds the nation’s laws and defends all subjects’ rights.

Dryden in 1667 found it inconceivable that such a kingship could end other than in the populace’s devotion and England’s success and unity: “Heaven never made so much Piety and Vertue to leave it miserable.”¹¹⁴ But by 1687, even a monarch of unparalleled “Piety and Vertue” cannot stabilize the nation. The pigeons descend into political (III.1218), familial (III.1087–88), and spiritual (III.1212) waywardness and gather “Like *Goths* and *Vandals* to demolish *Rome*” (III.1214). The Hind’s fable concludes in reticent triumph with James’s decree of indulgence, which curbs without resolving national instabilities. The Declaration helpfully facilitates the populace’s external unity by “mak[ing] all Birds of ev’ry Sect/ Free of his Farm, with promise to respect/ Their sev’ral Kinds alike, and equally protect” (III.1244–46). However, in James’s ultimate kingly service for the common good, equal protection for all, there remains the internal disunity of “ev’ry Sect” and “sev’ral Kinds.”

¹¹³ For doves’ parallels to the Roman Catholic clergy, see editorial notes in the Longman edition for III.950–51 and the California edition for III.995.

¹¹⁴ Dryden, *Works*, 1:49.

When James concludes his Declaration by cautioning his farm against civil war, he recognizes that their hearts are unchanged.¹¹⁵ Without unity of hearts, beliefs, and desires, the birds enjoy only a figurative substitute of the providential reality of a successful, stable, and united nation. Steven Zwicker argues that the fable's ending reflects the "sense of gloom that attended" James's toleration campaign for supporters and opponents.¹¹⁶ Yet, I suggest that this gloom is better understood as directed at the nation. James's indulgence may evoke the *real presence* of national peace, but it lacks the actual *substance* thereof because England is yet unconsecrated by its Catholic mother.

“[H]er future state”

The Hind and the Panther's conclusion most clearly illuminates this transformed providentialism, reoriented to eternal authority and victories. After a long evening of debating, the Hind and the Panther go to sleep. The poem concludes:

The Dame [Hind] withdrew, and, wishing to her Guest
The peace of Heav'n, betook her self to rest.
Ten thousand Angels on her slumbers waite
With glorious Visions of her future state. (III.1295–98)

Despite their triumphant tone, these lines are often read as evidence of the poem's earthly failure. Brandon Chua calls the "catnap" an "inconclusive and domestic slumber," concluding frivolous, fruitless chatter.¹¹⁷ Bryan Berry reads the lines as a vision of the wedding feast of the Lamb

¹¹⁵ Cf. *HP*, III.1255 (editorial).

¹¹⁶ Zwicker, "Paradoxes of Tender Conscience," 866.

¹¹⁷ Chua, "Representing Religious Toleration," 38.

(Revelation 19:9)—a solely otherworldly triumph.¹¹⁸ Jane Cotterill denies these “glorious Visions” any application to “England’s future state.” The visions apply only to the Hind’s and James’s future in heaven, a lackluster hope indicating temporal defeat, because, Cotterill argues, “the poem is intensely interested in, not heaven, but the here and now.”¹¹⁹ While I agree that the Hind has gained little ground over the poem’s course, I suggest that these lines fulfill the thwarted hopes for a nationally stabilizing authority in Dryden’s earlier poems. I thus disagree with Steven Zwicker’s recent argument that, by his career’s end, Dryden came to reject the belief that providence would redeem the age’s history and politics.¹²⁰ (Zwicker’s argument notably excludes *The Hind and the Panther*.)

The poem’s concluding, prophetic dream first revises Dryden’s 1660s understanding of providential authority as temporal, especially militaristic. III.1297’s reference to “Ten thousand Angels” alludes to Matthew 26:53 when Jesus could have called “twelve legions of angels” to defend Him from His arrestors, but chose not to because humanity’s salvation depended on His death. The poem emphasizes providence’s way of peace and necessary suffering by stripping the allusion of militaristic language. This significantly reveals (or confirms) the Hind’s mission. The angels allow the Hind’s immediate danger to persist because they know of a better victory than her temporal security. The angels’ “wait[ing]” illustrates both their posture of humble servitude to a divine authority and their and the Hind’s need to “waite” patiently for providence’s plans to unfold. The matron embodies the “passive fortitude” which Annabel Patterson identifies as the

¹¹⁸ Berry, “Cost of Dryden’s Catholicism,” 158.

¹¹⁹ Anne Cotterill, *Digressive Voices in Early Modern English Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 223.

¹²⁰ Zwicker, “Dryden and Restoration Time,” 226.

concept of heroism Dryden settles on in *The Hind and the Panther* after decades of exploring more militaristic or political manifestations.¹²¹

An authority that waits, rests, and blesses its enemies with “peace” resolves the destabilizing tendencies of even seemingly peaceful transfers of monarchical authority with which Dryden once wrestled (III.1296). *Threnodia Augustalis* recounts James anticipating and preparing for his succession to “the Regal State” his entire life, being “long exercis’d by Fate” (lines 429–30). However, as Charles lies dying, “his Pious Brother pray’d and vow’d,/ Renouncing Greatness at so dear a rate” and “defending” himself “From all the Glories of his future Fate” (lines 93–96). When James later rushes to his dead brother’s bedside,

Approaching Greatness met him with her Charms
Of Pow’r and future State;
But look’d so ghastly in a Brother’s Fate,
He shook her from his Armes. (lines 56–59)

James’s “future State” is a temptress, an enemy in battle. Yet, by resisting his “future State” James resists “Fate.” The transition between kings confusingly pits providence against Britain’s stability, the virtues of piety and loyalty against the monarchy, the past against the present and future, king against king, and brother against brother. For James to attain his “future State,” Charles must be overthrown—if not by James, then by God. The Hind’s non-militaristic vision refuses political overthrow. As a dream, her ascendancy occurs only within a state of rest. The vision thus foretells England’s stability and peace in the Hind’s ascension to power—experiences absent in the transitions from Commonwealth to monarchy and from Charles to James.

¹²¹ Patterson sees James embodying this heroism, not the Hind; Patterson, “Dryden and Political Allegiance,” 233–35.

End rhymes throughout *The Hind and the Panther* prepare the reader for this concluding call to “waite” on the “future state,” both in the sense of the duty due that state and in having patience for that state to materialize. This is the poem’s only pairing of “wait”/“state,” although Dryden ends sixteen lines with “state” or “estate.” Six of these he rhymes with “fate,” thereby associating the word “state” throughout the poem with providence’s plans.¹²² Yet, only the first imagines “state” providentially. In I.11–12, the narrator claims, “Their [the Hind’s family’s] earthly mold obnoxious was to fate,/ [As] Th’ immortal part assum’d immortal state.” “[F]ate” here represents the earthly wills that persecute and martyr Catholics. Yet, the couplet suggests a greater, providential fate that destines the Hind’s family to an “immortal state,” superseding their earthly “fate” of death.

The Hind makes three of the remaining end rhymes of “state”/“fate.” In each, she defines “state” as the Panther does (exclusively as the temporal nation or government) and in each, this “state” suffers a tragic “fate.” In III.36–38 and III.730–31, the Hind describes the stormy, rebellious “state” of war-time Britain, which brought the same “fate” of “publick hate” and a martyred sovereign on both matrons’ families. However, in III.644–46, the Hind interprets the “*Martyn*’s character and fate,” as expounded in the Panther’s parable to discredit Catholics, as signs of “her slander’d sons, the *Panther*’s hate,/ The people’s rage, the persecuting state.” Rather than allying with the Hind against dissenters’ “publick hate” (III.37), the Panther, upon regaining her authority in 1660, turns against the Hind and inflicts her own brand of unjust “fate”—religious persecution—on the Hind’s “sons.”

“Fate” in these examples morphs from dissenting to Anglican interpretations of good government and religion. The Panther fails to perceive “state” as something “immortal and

¹²² See I.12, 360, 496; II.44 (in verb form), 374, 384, 491, 500, 618; III.36, **349**, **415**, **646**, **730**, 916, 1298. Bolded citations are rhymed with “fate” and underlined citations end with “estate.”

unchang'd," as presented in I.1, 12, because she understands the "state" to be fashioned by earthly "fate," or, the current authority's will and beliefs. In III.415–16, the Panther accuses the Hind of having "fears of future change in state"—fears that the Catholic monarch will fall to a Protestant monarch and that religious toleration will fall with James—and thereby of "prophes[y]ing your [the Hind's] fate." Here the Catholic Church dictates the nation's fate simply because, in 1687, it has the upper hand. Such authority is deeply unstable. The Panther warns that the Hind may accidentally "prophesie" the downfall of her own "state." These examples reveal a dangerous contemporary understanding of "fate" as ultimately decided by the current, earthly authority, whether that be sectarians, the national church, or the Roman Catholic church; a republic or monarchy; the Cromwells or Stuarts. The "state" governed by such a changeable "fate" ultimately must fail and suffer.

"Hate" and "debate" are the only other end rhymes that Dryden repeats with "state" or "estate," and both mark the nationally destabilizing, persecutory policies of the ruling authority. In addition to the aforementioned examples (III.36–38, 644–46), Civil War "Reformers[']...hate" in I.359–60 is "destructive both to church and state." The pretending heirs' "debate" over the "fair estate" leads only to chaos and division in II.373–84. In II.490–92, the Hind rebukes the Panther, "For petty royalties you raise debate;/ But this unfailing universal state/ You shun; nor dare succeed to such a glorious weight." Dryden's preface defines "Conscience," contemporaries' key argument for toleration, as "the Royalty and Prerogative of every Private man."¹²³ The Panther defends such "royalties," but what she assumes is toleration is actually persecution. Under liberty of conscience, "None wou'd obey, but each wou'd be the guide," making "All in their turns accusers, and accus'd" (II.466, 469). The Hind rebukes the Panther for

¹²³ Dryden, *Works*, 3:120.

refusing the nation “an unerring Guide,” without which even toleration invites persecution (I.65).¹²⁴

The poem’s unique, concluding end rhyme of “waite”/“state” distinguishes the Hind as the uniquely unerring authority on which England might rely. Her waiting for “her future state” juxtaposes with the “doubtfull heirs” vying over Christ’s “fair estate” and James II’s impatient acquisition of “his just Estate.” The end rhymes of “waite” and “state” reveal the Hind’s posture of humility, trust, and quietist expectation. Alternatively, the end rhymes of fortune coming “late” and James receiving his “Estate” show James submitting to providence but judging providence incongruent with his expectations (III.915–16). The twice-repeated end rhymes of “debate” and “estate” in the parable of the fair estate contain no providential submission, only assertions of legal rights (II.373–74, 383–84).

Even the small difference between the words “estate” and “state” suggest that James and the Protestants are too focused on personal, temporal gains to guide the nation well. “State” and “estate” can be used interchangeably to denote one’s standing, position, or condition in life, or one’s interests in material possessions or property.¹²⁵ However, “estate” primarily applies to these personal conditions or gains. Hence, the “doubtfull heirs” seek an immediate inheritance and James “t[akes] Possession” of his throne (II.378, III.916). “[S]tate” can additionally refer to the nation itself (widening the application from the individual to all); to an era of history, particularly one “ordered by divine providence” (widening the application from a specific moment to an epoch); or to the individual’s immaterial, mental or emotional condition (widening

¹²⁴ For Part II’s repeated demand for this guide: II.80, 103, 300, 347–49, 390, 450, 474, 479, 484–86, 683.

¹²⁵ “state, n.,” I, II, IV (OED); “estate, n.,” 1–3, 5, 12–13 (OED).

the application from the external to the internal).¹²⁶ In seeking an “estate,” James and the claimants incorrectly assume that providence ordains their immediate success and benefit. The Hind’s waiting on a “state” encompasses national, providential, and spiritual concerns within and beyond this moment and her personal position and power.

Rather than excluding her enemies from “her future state,” the Hind extends the invitation with the caveat that they must surrender their semblances of authority over this state. Only in hermeneutical humility—in abandoning their ideal “fair estate,” persecutory “hate,” interpretation of providence as “late,” and “petty royalties” of conscience—will the Panther and nation attain the “glorious weight” of the “unfailing universal state.” *The Hind and the Panther*’s concluding vision offers no strategy to reach this “glorious...future state,” as *Annus Mirabilis* did in mercantilism or *Threnodia Augustalis* in James’s naval expertise. The only course of action offered is to “waite” like the angels, “rest” like the Hind, and not force one’s authority or ambitions through persecution, humbly trusting in providence’s revelations and timing.

Conclusion

The Hind and the Panther offers the Catholic Church as *the* sure authority that Dryden’s venerated portraits of the Stuart royals had only hitherto manipulated into existence. The Hind is divine and closely attuned to providence. Her theology has real and transformative resurrection power. She is pious, peaceful, and non-militaristic. However, unlike the Stuart royals in *Annus*

¹²⁶ “state, n.,” III, I.ii.8 (quotation), I.i (OED). The OED mentions passing or infrequent usages of “estate” referring to one’s mental condition or the commonwealth, but such applications of “state” are common and core; “estate, n.,” I, 10 (OED).

Mirabilis, the Hind does not have to force or trick providence or the nation to her will. In fact, she barely acts at all. Thus, contrary to the public perception of Roman Catholicism as a tyrannical religion and contrary to widespread fears that James's indulgence would lead to Catholics persecuting Protestants, the Hind is a genuinely tolerant authority. In contrast, *Annus Mirabilis*'s linguistic persecution of dissenters drew into question its defense of Charles II's tolerant nature, as if Dryden could not decide which policy would most please his potential royal patron—or which would most benefit the unstable nation in 1667.

The Hind's genuinely tolerant nature demonstrates her confident trust in God's mysterious ways. Providential uncertainties were a threat that demanded the manipulation of history and coercion of dissenters in *Annus Mirabilis*. However, the Hind allows history to be messy, dissenters to be uncontrollable wild animals, and herself to be scorned and threatened. Providence is so unquestionably on her side—or, more accurately, she is so unquestionably on providence's side—that she can patiently wait for God's perfect timing and method of initiating Britain's inevitable reconversion to herself. God alone will secure her and, contingently, the nation's future flourishing. Like the Protestant dissenters in the following chapters, England's Poet Laureate in his 1687 poem attests to a providential peace centered on God rather than His revealed will and on eternal rather than temporal hopes. This peace is envired, but poignantly untouched, by persisting temporal uncertainties.

Dryden in his published poems thus shares a spiritual journey very similar to the Restoration nonconformists—although they as vehemently rejected the Catholic Church as Dryden did their dissent. Yet Dryden's conversion is the most surprising and radical, even beyond his brazen Catholicism in Protestant Britain. Milton, Bunyan, Hutchinson, and Baxter separate God's eternal authority from their favored earthly authorities only after those earthly

authorities have failed and exposed their dissonance with providence's plans. Dryden's published poems turn to an eternal authority in a moment when the poet's favored earthly authority, the Stuart monarchy, aligns with that eternal authority. Furthermore, while the others turn to eternal expectations in a paucity of other options, being persecuted outcasts, the Poet Laureate embraces eternal victories at the cost of reputation and career. Dryden never converts back to Protestantism, though doing so would have served great professional advantage after William and Mary's anti-Catholic revisions to the Toleration Act in 1689.¹²⁷ As a poet aptly remarked after Dryden's death in 1700,

His mighty *Dr—n* to the Shades is gone,
 And *Con—ve* [Congreve] leaves Successor of his Throne:
 Tho long before his final *Exit* hence
 He was himself an abdicated Prince,
 Disrob'd of all Regalities of State,
 Drawn by a *Hind* and *Panther* from his Seat.¹²⁸

That the public immediately found *The Hind and the Panther* sensational is indicated by the fact that five editions were published in 1687, including three in London.¹²⁹ Well-known are the scathing and satirical responses which littered the press in the first years after publication.¹³⁰ One of the only, early, non-satirical allusions to *The Hind and the Panther* appears in the heroic poem *The Life of our Blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ* (1693) by the Anglican clergyman Samuel Wesley, the father of John and Charles Wesley. Gamaliel's young pupil Saul (later the Apostle Paul) defends the authority of the Pharisaical tradition above that of scripture in a speech

¹²⁷ For more on Dryden's sufferings for Catholicism: Gardiner, *Ancient Faith and Modern Freedom*, 3–4.

¹²⁸ *An Epistle to Sr. Richard Blackmore, Occasion'd by the New Session of the Poets* (London, 1700), 7.

¹²⁹ Cf. Dryden, *Works*, 3:326 (editorial).

¹³⁰ Among many examples, the satirist Thomas Brown published a three-part series of responses; *The Reasons of Mr. Bays Changing His Religion Considered in a Dialogue between Crites, Eugenius, and Mr. Bays* (London, 1688); *The Late Converts Exposed, or, The Reasons of Mr. Bays's Changing His Religion Considered in a Dialogue: Part the Second* (London, 1690); *The Reasons of Mr. Joseph Hains the Player's Conversion and Re-Conversion: Being the Third and Last Part to the Dialogue of Mr. Bays* (London, 1690).

that owes its ideas and phrasing almost entirely to the Hind's defenses of herself as Christianity's guide. I have bolded Wesley's allusions and added cross references to *The Hind and the Panther*:

“For <i>Heresies</i> have all the same pretence,	
“And quote the <i>Scripture</i> in their own defence:	II.154–55
Thus I <i>demonstrate</i> then from <i>Reason's School</i>	
The <i>Word</i> is neither clear, nor perfect Rule	II.211
Not <i>clear</i> — It can't the doubtful Sense declare.	II.96–99
“When <i>Piles</i> meet <i>Piles</i> , contending in the <i>Air</i> ,	
“ <i>Squadrons</i> of <i>Texts</i> drawn out on <i>either side</i> ,	II.161–62
How shall the controverted <i>Truth</i> be try'd ,	II.387
Without a <i>last Appeal</i> to some <i>unfailing Guide</i> ?	II.369–71, 80
...	
By these [the Pharisees] the <i>doubtful Word</i> it self is try'd ,	II.98, 387
They our <i>unerring Rule</i> , the <i>Church</i> our <i>Guide</i> .	I.65, II.203
“Thus ev'ry <i>Age</i> do's one another move	
“And <i>trusts</i> no farther than the <i>next</i> above,	II.218–19
“Our <i>good old Doctors</i> always took this way,	
“Each asks but what he heard his <i>Father</i> say,	II.164–65
All <i>doom'd to Death</i> who dar'd their Sentence <i>disobey</i> . ¹³¹	I.8

At face value, Wesley uses Dryden's poem to express the ideology of the early church's enemies.

However, Wesley's footnote complicates any straightforward denigration:

I must doubly ask Pardon here, both for borrowing these Verses, and making thus use of 'em; which I did, because they express the Doctrine and Plea of the Pharisees as closely and fully as 'tis possible to be done; and had the *Hind* and *Panther* been writ in his [Saul's] time, would undoubtedly have read it, and might have quoted it too, as well as he does *Menander*.¹³²

Wesley is evidently embarrassed to be using Dryden's poem as a source. Yet, remarkably, he acknowledges the text as something that brilliant religious men in ages past would have read and

¹³¹ Samuel Wesley, *The Life of Our Blessed Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ: An Heroic Poem* (London, 1693), 205, lines 835–59.

¹³² Wesley, 231.

used, had it been available to them. He thereby gives *The Hind and the Panther* a leading place in humankind's religious debates, even if on the enemy's side. Wesley reads a poem, which had (and still has) only ever been read as reactionary and occasional, as pertinent to religious questions far exceeding its 1687 moment. The allusion to Paul's quotation from the Greek playwright Menander's comedy *Thais* in 1 Corinthians 15:33 redeems Wesley's use of a Catholic poem, but also, in a small way, redeems *The Hind and the Panther*. Serious Christians might use Dryden's scorned poem for good, just as the Apostle Paul used a pagan text to communicate Christian values.

Yet, *The Hind and the Panther* fell into obscurity over the next fifty years. Only four extant works reference and acknowledge it: all newspapers which pilfer miniscule details for their own purposes.¹³³ We do not know if people read Dryden's poem and were confused by it or embarrassed to self-associate with its Catholic message or politics, or if people were wary of reading it altogether. Were people afraid of exposing themselves to Catholic falsehoods, or being seduced by the gentle but persuasive Hind? Milton caveated his famous defense of free reading to warn against engaging with Catholic texts for these very reasons. Already disproved by Protestantism, Catholicism needed no further investigation and posed only a stumbling block to godly minds.¹³⁴

The obscurity—or perhaps erasure—of the famed Restoration Poet Laureate's last great original poem is a legacy in itself. The readiest explanation is secularization's growth, as nascent, late-seventeenth-century doubts over how and if faith and providence related to politics,

¹³³ Cf. *Heraclitus Ridens*, no. 3 (February 13, 1718): [363]; *The Grub-Street Journal*, no. 72 (May 20, 1731); *The Grub-Street Journal*, no. 134 (July 27, 1732); Henry Stonecastle, *The Universal Spectator, and Weekly Journal*, no. 837 (October 20, 1744).

¹³⁴ Cf. Milton, *CPW* 2:181. For Milton's anti-Catholicism: Ronald Corthell and Thomas N. Corns, eds., *Milton and Catholicism* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2017), esp. Chapter 3.

the law, and nationhood calcified in the eighteenth-century psyche. *The Hind and the Panther* resists the privatization of faith by making religion the key issue of and, boldly, solution for the public sphere. The poem's legacy of obscurity also exposes the emergent, modern uncertainty over how to engage with opposing worldviews—or perhaps an unwillingness to engage. The poem is both stubbornly inflexible in its advancement of the one true faith and seemingly unstable in its equivocations. It thereby models the difficult, even unintuitive relationship between affirming truth and nonnegotiables resolutely while humbly and openly admitting uncertainty in the many gray areas of religious belief and human existence. The nonconformist texts to follow also bear these traits.

2

“Musing and much revolving in his brest”:

The Hermeneutical Process in Milton's *1671 Poems*

The “Age of Dryden” and “Age of Milton” typically denote opposites: wit, satire, and rhyme verses blank verse and claims of divine inspiration; royalism verses republicanism; conformity verses radicalism. Yet, these pillars of Restoration culture shared a deep concern with providence's plans for the nation, as well as an uncertainty over how best to discern and engage in those plans. Considering that Milton “assert[s] Eternal Providence” as the argument of

Paradise Lost (1667; 1674) and returns untiringly to the topic in the epic's 1671 sequel, shockingly few studies on Milton's providentialism exist (*PL* 1.25).¹ Raymond Waddington's 2012 book is the only extended study.² Yet, in its insistence that "from a seventeenth-century perspective, providence could be said to account for everything in [*Paradise Lost*]," the eclectic study often loses sight of providence altogether.³ Waddington is interested in Milton's call for individuals to reason and respond well to life's trials (what Waddington calls "providences"), and divine engagement all but disappears from his study. His determinate thesis that *Paradise Lost* is an Arminian poem causes him to lean into this single interpretative choice and neglect the wrestling over human versus divine agency in Milton's providentialism.⁴

The present study finds that grappling with beliefs about providence is a central concern of Milton's Restoration poems, and most thoroughly explored in the *1671 Poems*, which contains *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. While *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*'s debated composition dates and literary differences have led many critics to read them separately or without regard to their original publication structure, I suggest that only in reading the poems together as a single, calculated volume do we glean the hermeneutical process for discerning providence which they communicate, and which makes the *1671 Poems*, in its entirety, Milton's

¹ Citations from *Paradise Lost* are taken from *The Poetical Works of John Milton*, ed. Helen Darbishire, 2 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), abbreviated as *PL*. Citations from Milton's other writings are taken from *The Complete Works of John Milton*, ed. Gordon Campbell and Thomas N. Corns, 11 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008–forthcoming), hereafter abbreviated as *CWJM*, and from the *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, ed. Don M. Wolfe, 8 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953–1982), hereafter abbreviated as *CPW*. The *1671 Poems* can be found in volume 2 of *CWJM*. I cite the individual poems in-text as *PR* and *SA*, respectively.

² For shorter or in-passing studies: David Loewenstein, *Milton and the Drama of History: Historical Vision, Iconoclasm, and the Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 128–36; Paul Hammond, "Chance, Fate, and Providence," in *Milton's Complex Words: Essays on the Conceptual Structure of Paradise Lost* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 17–25; Ben Myers, "Can God's Work in History Be Discerned? The Ambiguities of Providence in the Poetry of John Milton," *Scottish Journal of Theology* 76 (2023): 240–55, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0036930623000017>.

³ Raymond B. Waddington, *Looking into Providences: Designs and Trials in Paradise Lost* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 7.

⁴ Cf. Waddington, 101, also Chapter 1.

sequel to *Paradise Lost*. The 1671 volume's hermeneutical process is one of rereading and testing, and while it demands that its characters and readers actively and attentively work out their beliefs, it also resists definitive conclusions. This chapter builds on Jason Kerr's recent argument that *De Doctrina Christiana* captures Milton's process of figuring out his theological beliefs rather than "a fixed repository of theological positions," as previously interpreted, and that *Paradise Lost* continues this process.⁵ Kerr challenges the longstanding critical practice of reading Milton's mid-century writings as glosses upon his Restoration poems, as if Milton's beliefs remained consistent across thirty years.⁶ Kerr omits Milton's doctrine of providence and the *1671 Poems*. My study finds that in its exploration of how best to interpret providence, the *1671 Poems* models the need to scrutinize and test scripture, Milton's earlier writings and asserted beliefs, as well as contemporary nonconformist responses to the Restoration and, specifically, to the toleration crisis of the late 1660s and early 1670s.

Paradise Regained and *Samson Agonistes* were licensed on 2 July 1670, entered into the Stationer's Register on 10 September 1670, and first advertised as available for purchase on 22 November 1670. The title page's post-dating of 1671 was not atypical.⁷ Critics generally agree that Milton started composing *Paradise Regained* around August 1665, when famously prompted by his young protégé, the Quaker Thomas Ellwood, to write a redemption sequel to *Paradise Lost*. However, critics have dated *Samson Agonistes*'s composition in the 1640s, 1650s, and early or late 1660s.⁸ The present study considers how *Samson Agonistes* might be read as subverting many of the arguments that Milton made for liberty and reform in the 1640s, thereby making the

⁵ Jason A. Kerr, *Milton's Theological Process: Reading De Doctrina Christiana and Paradise Lost* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023), 2.

⁶ Kerr, 1, 6–7.

⁷ Laura Lunger Knoppers, "General Introduction," in *The Complete Works of John Milton*, ed. David Loewenstein and Thomas N. Corns, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), xcvi.

⁸ For an overview of the critical debates surrounding the poems' compositions and a convincing argument for a late-1660s dating: *CWJM* 2:xcvii–viii.

poem an unlikely product of this earlier decade. Yet, regardless of the poems' composition dates, their joint publication in 1671 forces readers to rise to the hermeneutical test and work out why these poems should be read together.

Laura Lunger Knoppers's award-winning edition of *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* was the first volume published for the ongoing *Oxford Milton* project, and in it, Knoppers argues for the volume's intended political radicalism by exposing the radical bent of its publication history and reception among early readers.⁹ This is an important and persuasive reading. However, there is a danger of pigeonholing the *1671 Poems*—as well as Milton in the Restoration—in a context of radical nonconformity. Is not Milton's extreme notoriety as a defender of the regicide another viable reason why only the most radical of publishers might have dared to publish his works (particularly so violent a work as *Samson Agonistes*), or why early readers might have sought out the concealed presence of revolutionary spirit? Might not the publisher John Starkey simply have been an astute businessman in advertising Milton's volume alongside other radical texts, whose taboo status sold so well? London booksellers were desperate to make up their losses from the Great Fire, and selling Milton's notoriety might have been easier than selling two rather unusual genres.¹⁰ The surveyor of the press Roger L'Estrange's relentless defamation of Milton as a "monster of sedition" encouraged the Restoration public to expect radicalism of Milton.¹¹ However, L'Estrange based his evidence exclusively on Milton's pre-Restoration writings, and other licensers struggled to find anything particularly dangerous in Milton's post-1660 publications.¹²

⁹ *CWJM* 2:xxxii–l.

¹⁰ For Fire's effect on London publishers: von Maltzahn, "L'Estrange's Milton," 38. For volume's atypicality among 1670–71 publications: Laura Lunger Knoppers, "'Englands Case': Contexts of the *1671 Poems*," in *The Oxford Handbook of Milton*, ed. Nicholas McDowell and Nigel Smith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 572, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199697885.013.0032>.

¹¹ von Maltzahn, "L'Estrange's Milton," 34.

¹² von Maltzahn, 37.

On the assumption that Milton self-censored radical content as a means of self-preservation after narrowly escaping execution in the early 1660s, critics also have scoured his Restoration publications for implicit, radical meaning.¹³ Yet, what of the instances of explicit passivism, apoliticism, or otherworldly priorities in Milton's Restoration texts? The present study plays with the possibility that we have assumed the political radicalism of the *1671 Poems* on the faulty basis that, first, Milton's notoriety made some contemporaries assume this and, second, the volume remains deeply troubled over England's state and employs similar language of tyranny, priestcraft, and immorality as Milton's revolutionary texts. Having the same problems does not necessitate relying on the same solutions—nor of being certain of any one solution. Readings of Milton's Restoration poems as apolitical or nonradical have proven similarly determinist like their radical counterparts. Steven Marx, for example, argues that Milton's "affirmation of Quaker pacifist principles" in *Paradise Regained* "seems unmistakable."¹⁴

With David Loewenstein and John Coffey, I question the critical tendency to determine the 1671 volume's political bent with certainty. David Loewenstein encourages reading the volume as a "a double-edged response to the crisis of religious radicalism during the Restoration."¹⁵ Pairing such different texts achieves a "calculated ambiguity" and invites readers to humor various, even seemingly opposing responses to the Restoration situation.¹⁶ Loewenstein suggests that *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* represent Milton's processing of two

¹³ Sharon Achinstein's *Literature and Dissent in Milton's England* (2003) helped to direct critical attention to radical readings and away from earlier readings of Milton as a victim of defeat, such as Christopher Hill's *The Experience of Defeat: Milton and Some Contemporaries* (1984).

¹⁴ Steven Marx, "The Prophet Disarmed: Milton and the Quakers," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 32, no. 1 (1992): 112, 126, <https://doi.org/10.2307/450943>.

¹⁵ Loewenstein recently applied a similar argument to *Paradise Lost*'s polemical engagement in the Restoration world and calls to retreat therefrom in "Spiritual Inwardness, Religious Antiformalism, and Puritan Polemic in *Paradise Lost*," in *The Puritan Literary Tradition*, ed. Johanna I. Harris and Alison Searle (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2024), 93–111.

¹⁶ David Loewenstein, "Milton's Double-Edged Volume: On Religious Politics and Violence in the 1671 Poems," *Milton Quarterly* 44, no. 4 (2010): 231.

ways forward for Restoration nonconformists. He also insinuates that the volume's failure to explain the relationship between its quietist and violent possibilities exposes Milton's indecision. John Coffey's article on whether Milton in the Restoration was a "pacifist, quietist, or patient militant" questions the validity of reading dichotomies in the two poems. *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* do not present readers "with an either/or proposition" or "alternative routes to liberation," but with alternative answers to the question of God's timing for sin's overthrow and Christ's kingdom.¹⁷ Coffey suggests that the volume's indecision lies in providential timing, not trajectory. These uncertainties prevent readers from easily settling on one response or belief and thereby force readers to test ideas against one another and meticulously work out their own beliefs. I suggest that rather than the point itself, the volume's uncertainties model the way to truth and to faithfulness to God's will. By averting determinism, the *1671 Poems* invites readers to recognize their own potential for misreading and, hence, to pursue divine truth above human opinions or inferences by keeping their minds in attentive attunement and obedience to God and His mysterious will.

The *1671 Poems* thus builds on a hermeneutical process established in Books 11 and 12 of *Paradise Lost*, in which God sends Michael to cast the fallen Adam and Eve out of Eden but, first, to reveal to them the providential trajectory by which His promise will be fulfilled that Eve's seed will crush the serpent's head. God instructs Michael,

If patiently thy bidding they obey,
Dismiss them not disconsolate; reveale
To Adam what shall come in future dayes,
As I shall thee enlight'n, intermix
My Cov'nant in the Womans seed renewd;
So send them forth, though sorrowing, yet in peace. (*PL* 11.112–17)¹⁸

¹⁷ Coffey, "Pacifist, Quietist, or Patient Militant?," 169.

¹⁸ Note Milton's repetition of this language in *SA* 1747, which I later analyze.

Adam and Eve will only learn about “what shall come” and receive “peace” and consolation by being willing to obey God’s command to leave Eden, and leaving Eden means embarking on an unfamiliar, unchartered way. The epic’s famous concluding lines inform us that this way is one of many and uncertain choices (“The World was all before them, where to choose/ Thir place of rest”), “wandering,” and solitude (“thir solitarie way”) despite the fact that this way includes “Providence thir guide” (*PL* 12.646–49). Michael’s revelation of providential history in Books 11 and 12 subjects Adam to a sequence of alternating triumphs and tragedies, which demoralizes Adam as often as it consoles him.

God’s promised peace comes not in the providential revelations so much as in Adam’s processing of them. Adam moves through a series of decisive misreadings until he comes to align his beliefs with God’s truth and resolves to persist in this ongoing process of obedient attunement to God. First, Adam troublingly determines that the best way to be “dismist in peace” is either to “not accept/ Life offerd” (a nebulous phrase hinting at suicide, a concept unknown still to humankind), or to “end heer unborn” (*PL* 11.502, 505–7). He then misreads earthly pleasures and community as “portend[ing]” “hope/ Of peaceful dayes” (11.599–600). Yet, he later rightly recognizes that earthly peace is nothing like the peace which God promises, admitting, “I was farr deceav’d; for now I see/ Peace to corrupt no less then Warr to waste” (11.783–84). By the end of Michael’s revelations in Book 12, Adam has become attuned to his limited vision, experiences the promised peace, and determines to continue in obedience to God—the act which originally opened heaven’s revelations to him. Adam acknowledges that “beyond” these revelations about world history “is all abyss,/ Eternitie, whose end no eye can reach”; even so, “Greatly instructed I shall hence depart,/ Greatly in peace of thought,” and

Henceforth I learne, that to obey is best,
 And love with feare the onely God, to walk
 As in his presence, ever to observe
 His providence, and on him sole depend. (*PL* 12.555–58, 561–64)

That Adam determines to “observe” God’s providence indicates a dual process of attentive study and obedient compliance—all of which springs from wholehearted devotion to God.

The providence-centric focus of *Paradise Lost*’s concluding books brings the reader back to the epic’s beginning, back to the narrator’s promise to “assert Eternal Providence, and justifie the wayes of God to men” (*PL* 1.25–26). The actions denoted by the verbs “assert” and “justifie”—declaring a belief confidently and proving that belief’s validity—map onto the dual meaning of Adam’s resolution to “observe/ ...providence,” to adhere faithfully to his providential beliefs while also carefully processing them. This hermeneutical process is far humbler than the forcefulness which the verbs “assert” and “justifie” initially seemed to suggest, and it invites the reader also to “observe” the narrator’s opening prophecy that “one greater Man/ [Will] Restore us” (*PL* 1.4–5). Though the word “Restore” begs seditious application to Restoration politics, the epic’s proffered hermeneutical process of testing ideas and gut reactions invites pause. Even if it seems the obvious reading, is it correct to interpret this prophecy as portending Charles II’s overthrow by Christ’s millennial kingdom?

The *1671 Poems* adopts *Paradise Lost*’s hermeneutical process and invites similar rereadings of events and scriptures which many contemporary dissenters viewed as clear signs of divine judgment against Charles II’s regime and of God’s desire for national reform. The volume became available to the public in the midst of the toleration crisis which followed the political disillusionment evoked by 1666–67’s national disasters. Tensions had simmered in London as the populace anticipated the expiration of the 1664 Conventicle Act in March 1669 and protested the

passing of a new, harsher Act in April 1670.¹⁹ Among all of the early-1660s penal codes, the Conventicle Act impeded the most people's liberty. The Uniformity and Five Mile Acts targeted nonconformist ministers, the Corporation Act civil servants, and the Licensing Act writers. The Conventicle Act targeted anyone attending nonconformist meetings. As licensing enforcement faltered in the wake of the 1666–67 disasters, the presses busied themselves with arguments for and against religious toleration. We do not know whether Milton, who had been blind since 1652, had these publications read to him. Given his longstanding interest in religious toleration, his friends and helpers likely acquainted him with the current state of the debates. It also seems implausible that he was unaware of the rioting of discontented crowds in London in the late 1660s. Nonconformists finally were resisting monarchical tyranny and defending liberty, as Milton had implored them to do in *The Readie and Easie Way* (1660).²⁰ These pressing issues of liberty and governance pervade *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, and the latter even obliquely references conventicle persecution.²¹ However, in challenge to nonconformists' uses of the late-1660s crisis to lobby for or try to enforce a new religious settlement, the *1671 Poems* offers strangely apolitical solutions to these pressing issues of liberty and governance. As my analyses explore, the volume tests various responses to tyranny and persecution—perhaps most poignantly, the author's own, revolutionary responses—and thereby models the difficult process of discerning and obeying God's will in this early-1670s moment.

The protagonists in *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes* embark on a way of uncertain choices, wandering, and solitude akin to Adam and Eve's way outside of Eden in *Paradise Lost*. *Paradise Regained* retells the Gospel accounts of Jesus's temptation by Satan to

¹⁹ Cf. Stephen Bardle, *The Literary Underground in the 1660s: Andrew Marvell, George Wither, Ralph Wallis, and the World of Restoration Satire and Pamphleteering* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), Chapter 3.

²⁰ Cf. *CWJM* 6:476–523. For publication timing: *CWJM* 6:463 (editorial).

²¹ See *SA* 1718–22, which I later analyze.

choose a way to the promised kingdom other than the cross—a temptation faced alone and after forty days of wandering in the wilderness.²² *Samson Agonistes* extrapolates on Judges 16’s account of Samson’s fatal end and destruction of the Philistines’ temple. Milton’s Samson spends his final hours processing how his sinful and selfish choices may have thwarted God’s promises of deliverance for Israel and what choices he must make in response to his wicked, Philistine oppressors. Having been blinded by his enemies, he is—in a very poignant sense—alone and wandering in a dark world.

As *Paradise Lost* engages the characters’ and readers’ hermeneutical processing, the 1671 volume also trains readers in the challenge of interpreting providence for themselves. The presence of a human narrator in *Paradise Regained* lends some guidance in thinking through providential uncertainties—albeit not certain guidance, not God. However, the characters in *Samson Agonistes* speak in the dark, without narratorial intervention, and often raise conflicting ideas and readings of God’s will. Furthermore, God is silent apart from one communication to Samson (the alleged source of Samson’s “rouzing motions”), which the reader does not hear and, therefore, cannot trust implicitly (*SA* 1382). The poem’s debt to Sophocles’s *Oedipus at Colonus* renders providence doubly distant, between the classical tragedy’s pagan worldview and its suspect providence. Milton’s poem introduces Samson as the fallen Oedipus—blind, led by another’s hand, exiled and disgraced, seemingly betrayed by God.²³ Samson’s undefined “rouzing motions” and “inward eyes illuminated” (*SA* 1382, 1679), which lead to a morally-suspect finale of mass execution and suicide, echo Oedipus’s questionable resolution of the play’s providential tensions in his sudden, off-stage death—a death to which Oedipus willfully

²² Cf. Matt. 4:1–11, Mark 1:12–13; Luke 4:1–13.

²³ Cp. Samson’s opening soliloquy (*SA* 1–109) to the opening 200 lines of Sophocles’s *Oedipus at Colonus*, in *The Theban Plays*, trans. E. F. Watling (London: Penguin, 1950).

goes “*as one inspired with inward vision.*”²⁴ Samson’s suspect providential claims prompt the question whether Milton’s Samson should be read as the exemplar of faith commended in Hebrews 11, or merely as the flawed figure depicted in Judges. The 1671 volume’s movement from New to Old Testament stories is an unconventional way of reading scripture. Unlike Lucy Hutchinson’s readings of the Old Testament through a New Testament lens in *Order and Disorder*, the New Testament offers little clarity to the characters’ experiences in *Samson Agonistes*. The *1671 Poems* leaves the reader, like the protagonists, to wander in solitude with many, uncertain choices.

The following analyses explore how the *1671 Poems* invites readers to process through their providential understanding of contemporary politics. The Son in *Paradise Regained* practices reliance on the Father through political quietism and stalwart personal inaction. The brief epic thereby acknowledges the possibility that God may not want to achieve any of the political or ecclesiastical reforms that radicals like John Milton had so ardently pursued for two decades. The startling admission is poignantly humble and pliant—traits often lacking in Milton’s writings. *Samson Agonistes*, alternatively, considers the possibility that providence’s plans do align with religious radicals’, that Milton was right. God does want to reform the nation, overthrow wicked rulers, and institute policies of religious liberty. However, like *Paradise Regained*, *Samson Agonistes* maintains the necessity of relying on God rather than human agency, which keeps the providential lesson both complicated and cautious and encourages readers to remain in the thick of hermeneutical wrestling.

²⁴ Sophocles, 118.

Paradise Regained

“Balaam Reprobate”

Paradise Regained makes the issue of discerning God’s path to and specifications for the ideal kingdom the crux of Jesus’s temptation in the wilderness. The Son is by the Spirit “step by step led on” into the wilderness not specifically to be tempted by the devil, as the Gospels infer, but to facilitate His “Musing and much revolving in his brest,/ How best the mighty work he might begin/ Of Saviour to mankind” (*PR* 1.192, 185–87). Elizabeth Sauer emphasizes the “vatic” nature of Milton’s early-1640s calls to ecclesial and national reform, which prophesied both reformation and the fall of resisters thereto.²⁵ Milton’s pathways to a purified kingdom in *The Reason of Church Government* (1641), *Areopagitica* (1644), and *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649) all conclude with prophecies of the earthly fall and eternal damnation of tyrannical authorities, namely, the episcopacy, licensing acts, and king.²⁶ At first glance, the *1671 Poems* seems to align with such precedents. Towards the end of *Paradise Regained*, the narrator prophesies Satan’s eternal quelling (4.618–34), and *Samson Agonistes* concludes with the Philistines’ deadly downfall. However, while Milton’s providential expectation that tyrants will fall remains consistent across his canon, his *modus operandi* changes.

Milton’s revolutionary vision of the ideal, godly kingdom compelled the faithful to resist and, when necessary, overthrow unrighteous rulers. In *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* (1649), composed in the immediate aftermath of Charles I’s execution, Milton argued that no legitimate, divinely sanctioned authority could require a nation to endure tyranny passively. He

²⁵ Elizabeth Sauer, *Milton, Toleration, and Nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 30 (quotation), 35.

²⁶ Cf. Milton, *CPW* 1:861, 2:569–70, 3:256–58.

writes, “I ask by what conscience, or divinity, or Law, or reason, a State is bound to leave all these sacred concernments [of religion, laws, and liberty] under a perpetual hazard and extremity of danger, rather then cutt off a wicked Prince, who sitts plotting day and night to subvert them.” In this framework, the execution of Charles I is not regicide, but “the necessary self-defence of a whole Common wealth” (*CWJM* 6:183). Even in the face of the king’s enduring popularity, Milton maintained that the godly must act decisively. *A Defence of the People of England* (1651) invokes the biblical figure of Samson, commending him as “heroic” and “pious to kill those masters who were tyrants over his country, even though most of her citizens did not balk at slavery” (*CPW* 4:402). The righteous are obligated to resist tyranny, regardless of the people’s reluctance or political complacency.

Milton’s revolutionary argument that the attainment of the ideal kingdom required the overthrow of tyrants directly challenged the longstanding tradition that viewed the monarch as accountable solely to God and thus beyond the judgment of human laws or subjects.²⁷ This tradition held that God’s prerogative alone would punish wicked tyrants, either in this life or the next. Conversely, Milton’s political meritocracy made godly subjects responsible for safeguarding and reforming the nation. A free and godly kingdom was God’s will. However, so unconnected was providence to the actual work of establishing the ideal kingdom that *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates*, for example, scornfully pictures only self-serving divines as claiming direct providential injunction: “Providence onely must be the drumm, Providence the word of command, that calls them from above, but always to som larger Benefice, or acts them into such or such figures, and promotions” (*CWJM* 6:184). Providence is here a fabricated guide,

²⁷ Cf. Janet Coleman, “A Culture of Political Counsel: The Case of Fourteenth-Century England’s ‘virtuous’ Monarchy vs Royal Absolutism and Seventeenth-Century Reinterpretations,” in *Monarchism and Absolutism in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Cesare Cuttica and Glenn Burgess (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2012), 19–31.

a weathervane to the winds of reward. These wicked priests condemn the regicide not because of providential insight or conscience, but for personal gain. Alternatively, the godly put the nation's interests first in killing a tyrannical king and, thus, actually fulfilled God's will.

However, Milton's *1671 Poems* gives far more credence to providential guidance and action and, consequently, revisits the respective roles of God and the godly in overthrowing tyrants. Scripture calls Satan the "prince" and "god" "of this world" and the "prince of the power of the air" (John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2), and *Paradise Regained's* Satan raises contemporary debates about earthly rulers, particularly, the king and episcopacy. Satan is a wicked, tyrannical ruler doomed for imprisonment in the lake of fire at the end of time but whom God allows to remain temporarily. As the perfect Son of God, Jesus is the only human who could overthrow Satan. The question the epic explores is whether the Son should overthrow Satan in advance of God's execution of eternal punishment and, by proxy, whether wicked rulers should be allowed to maintain authority until that time when God punishes them.

At the end of Book 1, after the Son foretells a day when the devil will be made "mute," Satan petitions to secure his current position of authority:

Thy Father, who is holy, wise and pure,
Suffers the Hypocrite or Atheous Priest
To tread his Sacred Courts, and minister
About his Altar, handling holy things,
Praying or vowing, and vouchsaf'd his voice
To *Balaam* Reprobate, a Prophet yet
Inspir'd; disdain not such access to me. (*PR* 1.459, 486–92)

Satan reasons that God's way has been to allow wicked priests to minister and wicked prophets to prophesy. Satan's point that God has not overthrown "the Hypocrite or Atheous Priest" feeds off of the providential confusion experienced by anti-Episcopal dissenters in the Restoration over

why God would allow the episcopacy to be restored when it was not His will for the Church. Dissenting readers might have resisted Satan's argument for divine leniency with the scriptural precedents of Aaron's sons, Nadab and Abihu, or Eli's sons, Hophni and Phineas, whom God executed for their wickedness (Leviticus 10; 1 Samuel 4).²⁸

Yet, Satan's reference to "*Balaam Reprobate*" allows for readings of both divine judgment and leniency. Balaam was a wicked prophet of non-Jewish descent who aided the Moabites and Midianites in stumbling Israel into idolatry and sin, consequently weakening Israel's defenses (Numbers 22–25, 31). Yet, as Satan rightly notes, Balaam was "a Prophet yet/ Inspir'd." Though Balaam wanted to obey Balak, the king of Moab, in cursing Israel for reward, Balaam could only speak the words God gave him and thus prophesied truly by blessing Israel three times. However, angered by Balaam's intent, God sent an angel to kill the prophet en route to meet with Balak. The New Testament uses Balaam's example of wickedness and greed to expose and condemn false teachers in the church.²⁹ Yet, in Numbers 22, God delivered Balaam from his own death sentence by miraculously giving Balaam's donkey eyes to see the angel and speech to warn Balaam of its presence. The biblical precedent here gives credence to Satan's reasoning, and forces the reader to remain uncertain over how long or to what extent God will tolerate wicked leaders over His people.

The grouping of Balaam with wicked priests may have reminded readers of the 1661 print skirmish sparked by the poetic broadsides *The Asses Complaint against Balaam* and *A Supplement* thereto by the Anglican priest Lewis Griffin. While asserting loyalty to the Anglican establishment and Charles II and disapproval of fanatics and Presbyterians, Griffin assumes the

²⁸ Cf. *Paradise Lost*'s description of Belial who can be found "In Temples and at Altars, when the Priest/ Turns Atheist, as did *Ely's* Sons" (1.494–95).

²⁹ Cf. 2 Pet. 2:15–16; Jude 11; Rev. 2:14.

role of Balaam's ass to warn the king of imminent providential destruction. Griffin cautions that wicked priests have been returned their livings in the Church of England alongside faithful priests:

[T]his our tender conscience disapproves,
 That *Ravens* should return as well as *Doves*;
 And *croak* in *Pulpits* once again to bring
 A second Judgment on our *Church* and *King*.
 Though *England* doth not fear another losse,
 'Cause God hath *burnd* his Rods at *Charing crosse*;
 Yet *Clergy sins* may call him to the Doore.³⁰

Griffin begs the nation's and church's leaders to oust these Balaam priests, these hired prophets who do not know God, are not of the people of God, and provoke providential ire. The nation foolishly no longer fears God's wrath, assuming that "God hath *burnd* his Rods at *Charing crosse*" when the regicides were executed.

Such warnings of providential doom as severe as that experienced in the Civil War sounded dangerously like the radical *Mirabilis Annus* prodigies published that same year, and Griffin's broadsides unsurprisingly evoked several accusations of treason. One critic compiled in a single volume, which he entitled *Asse upon Asse* (1661), Griffin's broadsides and six of the more vituperative retorts they incurred, all accusing Griffin of "braying forth nothing but scandal and sedition."³¹ In *Balaams Reply to the Asse* (1661), another opponent, an anonymous priest, accused Griffin of esteeming Puritans' mid-century "Rebellion but a peccadillo," on par with any minor sins within the Restoration episcopacy.³² The text's reframing of Balaam as the righteous,

³⁰ Lewis Griffin, *The Asses Complaint against Balaam, or, The Cry of the Country against Ignorant and Scandalous Ministers* (London, 1661).

³¹ Leonard Blunt, *Asse upon Asse, Being a Collection of Several Pamphlets Written for and against the Author of The Asses Complaint against Balaam* (London, 1661), 8. Blunt mocks Griffin's libelers as driven to vituperation by the desire for money or position (e.g., pp. 11, 14, 20, 28), but agrees with their accusations of treason.

³² H. W., *Balaams Reply to the Asse, or, The Clergies Answer to the Countreys Complaint* (London, 1661), 5.

injured party uncomfortably inverts the scriptural story's lesson to demand unquestioning loyalty to the Anglican establishment. Griffin, unnerved especially by *Balaams Reply*, published a longer apologia named *The Doctrine of the Asse* (1661), which demonstrated his prophecies' alignment with the king, episcopacy, and, particularly, Christian orthodoxy.³³ "He that sayes the Asse hath spoken Treason, Let him tell him that Prays *Thy Will be done*, that he speaks *Blasphemy*," Griffin attested.³⁴

Yet, Griffin's repeated assertions of loyalty and orthodoxy failed to overwrite Balaam's long association with treasonous prophecy against the Stuart monarchy. The treatise "Balaam's Asse" by the Catholic John Williams, written in 1613, with additions in 1619, but no longer extant, denounced the Protestant King James VI and I as a Balaam-like Antichrist and prophesied the imminent, apocalyptic destruction of Whitehall on 6 September 1621.³⁵ "Balaam's Asse," as well as Williams's conviction and execution in 1619 for the unprecedented and dubious conviction of treason by unpublished words, caused an unforgettable stir.³⁶ When in 1651 the republican astrologer William Lilly published prophetic evidence which had foretold Charles I's death and the termination of the English monarchy, he included the Jacobean treatise. Lilly changed the date of destruction to 1 September 1642 to apply the prophecy to the Civil War's outbreak.³⁷ In the aftermath of the Fire of London in early September 1666, contemporaries remembered *Monarchy or No Monarchy in England's* prophesied early-September date of doom and its prophetic etchings of a fire destroying London. Lilly was brought before a

³³ Of the many responses Griffin's broadsides received, Griffin mentions only "the *Verses of H.W.*": Lewis Griffin, *The Doctrine of the Asse* (London, 1661), [*4].

³⁴ Griffin, *3r-v.

³⁵ For the treatise's history and reception: Emily Jennings, "'Balaam's Asse' Uncovered: New Light on the Politics of Prophetic Exegesis in Mid-Jacobean Britain," *Huntington Library Quarterly* 81, no. 1 (2018): 1-28.

³⁶ Jennings, 21.

³⁷ William Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy in England* (London, 1651), 69.

Parliamentarian committee for questioning.³⁸ Though Lilly was released without punishment, the episode underscores how these earlier prophetic writings involving Balaam remained at the forefront of the national imagination around the time when Milton composed *Paradise Regained*.

Like Lilly, although predating him, Milton used the story of Balaam as an after-the-fact prediction of the Stuart monarchy's downfall in *Eikonoklastes* (1649). *Eikonoklastes* accuses Charles I for having systematically destroyed the true church by establishing a corrupt episcopacy. "[L]ike to *Balac* the Son of *Zippor*," the Moabite king who hired Balaam to curse Israel, Charles I "against a Nation of Prophets thinks it best to hire other esteemed Prophets, and to undermine and weare out the true Church by a fals Ecclesiastical policy" (*CWJM* 6:376). Like Williams, Milton connected Balaam with the Antichrist. *Eikonoklastes* calls Charles I's empowering of the Balaam-like episcopacy a "method of Antichristian fraud" which works to the king's own doom, namely, "the undoing of his Monarchie" (*CWJM* 6:376). Previously, Milton only used Balaam's example in passing to condemn prelatical greed, after the pattern of 2 Peter 2:15–16 and Jude 11.³⁹ *Eikonoklastes*'s broader allegorization censures the king more than the bishops: Charles I controlled prelatical appointments and, in hiring wicked bishops, revealed his active intent to destroy the church. Scripture does not record Balak's fate. However, Numbers 31 documents Israel's slaughter of Balak's co-conspirators, the five kings of Midian and Balaam, in a divinely-commanded battle. Thus, God's people are providentially obligated to destroy wicked kings and their wicked, spiritual hirelings, who seek to undermine national holiness by seducing the populace into idolatry and sin.

³⁸ Patrick Curry, "Lilly, William (1602–1681)," ODNB, September 23, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/16661>. Cf. Lilly, *Monarchy or No Monarchy*, (11), (13), found on sigs. [Q10], [Q11].

³⁹ Cf. Milton, *CPW* 1:950.

By offering himself as a “*Balaam Reprobate*,” Satan in *Paradise Regained* raises half a century’s worth of high-profile jeremiads against the corruption of the Stuart monarchy and Church of England (*PR* 1.491). Even the most loyalist of these texts by Lewis Griffin in 1661 foretold divine judgment, should the church and king fail to “bring Religion to its wonted Splendour.”⁴⁰ With such precedents, Satan’s self-identification with Balaam and corrupt priests begs for a response of providential doom. Such a response from the Son would have inevitably raised in contemporary readers’ minds a parallel omen against the Stuart monarchy and episcopacy, which no one doubted Milton continued to loathe. Readers might have even assumed a self-censored jeremiad’s presence had the Son diverted the conversation or not responded. Yet, Book 1 concludes with Jesus acknowledging Satan’s Balaam-like position without censure or omen:

Thy coming hither, though I know thy scope,
I bid not or forbid; do as thou find’st
Permission from above; thou canst not more.
He added not; and Satan bowing low [disappear’d]. (*PR* 1.494–97)

The poem arranges an easy loophole into political radicalism: not even a Restoration censor could condemn Milton for damning the devil. However, the poet forgoes the opportunity. Satan has been given “Permission from above” to speak and act within the Father’s limits. This satanic Balaam is protected from providential destruction for the indefinite future, and the Son has nothing more to say on the matter.⁴¹

This is not passive nonresistance. It is radical and treasonous of *Paradise Regained* to insinuate parallels between Balaam, the Church of England, the Stuarts, and the Devil. It is even

⁴⁰ Griffin, *Asses Complaint*.

⁴¹ Similarly, the Son later refuses overthrowing the wicked, current Roman emperor, Tiberius; *PR* 4.125–31.

more radical for the writer, who had actively participated in Cromwell's government and vocally defended the regicide, to become the voice and mind of Jesus. To disagree with John Milton is now to disagree with Jesus Christ, the perfect and sinless Son of God. Milton's Son by no means accepts or respects Satan's authority. Earlier in this first temptation, the Son declared that even truth in Satan's mouth leads to his followers' destruction. When Satan complains that the nations' "think me much a foe" despite his help in revealing "answers, oracles, portents and dreams,/ Whereby they may direct their future life," the Son retorts, "[W]hence hast thou then thy truth,/ But from him [God] or his Angels" who "give thee in command/ What to the smallest tittle thou shalt say" (*PR* 1.387, 395–96, 446–47, 449–50). Satan's revelations are dictated by heaven "to the smallest tittle." Yet, the revelations seem to the nations to be "dark/ Ambiguous and with double sense deluding," and cause the hearer to "run...sooner to his fatal snare" (*PR* 1.434–35, 441). Even armed with heavenly truth and far more providential guidance than God offers humans in any of Milton's Restoration poems, Satan is a false prophet and failed leader, not to mention eternally damned. Yet, the point is that Milton's Jesus neither prophesies, demands, nor incites the overthrow of this "*Balaam* Reprobate" (*PR* 1.491). Instead, the Son leaves him—and by contemporary extension, the corrupt episcopacy and Stuart monarchy—wholly in His Father's hands.

“Unhumbl’d, unrepentant, unreform’d”

The Son not only leaves the details and timing of the overthrow of wicked rulers to God, but He also rethinks the anticipated kingdom of Milton's revolutionary writings. Ann Hughes argues with Alexandra Walsham that Puritan ministers preaching before Parliament in the early

1640s “invented the notion of a ‘Long Reformation’” in England, that is, the notion that the Protestant Reformation of the previous century was incomplete or had regressed after the Laudian reforms.⁴² In her analysis of the sermons’ key themes, Hughes finds that the sermons repeatedly urged Parliament to complete the “Temple-work” of building God’s house and purging it of unscriptural hay, stubble, and dross.⁴³ The Puritan preachers interpreted England’s spiritual state through the lens of ancient Israel. They even studied Israel’s chronologies of backsliding and reform to help decipher England’s history and predict its future prospects.⁴⁴ Reformation was imminent but would be difficult, the sermons warned, requiring the breaking of yokes.⁴⁵ Such imagery appears throughout Milton’s revolutionary writings, which David Loewenstein has demonstrated “contributed to [the creation of England’s Long Reformation] in crucial ways.”⁴⁶ Most famously, *Areopagitica* presents the true Church as “the Temple of the Lord” being built by the hewing and compiling of ideas like timbers and stones (*CPW* 2:555).

While the sermons’ scriptural exegeses and pastoral exhortations framed reformation as a spiritual issue, their delivery before Parliament anticipated political solutions. Making these political insinuations explicit, Milton’s revolutionary treatises put the onus of spiritual reformation on the government by calling for institutional and legislative reform. His anti-prelatical tracts (1641–42) demand church disestablishment, the separation of church and state, and some measure of religious toleration. *The Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* (1643) and *The Judgement of Martin Bucer Concerning Divorce* (1644) seek to reform the traditional

⁴² Ann Hughes, “Preaching the ‘Long Reformation’ in the English Revolution,” *Reformation* 24, no. 2 (2019): 152 (quotation), 154–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574175.2019.1665281>. Cf. Alexandra Walsham, “The Reformation and ‘the Disenchantment of the World’ Reassessed,” *Historical Journal* 51, no. 2 (2008): 497–528.

⁴³ Hughes, “Preaching the ‘Long Reformation,’” 157, 154–55. Cf. 1 Cor. 3:12; Prov. 25:4

⁴⁴ Hughes, 157–58.

⁴⁵ Hughes, 156–57.

⁴⁶ David Loewenstein, “Milton and the Creation of England’s Long Reformation,” *Reformation* 24, no. 2 (2019): 166, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13574175.2019.1665283>.

grounds for divorce. *Of Education* (1644) encourages a humanist reform of education, and *Areopagitica* (1644) petitions for the freedom of the press. Loewenstein has long read *Areopagitica* as the height of Milton's visionary hopes in the 1640s. He claims that the treatise contains the "fullest expression" of "Milton's view of Parliament undertaking an active and significant role in remaking the historical drama of the godly nation," one of Milton's "most invigorating and visionary moments" regarding the nation, his closest pairing of "national reform" with "creative renewal," and his most energetic and imaginative argument for the godly nation's "potential for renewal and exceptionalism."⁴⁷ I add that *Areopagitica*, which only ever appeared in print, most boldly renders spiritual reform a political issue by adopting the guise of an oratory delivered before Parliament—echoing the format of the reformation sermons, yet distinguishing itself not as a sermon but as a political speech.

Areopagitica opens by claiming that any successful, national reformation "will bee attributed first, as is most due, to the strong assistance of God our deliverer, next to your faithfull guidance and undaunted Wisdome, Lords and Commons of *England*," but the treatise focuses exclusively on how the MPs can secure England's reformation by promoting liberty (*CPW* 2:487). The phrase "the strong assistance of God our deliverer" suggests an active, intervening God. However, this treatise all about the nation's future makes only one foray into discerning providence's part in securing that future.⁴⁸ Demonstrating why the freedom to act (and publish and read) according to one's conscience and reasoning is so essential for the nation's reformation, *Areopagitica* attests,

⁴⁷ Loewenstein, *Drama of History*, 38; David Loewenstein and Paul Stevens, eds., *Early Modern Nationalism and Milton's England* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 15; Loewenstein, "Milton and Long Reformation," 167, 175.

⁴⁸ *Areopagitica* otherwise makes only offhand remarks about providence; *CPW* 2:509, 517.

many there be that complain of divin Providence for suffering *Adam* to transgresse, foolish tongues! when God gave him reason, he gave him freedom to choose... . This justifies the high providence of God, who though he command us temperance, justice, continence, yet powrs out before us ev'n to a profuesnes all desirable things, and gives us minds that can wander beyond all limit and satiety. Why should we then affect a rigor contrary to the manner of God and of nature, by abridging or scanting those means, which books freely permitted are, both to the triall of vertue, and the exercise of truth. (CPW 2:527–28)

This passage treats God not like an active “deliverer” but deistically, like a Watchmaker deity.

God simply set the correct way of reason and liberty into motion at creation, leaving the rest to

humankind. Milton makes an argument that Parliament in 1644 should repeal its recent

Licensing Act because of the divinely established order of creation, rather than because God

would explicitly disapprove of that Act or has other plans for the nation. Nowhere does

Areopagitica identify providence’s engagement in the present. Instead, *Areopagitica*’s argument

for “the reforming of Reformation it self” hinges on human agency: on Parliament repealing its

popish Act and thereby encouraging the free exchange of ideas and use of reason (CPW 2:553).

Areopagitica is significant to the 1671 volume because *Paradise Regained* raises its driving issue of the freedom of the press. The Restoration regime’s penal code made censorship a more urgent issue for nonconformists than it was in 1644 when they were the ones doling out the licensing acts. When envisaging how to establish His kingdom, the Son in *Paradise Regained* imagines a series of publications. Jesus’s Spirit-led journey into the wilderness in Book 1 is in contemplation of “How best the mighty work he might begin/ Of Saviour to mankind, and *which way first/ Publish* his God-like office now mature” (PR 1.186–88; my emphasis). The narrator refers to Satan’s opening temptation as a “slye preface” (PR 2.115). The Devil, too, is publishing a book, and the Son does not stop him even after reading its wicked “preface.” The Son allows the metaphorical press to go unlicensed, abiding by *Areopagitica*’s vision for how truth is proven

and spread.⁴⁹ Yet, as *Areopagitica* promised that Truth’s “confuting is the best and surest suppressing” of Falsehood, the Son’s superior arguments in *Paradise Regained* repeatedly silence Satan (*CPW* 2:561). Four times Satan is “mute confounded what to say” because “confuted and convinc’t/ Of his weak arguing” (*PR* 3.2–4); has nothing “to answer” because “struck/ With guilt” (3.146–47); is “to shameful silence brought,” because “the perswasive Rhetoric/ That sleek’t his tongue, and won so much on *Eve*,/ So little here, nay lost” (4.22, 4–6); and finds himself “Quite at a loss, for all his darts were spent” (4.366). This censorship occurs naturally, without enforcement by Jesus, because, as Book 3 concludes, “So fares it when with truth falshood contends” (*PR* 3.443).

Additionally, *Paradise Regained* espouses *Areopagitica*’s insistence that exercise must prove virtue; that God’s kingdom is won through warfare, intellectual not physical; and that spiritual and intellectual elites must guide the rabble in becoming a godly, reformed nation.⁵⁰ As critics have noted, Christ in the wilderness temptation is *Areopagitica*’s “true warfaring Christian” (*CPW* 2:515).⁵¹ The Son “can apprehend and consider vice with all her baits and seeming pleasures, and yet abstain, and yet distinguish, and yet prefer that which is truly better” (*CPW* 2:514–15). At one point, Milton’s hungry Jesus even improves Satan’s temptation to usurp the Roman empire with baits of “Thir sumptuous gluttonies, and gorgeous feasts” (*PR* 4.114). The Son’s rejection of this elaborated temptation in favor of “*David*’s Throne” is more admirable because more difficult to resist (*PR* 4.147).

⁴⁹ Cf. *CPW* 2:558–63, *passim*.

⁵⁰ Cp. *PR* 1.156–59, 163–67 with *CPW* 2:515, 543 (exercising virtue); 554 (intellectual warfare); 552–53, 566 (elite guides).

⁵¹ Most extensively, Elizabeth Hodgson studies how the Son is the fulfillment of *Areopagitica*’s “true warfaring Christian” by being a powerful warrior *and* pacifist—Milton’s paradoxical ideal of masculinity; “True Warfaring Christian: *Areopagitica* and *Paradise Regained*,” in *The Masculinities of John Milton: Cultures and Constructs of Manhood in the Major Works* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2022), 119–44. See also Warren Chernaik, “Choosing a Captain Back for Egypt: Milton and the Restoration,” in *From Republic to Restoration: Legacies and Departures*, ed. Janet Clare (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 251, *passim*.

What critics have called Book 4's "puzzling" "temptation of learning" (because it seemingly is separate from the preceding kingdom temptation and demonizes the Miltonic virtue of knowledge) mirrors *Areopagitica*'s vision of England's successful reformation into a virtuous, orthodox, and internationally renowned nation through free reading.⁵² As *Areopagitica* encouraged Parliament to "imitate the old and elegant humanity of Greece" by allowing "books [to be] promiscuously read" far beyond scripture's scope and alleged orthodoxy, Satan offers the Son ancient Greece and its philosophers, poets, playwrights, orators, and statesmen (*CPW* 2:489, 517).⁵³ "All knowledge is not couch't in *Moses* Law," Satan insists;

The *Gentiles* also know, and write, and teach
 To admiration, led by Nature's light;
 And with the *Gentiles* much thou must converse,
 Ruling them by perswasion as thou mean'st. (*PR* 4.225, 227–30)

The Son has within reach both the ideal kingdom and the method of achieving it, which Milton had envisioned in 1644. Yet, this way is now a Satanic temptation and must be rejected.

So much parallel rhetoric and imagery raises expectations of a shared ambition of institutional reform between the 1644 and 1671 texts. Additionally so because under the Restoration regime, Milton was now a direct target of the licensing, censorship, and enforced conformity for which he had criticized the wartime Long Parliament. From 1660 through long after Milton's death, Roger L'Estrange villainized Milton as the archetype of all that opposed and threatened the Stuart regime.⁵⁴ The disasters of 1666–67 weakened L'Estrange's bandwidth to control the press, giving new voice to nonconformist discontent and demands for religious

⁵² Laura Lunger Knoppers, "Satan and the Papacy in *Paradise Regained*," *Milton Studies* 42 (2003): 77.

⁵³ Cf. *PR* 4.221–84.

⁵⁴ For insightful overview of L'Estrange's targeted censure: von Maltzahn, "L'Estrange's Milton."

toleration.⁵⁵ The nonconformist defenders of toleration in the late 1660s emphasized the non-seditious nature of dissent and the improvements that toleration would make to the nation's economic, political, and spiritual wellbeing.⁵⁶ Cautious, high profile nonconformists like John Owen simply published their arguments anonymously.⁵⁷ Milton's notoriety put him in greater danger than Owen and others. However, the literary genres of the 1671 volume protected it from too-strict scrutiny by L'Estrange, whose licensing ire tended to fall on "texts with explicit meaning."⁵⁸ Milton's opportunity to defend, however implicitly, his long-espoused political policies was ripe during the years in which he composed and published the *1671 Poems*.

Yet, the poems sever the relationship between political reform and godliness. Answering Satan's temptation to attain the kingdom to deliver Israel from "Roman yoke," the Son in *Paradise Regained* rejoins,

Should I of these the liberty regard,
Who freed, as to their antient Patrimony,
Unhumbl'd, unrepentant, unreform'd,
Headlong would follow [the idolatry of the Gentiles]. (*PR* 3.158, 427–30)

The lines suggest that political liberty will not induce "the reforming of Reformation," as *Areopagitica* promised, but might instead embolden the "unreform'd" nation's waywardness (*CPW* 2:553; *PR* 3.429). In well-known lines from *Samson Agonistes*, Samson similarly complains that even if he "*Israel* from *Philistian* yoke deliver[ed]," freedom would be useless because the Israelites "love Bondage more then Liberty,/ Bondage with ease then strenuous liberty" (*SA* 39, 270–71). Elizabeth Sauer has astutely demonstrated that for Milton and many of

⁵⁵ For "ineffectual" licensing around 1666–67: von Maltzahn, 39.

⁵⁶ Bardle, *Literary Underground*, 123–24.

⁵⁷ Owen played a key part in the toleration debates, beginning in 1667 with the anonymous, *Indulgence and Toleration Considered* (London, 1667).

⁵⁸ von Maltzahn, "L'Estrange's Milton," 37.

his contemporaries, toleration was not a “positive value” in and of itself, which protected any beliefs, but a means to protect Christian and, specifically, reformed truth.⁵⁹ Milton scorned the idea of universal toleration and supported toleration only when it furthered truth and godliness. He accordingly most often defended toleration with theological rather than political arguments.⁶⁰ It is thus helpful to differentiate the *policy* of toleration from the *virtue* of liberty when reading Milton. The 1671 volume captures a moment when Milton reneged on his revolutionary arguments that the nation should actively secure and regulate its own liberty, despite his continued pursuit of Christian liberty. In a moment when tolerationists invited Britain to rethink how it might attain the peace, success, and godliness it had sought but not found in the Stuart regime, the *1671 Poems* questions the benefit of national, political reform and the scope of human agency.

Areopagitica praised England for being a “Nation chos’n before any other, that out of her as out of *Sion* should be proclam’d and sounded forth the first tidings and trumpet of Reformation to all *Europ*” (*CPW* 2:552). England was providentially chosen because of her natural propensity to pursue knowledge, and *Areopagitica* maps England’s reformation progress onto this pursuit. When wicked priests in the time of John Wycliffe misled the nation, the English became “the latest and the backwardest Schollers, of [the sixteenth-century European reformers] whom God offer’d to have made us the teachers” (*CPW* 2:553). Yet, in 1644, England is once again “so pliant and so prone to seek after knowledge” that she might lead the world in another reformation. “What wants there to such a towardly and pregnant soile, but wise and faithfull labourers, to make a knowing people, a Nation of Prophets, of Sages, and of Worthies?” Milton asks Parliament (*CPW* 2:554). The Son in *Paradise Regained* also envisions His future kingdom

⁵⁹ Sauer, *Milton, Toleration, and Nationhood*, 9.

⁶⁰ Sauer, 17.

leading the nations in God's truth through education (rather than through dominion, as Satan proposes). The Son claims that

...to guide Nations in the way of truth
By saving Doctrine, and from error lead
To know, and knowing worship God aright,
Is yet more Kingly. (*PR* 2.473–76)

In line with *Areopagitica*, the Son underscores the importance and spread of knowledge by repeating it twice in a row, as knowledge learned and understood. However, rather than this “knowing” prompting the nation’s promotion into an elite people, this knowledge leads to the correct worship of God. The “[o]rdinariness” of Milton’s vision of paradise is both a nonconformist rejection of the spiritual hierarchy and exclusivity of Roman Catholicism, as Neil Keeble argues, and a rejection of Milton’s former arguments for the nation’s spiritual elitism and exclusivity.⁶¹ The imminent reformation in *Paradise Regained*, the coming kingdom, accentuates God’s glory rather than the nation’s.

After English society’s failure in the 1640s to become an elite, godly nation ruled by popular governance, Milton shifted his hopes in the 1650s to the governing authority of intellectual and spiritual elites.⁶² It is this 1650s vision of the ideal kingdom which the remainder of *Paradise Regained* refutes. Satan tempts the Son to seize His kingdom by relying on great leaders of the past, including “*Macedonian Philip*,” Cyrus, “young *Scipio*,” “young *Pompey*,” and “Great *Julius*” (*PR* 3.32–35, 39). Yet, Jesus, whose kingdom-ambition is God’s glory, dispels illusions about humanity’s potential. “Th’ intelligent among them and the wise/ Are few, and glory scarce of few is rais’d,” the Son warns (*PR* 3.58–59). Even the scant glory won is not real

⁶¹ N. H. Keeble, “Milton and Puritanism,” in *A New Companion to Milton*, ed. Thomas N. Corns (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2016), 139.

⁶² Cf. Sauer, *Milton, Toleration, and Nationhood*, 94.

glory, for “what do these Worthies,/ But rob and spoil, burn, slaughter, and enslave/ Peaceable Nations” (*PR* 3.74–76)? The Son’s future kingdom will not be attained through institutional reform, nor will it lie in the greatness of human prophets, sages, or worthies. The devil’s likening of Jesus’s “Counsel” to

...the Oracle
Urim and *Thummim*, those oraculous gems
 On *Aaron*’s breast: or tongue of Seers old
 Infallible

is empty flattery, the outpouring of “all his Serpent wiles” (*PR* 3.13–16, 5).

The promised kingdom will not be attained even through the agency of history’s most spiritually and intellectually elite human. Jesus is not simply like the divination stones *Urim* and *Thummin*, as Satan flatters. The Son is God’s guidance incarnate: “God hath now sent his living Oracle/ Into the World, to teach his final will” (*PR* 1.460–61). Yet, Jesus refuses every Satanic invitation to begin His kingdom by His own power or intellect. The Son uses not His perfected reasoning and virtue but an unadorned scriptural retort as His mightiest weapon against the devil. This is true of each of Jesus’s responses to Satan’s temptations in the gospel accounts, but only of the final temptation in *Paradise Regained*. The first two temptations span most of Books 1–3 and three-quarters of Book 4. The preface, arguments, and conclusion of the third temptation span fewer than one-hundred lines (4.499–580), and Jesus’s part takes only two lines and uses no extrascriptural reasoning (4.560–61). While the sheer space devoted to debate and rhetoric highlights the importance of Jesus’s superior reasoning in Milton’s vision of how paradise is regained, it is the sword of scripture that conquers Satan and opens providence’s path to the kingdom.

This reliance on God and scripture above human reasoning is so essential to Milton's argument for achieving the ideal kingdom that it drives the epic's structure. Jason Kerr suggests that over the course of *De Doctrina Christiana*, Milton abandons his prefatory aim to base his theology only on scripture and its logical, doctrinal takeaways, because contested scriptural passages required additional argumentation.⁶³ The first two temptations in *Paradise Regained* reflect this reliance on rhetoric and reason. Yet, while the Son's arguments in *Paradise Regained* repeatedly best Satan's, they fail to defeat Satan altogether. The epic's third temptation reflects *De Doctrina*'s initial ambition to rely only on scripture and finally succeeds in defeating Satan. Thus, *Paradise Regained* partly revises a theological project gone astray: after even the most fruitful forays into scripture's meaning, the brief epic concedes possible human fallibility. Scripture's authority and truth stand independent of human understanding or interpretation.

The first two temptations divide and subdivide the scriptural proof text in a method very like that which Milton used in *De Doctrina Christiana*. In response to Satan's first temptation to turn the stones into bread, Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 8:3, "Man lives not by Bread alone, but each Word/ Proceeding from the mouth of God" (*PR* 1.349–50). Satan expands his temptation by raising doubts over Deuteronomy 8:3's meaning. He questions what it means for man to live on God's words (*PR* 1.342–492) and, needing food to survive, not live by bread alone (*PR* 2.242–409). Satan insists that he provides "oracles" which—though inferior to God's "living Oracle" (the Son) and His "inward Oracle" (the Spirit)—can communicate divine truth to humans, as already broached in my first analysis (*PR* 1.395, 460, 463). He thus first tempts the Son to glean God's words from places other than God's mouth and to idolize the words rather than rely on the divine speaker. Only thereafter does Satan, more straightforwardly, tempt the Son to eat food, to

⁶³ Kerr, *Milton's Theological Process*, 21.

do “that which only seems to satisfy/ Lawful desires of Nature, not beyond” (*PR* 2.229–30). In both cases, Satan tries to make the Son fall by interpreting scripture in a way which maintains the gist while excluding the need for God. In its examination of God’s general providence, *De Doctrina* groups Deuteronomy 8:3 with various other verses to contend that “God the Father...preserves...all created things” and that the created order dies when God hides His face from it.⁶⁴ *De Doctrina*’s focus is on creation’s dependence on God rather than on any particular provision—a focus opposite to Satan’s on the provision of words above God as their source. Thus, although Satan’s argument and rhetoric are based on the words of scripture (as *De Doctrina* insisted was necessary for orthodoxy), his emphases draw conclusions that distort truth and stifle faith.⁶⁵

Satan’s use of the book of Daniel is similarly selective and reductive, distorting the scriptural story’s significance. Preceding Satan’s temptation to eat bread, the hungry Son dreams that he is “a guest with *Daniel* at his pulse,” abstaining from the food which King Nebuchadnezzar provided for the exiled Hebrews (*PR* 2.278).⁶⁶ Aware of Daniel’s relevance to his temptation, Satan ensures the Son that the spread of food he offers does not include “Meats by the Law unclean, or offer’d first/ To Idols, those young *Daniel* could refuse” (2.328–29). Yet, the Son rejects not the specific food, but the satanic giver. “I can at will, doubt not, as soon as thou,/ Command a Table in this Wilderness,” the Son claims, so “Why shouldst thou then obtrude this diligence,/ In vain, where no acceptance it can find,/ And with my hunger what hast thou to do?” (*PR* 2.383–84, 387–89). In anticipation of His Kingdom’s supersession of the

⁶⁴ *CWJM* 8:I. 315 (quotation), 317. Citations to *De Doctrina* are taken from *CWJM*, volume 8. Citations refer to *DDC* volume and page, unless otherwise stated.

⁶⁵ E.g., Milton insists that beliefs must be based only a thorough study and delineation of scripture; *CWJM* 8:1. 5, 7, 9.

⁶⁶ Cf. Dan 1:8–21.

Jewish Law's requirements, the Son reorients the significance of Daniel's story from legal observance to resisting wicked meddlers like Satan, Nebuchadnezzar, or, by extension, Charles II, who seek to dictate others' exercise of conscience. In 4.144–51, the Son anticipates His future Kingdom as the fulfillment of two visions found in the book of Daniel and portending Nebuchadnezzar's downfall: Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the tree (Daniel 4:10–12) and Daniel's vision of the stone that shatters the statue representing great world empires (Daniel 2:31–5). The Son gleans Daniel's true significance only by reading the Old Testament book within the full trajectory of scripture. As contemporary nonconformists agreed, the book of Daniel was not about observing Jewish rites, but about Christ's coming Kingdom and its apocalyptic overthrow of wicked rulers.

As the first temptation tests Satan's scriptural processing, the epic's second and third temptations test the reader's. Milton divides the kingdom temptation into three parts, also structured on the scriptural proof text, and then subdivides these parts into seven, more nuanced temptations. In Luke 4:6–7, after showing Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world," the devil says, "All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it. If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine." Following Luke's syntax, Milton extrapolates first on the temptation's first clause. Satan first tempts Jesus with *glory* and *power*, through riches (*PR* 2.410–486), fame, and military strength (3.5–148).⁶⁷ Next, Satan tempts the Son to secure the kingdom through various means, including taking initiative (*PR* 3.149–226), gaining political experience (3.227–444), overthrowing the current Roman regime (4.25–153), and fostering an intellectual kingdom (4.212–364). These possibilities flesh out the steps the Son might take should He refuse to receive the kingdom from

⁶⁷ See especially Satan's temptation in 3.21–30 to "fame and glory, glory the reward" and "[highest] dignities and powers" (3.25, 30).

Satan, who, the second clause of the temptation in scripture attests, has authority over the kingdoms of the world and their distribution. Third and finally, in keeping the scriptural temptation, Satan tempts the Son to worship him as god (4.540–59).

The father of lies will inevitably obstruct scriptural truths in his arguments. Yet, *Paradise Regained* suggests that even a godly reader of scripture might unintentionally distort truth in their rhetoric. Milton structures the epic's delineation and exegesis of the first temptation on Jesus's response, which facilitates a focus on the more important part of Jesus's response: living on God's word. As Christ in the Gospel accounts relegates food to secondary importance after the Word, the temptation of food comes almost as an afterthought in *Paradise Regained*. Milton places special emphasis on the temptation about God's word by using it to conclude Book 1. However, Book 2 spends its first 108 lines on the off-stage action and thoughts of the disciples and Jesus's mother, Mary, before returning to the temptation about food. In short, in extrapolating on Jesus's words, Milton's retelling of the first temptation preserves His priorities.

However, Milton fleshes out the kingdom temptation by elaborating on Satan's words, and this study closely follows the devil's priorities. Satan, who is "Insatiable of glory" and fell in *Paradise Lost* because of his determination to have God's glory for himself, prioritizes glory's pursuit (*PR* 3.148).⁶⁸ Next, the temptation explores the desirability of worldly kingdoms—Satan's domain of influence in his fallen state. So little does Satan prioritize God and worship that challenging these falls at the tail-end of his temptation and bears none of his usual ingenuity. In addressing faith's most important issue—obedience or disobedience to the First Commandment to have no other gods besides God (Exodus 20:2)—Satan becomes rhetorically lazy. He turns to the illogical, superstitious, and increasingly outmoded providentialism of

⁶⁸ Cf. *PL* 1.38–40.

prodigies and astrology, reading in “the Starry Rubric” a grim future for the Son and trying to frighten Him with a prodigious storm and nightmares (*PR* 4.393).⁶⁹ Satan mocks humans who believe such signs, which are “as inconsiderable,/ And harmless, if not wholsom, as a sneeze” (*PR* 4.457–58). Yet, without establishing why some prodigies might be more threatening than “a sneeze,” Satan warns Jesus that “So many terrors, voices, prodigies” are “a sure fore-going sign” (*PR* 4.482–83). So low is the issue of worship in Satan’s priorities—or, perhaps, so inconsequential does Satan regard this issue in defeating the Son—that he does not even bother to craft an argument.

Paradise Regained’s first two temptations follow an hermeneutical process akin to that which Milton employed in *De Doctrina Christiana*. Both temptations proceed from scriptural proof texts to doctrinal conclusions; thus, the poem bases their formations of belief directly on scripture’s words. Phillip Donnelly has argued that each of Milton’s great Restoration poems “seem intended to provoke re-readings of various biblical passages, opening up interpretive possibilities, even aporias, that might otherwise remain unnoticed,” as *De Doctrina* did and encouraged others to do.⁷⁰ Yet, one analysis leads the reader to focus on the necessary truths of the faith, while the other leads the reader to fixate on unimportant, worldly concerns and devalue that which is of foremost importance to God. As important as Milton maintains that it is to form one’s beliefs by carefully reasoning through scripture (this is, after all, what his in-depth, poetic analysis of the temptation in the wilderness does), *Paradise Regained* posits that human reasoning can go awry, or, at least, fail to defeat falsehood completely. Contrary to critics who contend that Milton distorted scripture to accommodate his theological beliefs and who suggest

⁶⁹ For decline in the belief in prodigies: Burns, *Age of Wonders*, esp. Chapter 2.

⁷⁰ Phillip J. Donnelly, *Milton’s Scriptural Reasoning: Narrative and Protestant Toleration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 1. Cf. *CWJM* 8:1. 5, 7.

that his heresies stemmed from a manipulation of biblical texts, Jason Kerr persuasively argues that Milton painstakingly shaped his theology around scripture and revised his beliefs when scripture contradicted them.⁷¹ Milton’s theological processing necessitates wrestling with and formulating scripture’s meaning through meticulous Bible study and the Spirit’s guidance. Yet, in light of human fallibility and theological uncertainties, Milton also emphasized “how lightly it [his expressions of scripture’s meaning in *De Doctrina Christiana*] ought to be held, including by him.”⁷²

After assiduously expounding the meaning of scripture and exposing Satan’s heresies, *Paradise Regained*’s Son uses bare, unexplained scripture to defeat the devil. The brief epic thus holds even the best human reasoning lightly, esteeming God’s Word as the only certain authority, whether or not its meaning is deciphered. Satan tempts a third time:

There stand, if thou wilt stand; to stand upright
Will ask thee skill; I to thy Fathers house
Have brought thee, and highest plac’t, highest is best,
Now shew thy Progeny; if not to stand,
Cast thy self down; safely if Son of God:
For it is written, He will give command
Concerning thee to his Angels, in thir hands
They shall up lift thee, lest at any time
Thou chance to dash thy foot against a stone.
To whom thus Jesus: also it is written,
Tempt not the Lord thy God, he said and stood.
But Satan smitten with amazement fell. (*PR* 4.551–62)

In tempting the Son to stand, Satan lures Jesus to prove His “skill” and assert His right over this “highest” place in God’s house—literally, on the pinnacle, but more so figuratively, as the Son of

⁷¹ Kerr, *Milton’s Theological Process*, Chapter 2, esp. pp. 67, 80, 99, 105–7.

⁷² Kerr, 140.

God and chosen Savior of the world. In tempting the Son to fall, Satan lures Jesus to prove His ability to interpret scripture.

The poem's use of an unadorned scriptural retort in this final temptation also tests Satan's and the reader's abilities to interpret scripture. Is Jesus's use of Deuteronomy 6:16 referring to God the Father—chastising Satan for trying to force the Father's hand of protection—or is the Son here claiming equality with God and reading evidence of the Trinity in the Old Testament? Milton himself rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, but most of his readers would have seen such a reading as valid.⁷³ Dryden likely had this scene in mind when presenting the Hind's claim of the divine name "I AM" and the Panther being "amaz'd...to hear a god declar'd" (*HP*, II.398–400). Neither Milton's Son nor Dryden's Hind provides evidence of or extrapolation on their scriptural readings. Both divine heroes leave in their enemies' and in the reader's hands the responsibility to discern and to believe or disbelieve these heroes' rightful authority, and do not rebuke, correct, or punish their enemies for misreading the truth.

While the Son's reading of His place within the Trinity is even murkier to the audience than the Hind's reading of her place, *Paradise Regained* provides a lesson in hermeneutical humility to assist the reader, even if Satan, like the Panther, is self-destructively confident in his own understanding. Early in *Paradise Regained*, the Son recounts when, after hearing His mother's claims that He was the Messiah,

...strait I again resolv'd
The Law and Prophets, searching what was writ
Concerning the Messiah, to our Scribes
Known partly, and soon found of whom they spake
I am. (*PR* 1.259–63)

⁷³ Milton's process of adopting Arianism is the core of Kerr's study; Kerr, Chapter 4.

The third temptation's reference to Psalm 91:11–12 invites the Son to test His earlier conclusions against additional scripture passages, as *De Doctrina* also does and encourages its readers to do. Psalm 91 is not a traditionally acknowledged Messianic prophecy, like Psalm 2 or 22, for example. However, Psalm 91:13 prophesies, “Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder; the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet,” echoing Genesis 3:15's prophecy that the Messiah will bruise the serpent's head and the serpent the Messiah's heel. (Scripture uses lion, snake, and dragon imagery to describe Satan.⁷⁴) Satan's framing of the preceding verses as a Messianic prophecy is not farfetched. However, the Son refuses to prove His scriptural reasoning, whether this passage applies to Himself, or even to correct Satan's misquotation of Psalm 91:11, as preachers readily did.⁷⁵ In *De Doctrina Christiana*'s terminology, the Son makes no effort to defend “external scripture,” the written Word of God, or the trustworthiness of “internal scripture,” His Spirit-led ability to interpret scripture accurately.⁷⁶

The Son's decision to stand is not, as Satan meant the temptation, a reliance on personal acuity or elitism, but a humble yielding to scripture's authority. Jesus refuses to jump off the pinnacle to force God's validation of His scriptural interpretations, nor does He rebut Satan's use of scripture. By quoting scripture without explanation, the Son entrusts to God's wisdom the revelation of scripture's truths, the kingdom plan, His role therein, and evil's defeat. This yielding to God is what quite literally overthrows Satan, who “smitten with amazement fell” (*PR* 4.562). The Son's kingdom-spurring actions have hitherto been restricted, but heaven sanctions

⁷⁴ Cf. Rev. 13:2, 7; Gen. 3; Rev. 12.

⁷⁵ Writers across the religious divide identified Satan's omission of the phrase “in all thy ways” as key to his temptation. Nonconformist examples: John Gere, *Siniorragia the Sifters Sieve Broken, or, A Reply to Doctor Boughen's Sifting My Case of Conscience Touching the Kings Coronation Oath* (London, 1648), 21; Thomas Cobbet, *A Practical Discourse of Prayer* (London, 1654), 427. Conformist examples: Irenaus Philadelphus Philanthropus, *Eirēnikon, or, A Treatise of Peace between the Two Visible Divided Parties* (London, 1660), 56; John Bird, *Ostenta Carolina, or, The Late Calamities of England* (London, 1661), 77.

⁷⁶ Cf. *CWJM* 8:2. 811. For interplay of external and internal scripture in Milton's theology: Kerr, *Milton's Theological Process*, Chapter 1.

Jesus to “on thy glorious work/ Now enter, and begin to save mankind” (*PR* 4.634–35). Thus, the providential pathway to attaining the kingdom does not open through the Son’s agency, however correct His reasoning, strong His arguments, and necessary His engagement. The providential way opens, ultimately, through the Son’s surrender to and reliance on God the Father and His perfect Word. In this humility and submissiveness, we see also the author’s openness to the possibility that his preeminent intellect and assiduously reasoned beliefs about God’s will could be in need of providential redirection.

Samson Agonistes

“(Gaza is not in plight to say us nay)”

In contrast to *Paradise Regained*’s reticence to presume the providential plan, *Samson Agonistes* imagines the possibility that nonconformists were right and that God’s immediate will is to overturn tyranny and gift His people with religious freedom. After Samson’s death, Manoah proposes,

Let us go find the body where it lies
 Sok’t in his enemies blood, and from the stream
 With lavers pure and cleansing herbs wash off
 The clotted gore. I with what speed the while
 (Gaza is not in plight to say us nay)
 Will send for all my kindred, all my friends
 To fetch him hence and solemnly attend
 With silent obsequie and funeral train
 Home to his Fathers house. (*SA* 1715–23)

Manoah's parenthetical aside, "(*Gaza* is not in plight to say us nay)," could logically apply to collecting his son's body. Manoah has been striving throughout the poem to somehow liberate Samson from Philistine hands.⁷⁷ However, the aside instead speaks to Manoah's intention to "send for all my kindred, all my friends," indicating that the Philistines would have ordinarily prevented this. There has been no mention throughout the poem of the prohibition of Israelite gatherings. The Chorus travels together and is large enough to be split into a Chorus and Semichorus at the poem's end. Neither Dalila, Harapha, nor the Philistinian officer rebuked Samson and his tribesmen for congregating. This prohibited gathering which Manoah initiates is specifically a religious service. Its "lavers pure" engage in the ritual purification of the Levite priests, commanded in Exodus 30:18, and its "funeral train" for a chosen man of God anticipates the New Testament Church's commemoration of the Savior in His death. In true Miltonian fashion, it is a religious ceremony which conforms to no single creed but is instead a thoughtful mosaic of scriptural truths and values. The Israelites' "solemn[.]" "silent obsequie" here contrasts the Philistines' pagan, theatrical, and raucous "Religious Rites" (*SA* 1320).

Manoah's aside thus acknowledges the central issue facing nonconformists at the time of the volume's publication shortly after the passing of the Conventicle Act of 1670: ungodly oppressors restricting the gathering of God's people, whose faith and practices align with scripture and conscience rather than established religion. Yet, the poem recognizes this issue only to remark that it is no longer an issue, as emphasized by the acknowledgement's parenthetical nature. God's unexpected, miraculous intervention has annihilated the oppressors and given the Israelites freedom to gather and worship in accordance with scripture. This alleged withdrawal from, even resolution of political tensions is incongruent with nonconformists' experience in

⁷⁷ E.g., *SA* 516–20, 1457–71.

1670 and with Samson's violent act moments before. Critics have often assumed that Samson's final act is unsuccessful because Israel remains under Philistine oppression at the poem's conclusion.⁷⁸ However, I propose that the poem's conclusion does provide God's people with religious freedom, even if not an official act of toleration or change of government. By providing freedom *without* political reform, the poem tests the possibility that God might intervene to grant His people liberty, whether or not they succeed in overturning or reforming the tyrannical institutions over them.

Critics have convincingly read *Samson Agonistes* as an imaginative portrayal of the nonconformist experience in the 1660s. Laura Lunger Knoppers reads the poem as a nonconformist rebuke of the debauchery and popery of Charles II's court; Nicholas Jose as an undermining of the restored regime's self-regard, pomp, and propaganda; Janel Mueller as the sufferings endured by dissenters during the Great Plague, the Fire of London, and under the new penal codes.⁷⁹ I postulate that *Samson Agonistes* also recalls the radical efforts made by London dissenters to secure a new religious settlement in the late 1660s: the bawdy house riots of 1668. Quickly subdued, the rioters failed to tear down Whitehall, as threatened, or to secure toleration by overturning the Conventicle Bill. Milton was living in London during the much-discussed riots and likely writing and/or revising *Samson Agonistes*. His friend Andrew Marvell publicly and privately condemned Parliament's late-1660s proposals to renew the expired Conventicle Act of 1664.⁸⁰ While Milton did not openly participate in the toleration debates until *Of True Religion* (1673) and his extant writings make no reference to the 1668 riots, *Samson Agonistes*

⁷⁸ Most recently: Chernaik, "Choosing a Captain," 260.

⁷⁹ Laura Lunger Knoppers, "'Revell Like Belshazzar': Censorship, Biblical Allusion, and Milton's 1671 Poems," *Milton Studies* 48 (2008): 113–34; Nicholas Jose, *Ideas of the Restoration in English Literature, 1660–71* (London: Macmillan, 1984), Chapter 8; Mueller, "Figure and the Ground."

⁸⁰ Cf. Annabel Patterson, "The Point and Power of the Footnote: Marvell in Parliamentary History," *EIRC* 35, no. 1 (Summer 2009): 13–17, <https://doi.org/10.1163/23526963-90000363>.

adds to the biblical narrative details which closely align with these violent, tolerationist efforts. The apprentices in 1668 did not justify their violence providentially, but people had been prophesying the downfall of Whitehall, the Stuarts, and the national church since James I's reign. In this context—made especially relevant by *Paradise Regained's* preceding references to Balaam and the book of Daniel, in which contemporaries read the apocalyptic overthrow of wicked rulers—Samson's destruction of a Whitehall-like building, the wicked Philistinian lords, and their idolatrous rites fulfills decades of providential expectation.

A brief history of the little-studied riots is in order. During Easter week of 1668, mobs of discontented apprentices spent five days pulling down brothels across London in protest at debauchery at Court, the Restoration religious settlement, the corrupt episcopacy, and, pressingly in March 1668, Charles II's issuance of a proclamation for the enforcement of laws against conventicles.⁸¹ Rumors ran rampant through London that the rioters were remnants of Cromwell's army and that their next target was Whitehall.⁸² Samuel Pepys records how "here [at court] it was said how these idle fellows have had the confidence to say that they did ill in contenting themselves in pulling down the little bawdyhouses, and did not go and pull down the great bawdy-house at White Hall. And some of them have the last night had a word among them, and it was 'Reformation and Reducement.'"⁸³

Soon after the riots, three widely circulated satirical letters between the "poor whores" affected and Charles II's infamous Catholic mistress Barbara Villiers, the Countess of Castlemaine, firmly associated the riots in the public's mind with nonconformists' demands for

⁸¹ Despite an existing tradition of apprentices making a moral statement by pulling down brothels during Lent, Tim Harris convincingly demonstrates the targeted, political nature of these riots in "The Bawdy House Riots of 1668," *The Historical Journal* 29, no. 3 (September 1986): 537–56.

⁸² Cf. Harris, 551.

⁸³ Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, 2012, Wednesday, 25 March 1668, <http://www.pepysdiary.com/diary/>.

toleration and reformation.⁸⁴ The purported Lady Castlemaine comforts London's prostitutes with the assurance that three MPs will soon bring a bill before Parliament "for a full Toleration of all Bawdy-houses, Play-houses, Whore-houses, &c. that all the Adorers of *Venus* may come to their Worship without Molestation," with "this *Proviso...That all Preaching, Printing, Private Meetings, Conventicles, &c. may be forthwith suppressed; except those that are Connived at, as Members of Holy Mother Church.*" This bill for the toleration of whoredom, the theater, and popish idolatry—manifestations of sin and unreform which the satire treats as indistinguishable—mocks the real bill against conventicles brought before Parliament in early March. The satirist insinuates that the royal court's unabashed example and priorities sanction national sin and idolatry, as if by an official act of toleration, while being wickedly intolerant of the godly. Such degeneracy gives credence to the satires' reiteration of Whitehall's imminent destruction. The "poor whores" warn Castlemaine that "these ill *home-bread* slaves," that is, the rioters, "threaten your destruction as well as ours," and that "a stop" must "be put unto them before they come to your Honours Pallace, and bring contempt upon your worshiping of *Venus*, the great Goddess whom we all adore."⁸⁵ Though the satirist(s) make Lady Castlemaine their scapegoat, they warn of impending destruction on Whitehall's entire court.

Whitehall's felling was purportedly set for May 1, 1668. May Day was the next public holiday, but also a date with historical links to prostitution, paganism, popery, and public performances. Witnesses at the trial of the ringleaders on April 4 recalled how the rioters had "declared, that if the King would not give them Liberty of Conscience, they would make *May*

⁸⁴ The satires included one printed letter (dated 25 March) from London's prostitutes and two responses from Lady Castlemaine, manuscript (dated 1 April) and printed (dated 24 April): *The Poor-Whores Petition to the Most Splendid, Illustrious, Serene and Eminent Lady of Pleasure, the Countess of Castlemaine* (n.p., 1668); MS Don b. 8. Bodleian Library, Oxford; *The Gracious Answer of the Most Illustrious Lady of Pleasure, the Countess of Castlemaine, to the Poor Whores Petition* (n.p., 1668). Pepys records that the satires were "spread abroad": Pepys, Monday, 6 April 1668.

⁸⁵ *Poor-Whores Petition*.

day a bloody May day, threatning to pull down White-hall.”⁸⁶ One arrested rioter proclaimed that “he and 40,000 others were ready to rise on 1 May.”⁸⁷ Whether because such threats were exaggerated or the gory executions of four ringleaders for high treason on a dubious interpretation of the law subdued the apprentices’ fury, the May Day attacks were never carried out.⁸⁸ However, the bawdy house riots and their aftermath flamed fears of another republican uprising, which would take nonconformists’ demands for toleration and reformation to violent extremes.⁸⁹

That in 1670 the infamously republican Milton published a dramatic poem about an oppressed man of God, who is “Himself an Army” and who violently pulls down his enemies’ grand, idolatrous, and theatrical temple, where the leading members of Philistinian society gather, after that society has sought to force his conscience, is not coincidental (SA 346). The poem would have kindled memories of the traumatizing 1668 riots for early readers. Through extrabiblical details, *Samson Agonistes* invites parallels between the Judges narrative and the forewarned May Day destruction of Whitehall. The drama reframes Samson’s earlier attacks as means to a greater attack; associates the Philistines’ idolatrous festival with prostitution and the constraining of conscience and religious liberty; introduces all manner of public games, performances, dancing, and drunkenness into the Philistines’ holy-day rites; and associates the Philistines with flower imagery. The issues of prostitution and religious liberty parallel the

⁸⁶ *The Tryals of Such Persons as under the Notion of London-Apprentices Were Tumultuously Assembled in Moore-Fields, and Other Places, on Easter Holidays Last, under Color of Pulling down Bawdy-Houses. Taken at the Sessions in the Old-Bailey, on Saturday April 4. 1668* (London, 1668), 29.

⁸⁷ Harris, “Bawdy House Riots,” 550.

⁸⁸ For the conviction’s dubious legality: Harris, 548–50. For the ringleaders’ fates: *London Gazette*, no. 259 (May 7–11, 1668), <https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/259/page/2>.

⁸⁹ E.g., the Lord Chief Justice’s fears of another “Rebellion” like that from which England had been “newly delivered”: *Tryals of..London-Apprentices*, 13.

tolerationists' complaints, while the flower imagery and public revelry parallel May Day's and Whitehall's amusements.

As the bawdy house riots were claimed to anticipate a greater destruction, so *Samson Agonistes* frames its protagonist's earlier attacks against the Philistines to anticipate his final attack. Samson recalls how, when the Israelites handed him over to the Philistines to save their own lives, he broke his cords and

...on thir [the Philistines'] whole Host I flew
Unarm'd, and with a trivial weapon fell'd
Their choicest youth; they only liv'd who fled.
Had *Judah* that day join'd, or one whole Tribe,
They had by this possess'd the Towers of *Gath*,
And lorded over them whom now they serve. (*SA* 262–67)

Scripture's Samson does not correct or rebuke the Israelites when they ask “[K]nowest thou not that the Philistines are rulers over us?” and then deliver him to the Philistines on this plea of political impotence (Judges 15:11). In fact, nowhere in the Judges narrative does Samson admonish the Israelites for failing to coalesce into a resistance force. Yet, Milton's Samson insists that had Israel rallied with him after this smaller victory, they might have usurped Philistine power and “lorded over them whom now they serve.” Milton's Samson perceives the victory over the thousand as a steppingstone to conquering Philistia, a call to insurrection, and of little consequence in itself. Samson's lament in line 267 that Israel might have “lorded over them whom now they serve” is extrabiblical. However, the line is strikingly similar to the mantra proclaimed by the bawdy house rioters who invaded the Finsbury prison with swords and pikes to free their arrested comrades. When the jailer refused entrance, the rioters proclaimed, “We have been Servants, but we will be Masters now.”⁹⁰ The published record of the ringleaders' trial

⁹⁰ *Tryals of...London-Apprentices*, 16.

repeats this mantra three times, citing it as key evidence of high treason against the king and an unmistakable attempt “to Levie Warr and Rebellion.”⁹¹

Interpreting the attack on the thousand as a precedent to a greater, more devastating attack juxtaposes sharply with Samson’s focus in Judges after the battle at Ramathlehi: “And Samson said, ‘With the jawbone of an ass, heaps upon heaps, with the jaw of an ass have I slain a thousand men.’ And it came to pass, when he had made an end of speaking, that he cast away the jawbone out of his hand, and called that place Ramathlehi,” that is, the *hill* or *raising up* or *lifting up of the jawbone* (Judges 15:16–17).⁹² The biblical Samson vaingloriously eulogizes his unlikely weapon, but Milton’s Samson neither identifies the weapon as a donkey’s jawbone nor names the battlefield after this “trivial weapon” (*SA* 263). Samson’s entire focus is on usurping Philistinian power which he tellingly encapsulates in an architectural metonym: “the Towers of *Gath*” (*SA* 266). *Gath* does not appear in Judges 15 and reference to *Gath*’s towers appears nowhere in scripture.⁹³ Yet, Samson in Judges 16 pulls down and carries away the city gates and posts of another principal Philistinian city, Gaza, which perhaps alerts Milton’s readers to the violence Samson intends against *Gath*’s towers. That *Gath*’s “Towers” cleverly pun on *Gath*’s giants broadens Samson’s boast to encompass the mightiest Philistines, as the 1668 rioters’ threat against the palace of Whitehall simultaneously threatened Charles II and his court.

However, unlike the 1668 rioters, Samson fulfills his promise to tear down a grand Philistinian structure and mighty Philistines with it. Milton adds into the story of Judges the 1660s, nonconformist struggle for religious toleration. In Judges 16:25, the celebrating Philistines decide to “‘Call for Samson that he may make us sport.’ And they called for Samson

⁹¹ *Tryals of...London-Apprentices*, 15–16, 18, 28 (quotation from 15).

⁹² Cf. the Wycliffe Bible’s translation and Geneva Bible’s marginal note for Judges 15:17.

⁹³ Cf. *SA* 1068; 1 Sam. 17:4.

out of the prison house; and he made them sport.” Samson’s prompt obedience to the Philistines’ command suggests either no resistance, or submission without the protagonist’s usual, witty evasions or brute defiance. The fast-paced, straightforward action invites little conjecture about Samson’s thoughts on Philistine rites or his involvement therein. Yet, Milton transforms this scene into a hundred-line grievance against religious coercion, specifically, coercion to worship in a way contrary to scripture and conscience, which were pre-Lockean thinkers’ two primary arguments for toleration (*SA* 1308–1426).⁹⁴ “Our Law forbids at thir Religious Rites,” Samson tells the escorting officer; “my conscience and internal peace” are not “so broken, so debas’d/ With corporal servitude” as to “condescend to such absurd commands” (*SA* 1320, 1334–37). In her reading of *Samson Agonistes* as political theory, Sharon Achinstein demonstrates that the “sequence of events” of Samson being summoned to the festival, refusing, and then consenting is “lifted out of the pages of the history of compulsion.” It closely echoes contemporary, nonconformist demands for “freedom of performance of required acts,” since true consent is impossible under duress.⁹⁵ One of Samson’s arguments against religious coercion stems specifically from the bawdy house riots. As the rioters likened England’s spiritual waywardness to sexual waywardness and satirized the court’s intolerance as its means to protect whoring, Samson argues that his engagement in these idolatrous rites would be a type of prostitution. To use his “Consecrated gift/ Of strength” as part of the holy-day’s Dagonalia is “prostituting holy things to Idols;/ ...how vile, contemptible, ridiculous,/ What act more execrably unclean, profane?” (*SA* 1354–55, 1358, 1361–62).

⁹⁴ Sauer differentiates Milton’s and others’ toleration arguments on the basis of true belief from Locke’s pursuit of social peace; *Milton, Toleration, and Nationhood*, 3.

⁹⁵ Sharon Achinstein, “*Samson Agonistes* and the Drama of Dissent,” *Milton Studies* 33 (1996): 139.

Though Samson's obedience to God's inward guidance allows him to attend the festival without bringing anything "dishonourable, impure, unworthy/ [On] Our God, our Law, my Nation, or my self," the Philistines cannot claim the same (*SA* 1424–25). Their holy-day rites closely resemble May Day celebrations, which nonconformists warned were rooted in prostitution, paganism, and popery. Charles II's restoration in May 1660 was widely celebrated through May-Games and the erection of maypoles, which Puritans in the 1650s banned as idolatrous and wicked.⁹⁶ Troubled by the reinstatement of May-Games, the nonconformist minister Thomas Hall published *Funebria Floræ, The Downfall of the May-Games* (1660).⁹⁷ Hall reminds his readers that May Day originated as a commemoration of "one *Flora* a notable Harlot, which had got much riches by whoring," who bequeathed her money to the people of ancient Rome that they "should yearly keep certain Playes called *Floralia* or May-Games, in singing, dancing, drinking, whoring, and all manner of lasciviousness, in remembrance of her."⁹⁸ The festivities took on a religious hue only after the "ashamed" Roman Senate "invented this fig-leaf for a cover" that "*Flora* was a Goddess, which had the tuition of Flowers, ...and therefore shee must be worshipped (according to the custome of the Heathennish and Idolatrous Festivals) with lascivious sports and pastimes in *May*, that shee might more carefully see to" the people's "flowers, fruits, and herbs."⁹⁹ These games were passed down from pagan Rome to the Church of Rome, "and so to us."¹⁰⁰

Samson Agonistes's depiction of the Philistines' Dagonalia closely echoes the *Floralia* in emphasizing games, sports, dancing, drunkenness, and idolatry. The Philistines are "Drunk with

⁹⁶ Gregory M. Colón Semenza, "Samson Agonistes and the Politics of Restoration Sport," *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 42, no. 3 (Summer 2002): 459–60.

⁹⁷ C. D. Gilbert, "Hall, Thomas (1610–1665)," ODNB, September 17, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/11990>.

⁹⁸ Thomas Hall, *Funebria Floræ, the Downfall of May-Games* (London, 1660), 7.

⁹⁹ Hall, 7–8.

¹⁰⁰ Hall, 7.

Idolatry, drunk with Wine” and are “only set on sport and play” (*SA* 1660, 1669). Their holy-day rites include “Sword-players, and ev’ry sort/ Of Gymnic Artists, Wrestlers, Riders, Runners,/ Juglers and Dancers, Antics, Mummings, Mimics” (*SA* 1323–25). The day’s festivities are precipitated by Dalila’s unfaithfulness and wickedness. Tradition presents Dalila as a prostitute, though Milton frames her as Samson’s wife. Although there is talk beforehand that the Philistines will offer Dagon “Sacrifice, and Praises loud,” the poem’s only recorded festival activities are games and drinking, as if the day’s religious aspect has been forgotten (*SA* 434). In fact, of the poem’s fifteen references to Dagon, only two are made by Philistines.¹⁰¹ The Israelites are consistently more worried about pagan worship than the Philistines are about worshipping.¹⁰² As in the original May Day celebrations, the Philistines’ religion seems a ruse to excuse carousing.

Samson Agonistes further confirms the Philistines’ ominous connection to May Day by describing them with flower imagery. Dalila first enters the dramatic poem by approaching Samson “with head declin’d/ Like a fair flower surcharged with dew” (*SA* 727–28). She later acknowledges “double-mouth’d” fame, knowing she will be forever censured by the Jews but revered by the Philistines, among whom

I shall be nam’d among the famousest
Of Women, sung at solemn festivals,
Living and dead recorded, who to save
Her country from a fierce destroyer, chose
Above the faith of wedlock-bands, my tomb
With odours visited and annual flowers. (*SA* 971, 982–87)

Dalila here typifies the immoral Flora, turned goddess in Philistia’s eyes by her act of protection and deliverance and to be “sung” and remembered annually with “flowers” at “festivals.”

¹⁰¹ Cf. *SA* 861, 1311. Additionally, Manoah references Dagon in connection to Philistinian devotion in line 1463.

¹⁰² E.g., Samson and Manoah’s concern over Dagon receiving God’s praise in lines 433–78.

Judgment throughout the poem descends specifically on these honored and sexual Philistinian “flowers.” The temple roof falls on “Lords, Ladies, Captains, Councillors, or Priests,/ Thir choice nobility and flower,” and earlier at Ramathlehi, “A thousand fore-skins fell, the flower of *Palestin*” (SA 1643–44, 144). At the poem’s end, Manoah anticipates when “The Virgins also shall on feastful days/ Visit his [Samson’s] Tomb with flowers,” when festival ways and holy-days, polluted by the Philistines, would be made pure and virginal again (SA 1731–32).

Lastly, the performance of these Philistinian Floralia would have reminded early readers of court masques and thereby strengthened the connection between Whitehall and Samson’s violent judgment on the temple of Dagon. Milton describes the Philistine temple as

...a spacious Theatre
Half round on two main Pillars vaulted high,
With seats where all the Lords and each degree
Of sort, might sit in order to behold. (SA 1595–98)

Nicholas Jose reads Milton’s depiction of the Philistines’ theatricality as a critique of the early Restoration regime’s self-glorification in its theatrical coronation celebrations and its portrayals of history.¹⁰³ In the “Theatre[’s]” few “main Pillars,” Jose glimpses a reference to Christopher Wren’s daring, architectural design of Oxford’s Sheldonian Theatre, which embodied the Restoration sense of triumph and self-regard in its boldly unsupported roof.¹⁰⁴ I agree that the Philistinian theater censures the restored regime but add that it does so closer to home than Oxford—at Whitehall. Charles II and his court avidly enjoyed balls and masques.¹⁰⁵ In 1665,

¹⁰³ Nicholas Jose, “*Samson Agonistes*: The Play Turned Upside Down,” *Essays in Criticism* 30, no. 2 (April 1980): 134, 138–39, <https://doi.org/10.1093/eic/XXX.2.124>.

¹⁰⁴ Jose, 140.

¹⁰⁵ Sandra Tuppen, “Shrove-Tide Dancing: Balls and Masques at Whitehall under Charles II,” *The Court Historian* 15, no. 2 (2010): 157–69.

Charles II spent over £730 in transforming the Great Hall at Whitehall into a “fully-functioning theatre,” where he hosted games, dances, and plays, as his father had done.¹⁰⁶

The most extravagant performances fell on festival holy-days, like Shrove-Tuesday, Candlemas, and Twelfth Night.¹⁰⁷ The Philistines’ holy-day is similarly marked by a slew of performances by “ev’ry sort/ Of Gymnic Artists, Wrestlers, Riders, Runners,/ Juglers and Dancers, Antics, Mummers, Mimics” (SA 1323–25). The conjunction “and” in line 1325 in this list splits the athletes from the actors and groups “Dancers” with the latter. Plays at Whitehall in the 1660s so routinely included dancing that attendees often did not distinguish between the terms “ball” and “masque” in their records.¹⁰⁸ “Antics, Mummers,” and “Mimics” were types of comic actors common in court masques and foiling the poem’s prefatory celebration of tragedy as the most worthwhile form of drama (SA 1325; CWJM 2:66–68). Mummers were masked actors, a regular feature and etymological root of court masques.¹⁰⁹ The satirical Lady Castlemaine opens her response to the *Poor Whores’ Petition* (1668) by recounting her performance in Katherine Philips’s English adaptation of Corneille’s tragedy *Horace* “on *Shrove-Tuesday* last,” when “Splendidly did we appear upon the Theatre at W. H. being to amazement wonderfully deck’d with Jewels and Diamonds.”¹¹⁰ Despite being a tragedy, this performance included antics between each act—the grotesque or comic dances which *Samson Agonistes* includes in the Philistines’ holy-day rites.¹¹¹ In *Eikonoklastes*, Milton mocked Charles I for drawing his spiritual self-justifications in *Eikon Basilike* from such performances at Whitehall: “quaint Emblems and devices begg’d from the old Pageantry of some Twelf-nights entertainment

¹⁰⁶ Tuppen, 160.

¹⁰⁷ Tuppen, 157.

¹⁰⁸ Tuppen, 163–64.

¹⁰⁹ “mummers’ play, n.” (OED). Cf. Tuppen, 163–64.

¹¹⁰ *Gracious Answer...to the Poor Whores Petition*.

¹¹¹ Tuppen, “Shrove-Tide Dancing,” 160.

at *Whitehall*, will do but ill to make a Saint or Martyr” (*CWJM* 6:282). Court masques thus had a strange association with holy-days, being means of celebrating festival days but otherwise unrelated to these days’ spiritual significance. In Milton’s eyes, this engendered an empty religion devoid of true holiness and meriting retribution, as Charles I merited his execution and as the reveling Philistines merit theirs.

Many contemporaries regarded Whitehall’s pastimes as signs of Charles II’s imminent overthrow. Laura Knoppers identifies allusions to the fall of Babylon in *Samson Agonistes*’s extrabiblical description of the Philistines’ drunkenness and feasting, which, like King Belshazzar’s feast, invite their self-destruction.¹¹² Gregory Semenza reads the Philistines’ destruction in *Samson Agonistes* as arising primarily from their obsession with sports and games: “They only set on sport and play/ Unweetingly importun’d/ Thir own destruction to come speedy upon them” (*SA* 1669–71).¹¹³ Semenza demonstrates that seventeenth-century Puritans had long distinguished between “profitless” and “functional” sports, that is, those intended only for pleasure and those having spiritual or bodily benefit. Charles II’s reinstatement and avid support of public sports and games reignited this controversy, following official burnings of his father’s *Book of Sports* in 1643 and Cromwell’s ban on public sports in the 1650s.¹¹⁴ Both Knoppers and Semenza convincingly demonstrate that 1660s readers closely identified these sinful pastimes with the Restoration court and, therefore, would have understood these allusions to portend Charles II’s downfall.

However, none of these allusions evoke the specific type of destruction that concludes Milton’s dramatic poem. Daniel 5 closes with Belshazzar being killed by unspecified means and

¹¹² Knoppers, “Revell like Belshazzar,” 115–20, 125–29.

¹¹³ Semenza, “*Samson Agonistes* and Restoration Sport,” 470.

¹¹⁴ Semenza, 459–60.

the immediate takeover of the Babylonian kingdom by Darius the Mede. Charles I's Sabbath-breaking—as Puritans saw it—by his encouragement of public games was one of the cultural and religious disagreements that precipitated the Civil War. In both instances, the condign punishment for sin was God's people overthrowing a wicked king and usurping his kingdom. However, *Samson Agonistes* avoids identifying a single, tyrannical target. None of the poem's identified Philistines—the wily Dalila, the cowardly giant Harapha, and the officer who seems more messenger or lackey—have a king's power or influence, and Milton does not bother to confirm their deaths in the temple's fall. (Of course, killing a king-like character would be suicide for a writer in the 1660s.) Neither do the Israelites seize Philistia at the poem's conclusion. Their plans for the future include how to commemorate their fallen hero and spend their holy, “feastful days,” and nothing about ruling or legislating Philistia (*SA* 1731). The downfall the poem imagines is caused by annihilation, not a republican-like usurpation. It leads not to a different and superior government or legislation but, without political intervention or even clearly human intention, to freedom of worship.

By enacting the threatened May Day destruction of Whitehall, *Samson Agonistes* takes up the bawdy house rioters' dropped mantle. However, the poem does not go as far as contemporaries expected of the rioters: it does not reestablish the Good Old Cause. The poem invites its readers to test their providential expectations—to grapple with the possibility that they have expected too little and the wrong things of God. God's “uncontrollable intent” cannot be suppressed like the rioters were in 1668 (*SA* 1744). Yet, God may not employ governmental change or national reform to judge the wicked and liberate His people, as radical nonconformists expected.

God—not the “Irresistible *Samson*,” “Who tore the Lion, as the Lion tears the Kid” (a possible warning to leonine kings who destroy their weak subjects)—is the true riddle teller who brings down tyrants (*SA* 126, 128). Following Dalila’s visit, the Chorus spends fifty lines pondering why men are fatally subservient to women, who bring their fall through “female usurpation” (*SA* 1060; cf. 1010–60). The Chorus observes that the quandary is “Much like thy riddle, *Samson*”: unsolvable “in one day/ Or seven, though one should musing sit” (*SA* 1016–17). Yet, here God—who created woman and allowed Eve to prompt Adam’s fall—crafts the riddle, and Samson is the Philistine who will never understand. Samson may even be tempted to win the reward for solving the riddle by treachery and thereby invoke God’s fatal wrath, as the Philistines’ discovery of the riddle’s answer through Samson’s bride prompted Samson’s slaughter of them. To be obedient to God, Samson must allow the providential riddle to remain unresolved, or, at least, uncertain.

In its testing of providential assumptions, the poem invites the reader into the way of continual, hermeneutical processing established in *Paradise Lost*. *Samson Agonistes*’s concluding claim that God “hath dismiss” His servants “With peace and consolation” draws the reader’s attention to God’s desire at the beginning of Book 11 of *Paradise Lost* to “Dismiss [Adam and Eve] not disconsolate” but “in peace” by “reveal[ing]...what shall come” (*SA* 1747; *PL* 11.113–14, 117). The reference draws readers back to the beginning of the providential story and back to an earlier of Milton’s publications and invites them to read, discern, test, and process their understanding of providence afresh.

Conclusion (By Way of the Omissa)

The 1671 volume's concluding Omissa demonstrates how this process of testing, re-reading, and scrutinizing one's beliefs is essential to the development of true faith. Readers of the first edition finished *Samson Agonistes* only to turn the page and find ten noncontinuous lines of poetry to be inserted retroactively into the poem:

[Chor.] What if his eye-sight (for to Israels God
Nothing is hard) by miracle restor'd,
He now be dealing dole among his foes,
And over heaps of slaughter'd walk his way?
Man. That were a joy presumptuous to be thought.
Chor. Yet God hath wrought things as incredible
For his people of old; what hinders now?
Man. He can I know, but doubt to think he will;
Yet Hope would fain subscribe, and tempts Belief.
After the next verse which begins, A little stay, insert this.
Chor. Of good or bad so great, of bad the sooner;
Then follows in order, For evil news, &c.

The Omissa was likely added at a late stage of publication after the volume had received its license on 2 July 1670. Stephen Dobranski first suggested that Milton purposefully slipped in the Omissa later to avoid censorship for the lines' bold fantasy of "a renewed revolt against the monarchy" and "revitalization of the Good Old Cause."¹¹⁵ I agree that the Omissa's separate inclusion serves a unique and potent purpose, but were this purpose a flex of censurable radicalism, the Omissa failed to make its mark. *Samson Agonistes* received no post-publication censorship, nor is there any extant record of L'Estrange (or others) taking offense at the Omissa's portrayal of violent nonconformity. Indeed, the fact that Milton was not punished for the Omissa suggests to me that critics have focused unduly on the gruesome fantasy of Samson "dealing dole

¹¹⁵ Stephen B. Dobranski, *Milton, Authorship, and the Book Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 41–61 (quotation from 58). For Dobranski's revised, expanded argument: *Readers and Authorship in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 183–209.

among his foes/ And over heaps of slaughter'd walk[ing] his way” in lines 3–4—a fantasy which the reader knows will not be fulfilled. The fantasy on which critics have focused is in fact a peripheral matter to discerning providence in the Omissa. Milton makes the violent possibility contingent on providential intervention, and the rest of the Omissa grapples with questions about whether or not God will intervene for His people.

The appended lines are less an attempt to sneak in radical content and more a guide to the true way of faith. In all that precedes the Omissa—the poems of *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*, as well as the name of one of the era’s most notorious dissenters on the title page—we have a nonconformist text that received official toleration from the Restoration regime through the imprimatur of a licenser. The added Omissa suggests that this freedom and space granted by nonconformists’ enemies is too narrow to contain all that Milton has to say and all that God’s people have to do and process. Toleration, albeit messily received through the licensing process, is an insufficient condition to facilitate fully the development of faith and truth. The Omissa’s questions, doubts, intangible hopes, and, most importantly, lack of answers invite further exploration and questioning beyond the ten lines and leave the 1671 volume feeling more unfinished than finished.

This ever-uncertain, developing state is, for Milton, the only way of true faith. Milton instructs readers to insert the Omissa between when the Israelites hear troubling sounds proceeding from Dagon’s temple and the messenger’s explanation of what happened. The Omissa thus invites the reader to revisit and extend the poem’s climactic point of uncertainty—before any light is shed on what Samson, the Philistines, or God have done—and there to test true faith as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1). The images of *sight* and *hope* bookend the Omissa’s providential questioning (Omissa 1, 9).

Samson, who never received the gift of restored sight, becomes more clearly the Samson of laudable faith from Hebrews 11. The Israelites, who assume that “restor’d” “eye-sight” is necessary for God’s deliverance, expose a weaker faith, which their musings on God’s power, nature, and historic dealings gradually, but imperfectly, bolster (Omissa 1–2). That they remain unsure of God’s deliverance at the Omissa’s end—which is also the first edition’s physical end and final thoughts—suggests that the walk of faith, the way of redemption and restoration after the Fall, excludes certainty.

The Omissa’s way of faith also retrospectively makes sense of *Paradise Regained*’s odd ending. After heaven instructs the Son to “Now enter, and begin to save mankind,” the Son “unobserv’d/ Home to his Mothers house private return’d” (*PR* 4.635, 638–39). Either Jesus has disobeyed heaven’s command, or humanity’s hope of salvation somehow rests in the Son being “unobserv’d.” These lines play on Hebrews 11:1’s definition of faith and speak to the faith experience of all believers after the time of Christ, who cannot physically see God nor the ways in which He unfolds His plans. Lines which, at first glance, appear to prolong the Son’s passivity and defer His public ministry actually begin the work of salvation by inviting the reader to faith in “things not seen.”

The Omissa also invites the possibility that things apparent may not be as they appear. Critics have rightly questioned the alleged spiritual triumph and resolution of *Samson Agonistes*’s conclusion.¹¹⁶ The poem ends by claiming that God “hath dismiss” His people “With peace and consolation.../ And calm of mind all passion spent” (*SA* 1747–48). Yet, peace sits

¹¹⁶ Carey and Melbourne condemn Samson’s actions as terrorism and selfish individualism, although their arguments ignore the benefit which contemporaries ascribed to violence (see Lieb) and Samson’s appearance in Hebrews 11:32 as a hero of faith; John Carey, “A Work in Praise of Terrorism? September 11 and *Samson Agonistes*,” *TLS* 5188 (2002): 15; Jane Melbourne, “Biblical Intertextuality in *Samson Agonistes*,” *Studies in English Literature, 1500–1900* 36, no. 1 (1996): 111–27, <https://doi.org/10.2307/450930>; Michael Lieb, *Milton and the Culture of Violence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994). For a more nuanced questioning of *SA*’s ending: Chernaik, “Choosing a Captain,” 260.

inappropriately, disturbingly, with the reader's knowledge that just offstage and still unaddressed is a nightmarish pile of corpses, including the body of Israel's leader, and that Philistinian oppression will continue for generations to come. By inviting providential uncertainty, the Omissa challenges the assumption that peace means tranquility, freedom from disorder or conflict, and spiritual surety, which, for Milton, led to stagnant faith. True peace with God and His will requires testing, challenging, and processing: ongoing wayfaring and warfaring. The Omissa guides the reader to pause at no apparent providential, political, or textual resolution but to reenter an ostensibly finished narrative and wrestle with God's role and will therein.

In the wake of the 1670 Conventicles Act, the tolerationist arguments of the late 1660s also seemed like narratives with finalized conclusions. No one was writing about the bawdy house riots or the threatened destruction of Whitehall by the time Milton published the *1671 Poems*. The Omissa invites God's people to remain in the thick of the story of their awaited deliverance, in the thick of providential uncertainties, and to hope and believe in the God "who can I know" (Omissa 8). Between the providential plan being unknown even to the Son of God, *Paradise Regained's* seemingly anticlimactic ending, Samson's unsubstantiated "rouzing motions," *Samson Agonistes's* uneasy conclusion of peace, and the probing Omissa, the 1671 volume prevents the reader from lazily accepting any sure determinations about providence (*SA* 1382).¹¹⁷ To have providence as one's guide is to wander an undetermined path and yet to not be lost, this being God's way.

¹¹⁷ Sauer argues that *SA* "invite[s] speculation about [Samson's] motions in the final scene" by "[g]enerating more questions than answers"; *Milton, Toleration, and Nationhood*, 156–57.

3

“[T]o have the Lamb, the Saviour, turn Lyon”:

Ambiguous Authorities in Bunyan’s *Grace Abounding* (1666) and *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678; 1684)

Bunyan espoused many of the traits and ideologies that led the Restoration regime to deem dissenters a national threat. He had served in the Parliamentary army and been attracted to anarchical sects like the Ranters.¹ In a society moving towards Arminian soteriology, Bunyan held to the high Calvinism by which Civil War Puritans justified rebellion against the seemingly unchosen and warned the nation of God’s imminent, apocalyptic wrath. Bunyan embraced religious fanaticism, claims of divine inspiration, and terror-prone melancholia, which contemporaries associated with spiritual shams, insanity, and, most ominously, Anabaptist radicalism.² (Anabaptists had violently claimed control of Münster in 1534–1535—an event remembered by Restoration conformists like Dryden, whose *Hind and the Panther* associates contemporary Baptists with these sixteenth-century rebels.³) Bunyan’s conscience made him

¹ Cf. Christopher Hill, *A Tinker and a Poor Man: John Bunyan and His Church, 1628–1688* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), Chapters 5 and 7; Richard Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory: John Bunyan and English Dissent* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), 11–20, 67–74. For more on antinomianism’s perceived threat: Roger Pooley, “Bunyan and the Antinomians,” in *Trauma and Transformation: The Political Progress of John Bunyan*, ed. Vera J. Camden (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 120–34.

² Anne Dunan-Page, *Grace Overwhelming: John Bunyan, The Pilgrim’s Progress and the Extremes of the Baptist Mind* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006), Chapters 3 and 4.

³ Dryden, *HP*, I.43–51 (see also editorial footnote). For the widespread association of Baptists with Anabaptists: Dunan-Page, Chapter 2, esp. pp. 78–80.

politically recalcitrant, and he spent 1660–1672 and half of 1677 in prison. Offered release in 1661 if he promised to stop preaching, he refused.⁴ And yet, Neil Keeble can convincingly argue that the “presentation of himself as a good and loyal subject of Charles II whose nonconformist Christianity presents no threat to the restored regime is an unbroken thread throughout Bunyan’s works.”⁵

This chapter examines how Bunyan’s autobiographical and fictional conversion narratives, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* (1666) and *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678; Part II, 1684), register and explore the contemporary ambivalence towards authority in their uses of the ambiguous and multifaceted symbol of the lion, which was commonly associated with the king, God, and Satan. Published in moments of apocalyptic alarm during 1666’s crises, renewed debate over religious toleration in the late 1670s, and heightened persecution in the 1680s, these texts’ responses to Charles II and to God grapple with the same uncertainty over whether the (K)ing will use his authority to favor or harm his subjects. As a royalist dissenter, Bunyan adds an alternative voice to Dryden and Milton in the Restoration crises over toleration, royal authority, and political instability. Like Dryden’s poems, Bunyan’s conversion narratives resist contemporary monarchical disillusionment, but they echo the *1671 Poems*’s arguments for toleration on the basis of conscience and apocalyptic omens against tyrannical governments. Like both *The Hind and the Panther* and the *1671 Poems*, Bunyan’s texts pivot attention from temporal to eternal solutions and pursue deeper reliance on divine authority above political or providential resolution.

However, *Grace Abounding* and *The Pilgrim’s Progress*’s generic choices shift the focus from national interests and public application to pastoral concerns about how political and

⁴ Greaves, “John Bunyan (ODNB).”

⁵ N. H. Keeble, “Bunyan’s King,” *Bunyan Studies* 19 (2015): 18.

providential uncertainties affect the individual's faith journey. *Grace Abounding* is an autobiographical account of Bunyan's 1650s conversion experience. The account is psychologically intense, typically lacking in a clear chronology of events and unaware of the world beyond its author's troubled thoughts, questions, or readings of scripture. Addressed to persecuted, Restoration nonconformists, the text invites contemporary dissenters to glean hope and reasons to persevere amidst their own terrors and uncertainties through the nonconformist minister's example. Yet, the publication's autobiographical focus excludes the Restoration context as achronological, except in the preface. The impact is to shift readers' attention away from Restoration persecution to the weightier issue of their spiritual state. *The Pilgrim's Progress* is an allegorical story about the Christian's conversion and journey to heaven. Bunyan's uncharacteristic decision to license the allegory hints at its intended broader readership as an Everyman story, and the publication's immediate success testifies to its wide application.⁶ *The Pilgrim's Progress's* allegorical and fictional form provides space to imagine the uncertainties of spiritual conversion within settings and among characters that closely resemble Restoration England and its figures—most significantly, Charles II. However, the allegory keeps salvation as its highest end, and Restoration contexts are things which faithful pilgrims put behind them in order to reach the Celestial City. In both its allegorized and autobiographical forms, salvation is difficult to discern with certainty, and neither text assumes the providential relevance of its Restoration moment, like Dryden's occasional poems do.

The Restoration populace's struggle to ascertain political certainty paralleled the central, providential concern of Bunyan's Calvinist theology: in a world in which God arbitrarily exercises authority through double predestination, how can individuals be certain that they have

⁶ Keeble, "Come Ye out from among Them," 143; Dunan-Page, *Grace Overwhelming*, 136.

found divine favor and been elected to salvation? The soul cannot influence God's predestined decision, similarly to how Restoration dissenters, stripped of civil rights, felt powerless to influence Charles II's will. Bunyan's dramatic fluctuations between the hope of election and terror of damnation in *Grace Abounding* have sometimes been judged as mentally unhinged.⁷ Yet, these spiritual terrors are not that different from the terrors which the Stuart regime's unpredictable responses to dissent evoked in nonconformists, as legislations betrayed promises of indulgence, persecutory laws were arbitrarily enforced, and violent backlash followed moments of reprieve. Bunyan experienced periods of favorable treatment, even partial freedom during his 1660–1672 imprisonment. In the late 1670s, he contributed to a dissenting lecture series against popery, which “attracted much attention and won respect from staunchly protestant members of the Church of England.”⁸ However, during the 1670s, he also lived in constant fear of re-imprisonment, fears reified between December 1676–June 1677. As Bunyan's journey to salvific assurance in *Grace Abounding* exercises an indefatigable hope despite the uncertainty—even unlikelihood—of election so Bunyan's assertions of political loyalty express hope for toleration despite dishearteningly contradictory signs.

Grace Abounding and *The Pilgrim's Progress* speak into particularly politically disheartening Restoration moments. Bunyan likely composed *Grace Abounding* in late 1665 and early 1666, overlapping with the composition of Dryden's *Annus Mirabilis* and Milton's *Paradise Regained*.⁹ Like these poems, *Grace Abounding* grapples with the national and providential uncertainties of its mid-1660s moment, and, like *Paradise Regained*, encourages dissenters towards political quietism, even *otium*. Despite Bunyan's prefatory persona as a godly

⁷ That Bunyan suffered from mental illness is the crux of Richard Greaves' biography, *Glimpses of Glory*.

⁸ Hill, *Tinker and a Poor Man*, 148.

⁹ Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 207.

minister, “*st[u]ck between the Teeth of the Lions in the Wilderness*” and writing to his persecuted, pastor-less congregation from prison, and despite *Grace Abounding*’s illegal publication without a license, the autobiography avoids the political censure we would expect of a 1666, nonconformist publication—particularly considering censorship’s faltered enforcement during this time.¹⁰ Neil Keeble argues that Bunyan would retain the “literary persona” of an imprisoned minister even after his release to frame faith as a way of separation from the world. Keeble interprets this call to separation in Bunyan’s writings and in nonconformist literature more broadly as a form of political resistance, even if passive.¹¹ Yet, *Grace Abounding* is surprisingly apolitical and atemporal, recounting Bunyan’s intensely internal, 1650s journey to salvific assurance. The providential certainty which the text suggests persecuted, Restoration dissenters need in 1666 is not assurance of imminent toleration or of their enemies’ overthrow, but of election, life’s weightiest providential uncertainty.

Bunyan also composed the first part of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* in prison, likely between spring 1668–spring 1671, with a break possibly taken between September 1669–May 1670 when some months of relative freedom redirected his ministerial efforts beyond the Bedford jail.¹² Richard Greaves reads Bunyan’s composition of Part I as the author’s response to the 1667–73 crisis over religious toleration, and Part I’s publication in 1678 as Bunyan’s reentering of the renewed toleration debates around this time.¹³ Bunyan’s composition of *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, Part I, overlaps with Milton’s own response to this crisis in *Samson Agonistes*. (In fact, Greaves postulates that Bunyan was in London during the bawdy house riots which so shaped Milton’s

¹⁰ John Bunyan, *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, ed. Roger Sharrock (Oxford: Clarendon, 1963), 1. Hereafter cited as *GA*. Cp. 2 Tim. 4:17.

¹¹ Keeble, “Come Ye out from among Them,” 141.

¹² Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 218.

¹³ Greaves, 222, 226.

dramatic poem.¹⁴) Yet, unlike Milton's fantasies of his enemies' annihilation and unlike *Grace Abounding's* retreat from contemporary persecution, *The Pilgrim's Progress* humors the possibility that contemporary oppression might be providentially useful, even necessary, in the elects' spiritual journeys. Part II, likely composed in the early 1680s after Part I had gained fame, echoes this message but additionally humors hopes that wicked kings might be redeemed and earthly oppression might cease. These hopes, as well as Part II's more peaceful pilgrimage, reflect the author's status as a free man in the early 1680s. However, these hopes seem to disregard nonconformists' worsened persecution during these years and to challenge the widespread, exacerbated wariness over royal authority.

Significantly, these moments of composition and publication—during 1666's disasters, Charles's unfulfilled promises of toleration, and the Exclusion Crisis's challenge to royal authority and tradition—all overlap with widespread disillusionment toward the monarchy. Bunyan reads these moments as a loyal supporter of the king but who had primarily experienced persecution at the king's hand. Bunyan's subjection of political to providential authority thus brings no surprise, like Dryden's same hierarchy does in *The Hind and the Panther*. However, the interplay of temporal and eternal authorities in Bunyan's texts elucidates why dissenters, who refused to comply with or actively disobeyed the law, could maintain that they were loyal subjects who posed no threat to the king or nation. A king who did not uphold his promises of indulgence was difficult to trust. Yet, God was also hard to trust. He poured out blessings and judgments, and damned and elected people without regard to their merits. The issue over royal authority was more than political or partisan for Bunyan. It got to the troubling core of his theology, as impotent souls wondered whether they could trust God to favor them.

¹⁴ Greaves, 225.

I postulate that it is only in ambivalence and ambiguity that royalist dissenters, like Bunyan and Baxter, remained royalists throughout the Restoration's recurrent political disappointments. Bunyan suffered twelve years in prison for his nonconformity but professed fealty to both Restoration kings. In the same article that Keeble identifies political loyalty as "an unbroken thread throughout Bunyan's works," he juxtaposes Bunyan's avowed loyalty to Charles II "as God's minister and agent" with Bunyan's harsh criticisms of Charles "as Beelzebub, Diabolus, Nebuchadnezzar."¹⁵ Keeble concludes that these contradictions ultimately compelled Bunyan into "resistance and resolute defiance" when royal decrees sought to force his conscience.¹⁶ True, nonconformists felt bound to obey God over the king. However, the king's contradictory roles as an instrument of Satan and of God also prevented many nonconformists from spurning royal authority altogether. Providential ambiguity facilitated royal authority's interrogation as much as it did its safeguarding. Who could be certain what role Charles II or, later, James II played in God's providential scheme? Any dissenting "resistance and [] defiance" is "resolute" only on a case by case basis, not as a general principle of dissent. With Sharon Achinstein, I question the critical tendency to assume the "binary opposition" of Tory versus Whig, royalist versus radical, dissenting versus Anglican—particularly regarding the complex issue of royal authority.¹⁷ As Dryden's inclusion in this dissertation attests, both sides of the era's divides had strong, political and providential reservations. The lion's paradoxical and broadly applicable image vigorously communicated such reservations by encouraging expressions of mixed, cautious, but hopeful allegiances.

¹⁵ Keeble, "Bunyan's King," 18, 29.

¹⁶ Keeble, 29.

¹⁷ Sharon Achinstein, "John Bunyan and the Politics of Remembrance," in *Trauma and Transformation: The Political Progress of John Bunyan*, ed. Vera J. Camden (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 151.

My argument speaks into current critical interests, with caveats. Critics are presently fascinated by how Bunyan teaches readers to engage with the world. How did a separatist, who wrote an *Everyman*, spiritual conversion story, which is untethered enough from its Restoration context to resonate with centuries of readers of varying circumstances, nations, creeds, or no creeds at all, speak into matters like social justice, human rights, materialism, and consumerism? The aim seems to be to make an author known best for his otherworldliness germane to earthly concerns. The 2018 *Oxford Handbook* challenges critical precedents which value Bunyan primarily for writing a book of almost unsurpassed fame and that book's impact on the novel's development.¹⁸ Michael Davies's introduction invites us instead to value the author of *The Pilgrim's Progress* as "a figure who can speak to contemporary concerns over human rights, social justice, and civil liberties."¹⁹ Davies demonstrates how Bunyan's works often surface in moments of "revolutionary change," and he aligns Bunyan "within a long line of visionaries, all of whom invest in their work some form of revolutionary ethos."²⁰ In keeping with this reevaluation of Bunyan's worth, the handbook includes the gamut of academic disciplines and Bunyan's canon, including manuscripts he withheld from publication. Half of the volume is devoted to how post-seventeenth-century readers applied Bunyan's writings to their own political, spiritual, or social moments.²¹ While a stimulating new angle, the handbook's determination to contend for Bunyan's relevance in today's increasingly post-Christian society renders it, at times, too dismissive of the truly otherworldly emphasis of early modern

¹⁸ For an overview of the origin and development of critical readings of *Pilgrim's Progress* as a proto-novel: Peter Crisp, "The *Pilgrim's Progress*: Allegory or Novel?," *Language and Literature* 21, no. 4 (2012): 328–44, <https://doi-org.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/10.1177/0963947012444953>.

¹⁹ Michael Davies, "Introduction: Bunyan's Presence," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Bunyan*, ed. Michael Davies and W. R. Owens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 3.

²⁰ Davies, 4.

²¹ Michael Davies and W. R. Owens, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of John Bunyan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), Parts III and IV.

separatism. My dual focus on politics and providence demonstrates that worldly concerns interest Bunyan primarily in how they impact and illuminate eternal concerns.

The argumentative framework of Isabel Rivers's *Vanity Fair and the Celestial City: Dissenting, Methodist, and Evangelical Literary Culture in England, 1720–1800* (2018) better aligns with Bunyan's views on the strange, often strained, but undeniable connection between heaven and the world. Inviting us to wonder over the seemingly necessary presence of Vanity Fair in *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Rivers asks, "How was the journey to the Celestial City aided by passing through Vanity Fair?"²² Rivers takes, as a guiding metaphor for her book, Vanity Fair to symbolize the eighteenth-century world of print and the Celestial City to symbolize popular religious culture. As Bunyan's pilgrims must pass through Vanity Fair, so eighteenth-century religious culture often had to pass through the worldliness of print—its consumerism, materialism, trade, and commerce. Furthermore, religious teachings' dissemination hinged on the book trade's success. Rivers's is not a study of Bunyan. However, her guiding metaphor closely aligns with my findings on the relationship between earthly and divine authority in *Grace Abounding* and *The Pilgrim's Progress*. Rather than something to be always resisted or revolutionized, worldly concerns—including those of spiritually negative implications—might aid spiritual development. The next section examines contemporary uses of lion imagery, religious and political. By supporting and challenging such appropriations, Bunyan's lion imagery invites readers to reevaluate whether leonine authority figures are as damning or damnable as they appear.

²² Isabel Rivers, *Vanity Fair and the Celestial City: Dissenting, Methodist, and Evangelical Literary Culture in England, 1720–1800* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 2.

Equivocal Lions

In the only extended study of early modern lion imagery, Kathleen Curtin argues that lions were predominately used to describe the experience of persecution, per famous histories like Daniel 6 or early Christians being thrown to Roman lions.²³ This application of lion imagery vividly communicates suffering, terror, and danger, but also, importantly, portends providential judgment against persecutors. Though a Mede king condemns Daniel to the lions' den, the close proximity of that episode (Daniel 6) to the fall of the Babylonian empire (Daniel 5), along with the Babylonians' earlier persecution of the Hebrew captives (Daniel 1–4), closely associated religious persecution with empires that fall by divine command.²⁴ That the name Daniel means “God is Judge” or “God is my Judge” further bodes providential destruction or deliverance.

Emboldened by such examples, early modern people apocalyptically warned that God would rise to defend the persecuted and overthrow ungodly, unrepentant regimes.²⁵ Milton pointedly prefaced his justification of Charles I's downfall and execution in *Eikonoklastes* with Proverbs 28:15–17: “*As a roaring Lyon, and a ranging Beare, so is a wicked Ruler over the poor people.*”²⁶ The bestial image worked particularly well applied to a monarchy whose crest bore a lion, but royalists also used lion imagery to censure their enemies and assert their own providential favor. An anonymous treatise in 1660 claimed that the fact that Charles II “hath been extraordinarily preserved from the paw of the Lion” during and after his father's fall makes

²³ Kathleen Curtin, “Honey from the Lion: Interpretation and Religious Persecution in Early Modern English Autobiography” (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina, 2013), <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1399591424/>.

²⁴ Cf. Dan. 5:18–30.

²⁵ Curtin examines an early example from John Bale's *Vocacyon* (1553): Curtin, “Honey from the Lion,” 99. For a broader study: Walsham, *Providence*, Chapter 3.

²⁶ Milton, *CWJM* 6:252.

“it most evidently...appear, that he is a person most dear in Gods eye. and preserved for some extraordinary Advancement.”²⁷ Charles II is the persecuted Daniel or Paul and the Parliamentarians the wicked, leonine rulers, now overthrown. Providence thus follows its usual course against the lion. These uses of lion imagery encouraged black-and-white judgments that clearly distinguished the godly, whom God would protect and deliver, from the ungodly leonine persecutors, whom God would destroy.

While Restoration nonconformists continued to condemn their persecutors and identify with the righteous Daniel, late-seventeenth-century lion imagery acquired broader and more ambivalent applications, which hampered such straightforward, providential categorizations. Curtin’s study focuses almost exclusively on mid-sixteenth- to mid-seventeenth-century writings. Her final chapter on *Grace Abounding* reads the 1666 publication through the lens of Martin Luther’s *Commentary on Galatians* and John Foxe’s *Acts and Monuments*.²⁸ While these sixteenth-century books were favorites of Bunyan’s and undoubtedly colored how he processed persecution, *Grace Abounding*’s limited lion imagery aligns far better with equivocal, Restoration applications, as I later demonstrate.

Lions are a dominant image in Bunyan’s canon. Twenty-four of his over fifty publications reference them. *The Pilgrim’s Progress* references lions a staggering sixty-four times between Parts I and II, and the lion-mouthed Apollyon fifty-three times. Yet, Part I’s detailed, ten-page depiction of contemporary persecution at Vanity Fair provides only one of these references. The wicked Judge calls for the pilgrims’ execution on the basis of a series of pagan kings’ persecutory laws, including Darius’s which condemned perpetrators to “the Lions

²⁷ *The Mystery of Prophecies Revealed, by Which the Restoring of K. Charls the Second...Is Manifoldly, Plainly, and Fully Convinced* (London, 1660), 8.

²⁸ Curtin, “Honey from the Lion,” Chapter 5.

Den.”²⁹ This reference serves as one of multiple legal precedents and does not explicitly condemn Vanity Fair for being leonine. In fact, when later pilgrims pass through in Part II, Vanity Fair is more tolerant, even somewhat repentant—“ashamed to burn any more” after having burnt Faithful at the stake.³⁰ Despite its former connection to doomed, pagan empires, Vanity Fair shows signs of repentance, the only act which apocalyptic writers agreed could avert providential destruction. Bunyan’s lion imagery is consistently equivocal, echoing Restoration tendencies.

Dominating Restoration lion imagery is the struggle to discern whether a leonine figure aligns with God or Satan, good or evil. The beast’s lethal nature underscored the high stakes of correct discernment. Biblical precedent did not ease these hermeneutical difficulties. In scripture, lions represent authorities that are bestial and kingly, demonic and divine, destructive and protective. The devil is a roaring, devouring lion which will “make war with the saints” and seek “to overcome them” during the apocalypse.³¹ The psalmists liken wicked people to lions who hunt the righteous, and pagan nations and ungodly Israelites are like lions threatening the nation of Israel and its prophets.³² Yet, the Bible depicts the righteousness, boldness, and courage of individuals like Daniel, David, and Jonathan through lion imagery or experiences with lions.³³ God Himself is a lion-like Defender of Zion, frightening His people’s enemies; a lion-like force disciplining Job, Israel, King Hezekiah, King David, and the prophet Jeremiah; the lion devouring ungodly Israel when it shirks His salvation; and the Lion of Judah, the victorious Christ, who appears paradoxically as a slain lamb.³⁴ The divine Lion seems as often protective of

²⁹ John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim’s Progress: From This World to That Which Is to Come*, ed. James Blanton Wharey and Roger Sharrock, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 96. Hereafter cited as *PP*.

³⁰ *PP*, 275.

³¹ 1 Pet. 5:8; Rev. 13:2, 7.

³² Psa. 17:12, 22:13, 35:17, 57:4; Joel 1:6; Jer. 2:30.

³³ Dan. 6; 2 Sam. 1:23. Cf. Heb. 11:33; Psa. 91:13; Prov. 28:1.

³⁴ Job 10:16, Isa. 31:4, Hos. 11:10, Jer. 25:38, Isa. 38:13, Psa. 7:2, Lam. 3:10–11; Hos. 13:7–8; Rev. 5:5.

as incensed against His people. John Knott suggests that Bunyan empowers godly over satanic lion imagery in *The Holy War* (1682) by a rhetorical trick. Boanerges's and Conviction's "faces were the faces of Lions," but Diabolus's roaring is only "as a Lyon upon the prey" (my emphasis).³⁵ However, metaphor's slim upper hand over simile inadequately quiets temporal consternation. Satan's and God's power remain discernible in troublingly analogous terms.

Restoration religious writers most readily framed lions as damnable symbols—yet, also, as troublingly disguised and, therefore, difficult to identify. Lions in religious treatises and sermons tended to represent internal sin or false converts within one's community, rather than identifiable, enemy persecutors. A sermon in Samuel Annesley's popular, 1661 nonconformist collection warns, "The *forbearing* of any outward act of sin whatsoever, is no evidence of *Mortification*, or *Conversion*: Sin may be restrained when it is not mortified, a chained Lyon is a Lyon still."³⁶ Per Ephesians 4:22–24 and 2 Corinthians 5:17, salvation is total transformation into a "new creation," not moral reform of the "old man," or, in this case, the old lion. Outward signs of moral reform cannot indicate true faith. The ejected minister Bartholomew Ashwood (1622–1678) similarly attests, "What mischief have chained Bears and Lions done when broken loose? Believer, thy condition is not safe till thy sin be dead."³⁷ Undealt with sin chiefly threatens the individual's soul, but the image of "chained Bears and Lions...broken loose" also endangers anyone in the beasts' paths.

We see the communal repercussions of an inauthentic, leonine conversion in an anonymous 1678 account of a pet lion in Winchcombe, Gloucestershire. The lion "had got his

³⁵ John Knott, "Bunyan and the Cry of Blood," in *Awakening Words: John Bunyan and the Language of Community*, ed. David Gay, James Randall, and Arlette Zinck (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000), 57. Cf. John Bunyan, *The Holy War*, ed. Roger Sharrock and James F. Forrest (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), 93, 11.

³⁶ Samuel Annesley, ed., *The Morning Exercise at Cripplegate* (London, 1661), 62.

³⁷ Bartholomew Ashwood, *The Heavenly Trade, or, The Best Merchandizing the Only Way to Live Well in Impoverishing Times* (London, 1678), 221.

[its twelve-year-old keeper's] head into his mouth, and bit and crushed him to death; and also had sucked all the blood out of his body" before anyone could save the boy.³⁸ The author turns this gruesome account into a didactic tale about people whose hearts remain not fully transformed by God's grace:

In this instance we may see the rage and fury of these Creatures, and that though they seem never so tame and gentle, yet on the least disgust their natural fierceness returns. So it is with men in a natural estate, they may appear much Civiliz'd by Education, but if Grace have not made a through [*sic*] Change in the heart, the smallest occasion or temptation shall revive and discover their lurking Corruptions.³⁹

By using the horrific story of a murderous pet lion to communicate the need for transformative grace above outward reform, the author frames false or partial conversions as destructive to the entire community. The community's failure to discern true from false conversions could be lethal to them, as trusting the lion's tameness was to this twelve-year-old boy.

This alarming portrayal of personal salvation as communally impactful illustrates a concern largely new to the Restoration era. In her study on early modern conversion, Molly Murray argues that the Restoration era issued a new "polemical focus on the dangerous implications of religious change *per se*," as opposed to earlier eras' fears of particular types of conversion, such as to Roman Catholicism.⁴⁰ The Restoration regime's push for uniformity made contemporaries acutely skeptical of converts, since social and political incentives for conformity made new outward deeds poor marks of internal sincerity.⁴¹ The lion imagery examples put the onus of spiritual discernment on the community but offer no reliable means to distinguish true from false conversions. As a divinely wrought "Change *in the heart*," conversion is something

³⁸ *The Great Robbery in the West, or, The Innkeeper Turned Highwayman* (London, 1678), 6–7.

³⁹ *Great Robbery*, 7.

⁴⁰ Murray, *Poetics of Conversion*, 142.

⁴¹ Murray, 143.

terrifyingly outside of human control and intangible to human eyes.⁴² Redeemed humans did not transform into something non-threatening to make them identifiable, nor were false converts put to death like the Gloucestershire lion. Humanity's struggle to discern providential truths and inability to influence providential realities led to worse issues than personal fear or uncertainty: these limitations threatened society.

Religious writers seldom employed lion imagery in a positive light, but political uses allowed for a more paradoxical interpretation—one that acknowledged the lion's potential for danger while also suggesting the possibility of a strong, even beneficent, authority. In applying lion imagery to Charles II, conformists and dissenters alike communicated concerns over Charles II and wrestled with their own political loyalties. The General Baptist leader and writer Henry Adis urged Charles II to “*Rescue those many Poor Oppressed Ones, those Men and Women, those Tender Lambs of Iesus, out of thy Lion-like Claws, and thy Bear-like Paws; who art as eager in thy pursute after them, as a She-Bear bereaved of her Whelps.*”⁴³ Although Adis's plea hopes that Charles is good enough to rescue nonconformists from persecution, Charles is also the one inflicting the punishments (“thy *Lion-like Claws*”). Seeing that Adis published *A Fannaticks Alarm* under his own name, this is unlikely a direct attack. He instead critiques royal passivity regarding vicious advisors, such as Charles's vindictive, early-1660s Parliament.⁴⁴ Two decades later, Dryden portrayed the royal Lion James II as little more master or leader than Adis did Charles II, albeit also good and godly. Cartoonists dispersed images of England as an emasculated lion with its tail cut off—not providentially condemned, but humiliated by its

⁴² *Great Robbery*, 7 (my emphasis).

⁴³ Henry Adis, *A Fannaticks Alarm* (London, 1661), 10.

⁴⁴ Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 166–69.

leadership and policies.⁴⁵ The latter Stuart kings vacillated between the appearance of goodness and protectiveness and that of destructiveness, wild unpredictability, or uncharacteristic weakness.

To defend the king's reputation, some writers ceased describing him as leonine altogether. A 1660, pro-Caroline text warns royal counsellors to preserve Charles's natural mercifulness and not encourage behavior that would make him like Proverbs 28:15's "*wicked Ruler*" which acts "[a]s a roaring Lyon, and as a hungry Beare": "doe not as the Lyonesse did her young Lyon, teach him to catch, and to devoure the prey."⁴⁶ Charles II is a naturally merciful king, and, thus, this supporter attests, hardly leonine at all. In 1677, the writer and publisher Richard Head applied Mother Shipton's popular, sixteenth-century prophecies to the monarchs of the past two centuries. Head praises Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary I, James VI and I as being leonine, even going so far as to excuse the "*fierce Lyon*" Mary as "most Merciful, Pious, Iust," despite what "cruelty by the *Bishops and Priests* was done *under her*."⁴⁷ However, Head notably excises this royal attribute from his descriptions of Charles I and II, whom he describes unthreateningly as "The White King" and "A King."⁴⁸ These examples express some degree of political loyalty, but also place traditionally positive leonine kingship on uncertain footing.

Where it is perhaps most surprising to see the Restoration era's equivocal treatment of leonine authorities is in the dissident *Mirabilis Annus* tracts, against which Dryden composed his 1667 poem. Bunyan drew on these tracts in *The Pilgrim's Progress* and its damnation sequel,

⁴⁵ Kevin Sharpe, *Reading Authority and Representing Rule in Early Modern England* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2013), 206.

⁴⁶ W. H., *A Changling No Company for Lovers of Loyaltie* (London, 1660), 26–27.

⁴⁷ Richard Head, *The Life and Death of Mother Shipton...Also, All Her Prophetes* (London, 1677), 33. For other monarchs: Head, 18–19 (Henry VIII), 27 (Edward VI), 33 (Mary I), 38 (James VI and I) vs. 46–47 (Charles I and Charles II).

⁴⁸ Cf. Head, *Life and Death of Mother Shipton*, 46–47.

The Life and Death of Mr. Badman (1680).⁴⁹ The tracts record that on 21 March 1660, several Londoners witnessed the figure of “a fierce Lyon Rampant” in the sky.⁵⁰ Although the anonymous author offers no interpretation, this spotting occurs less than a week after the Long Parliament is disbanded—an event which signaled the Interregnum’s end. The lion most readily represents the imminent return of Charles II, who would issue the Declaration of Breda a week and a half later and enter London to claim his throne within two months. That the beast is “fierce” and “Rampant” renders it “formidably violent” yet brave, zealous yet dangerously unchecked, raising doubts over how Charles’s rule will affect the nation.⁵¹ Other celestial sightings seem unthreatening: the clouds transform into the shape of a lion and a castle; two lions converge into the form of one smaller lion; a lion morphs into a lightning bolt.⁵² The potential danger is less than it initially seems or is short-lived.

Some reports of celestial lions in the *Mirabilis Annus* tracts do foretell a more ominous national fate. A father and daughter witness “in the Air” “The form of the Tower and City of *London* all on fire...together with the forms of Lions over the City, and a Field of Blood in the West part of it.” In this apocalyptic scene, eerily prophetic of the Great Fire, the city and the seat of royal authority suffer imminent destruction, as “the Fire seemed to break forth brighter and brighter” every moment.⁵³ On 29 May 1662, exactly two years after Charles II’s official restoration, witnesses near Reading report apparitions of a lion, unicorn, and bear—the symbols of England, Scotland, and Parliament—accompanied by an army of horse and foot soldiers.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ For allusions in *Mr. Badman*: Nigel Smith, “John Bunyan and Restoration Literature,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Bunyan*, ed. Anne Dunan-Page (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 28–29.

⁵⁰ *Eniautos Terastios*, 19.

⁵¹ “fierce, adj.,” 1, 2 (OED); “rampant, adj., n.,” 2 (OED).

⁵² *Mirabilis Annus Secundus*, 8–9, 3, 20. My citations come from the first installment of *Mirabilis Annus Secundus* (Wing M2205).

⁵³ *Mirabilis Annus Secundus*, 1–2.

⁵⁴ *Mirabilis Annus Secundus*, 22–23.

The vision resurrects echoes of the nation-rending Civil War. The tracts record, in immediate succession, a sighting of ghostly, celestial red- and gray-coat armies over Yorkshire and the rare birth of “three Lyon whelps” to “a Lyoness in the Tower of *London*.”⁵⁵ These grouped images convey both a fear of renewed civil war and a stabilizing hope that Charles II’s progeny will one day rule. Thus, the dissident prodigies simultaneously assert and challenge Charles II’s authority and express uncertainty over his providential role. Importantly, none of these lions suffer providential destruction, as previous generations attested persecutory, leonine authorities would. The *Mirabilis Annus* tracts respond to the Restoration regime more equivocally than conformist accusations of sedition would suggest.

Thus, both sides’ uses of political lion imagery raise uncertainty, ambivalence, and hope over Charles II’s authority, rather than straightforward support or opposition. Such ambiguity invites a reevaluation of providential assumptions and judgments. The Stuart monarchy cannot be asserted as fully good or evil. Persecution might, by God’s grace, do more good than harm. Persecution also might not precipitate the oppressors’ downfall, as dissenters had long proclaimed. The lion’s ambiguous meaning invites response, re-reading, and sustained uncertainty over temporal circumstances, eliciting hope and caution but, importantly, not rebellion. After all, who could defeat a mighty lion should it turn against them?

The imagery offered nonconformists a way to grapple with their subjection to the king (whether forced or voluntary) and with their repeatedly thwarted hopes for toleration. Michael Mullett argues that by the Restoration period’s latter half, many dissenters, including Bunyan, believed that dissent would only enjoy “the alleviation of the discriminatory laws...in close political alliance with the Stuart monarchy.” “Bunyan’s important contribution” to encouraging

⁵⁵ *Eniautos Terastios*, 38.

this alliance “was to harness the Puritan apocalyptic tradition to an ardent attachment to the Stuart Crown.”⁵⁶ Mullett sees Bunyan doing this chiefly in 1680s, didactic works like *Of Antichrist, and his Ruine* (composed around 1682; published posthumously in 1692) and *Seasonable Counsel* (1684).⁵⁷ Yet, Bunyan’s use of primarily ambivalent, rather than apocalyptic, lion imagery in *Grace Abounding* and *The Pilgrim’s Progress* also carefully sidesteps denouncing the Restoration regime. The only overtly apocalyptic scene in Bunyan’s allegory is Christian’s battle with Apollyon, where apocalyptic, leonine wrath descends solely on the nonconformist pilgrim—not on any figure representing Restoration culture.

Most importantly, the interplay of hope, caution, and personal powerlessness expressed in contemporaries’ political lion imagery also displayed a positive means to cope with Calvinist soteriology. Stuart Sim has demonstrated that the characters in *The Pilgrim’s Progress* who are representative of “conformists and latitudinarians” “fail to display the necessary balance between willful assertiveness of their soteriology and doubt as to their own ultimate fate that is supposed to mark out the true elect.”⁵⁸ It is in the paradoxical interplay of doubt and certainty that election is revealed. A person with total certainty is necessarily a reprobate.⁵⁹ The following sections explore how Bunyan draws on political and spiritual uncertainties to encourage his readers to trust in God, the highest leonine authority, who has the ultimate authority over both eternal and temporal matters. Under Bunyan’s Calvinist framework, God may choose to damn the individual; yet, the individual’s only hope of rescue lies in Him.

⁵⁶ Michael A. Mullett, “Bunyan’s Life, Bunyan’s Lives,” in *The Oxford Handbook of John Bunyan*, ed. Michael Davies and W. R. Owens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 34.

⁵⁷ For likely composition dating of *Of Antichrist*: Greaves, “John Bunyan (ODNB).”

⁵⁸ Stuart Sim, “‘Safe for Those for Whom It Is to Be Safe’: Salvation and Damnation in Bunyan’s Fiction,” in *John Bunyan and His England, 1628–88*, ed. Anne Laurence, W. R. Owens, and Stuart Sim (London: Hambledon, 1990), 153.

⁵⁹ Stuart Sim, *Negotiations with Paradox: Narrative Practice and Narrative Form in Bunyan and Defoe* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), 93.

Grace Abounding

Bunyan contextualizes his spiritual autobiography in lion imagery, referencing the beasts five times in *Grace Abounding*'s short, four-page preface. Dissenting readers in 1666 would have assumed that such imagery symbolized their present persecution and national terrors, a reading also encouraged by the author's repeated emphasis on his imprisonment and use of politically charged biblical references. Yet, Bunyan as quickly overturns such readings as he encourages them, pivoting his audience towards eternal hopes and certainties through a more careful reading of scripture's promises.

Grace Abounding's preface opens,

Children, Grace be with you, *Amen*. I being taken from you in presence, and so tied up, that I cannot perform that duty that from God doth lie upon me, to you-ward, for your further edifying and building up in Faith and Holiness, &c., yet that you may see my Soul hath fatherly care and desire after your spiritual and everlasting welfare; I now once again, as before from the top of *Shenir* and *Hermon*, so now from *the Lions Dens*, and from *the Mountains of the Leopards* (Song 4. 8), do look yet after you all, greatly longing to see your safe arrival into *THE* desired haven.⁶⁰

Bunyan's emphasized reference to "*the Lions Dens*" within the context of his persecution and, especially, his continued, ministerial care for his spiritual flock draws to mind Restoration dissenting ministers' uses of the prophet Daniel. Ejected ministers' farewell sermons repeatedly employed the story of Daniel in the lions' den to encourage their congregations to continue in the

⁶⁰ Bunyan, *GA*, 1.

faith, despite political opposition.⁶¹ In a section demonstrating that “It is by Faith Christians overcome the world, 1 *John* 5.4,” one sermon attests, “[I]t must be a strong Faith that must stop the mouths of *Lions*, subdue Kingdoms, quench the violence of fire, *Heb* 11.35 [11:33–34].”⁶² In 1 *John* 5:1–3, the “world” to be overcome is clearly sin. Yet, this ejected minister reinterprets this “world” as a persecutory kingdom. He abridges the many examples of the faithful and their acts listed across the forty verses of Hebrews 11 to include only the examples of Daniel, subdued kingdoms, and quenched fire—a detail contemporary readers would link to John Foxe’s martyrs, with whom Restoration dissenters often self-associated.⁶³ While Hebrews 11:33 lists those who “through faith subdued kingdoms” multiple examples before those who “stopped the mouths of lions,” the sermon inverts the order, forcing an achronological association between persecuted believers’ faith and kingdoms’ falls. The fires which nonconformists’ spiritual predecessors, the Marian martyrs, could not escape finally would be quenched, the persecutory regime overthrown. This way of faith is one of active resistance and political overthrow.

However, as Milton’s Son in *Paradise Regained* interprets the story of Daniel correctly by reading it within a wider, scriptural context, so *Grace Abounding*’s preface encourages a more comprehensive reading of scripture. Bunyan subverts nonconformists’ expectations by taking his reference to “*the Lions Dens*” not from Daniel but from the Song of Solomon 4:8. The full biblical reference reads, “Come with me from Lebanon, my spouse, with me from Lebanon: look from the top of Amana, from the top of Shenir and Hermon, from the lions’ dens, from the mountains of the leopards,” and is part of two extended passages of Solomon delighting in his bride’s beauty. The bridegroom invites his bride from the foreign land of Lebanon, with its wild

⁶¹ *England’s Remembrancer, Being a Collection of Farewel-Sermons Preached by Divers Non-Conformists in the Country* (London, 1663), 164, 339, 348, 356–57, 381.

⁶² *England’s Remembrancer*, 149.

⁶³ Cf. Keeble, *Literary Culture of Nonconformity*, 5.

felines, to join him in Israel where he reigns as king. The Song of Solomon was consistently read in the seventeenth century as an allegory of Christ and His bride, the Church, and Elizabeth Clarke has demonstrated that this reading had political repercussions. Clarke contends that “the struggle over the identity of the Church of England in the seventeenth century is a conflict over the meaning of the Song of Songs.”⁶⁴ Her study investigates how religious radicals, particularly, used the Song of Solomon to defend their own ecclesiology, theology, or their “independence from earthly authority.”⁶⁵ Though Bunyan strongly supported religious separatism and the Baptist movement, in *Grace Abounding*’s preface he uses the Song of Solomon only to point towards the eternal Church. The Bridegroom calls His people out of this world to heaven, “*THE* desired haven.”⁶⁶ Rather than lament the struggle of nonconformity or injustice of persecution, anticipate divine deliverance from or the subduing of wicked kingdoms, or assert the Baptist way, Bunyan meditates on the eternal love story between Christ and the elect. He pointedly frames the way of faith as something *toward*, as spiritual desire expressed and reciprocated, as eternally minded. Lebanon and its lions are simply left behind as the bride journeys to her beloved. *Grace Abounding*’s preface thus redirects nonconformist efforts from resisting the lions to single-mindedly pursuing Christ.

Yet, putting this sentiment into action must have seemed untenable to a dissenting audience in 1666. By contextualizing the preface’s remaining lion references within Philistine oppression during Samson’s and David’s times, Bunyan demonstrates how such spiritual redirection occurs within unrelenting persecution. At first glance, these biblical precedents seem to invite violent resistance, as graphically imagined in Milton’s *Samson Agonistes*. The

⁶⁴ Elizabeth Clarke, *Politics, Religion and the Song of Songs in Seventeenth-Century England* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 3.

⁶⁵ Clarke, 75. See also Clarke, 1–3, 46, 62–63.

⁶⁶ Bunyan, *GA*, 1.

Philistines' dishonest discovery of the answer to Samson's riddle, inspired by the honey he found in the lion's carcass, led to Samson murdering thirty men of Ashkelon (Judges 14). David's slaying of "the Lyon and the Bear" to protect his father's flocks prepared him to "fight with the Giant of *Gath*, *1 Sam. 17. 36, 37*," whom he likewise killed.⁶⁷

However, rather than inviting resistance, or even a passive condemnation of persecutors, Bunyan's readings of these charged, biblical precedents focus exclusively on illuminating God's work of grace within the soul. As David's memory of God's deliverance from the lion emboldened him to trust in God's deliverance from Goliath, so "[i]t is profitable for Christians to be often calling to mind the very beginnings of Grace with their Souls."⁶⁸ The persecuted minister censures neither the lion who attacked David's flock, nor the "uncircumcised Philistine [who] def[ied] the armies of the living God," though both oppress the true Church, represented as the Good Shepherd's flock and the Church Militant (1 Samuel 17:26). So ostensibly insignificant is this oppression that Bunyan makes no comment on it. Yet, counterintuitively, these persecutory experiences prompt God's outpouring of grace and, thus, are providentially beneficial.

Bunyan's allusion to Samson and the lion similarly directs readers' focus to God's responsive grace. Bunyan offers his autobiography as "a drop of that honey, that I have taken out of the Carcase of a *Lyon* (*Judg. 14. 5, 6, 7, 8*)," a good engendered in his terrifying conversion experience:

(Temptations when we meet them at first, are as the *Lyon* that roared upon *Sampson*; but if we overcome them, the next time we see them, we shall finde a Nest of Honey within them.) The Philistians understand me not. It is a Relation of the work of God upon my own Soul, even from the very first, till now; wherein you may perceive my castings

⁶⁷ *GA*, 2.

⁶⁸ *GA*, 2.

down, and raisings up; for he woundeth, and his hands make whole.⁶⁹

The riddle of the lion is how do humans, unable to achieve any part of their own salvation, “overcome” their natural inclination to sin? This is the great terror with which *Grace Abounding* wrestles. Sharon Achinstein interprets the “Nest of Honey” as a sign of God’s grace, the key element of Calvinist soteriology. “[T]he gift of honey comes unasked for, as a result of heroic struggle,” although not caused by the heroic struggle.⁷⁰ Thus, the soul must engage with the lion, must resist temptations, but this engagement cannot earn salvation. Paradoxically, if the soul does not engage, if the lion is not overcome, the hive will not be built within its carcass. The “Honey” of grace is strictly “the work of God” upon the soul, but the individual’s interaction with the lion—his wrestling with damnable, personal sinfulness—reveals this spiritual trajectory of election. I value Achinstein’s insight into this passage’s soteriological significance but disagree with her over-readiness to equate spiritual matters with political when she concludes that the “story of overcoming an enemy is the story of overcoming temptation.”⁷¹ Bunyan hinders expectations of political triumph by claiming, “The Philistines understand me not.” He stops the story before the Philistines discover the riddle’s meaning, before Samson has cause for vengeance. The separatism that *Grace Abounding*’s preface encourages makes it unlikely that nonconformists will divulge the riddle’s answer to outsiders and thus leaves no cause for rebellion against enemy “Philistines.”

Furthermore, these “Philistines” are not necessarily Bunyan’s persecutors, but any who do not fight temptation. The threatening lion represents every person’s natural propensity toward

⁶⁹ *GA*, 1–2.

⁷⁰ Sharon Achinstein, “Honey from the Lion’s Carcass: Bunyan, Allegory, and the Samsonian Moment,” in *Awakening Words: John Bunyan and the Language of Community*, ed. David Gay, James Randall, and Arlette Zinck (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000), 69.

⁷¹ Achinstein, 69–70.

sin, which puts Restoration persecutors in as great of danger of leonine attacks as persecuted nonconformists. The dichotomies Bunyan draws in a preface contextualized in his own and dissenters' severe, mid-1660s persecution are not between dissenters and the Restoration regime, as we expect, but between the spiritually conscious and lackadaisical. Keeble contends that "the wonder of his [Bunyan's] gospel" is that "the Restoration world is powerless to deny him (and those like him) access to unlimited prospects far beyond its ken."⁷² We sense in Bunyan's writings that not only can the Restoration world not deny dissenters a spiritual kingdom, but that the Restoration world might—in some ambiguous, counterintuitive, and unintentional sense—aid dissenters in their spiritual pursuits by being a vehicle for divine grace.

Whether because Bunyan's conversion experience predates dissenters' experience of persecution, or because Bunyan imbues lions with a positive providentialism little seen within the autobiography, *Grace Abounding* proper features only one lion reference. Significantly, this reference applies to the divine Lion the preface's lessons in re-reading leonine threats. Amidst the throws of terror that he had sinned the unforgivable sin of blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:29), Bunyan recounts a time when "the most free, and full, and gracious words of the Gospel were the greatest torment to me; yet, nothing so afflicted me as the thoughts of Jesus Christ: for the remembrance of a Saviour, because I had cast him off, brought both the villainy of my sin, and my loss by it to mind." Convinced that he is damned, Bunyan cannot apply to himself scripture's promises or Christ's graciousness, only divine wrath: "Oh! 'tis sad to be destroyed by the grace and mercy of God; to have the Lamb, the Saviour, turn Lyon and Destroyer, *Rev. 6.*"⁷³ The outcry reveals Bunyan's assumption that Christ only appears to the elect as "the Lamb" and to the damned as "Lyon and Destroyer."

⁷² Keeble, "Come Ye out from among Them," 139.

⁷³ Bunyan, *GA*, 56.

Yet, the author invites the reader to recognize his younger self's misreading of the providential signs. Michael Davies, who has done much work on the relationship between correct reading and theology in Bunyan's writings, argues that *Grace Abounding* is "hermeneutic rather than unhinged" in that it demands the "interpretation and the decipherment of texts," especially, scripture.⁷⁴ The younger Bunyan imagines Jesus's lamb- and lion-like natures as having separate providential uses: one to damn, the other to save. However, Revelation 5:5 and 6:1, from which Bunyan gleans these descriptors, use the images synonymously to describe Jesus's singular authority to open the heavenly scroll. If any distinction of providential purpose could be made, it is counterintuitive. The "Lion of the tribe of Judah" quiets the Apostle John's worries that none are worthy to open the scroll and inspires angelic worship (Revelation 5), while "the Lamb" unleashes the four horsemen of the apocalypse (Revelation 6). Bunyan's in-text reference only to "Rev. 6" misses Jesus being named the Lion and inspiring such peace and awe in His human and angelic followers. In scripture, Satan, not Christ, is the "Lyon and Destroyer" Bunyan fears, as "the devil [is] a roaring lion, [who] walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

Furthermore, this instance of fear over damnation, and countless others like it throughout *Grace Abounding*, occur in a book about how Bunyan became *assured* of his salvation. The preface's consistent framing of lions as spiritually positive encounters raises the possibility that the Lion and the Lamb might both be at work in the elect soul. Consequently, leonine experiences cannot be read axiomatically as arising from personal damnation or from damnable persecutors. *Grace Abounding*'s unintuitive lion imagery invites persecuted nonconformists in

⁷⁴ Michael Davies, "Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners: John Bunyan and Spiritual Autobiography," in *The Cambridge Companion to Bunyan*, ed. Anne Dunan-Page (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 75–76. Cf. Michael Davies, *Graceful Reading: Theology and Narrative in the Works of John Bunyan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002).

1666 to reread this highly troubled, borderline psychotic, conversion narrative and reconsider how they interpret spiritual struggle. Just as dissenters would not perceive their earthly struggle of persecution as a sign of damnation, so *Grace Abounding* invites them to not assume that spiritual struggle indicates unaddressed sin or, worse, damnation. If experiencing the lions of persecution revealed nonconformists' holiness and faithfulness to God, might experiencing the divine Lion also be part of providence's redemptive work?

The Pilgrim's Progress

Lions appear at pivotal moments in *The Pilgrim's Progress*—moments in which pilgrims must decide whether to go forward or not, to trust God or not, or to pursue heaven in the face of seemingly insurmountable obstacles or to accept damnation. In his study of how Protestantism reframed medieval pilgrimage as a spiritual rather than physical journey, Neil Keeble argues that the “Protestant story takes its rise from such an act of trust” as Abraham obeying God’s call without knowing his destination (Genesis 12:1). Acts of trust are “represented time and again in the decision to relinquish security and stability and to venture into the unknown against, as it seems, common sense.”⁷⁵ Keeble demonstrates this argument as true across sixteenth- and many seventeenth-century Protestant texts, including *The Pilgrim's Progress*. This section explores how lion imagery in *The Pilgrim's Progress* invites trust in both God and the king in the face of persuasive evidence to mistrust these authority figures. Under the political protection provided

⁷⁵ N. H. Keeble, ““To Be a Pilgrim’: Constructing the Protestant Life in Early Modern England,” in *Pilgrimage: The English Experience from Becket to Bunyan*, ed. Colin Morris and Peter Roberts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 251.

by a literary genre, Bunyan's allegorized conversion narrative could more directly engage in contemporary politics than his autobiography could. The allegory's lion imagery struggles with how to best respond to the Restoration regime's vacillating posture toward toleration. As fruitfully analyzed by Richard Greaves, the allegory makes poignant defenses of the liberty of conscience, particularly in the pilgrims' experience at Vanity Fair or responses to persecutory giants like Pope, Pagan, and Despair.⁷⁶ Greaves reads the allegory's engagement in contemporary toleration debates simplistically as dissenting antagonism against the Establishment. Yet, the book's lion imagery alerts us to the far messier, more complex engagement of a royalist nonconformist wrestling with hope that, one day, the king might favor dissenters and even seemingly destructive royal policies might prove redemptive. This suspended hope in the king's favor parallels the pilgrim's need to cultivate a similar hope in God's favor in order to persevere in his journey to the Celestial City, even in the face of unfavorable signs.

The Pilgrim's Progress begins with the author choosing a den as his resting place: "I lighted on a certain place, where was a Denn; And I laid me down in that place to sleep."⁷⁷ Whether or not Bunyan meant this as a lions' den (the marginal note explains it as "The Goal [jail]," denoting Bunyan's imprisonment), the artist Robert White (1645–1703) interpreted it as such for the 1679 frontispiece.⁷⁸ White was one of the most successful engravers of the era, which Anne Dunan-Page argues "should alert us to the amount of attention that the sleeping portrait deserves."⁷⁹ White's portfolio boasts hundreds of pieces, primarily portraits of famous individuals, including kings, royals, divines, and leaders in science and philosophy, as well as

⁷⁶ Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, Chapter 6.

⁷⁷ Bunyan, *PP*, 8.

⁷⁸ *PP*, 8, 353–54.

⁷⁹ Dunan-Page, *Grace Overwhelming*, 137.



Image 1: Frontispiece to the British Museum's copy of the 1679 edition, taken from John Bunyan, *The Pilgrim's Progress: From This World to That Which Is to Come*, ed. James Blanton Wharey and Roger Sharrock, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), IN5.

Eikon Basilike's (1649) famous frontispiece of Charles I as a Christian martyr.⁸⁰ That Bunyan's publisher Nathaniel Ponder commissioned White to draw the frontispiece for the 1679 edition of *The Pilgrim's Progress*, following the immediate success of the first edition, presumes Bunyan's allegory a place among these national leaders.⁸¹

The frontispiece's composition emphasizes a mindset of quite literally embracing hardship as an opportunity for spiritual rest and vision. White's depiction of the sleeping author as lying outside the den (rather than in it, as the text denotes) reflects Bunyan's freedom at the time of publication, but it also broadens the audience to which the allegory might apply.⁸² One need not be a persecuted nonconformist to find spiritual vision, as *Grace Abounding*'s preface implied. The free person of faith may also embrace struggle and find peace. Leonine struggle may, in fact, be part of every soul's faith journey. The lion's dwarfed size corresponds better with the pilgrim in the sleeping author's vision than with the author. This intimates that the lion has allegorical significance beyond the contemporary, nonconformist persecution which its presence on the frontispiece draws to mind. The ominous lion may be as much a part of the pilgrim's progress as the Book in his hand, the City of Destruction abandoned at his back, and the narrow gate ahead.

Anne Dunan-Page argues that White's famous etching "refuses to yield to any one fixed interpretation." It presents the dreaming author as "part visionary enthusiast, part inspired prophet; part oblivious sleeper, part reliable guide."⁸³ Similarly, the lion on the frontispiece

⁸⁰ White's portfolio includes portraits of Charles I (D26313, D10623, D26317 [*Eikon Basilike*'s frontispiece]); Charles II (D29280); the Archbishop of Canterbury John Tillotson (D31120, D31122, D31123); the natural philosopher Robert Boyle (D30345); the court libertine John Wilmot, the Duke of Rochester (D46330); the political radical Titus Oates (634); the Congregationalist minister John Owen (D21226, D21228, D21234, D29655); and Richard Baxter (D29729); "Robert White (1645–1703), Engraver," National Portrait Gallery, accessed March 3, 2020, <https://www.npg.org.uk/collections/search/person/mp07727/robert-white?role=art>.

⁸¹ Cf. Dunan-Page, *Grace Overwhelming*, 136.

⁸² Bunyan, *PP*, 8 (my emphasis).

⁸³ Dunan-Page, *Grace Overwhelming*, 141, 140.

invites thoughts of persecution and toleration, the nonconformist experience in the Restoration and a universal faith story, potential harm and benefit. White's etching thus captures the paradoxical and multifaceted significance which Bunyan's story imbues in lion imagery.

However, critics have read the lions outside the Palace Beautiful simplistically as symbols of contemporary persecution. Christopher Hill agrees with Sharrock and Wharey that the lions' chains in Part I represent "the period of liberty under the Commonwealth" and that Grim's backing of the lions in Part II represents the intensified persecution of the early 1680s.⁸⁴ The years following 1681 have been called "one of the most ruthless and successful political and religious persecutions of the seventeenth century," and Grim's ferocity and the fact that pilgrims have avoided the way past him supports this historical contextualization.⁸⁵ However, it is difficult to reconcile the terrifying beasts in Part I, even if chained, with a period of religious freedom and political triumph for nonconformists, and the lions do not lose their chains in Part II to reflect Bunyan's freedom at the time of the sequel's composition and publication. Ken Simpson's reading of the lions as symbols of the Restoration Conventicles Act, which Greaves has demonstrated to be so impactful on Bunyan's composition of Part I, is more convincing.⁸⁶ Like the Conventicle Acts, the lions scare pilgrims away from the House Beautiful, which critics agree symbolizes a nonconformist church.⁸⁷ Yet, the House Beautiful lions serve a deeper purpose than simply depicting contemporary persecution. The beasts are a potent tolerationist

⁸⁴ Hill, *Tinker and a Poor Man*, 217; *PP*, 218 (line 27, editorial note).

⁸⁵ Tim Harris, "Introduction: Revising the Restoration," in *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England*, ed. Tim Harris, Paul Seaward, and Mark Goldie (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), 6. Harris is here summarizing traditional depictions of the Restoration, much of which he proceeds to criticize. Yet, his criticisms fall not on such historical facts, but on historians' assumptions that Restoration politics were carried out primarily at a high level.

⁸⁶ Ken Simpson, "'For the Best Improvement of Time': *Pilgrim's Progress* and the Liturgies of Nonconformity," in *Awakening Words: John Bunyan and the Language of Community*, ed. David Gay, James Randall, and Arlette Zinck (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2000), 116; Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 218. Greaves also associates the lions with Restoration persecution; Greaves, 244.

⁸⁷ Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 263; Dunan-Page, *Grace Overwhelming*, 89; Hill, *Tinker and a Poor Man*, Chapter 24, esp. p. 292.

and providential tool, which exposes the flawed ideologies behind the Restoration Establishment's policies, compares the intended and actual impacts of the penal codes, and ultimately relocates all authority to God's hands.

First, the beasts expose the views which drive the Establishment's expectations and policies. Near the beginning of Part I, Mr. Worldly-Wiseman warns Christian, "[T]hou art like to meet with in the way which thou goest, *Wearisomness, Painfulness, Hunger, Perils, Nakedness, Sword, Lions, Dragons, Darkness; and in a word, death, and what not? These things are certainly true, having been confirmed by many testimonies.*"⁸⁸ The many types of "death" heighten the sense of the unknown dangers ahead. The journey's dangers increase in intensity from experiences familiar to all ("*Wearisomness, Painfulness, Hunger*"), to experiences familiar only to some ("*Perils, Nakedness,*" and the persecutory "*Sword*"), to experiences familiar to none living (apocalyptic "*Dragons*" and hellish "*Darkness*"). By including unavoidable human experiences (like physical ailments) with avoidable experiences (such as eternal damnation for the elect), Worldly-Wiseman equates the earthly hardships and discomforts on this "*dangerous and troublesome way*" with eternal destruction.⁸⁹ This is the "crude providentialism" to which early modern Protestant writers often fell prey, "in which suffering and misfortune are simplistically equated with immorality and sin."⁹⁰

Significantly, Worldly-Wiseman's inclusion of "*Lions*" is at the crux of this providential misreading. That the "*Lions*" fall between the "*Sword*" and the "*Dragons*" and "*Darkness*" raises uncertainty over whether they should be considered part of an experience of earthly or eternal suffering. Do the lions simply intensify earthly persecution and kill the body—a fate that

⁸⁸ Bunyan, *PP*, 18.

⁸⁹ *PP*, 18.

⁹⁰ Walsham, *Providence*, 95.

nonconformists more readily associated with election—or do they initiate the damned soul’s eternal torture? The uncertainty of the lions’ role encourages the pilgrim not to risk the journey and, instead, stay with Worldly-Wiseman in his safe and prosperous hometown, Morality. However, to do so would be delusional and damning. No human can escape the commonplace sufferings from which Worldly-Wiseman also promises deliverance. In trying to dodge suffering, the pilgrim damningly stops journeying toward the Celestial City. In avoiding the ambiguously impactful lions, the pilgrim forfeits an opportunity to discern his personal eschatology.

Critics have noted how Worldly-Wiseman represents the Latitude-men within the Restoration Church of England, but none how closely his advice mirrors latitudinarian providentialism, specifically.⁹¹ Michael Winship argues that, “in an effort to eliminate the destabilizing potential of the supernatural,” Restoration Anglican providentialism renounced earlier, Puritan providential readings focusing on God’s wrath and individual destinies.⁹² Earlier, I refuted Winship’s reading of Restoration Puritan providentialism. However, I find his study of Restoration Anglican providentialism reliable and helpful. Winship argues that Anglicans concerned themselves with providence as it relates to national and political stability and not to individuals or specific circumstances (as we saw true in Dryden’s *Annus Mirabilis*).⁹³ Worldly-Wiseman promises that in the Town of Morality, Christian will enjoy “*safety, friendship, and content*”; “*live by honest neighbors, in credit and good fashion*”; and find “*Provision...cheap and good*” and houses available “*at reasonable rates.*” Worldly-Wiseman links such social goods to spiritual freedom and orthodoxy. There are townspeople with “*skill to help men off with such*

⁹¹ For studies of Bunyan’s aversion to latitudinarianism: Isabel Rivers, “Grace, Holiness, and the Pursuit of Happiness: Bunyan and Restoration Latitudinarianism,” in *John Bunyan: Conventicle and Parnassus*, ed. N. H. Keeble (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), 45–69; Hill, *Tinker and a Poor Man*, Chapter 12, esp. pp. 130–35.

⁹² Winship, *Seers of God*, Chapter 2 (quotation from p. 32).

⁹³ Winship, 38–39.

burdens as thine are, from their shoulders,” but Christian will “*so carelessly cast away himself*” (an action associated with separation from God in scripture) if he follows Evangelist’s advice and passes by this community.⁹⁴ Evangelist is “*a stranger*”—one outsider’s voice against the “*many testimonies*” offering a uniform front.⁹⁵ The word “*testimonies*” appeals to these voices’ spiritual authority, as open professions of faith, and to their spiritual correctness, as echoes of God’s law, described in the Wycliffe, Geneva, and King James Bibles as His “*testimony.*”⁹⁶

Worldly-Wiseman’s argument echoes the providentialism of the era’s most popular preacher, the later Archbishop of Canterbury John Tillotson. Tillotson’s writings stress “the worldly advantages of religion” which, Winship argues, “had important political implications. The devout were not to look to supernatural signs for indications that God approved of them, but instead to the extent of their successful integration in the existing social order.”⁹⁷ The way of providence—not merely of Restoration culture—is one of peace, success, and social harmony, latitudinarian divines like Tillotson insisted. Herein lies the tempting attractiveness of Worldly-Wiseman’s offer. It is not a call for Christian to neglect his burden of sin but to rid himself of it in an easier way, through community and personal improvement. Christian can begin immediately to “*enjoy the benefits of the blessing which God hath bestowed upon thee,*” providential benefits which he enthusiastically anticipated with Pliable earlier.⁹⁸ Good living, which to Restoration conformists meant social integration, will result in salvation, and, thus, the pilgrim’s avoidance of the lions of earthly persecution also sidesteps the lions of supernatural wrath.

⁹⁴ For God “casting away” the wicked or the wicked separating themselves from God by “casting away” God’s law: Job 8:4; Psa. 51:11; Prov. 10:3; Isa. 5:24, 30:22 (KJV).

⁹⁵ Bunyan, *PP*, 18–19.

⁹⁶ “testimony, n.,” 4a, b; 5a (OED). Cf. Exo. 30:6, 32:15 (Wycliffe); Exo. 25:16, 32:15, Num. 1:50 (Geneva); Num. 1:50, 9:15, 17:4 (KJV).

⁹⁷ Winship, *Seers of God*, 48.

⁹⁸ Bunyan, *PP*, 17. Cf. *PP*, 13–14.

Yet, Worldly-Wiseman's call to avoid physical and spiritual suffering damningly alters God's plan of salvation. Christian is only delivered from Worldly-Wiseman's temptation by a fear that the fiery hill on which Morality stands will fall on him, but Bunyan invites the reader to avoid this temptation by recognizing the Gospel's troubling absence. The town's allegorical name and Bunyan's marginal explanation that the fiery hill represents "*Mount Sinai*," where Moses received the Law, makes this absence unmistakable to the reader, and Evangelist later informs Christian that Worldly-Wiseman desired "to render the Cross odious to thee."⁹⁹ Indeed, Jesus's death on the cross brings to pass both dreaded, leonine threats: physical death and supernatural wrath. Yet, significantly, God Himself bears both deaths, and the deaths thus paradoxically deliver rather than doom the pilgrim. Only at the cross does Christian later lose his burden.¹⁰⁰

In addition to exposing the Stuart Establishment's Latitudinarianism, the House Beautiful lions expose the penal codes' political ineffectiveness and possible, spiritual detriment. Pilgrims who reject Worldly-Wiseman's pleasant but damning ways inevitably encounter the lions of persecution. However, this stick brings no more unity than Worldly-Wiseman's carrot. Christian meets Mistrust and Timorous running the wrong way over the top of the Hill of Difficulty. Mistrust explains, "[J]ust before us lye a couple of Lions in the way, whether sleeping or wakeing we know not and we could not think, if we came within reach, but they would presently pull us in pieces."¹⁰¹ The fleeing pilgrims are Restoration nonconformists, having already separated themselves from their communities in the City of Destruction, presumably withstood Morality Town's lure, and now faced the terrors of the arbitrarily enforced penal codes, which

⁹⁹ *PP*, 20, 22.

¹⁰⁰ *PP*, 38.

¹⁰¹ *PP*, 43.

are unpredictably “sleeping or wakeing.”¹⁰² Contrary to what supporters of persecution attested, the leonine laws do not reintegrate nonconformists into society.¹⁰³ Mistrust and Timorous express no wish to return to Worldly-Wiseman’s harmonious community; they are simply diverted from “going to the City of *Zion*.”¹⁰⁴ Deeply troubling is the implication that the penal codes dissuade souls from the path of salvation. It may be Mistrust or Timorous’s voice which cries chillingly from hell in Part II, “*O that I had been torn in pieces before I had, to save my life, lost my Soul.*”¹⁰⁵

However, Bunyan immediately excuses Charles II’s regime from the horrifying implication that it causes its subjects’ eternal damnation. Since God is omnipotent over individual eschatology, neither the individual nor their circumstances can obstruct their predestined fate. The scene emphasizes this providential authority in how, after parting with Mistrust and Timorous, Christian looks to his roll, his “Pass into the Cælestial City,” the assurance of his salvation given to him at Jesus’s cross, to be comforted in proceeding towards the lions.¹⁰⁶ It is his discovered misplacement of the roll, not the threat of the lions ahead, which momentarily obstructs Christian’s journey. Persecution has surprisingly little effect on the elect pilgrim’s decision to continue or pause his journey and, therefore, is providentially impotent—in addition to being an impuissant political policy, the story suggests.

Thus, the allegory’s warnings of lions expose the Stuart regime’s flawed ideologies and methods of peace. This renders the lions less a symbol of the nonconformist experience of persecution, as critics have argued, and more a challenge to the persecutors’ authority and

¹⁰² Cf. Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, 166–91.

¹⁰³ For a helpful study of the positive aims and objectives of early modern, civil and ecclesiastical intolerance: Walsham, *Charitable Hatred*, 66–92.

¹⁰⁴ Bunyan, *PP*, 43.

¹⁰⁵ *PP*, 287.

¹⁰⁶ *PP*, 43. Cf. *PP*, 41.

policies. Bunyan cleverly engages in contemporary toleration debates not only by elsewhere presenting nonconformist arguments for conscience (as others have studied) but also by carefully debunking his enemies' spiritual and social arguments for persecution.¹⁰⁷ The very symbol of the persecutors' power, the lion, embarrassingly becomes the evidence of their groundless authority.

Yet, as White's frontispiece hinted, the allegory's lion imagery additionally bears a providential usefulness, which rises above mere political censure. When Christian begins to retreat from the House Beautiful because of the lions, the porter Watchful calls out, "Is thy strength so small? fear not the Lions, for they are Chained; and are placed there for trial of faith where it is; and for discovery of those that have none."¹⁰⁸ The phrase "strength so small" echoes Jesus's gentle rebuke of His disciples' fear during the storm on the Sea of Galilee in Matthew 8:26, and His rebuke in Matthew 17:20 of the disciples' small faith, which cannot even rival the mustard seed in size. Both rebukes are followed by Jesus's miraculous intervention to save His disciples. Jesus calms the storm and casts out a demon, which the disciples' faith could not do. These are tests of faith over which God is omnipotent and in which He gives victory. In this context, the threatening lions become favorable signs of God's gracious provision of deliverance and building of believers' weak faith. Christian does not retreat from the next lion he encounters in the figure of Apollyon.

Such assurance could be garnered from scripture's views on persecution. 2 Timothy 3:12 claims that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution." In John 15:18, Jesus reminds His disciples, "If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you"; the disciples thus become more like Christ through persecution. Jesus promises those "persecuted for righteousness' sake" in Matthew 5:10 "the kingdom of heaven." 1 Peter 4:12–14 calls those who

¹⁰⁷ Cf. Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, Chapter 2.

¹⁰⁸ Bunyan, *PP*, 45–46.

experience the “fiery trial” of being “reproached for the name of Christ, happy, ...for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.” The experience of persecution indicates one’s godliness, Christ-likeness, and eternal favor. These were common comforts for Restoration nonconformists.¹⁰⁹

Yet, that the House’s residents are remarkably unphased by the lions invites another reading beyond persecution. Scripture’s comforting readings consistently frame persecution as something separate from God, committed against God and His people, but, by His omnipotence, redeemed for good. However, the porter claims that the lions “are placed there for trial of faith where it is,” begging the question, who placed the lions there?¹¹⁰ In an allegory in which the pilgrims seem incessantly to be resisting evil authorities, by word or action, no pilgrim attempts to fight or resist the lions. Persecution ebbs in *Vanity Fair* in Part II, but the House Beautiful lions remain. Not every pilgrim battles Apollyon or is tempted by Worldly-Wiseman’s latitudinarian providentialism, but every pilgrim must pass in the middle of the “very narrow passage” between these two lions.¹¹¹ The lions help the pilgrim keep to the narrow way that Matthew 7:13–14 claims leads to eternal life, and which Bunyan’s allegory repeatedly uses to describe the pilgrims’ path.¹¹² The House Beautiful residents’ lack of concern is arguably because the lions protect the true church from those who damningly avoid the narrow way. It appears that God, not dissenters’ enemies, has “placed” the lions there.

In this alternative reading, the lions outside are not a political censure, but a divine grace, leading to eternal life. The Independent minister Thomas Brooks (1608–1680) describes God

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Brown, *Spirituality in Adversity*, Chapter 2.

¹¹⁰ Bunyan, *PP*, 45–46.

¹¹¹ *PP*, 45.

¹¹² For Bunyan’s repeated descriptions of the “narrow” way: *PP*, 27–28, 39, 41, 62, 64, 106.

“playing the Lyons part with his People...to bring them nearer and closer to himself.”¹¹³

However, that Bunyan’s lions are chained implies that they cannot represent God. By offering the reader conflicting readings of the lions, as a sign of persecution and of divine grace, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* necessitates ambivalence. The reader cannot unreservedly interpret the lions as Bunyan’s condemnation of Stuart oppression.

In Part II, the palace lions are now accompanied by the giant Grim, who refuses to let the pilgrims’ pass, is challenged to battle by Great-heart, and subsequently killed. I agree with Sharrock and Wharey that Grim represents the “renewed outbreak of persecution” between 1681–84, during which time Bunyan composed and published Part II.¹¹⁴ The giant’s presence with the lions has so deterred pilgrims that “this way had of late lain much un-occupied, and was almost all grown over with Grass.”¹¹⁵ Yet, the unfolding scene questions Grim’s authority over the lions by making the giant appear increasingly out of place. When the pilgrims first spot the giant, the narrator claims, “Then there appeared one, that it seems, had taken upon him to back the Lions.”¹¹⁶ The narrator’s hypothesizing diction and Grim’s self-directed responsibility casts doubt on the giant’s authority and raises a possibility that Grim is more vigilante than magistrate. The narrator becomes increasingly uncertain of Grim’s magisterial right, describing Grim next as he “(that attempted to back the Lions)” and, after Grim’s death, as “old *Grim* that intended to back them.”¹¹⁷ The descriptions progress from authority with uncertain foundation, to effort with uncertain effectiveness, to intention with uncertain execution, and thereby systematically deconstruct Grim’s attested authority over the lions.

¹¹³ Thomas Brooks, *A Word in Season to This Present Generation, or, A Sober and Serious Discourse about the Favorable, Signal and Eminent Presence of the Lord with His People* (London, 1675), 59.

¹¹⁴ Bunyan, *PP*, 218 (line 27, editorial).

¹¹⁵ *PP*, 218.

¹¹⁶ *PP*, 218.

¹¹⁷ *PP*, 219.

Bunyan does not avert censorious readings of early-1680s persecution; Grim is present, cruel, and, in many cases, effective. However, the two lions remain “chained, and so of themselves could do nothing” after Grim’s death.¹¹⁸ The scene returns to what Anne Dunan-Page describes as the allegory’s “perfect equilibrium between ‘hope’ and ‘fear’” after the usurping persecutor is removed.¹¹⁹ The pathway is not “mine own Ground,” as Grim claims, but “the Kings High-way,” the knowledge of which strengthens the pilgrims through oppression and spurs them past the lions.¹²⁰ The beasts seem paradoxically on the divine King’s side, not that of the Restoration persecutor. Thus, the House Beautiful lions invite parallel readings of persecution and of divine grace and protection, of the Restoration Establishment’s unorthodoxies and tyranny and of God’s perfect way. The difficulty of separating these readings necessitates suspended judgment regarding the Restoration regime. The reader cannot dismiss or condemn the lions completely because of their providential usefulness, and pilgrims who reject the lions ultimately reject God.

However, *The Pilgrim’s Progress* invites no such ambivalence over the leonine figure of Apollyon, who is unquestionably Satanic and therefore not put in the pilgrim’s way by the divine King for spiritual benefit. This hermeneutical clarity bears seditious implications, since Bunyan’s narrative and imagery connect the Satanic figure to tyrannous, doomed kings and, specifically, to Charles II. “Apollyon” is the name that Revelation 9:11 gives to Satan, whom the verse also describes as “a king” over the locusts released from hell to torment the earth with their lion-like teeth during the apocalypse (Revelation 9:8). Bunyan’s pilgrim encounters Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation after having been equipped with the full armor of God at the House of the

¹¹⁸ *PP*, 219.

¹¹⁹ Dunan-Page, *Grace Overwhelming*, 141.

¹²⁰ Bunyan, *PP*, 219.

Interpreter.¹²¹ Having no armor for his back, Christian “went on, and *Apollyon* met him; now the Monster was hidious to behold, he was cloathed with scales like a Fish (and they are his pride) he had Wings like a Dragon, feet like a Bear, and out of his belly came Fire and Smoak, and his mouth was as the mouth of a Lion.”¹²²

Bunyan’s description drips with apocalypse and tyrannical kingship. Satan is the dragon cast out of heaven (Revelation 12), and Revelation 13:1 describes his human counterpart in the apocalypse, the Antichrist, as a beast rising from the sea, with the feet of a bear and mouth of a lion. The various animals also echo the apocalyptic vision in Daniel 7, in which the great world empires are denoted by an eagle-winged lion, a ravenous bear, a four-winged leopard, and ten-horned beast. Contemporaries read Daniel’s lion kingdom as representing Nebuchadnezzar’s Babylon, a king and empire with which dissenters readily associated Charles II and thereby prophesied his downfall.¹²³ Daniel 7’s transition from the four, monstrous rulers to a prophecy of the Son of Man being given power over all dominions led some to emphasize how these rulers’ downfalls would initiate Christ’s millennial reign.¹²⁴ The “scales” that “are his pride” reference the leviathan, a sea monster by which God communicates human powerlessness to Job (Job 41:15). After 1651, the leviathan was inseparable from Thomas Hobbes’s argument for an absolute sovereign, which, as seen in Chapter 1, became an increasingly ominous prospect for the populace under Charles II and later, also, James II.¹²⁵ *The Pilgrim’s Progress* shares this wariness of absolute kingship, later introducing the Leviathan as an uncontrollable and

¹²¹ Cf. *PP*, 55.

¹²² *PP*, 56.

¹²³ E.g., Samuel Clarke, *The Life and Death of Nebuchadnezzar the Great...Represented by the Golden Head of That Image; Dan. 2. 32. and by the Lion with Eagles Wings; Dan. 7. 4.* (London, 1664), [title page].

¹²⁴ E.g., I. F., *A Sober Inquiry, or, Christs Reign With His Saints a Thousand Years: Modestly Asserted from Scripture* (London, 1660), 130; William Sherwin, *Chronoi Apykatakastaseōz Panton, or, The Times of Restitution of All Things with Their Neer Approach upon the Ruine of the Beast* (London, 1675), 17. Cf. Dan. 7:13–14.

¹²⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan, or, The Matter, Forme, and Power of a Common Wealth* (London, 1651).

invincible, enemy “King.”¹²⁶

The interlacing of eschatological images with monarchical censure raises Restoration dissenters’ warnings that Charles II’s wicked policies and person would evoke the apocalypse in England—warnings most notoriously communicated by the early-1660s *Mirabilis Annus* tracts. Bunyan had certainly read these tracts. He later used them for inspiration in *The Life and Death of Mr. Badman*.¹²⁷ That he had the tracts in mind in crafting Apollyon for *The Pilgrim’s Progress* is evident in the detail of “out of his belly came Fire and Smoak,” for which I can find no other precedent than a prodigy recorded in the second *Mirabilis Annus* book.

Two watermen are on the Thames late at night. One comments to the other that he does not believe “the Book of *Prodigies*,” presumably the first *Mirabilis Annus* tract. They spot two ships coming towards them, and, terrified of piracy, try to row away but inexplicably cannot. The encounter is worth quoting at length:

The Ships now being very near them, on a sudden one of them was turned into the likeness of a very tall Man, of a most monstrous shape, about twenty foot in height as they conceived. Upon this, the person in the Boat being extreamly affrighted, fell on praying, and immediately that Appearance stood still, and was turned on one side; they being very near it, and looking upon it about half an hour, did plainly discover the form of its countenance, and also its hair; at length they plainly saw fire come out of its belly, and then it moved towards the bank-side, and there he saw it consume away as if it had been a barrel of Pitch on fire, and so it vanished. The other Ship was turned into the form of a Castle, but they were so intent in fixing their eyes upon the former, that they can give no further account of the latter. After both of them were vanished the Waterman was able to move his Boat, but not before, and then they proceeded on their voyage, and have often since reported what is here related, and do constantly affirm the truth of it.¹²⁸

The monster draws to mind the Antichrist, appearing on the water like the Antichrist will rise out of the sea and consumed by fire as the Antichrist and false prophet will be (Revelation 19:20).

¹²⁶ Cf. Bunyan, *PP*, 131.

¹²⁷ Cf. Smith, “John Bunyan and Restoration Literature,” 28–29.

¹²⁸ *Mirabilis Annus Secundus*, 71–72.

The towering figure also brings to mind King Nebuchadnezzar's statue in Daniel 3, for which, refusing to worship, the three Jewish captives were famously thrown in the fiery furnace. The second ship's castle-like appearance more explicitly connects this false god and idol to political power. Bunyan's introduction of Apollyon draws on the watermen's descriptions of "the fire come out of its belly," the examination of "its countenance," and the label "monster"—details not present in scripture's depiction of the Antichrist or in Daniel's prophecy.¹²⁹

This *Mirabilis Annus* prodigy is particularly interesting because it counters disbelief in the entire first book of prodigies, which, the anonymous compiler assured, foretold apocalyptic doom on the king and nation should they refuse to repent of their sins.¹³⁰ The episode makes a vocal believer out of the doubting waterman. The waterman's testimony encourages other doubting readers to take seriously the many recorded signs of imminent doom—perhaps, particularly signs implicating Charles II, like this one. Indeed, Bunyan's focus in the Apollyon scene is on evil, earthly kings. Contemporaries often interpreted scripture's Apollyon as the Pope (a logical extension of the early modern melding of the Pope and Antichrist) and focused on his role as the "Destroyer," the Greek name's English translation.¹³¹ They did not note the English 'lyon' embedded in the name, nor did they favor scripture's leonine apocalyptic symbols above scripture's other apocalyptic symbols.¹³² Bunyan's Apollyon is unconnected to the Pope, who appears later as senile, decrepit, and wholly unthreatening giant.¹³³ Christian's single reference to

¹²⁹ The added image of "smoak" likely alludes to the smoke flowing out of hell in Revelation 9.

¹³⁰ *Eniautos Terastios*, A2v.

¹³¹ For readings of how Daniel 7's empires, the Antichrist, and Apollyon figure the Pope: Edward Haughton, *The Rise, Growth, and Fall of Antichrist: Together with The Reign of Christ* (London, 1652), 3–8, 107, 61; Thomas Harby, *What Is Truth, or, The Pat[t]ern in the Mount. Wherein Many Places of Scripture Are (in Pursuit of Truth, and the Churches Peace) Explained* (London, 1671), 88–89; 21–22; 205. For focus on the Greek name's meaning: Haughton, *Rise, Growth, and Fall of Antichrist*, 61.

¹³² If analyzing the apocalyptic figures' animal traits, contemporaries extrapolated on them equally and consecutively; e.g., Thomas Narjenn, *A Sober Whisper, Concerning The Evil of Things Present, and The Good of Things to Come* (London, 1665), 7; Haughton, *Rise, Growth, and Fall of Antichrist*, 4.

¹³³ Cf. Bunyan, *PP*, 65.

Apollyon's nature as a Destroyer appears parenthetically and seems far from the monster's mind, also.¹³⁴ Apollyon promises to "*deliver*," "*withstand*," and "make a full end" of Christian, but not to *destroy*.¹³⁵ An illiterate man like Bunyan may have been far likelier to notice and find significant the "lyon" in Apollyon's name, and Bunyan's allegory focuses almost exclusively on Apollyon's leonine mouth. This is the monster's most kingly feature, and the Apollyon episode focuses on that mouth's assertions of kingship over "*one of my Subjects*," Christian—assertions which resemble Charles II's approach.¹³⁶

That Christian's experience of Apollyon's leonine mouth is unexpectedly one of conversation, rather than devouring, reflects Charles II's tendencies towards leniency. Contrary to what we would expect of the apocalyptic Destroyer, Apollyon extends mercy and forgiveness to Christian and expresses readiness to overlook Christian's betrayal. "*I am willing to pass by all, if now thou wilt yet turn again, and go back*," Apollyon promises.¹³⁷ When Christian complains of Apollyon's "service" and "wages," Apollyon alleges, "[*W*]hat our Countrey will afford, I do here promise to give thee," on the condition that Christian "*be content to go back*."¹³⁸ Such promises of indulgence and reparation—contingent on Christian *going back* to former allegiances, communities, and ways and reneging on his "sworn [] Allegiance" to "that the Prince under whose Banner now I [Christian] stand"—mimic Charles's promises to dissenters in the Declaration of Breda.¹³⁹ Using the royal "we," Charles promised, "[*W*]e do grant a full and generall Pardon...to all our Subjects of what degree or quality soever, who...*return* to the Loyalty and Obedience of good Subjects" (my emphasis). Furthermore, the Declaration promised "the

¹³⁴ Cf. *PP*, 57.

¹³⁵ *PP*, 58–59.

¹³⁶ *PP*, 56. Only as Apollyon departs after battle does the narrator note any of his other animal features, namely, "his Dragons wings"; *PP*, 60.

¹³⁷ *PP*, 57.

¹³⁸ *PP*, 57.

¹³⁹ *PP*, 57.

full satisfaction of all Arrears due to the Officers and Souldiers of the Army, under the Command of General *MONCK*: And that they shall be received into our Service upon as good pay and conditions as they now enjoy.”¹⁴⁰ Apollyon’s promises to provide the recently armed and armored pilgrim with better “service” and “wages” imagines Christian as a member of General Monck’s New Model Army, which Charles II promised to reward for their part in his restoration, despite their historic loyalties to the Parliamentary cause. Apollyon offers mercy and reward for the soldier-pilgrim’s amended loyalties.

However, the scene’s biting marginal notes (“Apollyons *flattery*,” “Apollyon *undervalues Christs [Christian’s] service*,” “Apollyon *pretends to be merciful*”) and Apollyon’s sudden turn to “grievous rage” reflect how quickly Breda’s promises were forgotten and how surprisingly harsh the Restoration settlement turned out to be.¹⁴¹ Such contemporary allusions discourage us from reading the scene only spiritually as a battle of “competing allegiances to two sovereigns, the King of princes and the king of the bottomless pit,” as Richard Greaves does.¹⁴² After Apollyon’s defeat, Christian “give[s] thanks to him that hath delivered me out of the mouth of the Lion; to him that did help me against *Apollyon*.”¹⁴³ Christian likens his situation to Daniel’s under King Darius or Paul’s under Nero, not to a soul’s under Satan. What is most politically audacious is that unlike the pilgrims’ passive resistance to evil authorities in *Vanity Fair*, for example, Christian fights Apollyon, piercing him with a sword. Christian’s scripture verse recitations accompanying his sword thrusts and the narrator’s later allusion to the “two-edg’d Sword” of Hebrews 4:12 encourage us to interpret Christian’s sword as the Word, part of the full

¹⁴⁰ Charles II, *Declaration of Breda*.

¹⁴¹ Bunyan, *PP*, 57, 59.

¹⁴² Greaves, *Glimpses of Glory*, 252.

¹⁴³ Bunyan, *PP*, 60. Cf. Dan. 6; 2 Tim. 4:17.

armor of God (Ephesians 6).¹⁴⁴ Yet, the fact remains that the dissident pilgrim violently attacks and defeats his country's king. With radical dissenters, Bunyan seems to be encouraging active resistance to Charles II on the basis that the king's wickedness threatens apocalyptic doom.

However, *The Pilgrim's Progress* checks such political radicalism by challenging the *Mirabilis Annus* tracts' providentialism. The title page for *Mirabilis Annus Secundus* claims the book is "now Published as a Warning to all Men speedily to Repent, and to prepare to meet the Lord, who gives us these Signs to his Coming." Yet, as Christopher Hill notes, Christ is "relatively absent" from *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and the Apollyon scene sets His return far in the future.¹⁴⁵ Apollyon mocks Christian's allegiance to the King of heaven by claiming that "*he never came yet from the place where he is, to deliver any that served him out of our hands.*"¹⁴⁶ Rather than asserting imminent, divine deliverance like the early-1660s jeremiads did and the dawn of Christ's millennial kingdom, Christian surprisingly agrees with Apollyon: "for present deliverance, they [God's servants] do not much expect; for they stay for their Glory, and then they shall have it, when their Prince comes in his, and the Glory of the Angels."¹⁴⁷ The millennium will happen, but not now; its timing is unknown. Like Dryden's Hind "wait[s] on her future state" or like Milton's millenarianism after 1660, Bunyan's is, in Hill's words, "a waiting, not an active millenarianism."¹⁴⁸

The Apollyon scene also checks the seditious implications of apocalyptic literature by reorienting the focus of divine judgment from the nation to the individual. The preface to *Mirabilis Annus Secundus* concludes with the hope that

¹⁴⁴ Bunyan, *PP*, 60.

¹⁴⁵ Hill, *Tinker and a Poor Man*, 210.

¹⁴⁶ Bunyan, *PP*, 58.

¹⁴⁷ *PP*, 58.

¹⁴⁸ Hill, *Tinker and a Poor Man*, 151.

every one of these particular Works of the Lord may be a lively quickning Sermon to the whole Nation, and that they may prove an effectual Warning to all, to break off their Sins by a timely *Gospel-Repentance*, lest the Lord, as he threatens by his Prophet, become a *Lion unto Ephraim, and a young Lion to the house of Judah, and tear, and devour, and there be none to rescue.*¹⁴⁹

God's leonine wrath will fall on "the whole Nation," on "all," unless they repent. The author heightens this threat by exchanging God's threat to "take away" in the King James and Geneva Bibles with the word "*devour.*" This reframes Hosea 5:14 not as God's disciplining of His chosen people, but as His violent destruction of them. *The Pilgrim's Progress* limits the threat to Christian. With what Michael Davies calls "terrifyingly intimate and comprehensive knowledge" of Christian's sins, as though Apollyon can "read into Christian's mind and heart his worst failures and most potent fears," Apollyon lists Christian's sins to convince him of God's rejection.¹⁵⁰ Christian reveals his humbled and penitential heart by again agreeing with Apollyon's censure: "All this is true, and much more, which thou hast left out; but the Prince whom I serve and honour, is merciful, and ready to forgive: ...I have groaned under them [the sins], been sorry for them, and have obtained Pardon of my Prince."¹⁵¹ Christian thus heeds contemporary jeremiads' warnings to repent, but here the apocalyptic threat and deliverance therefrom relate only to Christian's personal eschatology.

Thus, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, Part I, offers a strained, even paradoxical view of Charles II's kingship—radically condemning the king for unparalleled wickedness while humbly accepting some of the king's providential and spiritual insights. These contradictions may reflect the psychological battle of allegiance for a royalist nonconformist writing from prison, actively

¹⁴⁹ *Mirabilis Annus Secundus*, [A4v].

¹⁵⁰ Michael Davies, "The Pilgrim's Progress (1678): Chasing Apollyon's Tale," in *The Oxford Handbook of John Bunyan*, ed. Michael Davies and W. R. Owens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 255.

¹⁵¹ Bunyan, *PP*, 58–59.

suffering under his king's legislations; Apollyon poses little threat in Part II, which Bunyan composed as a free person. We might expect Bunyan again to raise and perhaps intensify his monarchical prodigies after the Exclusion Crisis led even more of the populace to question royal authority and intensified the persecution of dissenters. Instead, Part II distances the apocalyptic threat from its close connection to the earthly king.

As the pilgrims pass through the Valley of the Shadow of Death (to which Apollyon retreated after his battle with Christian), they are threatened first by Apollyon and, after, by a lion. Great-Heart effortlessly frightens Apollyon away: “the *Fiend* came on, and the Conductor met it; but when it was just come to him, it vanished to all their sights.”¹⁵² The apocalypse, which seemed so imminent to early Restoration dissenters or in Part I's Apollyon scene, poses no immediate threat. Apollyon has become an intangible, otherworldly creature, who “vanish[es],” and the pilgrims' scriptural explanation of this phenomenon—“*Resist the Devil, and he will fly from you*”—reads the creature as solely Satanic.¹⁵³

The lion, which Part I used to connect Apollyon to Charles II, meets the pilgrims as a separate figure:

Mercie looking behind her, saw as she thought, something most like a Lion, and it came a great padding pace after; and it had a hollow Voice of Roaring, and at every Roar that it gave, it made all the Valley Eccho, and their Hearts to ake...and Mr. *Great-heart* addressed himself to give him Battel. But when he saw that it was determined that resistance should be made, he also drew back and came no further.¹⁵⁴

The narrator's shift from referring to the lion as “it” to “he” suggests that the pilgrims have identified who this “something most like a Lion” is. Yet, the identified person is not Charles II

¹⁵² *PP*, 241.

¹⁵³ *PP*, 242.

¹⁵⁴ *PP*, 242.

but the devil. The marginal reference to 1 Peter 5:8–9 connects this lion exclusively to the devil, who is “as a roaring lion, walk[ing] about, seeking whom he may devour,” and must be “resist[ed].” The allegory does not need two consecutive attacks from Satanic figures to communicate scripture’s call to resist the devil. The separate attacks, paired with the surprising lack of monarchical allusions (following Part I’s emphasis thereon), separate Charles II from Satanic and apocalyptic associations.

What is more, Part II expresses hope that Charles II will repent of his sins and become part of God’s good plans for His people. As the pilgrims pass through the Valley of Humiliation where Christian battled Apollyon, their guide Great-Heart claims that every pilgrim he ever led through the valley “confessed the same; *To this man will I look, saith the King, even to him that is Poor, and of a contrite Spirit, and that trembles at my Word.*”¹⁵⁵ Great-Heart quotes Isaiah 66:2, in which God is the speaker. However, the lack of a marginal reference, and Bunyan’s ascriptural insertion of “*saith the King,*” draws the mind more readily to King David’s assurance that “a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise” in Psalm 51:17. Psalm 51 was one of the era’s most popular penitential psalms and would have been a far better-known reference.¹⁵⁶ The layered scripture references invite the reader to consider King David repenting for his sins of adultery and murder, committed against his subjects. King Apollyon and King Jesus were opposing sovereigns, who could not simultaneously secure a subject’s allegiance. However, the penitential, earthly King David and the heavenly King, who in Isaiah 66:1 claims, “The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool,” agree that a “poor and contrite heart” averts divine wrath. In this case, pilgrims can—and should—swear allegiance to both kings.

¹⁵⁵ *PP*, 240.

¹⁵⁶ Hannibal Hamlin, “Sobs for Sorrowful Souls: Versions of the Penitential Psalms for Domestic Devotion,” in *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (London: Routledge, 2016), 234.

Part I offers no descriptions of the Valley of Humiliation, apart from being the scene of apocalyptic battle. However, Part II transforms the valley into a place as close to heaven as earth can be. “It is the best, and most fruitful piece of Ground in all those parts,” the place where “our Lord formerly had his *Coutrey-House*” and “loved much to be here,” Great-Heart claims.¹⁵⁷ “Some also have wished that the next way to their Fathers House were here,” that is, that the valley was the gateway to the Celestial City; “but the way is the way, and there’s an end.”¹⁵⁸ It is the place of a shepherd boy’s song, which echoes Jesus’s claim in Matthew 19:14 that “of such [little children] is the kingdom of heaven” and draws on the strong, early modern association of heaven with music.¹⁵⁹ The appearance of the shepherd boy also layers images of King David in his youth with the divine Shepherd.¹⁶⁰ The place of apocalypse becomes the place of divine incarnation and heavenly echoes. The proud, leonine king is replaced by a humble, shepherd king.

Subtly, Part II’s Valley of Humiliation imagines what would be the providential effect of Charles II’s repentance and turn to godliness. Mercie delights in the Valley of Humiliation as a place without persecution and conducive to meditating upon her spiritual condition and following God. She says, “Methinks here one may without much molestation be thinking what he is, whence he came, what he has done, and to what the King has called him.”¹⁶¹ Christopher Hill argues that Bunyan held to “the traditional idea that kings of the earth would overthrow Antichrist,” an idea confirmed by the reality that “[s]uch toleration as dissenters received after 1660 seemed to be owed to kings rather than to Parliament.” Hill hereby explains Bunyan’s

¹⁵⁷ *PP*, 237–38.

¹⁵⁸ *PP*, 237.

¹⁵⁹ *PP*, 238. I develop heaven’s connection to music in Chapter 5.

¹⁶⁰ Cf. 1 Sam. 16:8; Psa. 23:1; John 10:11.

¹⁶¹ *PP*, 239.

political tactics of “nonresistance,” “avoidance of scandal,” and “readiness to co-operate with any state authority which would grant toleration.”¹⁶² Part II’s shepherd king protects pilgrims from “molestation.” In recalling to mind Part I’s persecutory, leonine king Apollyon, readers might have remembered how, as a shepherd boy, the future King David killed a lion and a bear which threatened his flock (1 Samuel 17:34–36). Indeed, no such threats appear in the Valley of Humiliation this time, as they did in Part I. With poignant hopefulness, Part II raises the possibility that Charles II might yet repent of his oppressive policies and join the faithful in overcoming evil and pursuing heaven.

Mercie’s musings on the Valley of Humiliation depict a place in which pilgrims are free to mull on scripture’s truths about God’s being, kingdom, and actions, and accordingly respond. A plethora of spiritual and political possibilities open to the pilgrim who is given this freedom. Christian entered the valley armed with the sword of the Word of God, but Apollyon’s oppression forced him to use the Word simplistically—as a weapon and defense against his persecutor. In contrast, the oppression-free valley in Part II is brimming with layered scriptural allusions, which inspire joy, peace, and the possibility of political loyalty. Similarly, while Part I’s margins keep the reader on the defensive by including multiple references to the books of Revelation and Daniel, Part II’s margins contain no references to Daniel and only a handful to Revelation. Part II’s margins additionally introduce six references to the Song of Solomon, which Part I never references.¹⁶³ Part II’s positive treatment of Charles II’s authority emerges only when the reader identifies additional scriptural allusions embedded within the reference

¹⁶² Hill, *Tinker and a Poor Man*, 322.

¹⁶³ For Part I’s marginal references to Revelations, see 13–14, 36, 44, 50, 83, 86, 110, 134, 156, 159–61, and to Daniel, see 36, 96, 134, 141. For Part II’s marginal references to Revelations, see 176, 179, 253, 277, and to the Song of Solomon, see 180, 190, 235, 237, 239, 263.

explicitly supplied by the narrative. To cultivate political loyalty, the reader must go beyond the bounds of the story's set limits and engage with spiritual truths in a way unscripted by the narrator's governing authority. Part II's layered scriptural allusions also remind suffering nonconformists that there are more ways to interpret one's situation than the most obvious. The pilgrimage had seemed like the way of Daniel's den and apocalyptic doom in Part I, but the same journey in Part II—made less terrifying by the fact that Christian has gone before and triumphed, and by the author's pivoting of marginal references from the apocalypse to the Song of Solomon—invites happy surety regarding heaven. In bringing to mind scripture's variety, pilgrims learn to see other possibilities of how God might be at work. They need not jump to condemning their enemies or seeking to escape their situation. The lion might certainly represent the devil, persecution, and wicked kings, but it might also represent God, His protection, and good kings.

Conclusion

The equivocality of lion imagery in the Restoration offered John Bunyan a means by which to explore the, in many ways, similar crises of loyalty to Charles II for royalists and trust in an omnipotent, predestining God for high Calvinists. The lion's ambiguous significance allowed Bunyan to maintain and encourage in others political and providential hope. Loyalty to God or the king has little to do with being certain of either's favor and all to do with being hopeful enough to engage with the terrifying, leonine authority figure.

Bunyan likely drew this tendency towards suspended judgment and hope from contemporaries' political lion imagery, which illustrates dissenters' remarkable engagement in and attunement to their Restoration world. Rather than encouraging a solely insular or otherworldly culture, Bunyan appropriates the nation's widespread ambivalence over kingly authority to give voice to suffering dissenters' own ambivalence over God's providential authority and ways. Religious writings framed lions almost exclusively as damnable signs, leaving people no framework through which to understand how the divine Lion might favor them. Yet, contemporaries' cautious but hopeful political lion imagery offered a means by which to imagine that an ostensibly wrathful God might yet show favor, and that apparently damning or destructive circumstances might yield immense, spiritual value. John Bunyan agreed with the political ambivalence and loyalty expressed in contemporaries' lion imagery, which made his use thereof quite natural. Yet, Lucy Hutchinson empathized with and even appropriated contemporary ideologies with which she strongly disagreed to communicate deep spiritual truths.

4

“[T]he originall spring of...felicity”:

Worship in Lucy Hutchinson’s *Order and Disorder* (1679)

In 1679, Lucy Hutchinson reworked a preface that she had composed in 1675 for her translation of Lucretius’s origin poem *De rerum natura* to introduce her own creation poem, *Order and Disorder*—the first five cantos of which she published anonymously that year. Like Milton’s *Paradise Lost*, *Order and Disorder* is an epic poem that retells the story of Genesis and is deeply concerned with how best to understand providence. *Order and Disorder*’s reuse of Hutchinson’s Lucretius preface frames the Genesis epic as a response to Lucretian atheism.¹ This belief held that God is uninvolved in human affairs and that all circumstances occur by chance or human agency, and warded against superstition, which for Lucretius meant an irrational belief in the supernatural that evokes fear.² Lucretian atheism had begun to garner public support in the 1670s—and particularly within Charles II’s royal court—as a solution to the terrors of

¹ In his introduction to the first critical edition of *Order and Disorder*, David Norbrook describes the poem as “a conscious reversal of what [Hutchinson] found in Lucretius”; “*Order and Disorder: The Poem and Its Contexts*,” in *Order and Disorder*, by Lucy Hutchinson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), xxxii.

Citations from *Order and Disorder* are taken from Lucy Hutchinson, *Order and Disorder*, ed. David Norbrook (Oxford: Blackwell, 2001), abbreviated as *OD*. I cite *OD*’s editorial material and preface in the footnotes by page number and poem in-text by canto and line numbers. Citations from Hutchinson’s *De rerum natura* translation and from her theological writings are taken from *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, ed. David Norbrook, Elizabeth Clarke, and Jane Stevenson, 4 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012–forthcoming). Hutchinson’s Lucretius translation is found in volume 1 and cited as *DRN* and by page number, for authorial or editorial prefatory materials, or by book and line number. Hutchinson’s theological writings are found in volume 2 and are hereafter cited as *TW*.

² Cf. Hutchinson, *DRN*, 13; also, 1.104–14.

providential uncertainty. Hutchinson long predated the 1670s interest in Lucretius, having made the first complete and most stylistically accurate English translation of *De rerum natura* in the 1650s.³ That, in the 1670s, she revisits and denounces *De rerum natura* as “being one fault,” full of “Atheismes & impieties,” and then publishes a biblical, origin story alternative demonstrates her deep concern over atheism’s growing popularity.⁴

Order and Disorder was Hutchinson’s only publication in her lifetime. We do not know if she purposefully withheld the last fifteen cantos from publication, or if they were not yet ready by the time the manuscript went to the press. Critics have assumed the former due to the final cantos’ inclusion of more politically charged images.⁵ The preface and first five cantos so adroitly engaged with the “elite masculine culture” of Charles II’s royal court that early readers mistook the publication for being Sir Allen Apsley’s, Hutchinson’s courtier cousin, until 1999, when David Norbrook uncovered the work’s true authorship.⁶ Yet, as this chapter demonstrates, the unprinted cantos are remarkably gracious toward the royal court with which the 1679 publication intentionally engages. Hutchinson gifted manuscript copies of both her unpublished Lucretius poem and the complete *Order and Disorder* text to two members of the royal court who were concerned about the rising influence of atheism and the court’s moral decline.⁷ Furthermore, the ideas and imagery in *Order and Disorder*’s published preface apply to the

³ Hugh de Quehen, “Ease and Flow in Lucy Hutchinson’s Lucretius,” *Studies in Philology* 93, no. 3 (1996): 302.

⁴ Hutchinson, *DRN*, 7.

⁵ E.g., David Norbrook, “*Order and Disorder*: The Poem and Its Contexts,” xiv; Elizabeth Scott-Baumann, “Lucy Hutchinson, the Bible and *Order and Disorder*,” in *The Intellectual Culture of Puritan Women, 1558–1680*, ed. Johanna Harris and Elizabeth Scott-Baumann (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 184.

⁶ This cultural engagement included the text’s attunement to epicureanism, classical literature, political and theological controversies, and popular literary conventions, forms, and politicized dialogue; Susan Wiseman, *Conspiracy and Virtue: Women, Writing, and Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 209; for similar themes in Hutchinson’s other writings: 209–29. Cf. David Norbrook, “A Devine Original: Lucy Hutchinson and the ‘Woman’s Version,’” *TLS*, no. 5007 (March 19, 1999): 13–15. The authorial misattribution originated with the late-seventeenth-century antiquarian Anthony à Wood, *Athenae Oxonienses: An Exact History of All the Writers and Bishops Who Have Had Their Education in the University of Oxford; To Which Are Added the Fasti*, ed. Philip Bliss (London, 1813), 272.

⁷ See p. 217.

entire poem; in fact, some of the unprinted cantos' key moments most readily make sense when read with this preface in mind. I postulate that the entire poem seeks a public audience and intends to engage in contemporary, public debates about providence.

This chapter examines how the entirety of *Order and Disorder* presents an alternative solution than atheism to the era's providential uncertainties by proposing that only worship of God can free people from the terrors and confusions of changeable circumstances. Hutchinson develops this solution through fountain or spring imagery, which she inserts into the Genesis narrative in moments of hermeneutical uncertainty. God appears behind streams' (that is, circumstances') apparent randomness or disfavor as the Fountain of Truth, ebbing and flowing for the good of the elect and the fulfillment of His eternal plans. Hutchinson's imagery resists Lucretian atheism with a Calvinist insistence that "all things ultimately rest in God," but upholds Lucretius's refusal to interpret circumstances as signs of providential favor or disfavor.⁸ Her embrace and reappropriation of a belief that led Lucretius and the court wits to atheism is startling, especially considering its challenge to decades of interpreting circumstances as providential signs. In *Order and Disorder*, circumstances do not reveal providential truths but instead direct the soul to worship the providential fountainhead. Worship reveals that God's goodness mediates His omnipotence, and, thus, worship eradicates terror.

Robert Mayer claims that Hutchinson's historical writings are all attempts "to discern and accept God's will."⁹ Yet, her approach changes between the 1650s and 1660s histories, which make black and white any gray areas of history, and her 1670s writings, which make peace with the gray. Hutchinson's earlier writings interpret uncertain or morally ambiguous circumstances

⁸ Cassandra Gorman, "Lucy Hutchinson, Lucretius and Soteriological Materialism," *The Seventeenth Century* 28, no. 3 (2013): 298, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2013.823299>.

⁹ Robert Mayer, "Lucy Hutchinson: A Life of Writing," *The Seventeenth Century* 22, no. 2 (2007): 323, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2007.10555597>.

as indications of God's support of the republican cause. *Memoirs* glosses over or omits wartime cruelties committed by the parliamentarians, and imagines the royalist army's actions as random acts of plundering and violence rather than strategic advances.¹⁰ Derek Hirst suggests that Hutchinson skews her husband's actions and motivations to craft his legacy as a godly and republican hero for his children, and Giuseppina Iacono Lobo argues that Hutchinson omits the Colonel's apology for his rebellion against the king to portray him as a consistent upholder of the republican conscience.¹¹ Erin Murphy argues that Hutchinson's "writing represents a world of disorder, which can only be brought to order through practices of multiplicity," and thus she "sees piety in fraud and possibility in fiction."¹² So certain was Hutchinson that "the republican cause was God's cause" that she mixed reality with fiction to help the reader correctly interpret history's ambiguities.¹³ In Hutchinson's early writings, if the apparent facts do not align with what she believes to be the providential reality, she alters them.

Hutchinson's 1670s writings agree that only a providential perspective makes the paradoxical world comprehensible, but disagree that providence's plans are primarily political. This subsequently nullifies the practice of interpreting earthly circumstances as signs of God's favor or disfavor. Patricia Patrick notes that in *Memoirs* when events seem inexplicable (either beyond reason or beyond goodness and mercy), the author attributes them to pagan Fortune rather than Christian providence.¹⁴ Patrick describes Hutchinson's process of resting with

¹⁰ Sydney Race, "The British Museum MS of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson and Its Relation to the Published Memoirs," *Transactions of the Thoroton Society* 18 (1914): 37; Martyn Bennett, "Every County Had More or Lesse the Civill Warre within It Selfe': The Realities of War in Lucy Hutchinson's Midland Shires," *The Seventeenth Century* 30, no. 2 (2015): 203, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2015.1047256>.

¹¹ Hirst, "Remembering a Hero," 688; Iacono Lobo, "Revisions of Conscience," 321.

¹² Erin Murphy, "'I Remain, an Airy Phantasm': Lucy Hutchinson's Civil War Ghost Writing," *ELH* 82, no. 1 (2015): 109, <https://doi.org/10.1353/elh.2015.0006>.

¹³ Iacono Lobo, "Revisions of Conscience," 339.

¹⁴ Patricia Patrick, "'All That Appears Most Casuall to Us': Fortune, Compassion, and Reason in Lucy Hutchinson's Exploratory Providentialism," *Studies in Philology* 112, no. 2 (2015): 344–45.

providential ambiguity as “intellectually and theologically open—more exploratory than dogmatic,” which allows Hutchinson to react to all suffering, even her enemies’, with humane compassion rather than religious judgment.¹⁵ Hutchinson’s sense that providence eludes human understanding only grew in the first decades of the Restoration as it became clearer that the republican cause was no phoenix and, therefore, must not be God’s will. Her 1670s writings embrace what her histories show only in glimmers: a less stable but more merciful providentialism. If God’s cause is not political, republicanism cannot evince holiness and royalism cannot evince spiritual waywardness. Politics and religion remain wedded for Hutchinson, as for any early modern writer. Yet, *Order and Disorder*’s political commentary is always secondary, even irrelevant, to the eternal resolution of life’s uncertainties. Hutchinson’s 1670s writings sense that God engages in politics and contemporary concerns only as means to an eternal end.

Hutchinson’s changing circumstances between the Civil War and the 1670s impacted this revised hermeneutic. Her Parliamentary loyalties soured during the sham-monarchy of Cromwell’s Protectorate, and her husband and other republicans covertly joined forces with anti-Cromwellian royalists.¹⁶ The Restoration strengthened these royalist ties. Royalist friends saved Hutchinson’s husband from execution in the early 1660s.¹⁷ In the 1670s, Hutchinson attended the London conventicle of the Congregationalist John Owen, whose preaching also appealed to royalists, including Philip, Lord Wharton; Aubrey de Vere, earl of Oxford; and Arthur Annesley, earl of Anglesey, and his wife, who was a member of Owen’s church.¹⁸ Hutchinson shared meals

¹⁵ Patrick, 352.

¹⁶ Cf. David Norbrook, “Lucy Hutchinson Verses Edmund Waller: An Unpublished Reply to Waller’s *A Panegyrick to My Lord Protector*,” *The Seventeenth Century* 11, no. 1 (1996): 68.

¹⁷ Hutchinson, *DRN*, xxv, cxi.

¹⁸ Crawford Gribben, “John Owen, Lucy Hutchinson and the Experience of Defeat,” *The Seventeenth Century* 30, no. 2 (2015): 180, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2015.1046701>; Richard Greaves, “Owen, John (1616–1683),” ODNB, October 3, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/21016>.

with courtiers and even expressed motherly concern for the libertine, Sir Allen Brodrick, during his illness in 1676.¹⁹ During these same years, Hutchinson's writings underwent an "intensified religious dedication."²⁰ She translated Calvin and John Owen; composed multiple theological works, including "On the Principles of the Christian Religion" (a treatise on justification, worship, and reasons not to join a sect) and two statements of personal belief (one of which is 50 pages); worried over the spiritual impact of her Lucretius translation; and wrote a biblical epic.²¹ The republican cause's defeat alongside this zealous, spiritual development untangled providence from politics in Hutchinson's writings. But what, if not one's political affiliation, signified God's favor or disfavor? By 1668, Hutchinson had adopted worship as this providential sign, as evident in her composition of "On the Principles."²²

Worship and Fountain Imagery

Contemporaries understood worship as a focusing of the heart and mind on God to praise Him, often following or alongside the confession of sin. Worship occurred inwardly (in the heart, mind, and conscience, and in solitude) and outwardly (in speech and actions, and in the communal practices of one's household or church). According to Elizabeth Clarke, Hutchinson's theology of worship in "On the Principles" draws from the moderate Puritan William Perkins

¹⁹ Hutchinson, *DRN*, cxiii.

²⁰ David Norbrook, "Hutchinson [Née Apsley], Lucy (1620–1681)," ODNB, May 26, 2016, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14285>.

²¹ For Hutchinson's statements of belief: *TW*, 95–134.

²² For composition dating: Elizabeth Clarke, "Introduction to 'On the Principles of the Christian Religion,'" in *The Works of Lucy Hutchinson*, ed. David Norbrook, Elizabeth Clarke, and Jane Stevenson, vol. 2 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 157.

(1558–1602) and the Catholic bishop St. Francis de Sales (1567–1622).²³ Both emphasized inward above outward worship, because outward worship only testified to an inward reality and was, in itself, impotent.²⁴ From Perkins Hutchinson adopts basic delineations of inward worship but adds to these “a complex tissue of biblical quotations, interspersed with her own commentary,” which reveals her nuanced wrestling with worship’s purpose and value.²⁵ From de Sales, Hutchinson draws and transforms images of how inward worship feels to the human soul. Elizabeth Clarke names this “some of the most original writing in the whole treatise.”²⁶ Where prayers recommended by de Sales are “sparks,” those Hutchinson’s “Principles” recommends are “a constant flame”; the difference is the worshipper’s empowerment by the “spiritt and mediation of the Lord Iesus.”²⁷ Hutchinson’s use of the Catholic text demonstrates her conviction that something spiritually suspicious can be usefully redeemed by the Spirit’s intervention.²⁸

God’s favoring of inward over outward worship permeates scripture, and post-Reformation Christianity developed private, devotional practices to this end.²⁹ Kate Narveson’s monumental study of the post-Reformation laity’s engagement with the Bible demonstrates how new, personal reading of scripture engendered and authorized a vibrant writing culture, in which laypeople confidently applied scripture to their own circumstances. Such practices were hitherto

²³ Clarke, 170–74.

²⁴ Cf. William Perkins, *The Whole Treatise of the Cases of Conscience* (London, 1635), 149.

²⁵ Clarke, “Introduction to ‘Principles,’” 171. Cp. Perkins, *Cases of Conscience*, 150–53, with Hutchinson, *TW*, 251–58.

²⁶ Clarke, 171.

²⁷ Hutchinson, *TW*, 264.

²⁸ Though De Sales’s *Introduction to a Devout Life*, first published in England in 1613 and in a “Protestantized version” in 1616, became a widely popular “model of Christian meditation” in the 1620–30s, Clarke says that Hutchinson’s use thereof remains “surprising”; Clarke, “Introduction to ‘Principles,’” 172, 171. However, although dissenters were “[i]ntensely critical of ‘Popery,’” many “acknowledged a debt to that tradition,” and “the margins of many Nonconformist publications are replete with quotations” from medieval Catholic leaders; Brown, *Spirituality in Adversity*, 202.

²⁹ Cf. Deu. 6:4–7; 2 Kings 10:30–31; Psa. 51:16–17; Isa. 29:13; Matt. 22:37–40.

reserved for the clergy.³⁰ Private prayer was another encouraged practice. Raymond Brown delineates Restoration dissenting preachers' prolific teachings on praying "regularly, sincerely, penitently, gratefully, compassionately and attentively."³¹

While popular tracts promoted individual devotion, legislations against conventicles betrayed concern about religious enthusiasm. Charles II's 1661 decree against conventicle gatherings condemns the meetings as being only "under pretence of Worshipping God" but actually a façade for "persons riotously and unlawfully Assembled."³² Ministers had long feared scripture's mishandling in laypeople's devotions, and conventicles similarly wrested corporate worship from trained clerical hands and government regulation.³³ Hutchinson's "Principles" walks the narrow line between worship and religious enthusiasm by focusing exclusively on internal worship and warning the treatise's addressee (Hutchinson's daughter Barbara Orgil) against joining a sect.³⁴ Though the treatise's closing remarks promise Barbara a second work on worship practices, this was never written or remains undiscovered, and its intended delayed and disjointed composition suggests its secondary importance.³⁵

The "Principles'" theology of worship indicates that contemporaries value the spiritual exercise too narrowly. Contemporaries wrangle over signs of political subterfuge while worship has eternal implications. Insincere inward worship reveals possible rebellion against God Himself, as Hutchinson warns that "those who thinke they worship him [God] with a few lazie wishes are as bad as those who set vp themselues in open defiance against him" and risk "a

³⁰ Kate Narveson, *Bible Readers and Lay Writers in Early Modern England: Gender and Self-Definition in an Emergent Writing Culture* (New York: Taylor and Francis Group, 2016), 15.

³¹ Brown, *Spirituality in Adversity*, 126.

³² Charles II, *A Proclamation Prohibiting All Unlawful and Seditious Meetings and Conventicles under Pretence of Religious Worship* (London, 1661).

³³ Narveson, *Bible Readers*, 15.

³⁴ Cf. Hutchinson, *TW*, 190–91. For Hutchinson, sectarianism is distinguishable from Congregationalism, so there is no discrepancy between her membership in Owen's church and her warning to her daughter.

³⁵ *TW*, 273.

provocation of his wrath.”³⁶ Alternatively, sincere internal worship is a definite sign of election in a world with few sure providential signs. Hutchinson explains, “Gods glory ought to be the prime end of all our actions euen before the salvation of our owne soules if they were seperable but God in his gracious goodnesse hath soe tied them together that none can misse salvation who principally seeke his glory.”³⁷ Since the purpose of the elect’s life is to worship, whoever treats worship as their central purpose reveals their election. (Though, worship cannot achieve salvation, which God offers unconditionally.)

Correct internal worship reliably reveals one’s election because it enables the soul to grasp both God’s authority and His goodness—a pairing the “Principles” conveys through fountain imagery. Simply knowing that God is omnipotent gives no reason to expect salvation. The “Principles” identifies two “end[s] of our worshipping”: “to render him [God] that honor and glory that is due to him as our Creator Lord Governor Redeemer and Benefactor” and “that wee might be blessed and happie in the Communion of our God who is in himself the supream Good and the originall spring of the felicity of all his creatures.”³⁸ The worshipper acknowledges God’s omnipotence over every aspect of life and delights in His goodness and invitation to relationship. To imagine God as “the originall spring” suggests that He is the origin of and impetus behind all good, an “important and typical” part of Hutchinson’s theology.³⁹ Earthly goods and felicities are only streams flowing from their heavenly “spring,” which point the soul back to the true object and satisfaction of its desires. In recognizing providential authority and goodness, the worshipper can imagine God wielding His omnipotence in her favor and subsequently desires “Communion” with so good a God. As “the outworking of communion with

³⁶ *TW*, 263.

³⁷ *TW*, 255.

³⁸ *TW*, 250.

³⁹ Clarke, “Introduction to ‘Principles,’” 175.

God” comes only “through the justification brought about by Christ and the love inspired by the Holy Spirit” (that is, two central experiences of salvation), that worshipful communion evinces election.⁴⁰

Hutchinson here draws from John Owen, whose extensive use of fountain imagery attempted to assuage the terrors of Calvinist predestination. Anyone who had read Owen as extensively as Hutchinson had encountered his fountain and spring imagery.⁴¹ References occur a staggering 68 times in *The Doctrine of the Saints Perseverance* (1654), 59 times in *Of Communion with God the Father, Sonne, and Holy Ghost* (1657), 34 times in *Exercitations on the Epistle to the Hebrews* (1668), 66 times in *Pneumatologia* (1674), and a handful of times in other works. Owen explains that God’s predestining will is “the fountaine, and cause of grace” and is unaffected by people’s faith or good works, which are merely the “effects of election flowing from it.”⁴² This electing fountain springs specifically from God’s love, not His judgment, and therefore assuages the terror of human impotence. Owen writes, “His [God’s] love lyes at the *Bottom* of all dispensations towards us: and we scarce any where find any mention of it, but it is held out as the cause and Fountaine of some *free gift*.”⁴³ However, Tim Cooper demonstrates that, ultimately, Owen’s sermons unpersuasively avert the despair associated with Calvinism—a failure which, Elizabeth Clarke argues, Hutchinson’s “Principles” avoids by leaving the reader with a positive, if still uncompromising, message.⁴⁴ By imagining the providential fountain as God rather than “the doctrine of predestination,” Hutchinson reifies

⁴⁰ This is Elizabeth Clarke’s summary of the “Principles” explanation of internal worship; Clarke, 170.

⁴¹ For Owen’s wide-ranging impact on Hutchinson’s thought: Hutchinson, *TW*, 9, 20, 283, 287–88.

⁴² John Owen, *Theomachia Autexousiastike, or, A Display of Arminianisme* (London, 1643), 4, 64.

⁴³ John Owen, *Of Communion with God the Father, Sonne, and the Holy Ghost* (Oxford, 1657), 28.

⁴⁴ Tim Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter and the Formation of Nonconformity* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 68–71; Clarke, “Introduction to ‘Principles,’” 162.

Owen's abstractions and invites the reader to enter into relationship with loving providence through worship.⁴⁵

Hutchinson's reassuring, even inviting, providentialism appealed to 1670s contemporaries, who were increasingly apathetic to the idea of a threatening deity. In an explanation of the "fear of God," a biblical synonym for worship, Hutchinson explains that this is "not that spirit of bondage and slavish terror" which causes the wicked to "dread...punishment," but a "reverentiall awe that a child hath to a father whom he loues and honors desiring and delighting to please him and being griued more for sin then for the evill consequents of sin."⁴⁶ The worshipper experiences the peace, safety, and joy of a child under its loving parent's protection and avoids sin as a hindrance to this relationship rather than as a possible cause of punishment, including the ultimate punishment of hell.⁴⁷ Hutchinson gears this message toward contemporary atheists, who perceive all religion as superstitious, by presenting correct worship as the antithesis of "superstitious services done for necessity and not freely."⁴⁸ True worship thus offers an alternative to atheism for resisting superstitious terrors. Whoever recognizes both God's authority and goodness (concepts ingrained in the father-child and "originall spring" imagery) will not be terrified of God, nor obey Him only to avoid punishment.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Some other dissenting ministers described salvation (albeit not always predestination) with fountain imagery: e.g., Samuel Petto, *The Difference between the Old and New Covenant* (London, 1674), 30; Annesley, *The Morning Exercise at Cripplegate*, 629; Samuel Lee, *Contemplations on Mortality* (London, 1669), 92–93. Usually preachers used the imagery to signify divine blessings or original sin: e.g., Thomas Adams, *God's Anger, and Man's Comfort* (London, 1652), 64; Annesley, *The Morning Exercise at Cripplegate*, 441; Joseph Caryl, *An Exposition with Practicall Observations Continued upon the Thirty Second, the Thirty Third, and the Thirty Fourth Chapters of the Booke of Job* (London, 1661), 393.

⁴⁶ Hutchinson, *TW*, 259.

⁴⁷ *TW*, 260.

⁴⁸ *TW*, 206.

⁴⁹ *TW*, 250.

Though the “Principles” would never be read by contemporary atheists, Hutchinson’s origin poems extend her providentialism to a wider audience. Hutchinson gifted her Lucretius translation and Genesis epic to courtiers who were concerned by the royal court’s spiritual situation and hoped for its transformation. The Lucretius preface she addresses to Arthur Annesley, the Earl of Anglesey and Keeper of the Privy Seal, whose recognition of “the great decay of piety and increase of profaneness and atheism” four years prior prompted a rededication of his life to God.⁵⁰ Hutchinson gifts a manuscript copy of *Order and Disorder* to her cousin Anne Wilmot, the Countess of Rochester and the notorious Earl of Rochester’s Puritan mother. The Countess was “deeply disturbed by her...son’s open atheism.”⁵¹ The origin poems’ prefaces compare worship’s and human wisdom’s respective effectiveness in addressing terrifying providential ambiguities. Building on the “Principles” presentation of God as the good and omnipotent “originall spring,” the prefaces imagine God as “the fountain of Truth,” from whom all true wisdom, joy, and salvation flows.⁵² Human wisdom and wit the prefaces imagine through their pagan, classical source, “Helicon’s spring.”

These opposing springs seem to invite categorizations of damnation and election. By 1675, even Anglican bishops and dissenters agreed that England’s widespread “atheism and profaneness,” most blatant among the court wits, would lead to “a collapse of morality and order” if unaddressed.⁵³ Hutchinson’s republican and Christian values seem reason enough to condemn the court atheists. Scholars have long interpreted *Order and Disorder* as a “militantly Puritan and anti-courtly” poem, an opportunity to “meditate obliquely yet sharply and ominously

⁵⁰ Spurr, *England in the 1670s*, qutd. 227. Cf. Anglesey’s diary entry for 26 May 1671; Add MS 40860, British Library, London.

⁵¹ Norbrook, “Devine Originall,” 15.

⁵² Hutchinson, *TW*, 250; *OD*, 3. Cf. God as the “only true & pure devine fountaine” in *DRN*, 13.

⁵³ Spurr, *England in the 1670s*, 69.

upon the calamities of the Restoration and its prodigal culture and upon the mighty nature of divine justice, power, and vengeance.”⁵⁴ David Hopkins suggests that Hutchinson distances herself from *De rerum natura* in *Order and Disorder* primarily because “Lucretian Epicureanism had become associated with the (to Hutchinson, repellent) libertinism of the Restoration court.”⁵⁵

However, Hutchinson perceives atheism as far more rational than superstition. Lucretius, she claims, lived among people who imagined “Heaven & Hell, Eternall Rewards & Punishments” in ways that “were so ridiculous, as seemd rather stories invented to fright children, then to perswade reasonable men.”⁵⁶ The changeable and terrifying providential interpretations of the 1650s and 1660s had for many a similar savor of superstitious invention, used to tyrannize people into submission and order. Court wits like the libertine poet Rochester rejected the tyrannizing fictions of “priestcraft,” espoused Lucretian atheism, and lived by pleasure in defiance of social and moral conventions.⁵⁷ Though Hutchinson condemns the court wits’ lifestyles, she empathizes with their intellectual conclusions. Hutchinson’s Lucretius translation even alludes to Rochester’s *A Satyr Against Reason and Mankind*. David Norbrook reads in these allusions the poets’ shared aversion to natural theology and clericalism, the latter of which both saw as a political tool.⁵⁸ Though all external signs damn the court wits, Hutchinson’s new focus on eternal rather than temporal providential signs and her conviction that the Holy Spirit can redeem spiritually suspicious things, causes her to resist such simple conclusions.

⁵⁴ Norbrook, “Devine Original,” 13; David Loewenstein, “The Seventeenth-Century Protestant English Epic,” in *The Cambridge Companion to the Epic*, ed. Catherine Bates (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 164–65.

⁵⁵ David Hopkins, “The English Voices of Lucretius from Lucy Hutchinson to John Mason Good,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Lucretius*, ed. Stuart Gillespie and Philip R. Hardie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 255.

⁵⁶ Hutchinson, *DRN*, 11.

⁵⁷ Spurr, *England in the 1670s*, 93.

⁵⁸ Hutchinson, *DRN*, cxx–cxxi.

Hutchinson's Lucretius preface imagines the atheist courtiers as "incautious travellers," lost in "walkes of witt." While "they tittle att their celebrated Helicon," they "loose [*sic*] their liues, and fill themselues with poyson, drowning their spiritts in those pudled waters, and neglecting that healing spring of Truth."⁵⁹ The inverse realization of the water's lethal nature shows how completely it has deceived the partakers. "[T]hey loose their liues" before they realize they are "fill[ing] themselues with poyson," and they realize it is "poyson," before they recognize that the waters are suspiciously "pudled," stagnant and opaque. Their atheism leads them into worse self-deceptions, and what they think will be a satisfying self-indulgence destroys them. However, notably, they are not yet truncated from the "healing spring of Truth," as the damned are in *Order and Disorder*; they simply "neglect[]" it because deceived.⁶⁰ Hutchinson's Lucretius preface extends sympathy but not salvation to those at Helicon, perhaps due to the atheistic text to follow.

However, her preface to *Order and Disorder* postulates that those at Helicon might return to the "fountain of Truth" and be saved. Hutchinson recalls her own fall to Helicon in her youthful love for Lucretius's poetry. She admits that it was not until Lucretius so "filled my brain with such foolish fancies, that I found it necessary to have recourse to the fountain of Truth [and] wash out all ugly wild impressions, and fortify my mind with a strong antidote against all the poison of human wit and wisdom that I had been dabbling withal."⁶¹ Her conversion initially appears to be an assertion of personal authority ("I found it necessary"), but it quickly shifts into an expression of submission to God's authority. Her use of the word "recourse" complicates any sense of free will by imagining it as a river which doubles back on its course because of some

⁵⁹ *DRN*, 15.

⁶⁰ Cf. *OD*, 4.21–26.

⁶¹ *OD*, 3.

external force, or as a tide which ebbs and flows because of the moon and sun.⁶² As the Spirit transformed Francis de Sales's weak "sparks" of inward worship into "a constant flame," the Spirit here intervenes to turn a deluded soul from Helicon's spring to the far superior "fountain of Truth." *Order and Disorder* develops the providential fountain as the sole impetus behind all streams' movements, and thereby raises the possibility—even probability—of the election of some of the most spiritually suspicious characters in Genesis.

Helicon's Spring

Order and Disorder's Flood scene (cantos 7–8; cf. Genesis 6:9–9:17) draws the epic's most explicit parallel between the Genesis narrative and contemporaries by likening the unquestionably damned Flood generation to the 1670s royal court. Both are intoxicated by the atheism and wit of Helicon's spring. The Flood gave contemporaries a rare opportunity to analyze the causes or traits of damnation, as there are few other places in scripture where God so clearly condemns and destroys. Commentators' explanations for the destruction wrought by the Flood hinged on three primary reasons. First, the Flood generation's unholy marriages, condemned in Genesis 6:1–4, dilute and pollute true religion.⁶³ Second, their carnal minds, which Calvin describes as bestial "madnesse" and the Anglican minister Abraham Wright

⁶² "recourse, n.," etymology, 6a–b; 7a–b (OED). The moon and sun's impacts on the tides was known in Hutchinson's day, asserted by Simon Stevin, *De spiegheling der ebbenvloet* (Rotterdam, 1608), Galileo Galilei, *Dialogo sopra i due massimi sistemi del mondo* (Florence, 1632), and, after Hutchinson's death, Isaac Newton, *Principia* (London, 1687).

⁶³ William Whately, *Prototypes, or, The Primarie Precedent Presidents out of the Booke of Genesis* (London, 1640), 54; Abraham Wright, *A Practical Commentary or Exposition upon the Pentateuch* (London, 1662), 9.

(1611–1690) as “presumptuous imaginations,” forsake humanity’s divinely-gifted reason.⁶⁴

Third, their “great wickedness” causes them to pursue earthly goods like “Long life, great strength, great peace,” according to the Puritan minister William Whately (1583–1639).⁶⁵

Hutchinson’s epic upholds these criticisms but adds parallels to contemporary courtiers’ lifestyles and worldviews:

They wholly gave themselves to feasts and mirth,
 Ate, drunk, built piles, got children and new wives,
 As if no danger threatened their lewd lives
 And their first natural impressions were
 Vain superstitions and a childish fear;
 Boasting they had attained to be wise
 When they with manly courage could despise
 Fictions of God and Hell that did control
 A vulgar, weak, deluded, pious soul.
 So run the old world then, so do they now
 Who none but atheists for wise men allow:
 Such as no awe of th’ unseen God doth curb,
 No thoughts of any future state disturb;
 Who valiantly have conscience overcome. (7.128–41)

This passage moves beyond unequally yoked marriages to a general disrespect for the institution of marriage, a trait of Charles II’s profligate court. The getting of “new wives” suggests marital unfaithfulness or polygamy. The inverse ordering of “children” before “wives” suggests fornication, yet immediately excuses or necessitates this sin because the end rhymes of “wives” and “lives” secure the couplet’s poetic integrity. The casual phrasing “got children” contradicts the immense, providential value which the epic places on children to continue and preserve the Holy Seed, elsewhere argued by Lauren Shook and Erica Longfellow.⁶⁶ The lines’ coupling of

⁶⁴ Jean Calvin, *A Commentarie...vpon the First Booke of Moses Called Genesis*, trans. Thomas Tymme (London, 1578), 173; Wright, *Practical Commentary*, 11.

⁶⁵ Whately, *Prototypes*, 54.

⁶⁶ Lauren Shook argues that the epic’s repeated end rhyme of “womb”/“come” underscores the importance of maintaining Christ’s bloodline through the unions of elect patriarchs and matriarchs; Lauren Shook, “‘Pious Fraud’:

this cavalier procreation with fornication reminds the reader of Charles II's nineteen illegitimate children who could never carry on his royal line.

The carnality of the Flood victims' minds bears specific marks of the Stuart court's worldview. Like the 1670s court wits, the victims specifically adhere to Lucretian atheism and reject irrational, superstitious terrors, "despis[ing]/ Fictions of God and Hell that did control/ A vulgar, weak, deluded, pious soul" (7.134–36). David Norbrook argues that the victims' oppressive mocking of all pious people as "vulgar," inferior to them in education, understanding, and wit, "parodies the social snobbery of courtly atheists."⁶⁷ The reader is also reminded of dissent's silenced voice in the victims' scorning of the "vulgar" (a popular, derogatory term for dissenters) and in their defeat of "conscience" (the basis for most arguments for religious toleration). Lastly, *Order and Disorder's* victims of the Flood "wholly gave themselves to feasts and mirth," and thus pursue earthly pleasures associated with the court's excess and drunkenness (7.128).

By associating the specific sins by which commentators condemned the victims of the Flood with the 1670s royal court, Hutchinson sets herself up to damn the court rather uncontroversially. The Puritan William Whately, with whose posthumous, 1640 commentary Hutchinson was surely familiar, criticizes the victims of the Flood in a way which a 1670s reader could easily parallel with the Restoration pressures for political and religious conformity. Whately writes that the Flood people seemingly enjoy "great peace...under a paternall government," under which "they had all one language and so no great cause of controversie, and

Genesis Matriarchs and the Typological Imagination in Lucy Hutchinson's *Order and Disorder*," *Modern Philology* 112, no. 1 (2014): 189–90. For how Hutchinson's Puritanism spiritually prized the family unit: Erica Denise Longfellow, *Women and Religious Writing in Early Modern England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 33.

⁶⁷ Hutchinson, *OD*, 7.136, footnote 213.

one religion too.”⁶⁸ However, they maintain this government through “violence and oppression.” They maintain religious peace through spiritual apathy or stigmatization, as many “degenerated to prophanenese and the most became of no religion, and so did not warre with the contrary little partie, unlesse it were with jests, scoffes, and contumelies.”⁶⁹ Whately’s depiction of the Flood generation’s tendencies towards conformity, persecution, “prophanenese,” atheism, and the stigmatization of their enemies beg contemporary application to the Restoration regime. Yet, despite these easy parallels and despite later using Whately’s analysis of Ishmael to defend persecuted Restoration dissenters, *Order and Disorder* does not damn the court as it must the Flood generation.

Charles II’s court remains—humbled but seemingly under God’s favor—in the form of the post-Flood earth, imagined in canto 8 as a restored prince. As the flood waters recede, the narrator wonders, “What will full Restoration be, if this/ But the first daybreak of God’s favour is?” (8.27–28). The earth emerges as “a prince who, long in prison bound,/ Comes squalid forth at first, untrimmed, uncrowned” and is made “fair” and “stately” again by “Heaven’s compassionate, kind, refreshing eye” (8.35–36, 42, 39). Though “Restoration” echoes the Geneva Bible’s annotation that the earth is “restored by God’s promise” (Genesis 8:22), the word is also politically charged.⁷⁰ “Restoration” refers to both England’s 1660 reversion to a monarchical government and the republican ideology of “breaking down corrupt or tyrannical orders in order to restore a primal freedom.”⁷¹ Hutchinson uses this republican sense in the “Elegies.”⁷² Susan Wiseman suggests that Hutchinson’s post-1660 use of words like “restore”

⁶⁸ Whately, *Prototypes*, 54.

⁶⁹ Whately, 54.

⁷⁰ Hutchinson, *OD*, 8.27, footnote 234.

⁷¹ David Norbrook, “John Milton, Lucy Hutchinson, and the Republican Biblical Epic,” in *Milton and the Grounds of Contention*, ed. Mark R. Kelley, Michael Lieb, and John T. Shawcross (Duchesne University Press, 2003), 49.

⁷² Elise Lonich Ryan, “Gardens of Grief: Lucy Hutchinson’s ‘Elegies,’ the Garden of Gethsemane, and Formal Uses of Betrayal,” *Exemplaria* 28, no. 3 (2016): 223, <https://doi.org/doi:10.1080/10412573.2016.1178450>.

crafts “an oppositional poetic vocabulary from the lexicon of the Restoration” to challenge these words’ standard uses after 1660. Such lexical appropriation “memorialize[s]” the bygone era of the Republic, in which the words had an alternative and potent meaning.⁷³ Emily Jones Griffiths reads canto 8’s allusion to a future “full Restoration...of God’s glory” as a rebuke to the Stuart monarchy for assuming that its 1660 restoration was the triumph of providence and virtue which would actually only materialize in Christ’s return.⁷⁴ In Hutchinson’s word choice, we are undoubtedly meant to hear an echo of Milton’s anticipation of when “one greater Man/ Restore us” in the period’s more famous Genesis epic poem, and, through this association, question whether *Order and Disorder* is similarly anti-Monarchical and pro-republican (*PL* 1.4–5). Hutchinson’s canon would suggest so. She so loathed the institution of the monarchy that her writings avoid referring even to God as a king lest He be associated with fallen human forms.⁷⁵

However, canto 8’s description of the post-Flood earth’s restoration lacks both judgment and nostalgia. The earth-prince sees God as “compassionate, kind, [and] refreshing,” not a source of judgment or terror, and understands himself to lack any personal goodness or glory (8.39). He has, according to the “Principles,” learned to worship aright. Canto 8 identifies God’s favor on the earth-prince without obliterating its monarchical associations. True to Hutchinson’s transformed providentialism in the 1670s, the evidence of God’s favor is neither royal nor republican. The evidence of God’s favor is correct worship, which is spiritually potent enough to foreshadow the “full Restoration...of God’s glory” at Christ’s return, even when enacted by the fallen institution of the monarchy.

⁷³ Wiseman, *Conspiracy and Virtue*, 227, 230. Wiseman’s case example is from the “Elegies”; Wiseman, 221.

⁷⁴ Emily Griffiths Jones, “‘My Victorious Triumphs Are All Thine’: Romance and Elect Community in Lucy Hutchinson’s *Order and Disorder*,” *Studies in Philology* 112, no. 1 (2015): 190.

⁷⁵ Norbrook, “Milton, Hutchinson, and the Republican Biblical Epic,” 49.

Commentators commonly applied the Flood narrative to their contemporaries, especially to evoke a deeper conviction over original sin in the self-complacent godly. People needed to be reminded that God alone impedes their becoming like the Flood generation. Whately warns his godly readers that “there is not one of us that would not grow unjust, voluptuous, worldly, violent, and extreemly wicked in every kind of wickednesse, as occasion would offer it self, if the Lord did not hold us backe, either by restraining or sanctifying, or both.”⁷⁶ *Order and Disorder* similarly calls for its readers to recognize their original sin and seek goodness only in God through correct worship:

The Holy Spirit drew the old world thus
 To be our emblem that, ourselves to us
 In our polluted births most truly shown,
 Might in ourselves no goodness seek nor own
 But to the first eternal spring repair,
 Carrying and seeking all our goodness there. (7.193–98)

This passage could address self-complacent Christians. However, it is the royal court, in the form of the restored earth-prince, who answers this summons to the providential fountain. In 8.49–52, the narrator warns the earth-prince that “If humbled waters must no more ascend,/ ...Your new-restored glory shall expire,/ To ashes turned in the world’s funeral fire.” In this apocalyptic warning (which admittedly raises doubt over the earth-prince’s spiritual authenticity) is an admission that the earth-prince’s “humbled waters” currently “ascend” to God. The “Principles” imagines worship as the soul’s God-ward ascension, and the natural impossibility of a stream flowing against gravity back to its fountainhead indicates the Spirit’s intercession.⁷⁷ The earth-prince appears to have heeded the narrative’s spiritual application and “to the first eternal spring

⁷⁶ Whately, *Prototypes*, 55–56.

⁷⁷ Hutchinson, *TW*, 254.

repair[ed]” with “humbled waters.” This indicates that the earth-prince “no goodness seek[s] nor own[s]” in itself.

Hutchinson’s Flood narrative invites and guides the royal court’s repentance and worshipful sanctification. As having recourse to “the first eternal spring” involves “seeking all our goodness there,” canto 7 envisages providence’s intervening goodness in the lives of the Flood generation (7.197–98). The Flood victims, who were damned before they even had a chance to sin (per Calvinist theology) and who must be destroyed by God (per the Genesis narrative), will never recognize God’s goodness and repent. Yet, the established parallel between the victims of the Flood and contemporary court atheists offers the latter an opportunity to witness providence engaging positively with people whose lives and mindsets are very similar to their own—to, as it were, read God into their lives. 7.143–53 reads,

...[T]he Lord his goodness did pursue
 To these ill men: their seasons did renew;
 Allowed them common blessings, air and light,
 Restored calm days, expelled the stormy night,
 A table for his rebels daily spread
 Whereat themselves they fat for slaughter fed;
 His watchful providence for them employed,
 Nor left the wretched world without a guide,
 But wisely led and turned their violent streams
 To ends that were not in their thoughts nor aims;
 Wrought their deliverance, danger did prevent.

The idea of God giving “common blessings” to the damned and the elect alike is a logical necessity within the framework of double predestination. If God is omnipotent, the cause and origin of all life, how could any damned people exist if God did not grant them things like “seasons, “air,” and “light”? However, canto 7’s depiction of providential goodness exceeds simple life necessities and humors the possibility of election.

Canto 7.143–53 imagines God’s treatment of the victims of the Flood as the same as His treatment of the elect, as known from Psalm 23, which famously begins, “The Lord is my shepherd.” 7.147’s picture that God “A table for his rebels daily spread” parallels the psalmist’s experience of God, who “preparent a table before me in the presence of mine enemies” (Psalm 23:5). 7.147 imagines the “rebels,” the enemies of God’s people, who have just mocked “pious soul[s]” as “vulgar, weak, [and] deluded” eleven lines earlier, receiving the same providential treatment as the faithful, who live under God’s favor. That God in 7.150–51 is the rebel world’s “guide,” who “wisely led and turned their violent streams,” echoes the psalmist’s description of the guidance and authority of the divine shepherd, who “maketh me lie down,” “leadeth me beside the still waters,” and “leadeth me in the paths of righteousness” (Psalm 23:2–3). The implied juxtaposition of “violent streams” (7.151) and “still waters” (Psalm 23:2) humors the possibility that God’s guidance of the “violent streams” to “ends that were not in their thoughts nor aims” (7.152) is a guidance into the way of the “still waters,” which so benefit the godly. The streams’ dramatic changes suggest their connection to the providential fountain, the source of all movement. Hell alone knows “no soft changes,” and the fallen angels are “a noisome, dead, and poisonous lake” (5.491, 4.25).

Perhaps most surprisingly, God does not simply use the damned generation to carry out His plans for the elect, as persecuted dissenters often portrayed their enemies’ successes and as Hutchinson uses Hagar in canto 14. (I examine Hagar’s role later.) Raymond Brown examines how Restoration dissenters perceived their persecutors as “under divine control,” with, as John Bunyan quoted from 2 Kings 19:28, “Gods hook [] in their nose.”⁷⁸ This belief assured suffering

⁷⁸ Brown, *Spirituality in Adversity*, 110; John Bunyan, *Seasonable Counsel, or, Advice to Sufferers*, in *The Miscellaneous Works of John Bunyan*, ed. Owen C. Watkins, Roger Sharrock, and W. R. Owens, vol. 10 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 73.

dissenters that God’s omnipotence and justice would render persecution beneficial to them while “not overlook[ing] the slightest injustice.”⁷⁹ However, God’s engagement with the victims of the Flood appears wholly unrelated to Noah and his family and solely out of personal love and care. God “employ[s]” His “watchful providence” specifically “for them” (7.149) and ardently “pursue[s]” “these ill men” with “his goodness” (7.143–44). 7.143 even heightens God’s care and concern for the Flood generation by intensifying the psalmist’s word choice from “follow” to “pursue.”⁸⁰

Even commentators who praised God for His invitation to repentance in His 120-year delay of judgment (Genesis 6:3) did not portray God as kind or loving. For Calvin, God’s rejected invitation to repent affirms His justice and patience; “God was not ouer hastie” or “more seuere then there was cause.”⁸¹ Whately, similarly, imagines the delay as providence’s “course of gentleness.”⁸² Yet, Calvin visualizes God’s invitation to repent as “threatenings, or...examples of light chastisementes.”⁸³ Whately’s apparently gentle God “is faine to strive with himselfe to keepe downe his anger, that it raise not up it selfe against them in excesse and over-suddenly.”⁸⁴ Any response of repentance to such a threatening deity would be out of terror and, in Hutchinson’s mind, thwart correct worship and validate atheists’ criticisms of religion as being superstitious. Though in His execution of judgment in 7.447 God sits as “the great King of Terrors on the waves,” in His invitation to repentance He is loving and gracious. The epic thus offers readers an opportunity to repent out of an inflamed desire for God rather than simply to avoid punishment—to repent out of worship, not fear.

⁷⁹ Brown, *Spirituality in Adversity*, 110.

⁸⁰ Cp. Psa. 23:6.

⁸¹ Calvin, *Commentarie vpon Genesis*, 171.

⁸² Whately, *Prototypes*, 54.

⁸³ Calvin, *Commentarie vpon Genesis*, 172.

⁸⁴ Whately, *Prototypes*, 54.

After first reading God's goodness upon the Flood generation, and, by extension, the court atheists, Hutchinson's epic invites its audience to acknowledge God's authority, which the victims of the Flood refuse to and cannot do. The Flood generation receives every reason to worship God, but "they miscalled his high help accident,/ Nor owned nor blessed that unseen powerful hand" (7.154–55). Though "miscalled" could suggest either a willful misnomer or a lack of understanding, the refusal to "own" God's "hand" indicates an awareness but denial of divine intervention. Hutchinson's "Principles" warns that "To acknowledge Gods wise-dome Power and Goodnesse without adoring and loving them, is so farre from making vs happie, that it makes vs devills."⁸⁵ This standard contemporary definition of atheism insists that God's authority is always discernible but that some simply refuse to submit to it, such as the fallen angels who dwelt with God in heaven but rejected His authority, seeking instead their own glory.⁸⁶ The Flood generation also acknowledges only its own goodness and, in language mirroring the fall of the angels in 4.21–26, is proven damned because "Pure waters which through stinking channels run/ Become corrupt in their declining stream" (7.182–83).⁸⁷ Hutchinson warns that atheism's natural and deserved outcome is damnation.

Yet, by reading Psalm 23 over the lives of the Flood generation in canto 7 and by purifying the monarchy in the form of the prince-earth in canto 8, the epic creates a parallel story with an alternative ending. Psalm 23, as one of the best-known passages in scripture, would be familiar to any seventeenth-century reader but unknown (because not yet written) to the Flood generation. Hutchinson furnishes the 1670s reader with a framework of providential understanding that the damned Flood generation lacked. *Order and Disorder* takes its reader to

⁸⁵ Hutchinson, *TW*, 196.

⁸⁶ Cf. Isa. 14:12–15.

⁸⁷ For the Flood people's self-praise: *OD*, 7.133–34, 141.

the very edge of “the first eternal spring,” from which all true “goodness” flows, and invites and assists true worship (7.197–98).

The Fountain of Truth

In Hutchinson’s Flood scene, God’s goodness pursues the most unlikely worshippers, the atheistic royal court, whose worldview naturally resisted such divine interventions. Yet, throughout *Order and Disorder*, even the elect experience circumstances where God’s goodness and omnipotence seem dubious. True to its prefatory insistence on *sola scriptura*, the epic typically adheres closely to scripture and draws spiritual lessons from imagery already present.⁸⁸ However, Hutchinson diverges from this orthodox approach by inserting four fountains, either real or symbolic, into places in Genesis where they are not: in Abraham’s near sacrifice of Isaac, during Rebekah’s difficult pregnancy, in Isaac’s exile from King Abimelech, and in Jacob’s flight from Esau. Rather than interpreting these insertions as expressions of the author’s spiritual originality—a tempting conclusion for modern critics, though one Hutchinson herself would reject—we might better understand them as consistent with *Order and Disorder*’s broader practice of embedding New Testament applications into the Old Testament narrative.⁸⁹ The inserted fountains appear in spiritually ambiguous circumstances when God’s way appears wrong—morally or as a means to His promised end. The biblical characters must either reject

⁸⁸ Hutchinson, *OD*, 5.

⁸⁹ Originality of thought was not a desired trait in religious writings as it indicated individualism, or even unorthodoxy. Kate Narveson attests that few seventeenth-century devotional writers were “original” in thought, diction, or style, valuing instead shared spiritual experiences and passing their manuscripts through many revising hands; Narveson, *Bible Readers*, 18, 22. Raymond Brown insists that even nonconformists, “characterized by spiritual insularity” and personal faith, were “not remotely individualistic”; Brown, *Spirituality in Adversity*, 224.

providence by relying on human wisdom or trust in God's character and respond to the temporal ambiguity with worship. Worship at the fountain mitigates the terror and loss caused by earthly circumstances by cultivating in the worshipper a providential perspective.

Abraham and Isaac

God's command to Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, the child through whom God vowed to fulfill His covenant promise to make Abraham's descendants like the stars and to bless all people, is startling. This command comes in Hutchinson's epic, as in scripture, directly following Ishmael's expulsion from Abraham's household, leaving Abraham with no alternative through which to see God's covenant fulfilled (cantos 14–15; Genesis 21–22). While Genesis does not explore these intellectual and moral aporias, moving simply from God's command to Abraham's obedience, early modern commentators wrestled with Abraham's valid reasons to doubt God's command, reasons which the Geneva Bible names the scene's true "te[m]ptation."⁹⁰ Abraham Wright attests to the bewilderment long evoked by Genesis 22 by claiming that "all the Ages of the World have stood amaz'd, not knowing whether they should more wonder at Gods injunction, or *Abrahams* obedience."⁹¹ William Whately upholds the orthodox view that human "nature must give place to Gods commandment." Yet, Whately wonders why God makes the situation so unnatural and seemingly cruel. After all, God could have called for Isaac's death "when hee was a young childe, before hee [Abraham] had filled his heart with so intense love and earnest expectation," or "sen[t] some disease to fetch him," instead of demanding that "the

⁹⁰ Gen. 22, marginal ref. b (Geneva Bible).

⁹¹ Wright, *Practical Commentary*, 33.

Father must murder the sonne.”⁹² God’s command challenges human understanding, human affections, and, most unsettlingly, the means for humanity’s salvation. Calvin explains, “For what grace so euer he [Abraham] could hope for at the handes of GOD, it was included within this promise alone, *In Isaac shall thy seede be called*. Whereby he gathered necessarily, that his saluation, and the saluation of all mankinde perished, except Isaac remained in safetie.”⁹³

Contemporary commentators resolved Abraham’s mental and spiritual disquietude through faith and obedience. Calvin claims that Abraham “reconcileth the commaundement with the promise” before departing the next morning and rewards Abraham with a pervasive sense of mental peace and trust in God’s character. Being “vndoubtedly persuaded that God is faithfull,” Abraham “leaueth vnto him the successe whereof he is ignoraunt.”⁹⁴ Similarly, Wright calms the patriarch’s fears with a dogged submission to God’s character and authority. “In an holy wilfulness he [Abraham] either forgets Nature, or despises her: he is sure that what God commands is good; that what he promises is infallible, and therefore is careless of the means, and trusts to the end,” Wright claims.⁹⁵ In obedience, the soul “forgets” or “despises” its contrary arguments altogether and becomes “careless of the means” by which God fulfills His promises. The soul submits to God’s authority without argument like a soldier, because “there needs no Counsellor when we know God is the Commander.”⁹⁶ Internal peace over God’s unsettling command arises in these commentaries by silencing, not satisfying, human reason.

Hutchinson’s Abraham also recognizes his fallible reason and obeys God’s command through faith. However, he receives no reward of peace or spiritual insight as a result. At God’s

⁹² Whately, *Prototypes*, 134.

⁹³ Calvin, *Commentarie vpon Genesis*, 474.

⁹⁴ Calvin, 475.

⁹⁵ Wright, *Practical Commentary*, 33.

⁹⁶ Wright, 33.

command

...the amazed patriarch senseless grew
 And trembling horror did his breast invade,
 Yet without scruple he the Lord obeyed,
 For faith, soon recollecting his wild sense,
 Prevailed and bred a prompt obedience. (15.62–66)

Although Abraham quickly brings order to his disordered mind, he voices no reason why God or His command should be obeyed, as commentators did. The patriarch's "trembling horror" remains glaringly unresolved. Abraham's faith and obedience savor of superstitious irrationality as they bring him neither relief from the situation's terror nor spiritual understanding. Though Hutchinson uses a now-obsolete sense of the phrase "without scruple" to mean without doubt or question, inferring an internal reconciliation with God's command, the phrase's more popular usage, even in Hutchinson's day, complicates this act of trust with a troubling of conscience.⁹⁷ The conscience represented one's Spirit-led understanding of God, scripture, and the world. To many dissenters, it was the highest spiritual authority, and Abraham, the first of God's chosen seed, seems more authorized than most to rely on his conscience. Yet, in Hutchinson's epic, even Abraham's conscience cannot be reconciled with God's will. Neither spiritual nor earthly forms of understanding relieve the patriarch's confusion and "trembling horror," as strong perturbation troubles his obedient preparations and journey.⁹⁸

Abraham's disquiet springs from a mistrust of providential omnipotence, which prevents him from drawing near to God in worshipful communion. God's command makes Abraham feel as if his heart has been "invade[d]" by an enemy (15.63). As in Wright's commentary, God is a

⁹⁷ "scruple, n²," 2c, 1 (OED).

⁹⁸ E.g., Abraham rises early for his journey because horror denies him sleep (15.67–69), rather than because of an obedient desire "to hasten his businesse," as Calvin interprets the detail in Genesis 22:3; Calvin, *Commentarie vpon Genesis*, 478.

sort of military “Commander,” but one which Abraham must resist rather than submit to.⁹⁹ In one of scripture’s most dramatic pauses—that between Abraham’s uplifted knife and the angel’s cry to stop—Hutchinson again raises God’s unsettling command and casts doubt on God’s character:

O how religion changes styles of things,
 Making the same act diverse as it springs
 From man’s own nature, or obedience
 To God’s command to murder innocence.
 To have an unrelenting father kill
 His only son, guiltless of every ill:
 What barbarous cruelty would this have been,
 If God’s command had not from impious sin
 Changed it into the highest piety. (15.131–39)

If not for the fact that the act “springs” from God, it would be “barbarous cruelty,” “impious sin,” the unjust “murder” of “innocence,” of the “guiltless.” Though Hutchinson will build on this vague reference to the divine fountain in her later, satisfying explanation of God’s command, Abraham’s (and the reader’s) reason at this point remains deeply unsatisfied. God has only “change[d] styles,” or names, “of things” from “cruelty” to “piety.” Nothing indicates that this “piety” is anything beyond a surface-level quality. Penelope Anderson examines a similar, morally suspect instance in 13.103–12, when God metaphorically rapes Lot’s soul to bring it to repentance and to force Lot to abandon the soon-to-be incinerated Sodom and Gomorrah (cf. Genesis 19). “The metaphor of holy rape, which presents rape as a means to the positive end of salvation, has the worrisome effect of seeming to condone those rapes” which occur in the doomed cities, Anderson attests.¹⁰⁰ That God appears hostile, even unrighteous, to His elect in

⁹⁹ Wright, *Practical Commentary*, 33.

¹⁰⁰ Penelope Anderson, “Lucy Hutchinson’s Sodom and the Backward Glance of Feminist Queer Temporality,” *The Seventeenth Century* 30, no. 2 (2015): 257–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2015.1046699>.

Hutchinson's versifications of Genesis 19 and 22 suggests that faithful obedience alone cannot draw the soul into loving intimacy with God. Faith recognizes God's omnipotence and silences human understanding so that the soul can submit to God. Yet, providential authority remains terrifyingly detached from any clear sense of goodness, which prompts the soul to obey superstitiously out of fear rather than love.

As the "Principles" pairs the worshipper's understanding of providential authority with her understanding of God as "the supream Good and the originall spring of...felicity," canto 15 mitigates Abraham's horror with a vision of the providential fountain.¹⁰¹ In the place of Isaac's sacrifice on the mountaintop, Abraham beholds "with faith's prophetic, joyful eyes" a vision of Jesus as the true sacrifice, which secures salvation for humankind:

Man's guilt purged by this guiltless sacrifice,
 From whose pierced side streamed forth a plenteous flood
 Of cleansing waters and all-healing blood.
 Here dropped that balm which doth the passions cure,
 Here sprang that fountain which makes sinners pure,
 Here forfeit mankind's desperate debt was paid,
 Here was the treasure of God's love displayed,
 Here death's large power by dying vanquished;
 Here hungry souls, with heavenly manna fed,
 Who ever since have sick or weary been,
 Here have their cure, here their refreshment seen.
 In all extremities who looks up here
 Forever quits his sorrow and his fear. (15.244–56)

The clergyman Andrew Willet (1562–1621) attributes the popular reading of Isaac as a figure of Christ, offered freely by His Father for the sins of the world, to the fourth-century bishop Ambrose.¹⁰² The moderate Presbyterian Charles Herle (1598–1659) imagines Abraham and

¹⁰¹ Hutchinson, *TW*, 250.

¹⁰² Andrew Willet, *Hexapla in Genesin* (London, 1605), 238. Biblical scholars disagreed on whether the mountain in Genesis 22 was also the site of the crucifixion. Willet insisted it was, but Henry Ainsworth linked the mountain only to the future site of Solomon's temple. Ainsworth, however, repeatedly likened Isaac to Christ. Alternatively

Isaac's story as being of continual, emblematic significance (what Herle calls "an everlasting presentness"), since Abraham's obedience to God's command to "Take *now* thy son" and sacrifice him is eternally fulfilled in God's sacrifice of Jesus (Genesis 22:2, my emphasis).¹⁰³ Herle conveys the unceasing effectualness of Jesus's sacrifice by imagining His crucifixion wounds as "an everlasting fountain to all those that are his," continually flowing and purifying the elect from "sinne, and [] uncleannesse."¹⁰⁴ 15.244–256's allusions to Jesus's transfiguration and passion and Isaiah 25, Zechariah 13:1, and Revelation 22:1–2's eschatological prophecies give Abraham a New Testament and eternal perspective that is redemptive and comforting.

Hutchinson's providential fountain secures humankind's salvation in a way which satisfies Abraham's reason and abates his fears. The vision raises and confirms the moral ambiguity which haunts the rest of the story: God will indeed execute the "guiltless sacrifice" (15.244) and humankind's salvation depends upon this sacrifice, per Calvin's commentary.¹⁰⁵ However, this terrifying execution unleashes God's goodness, including "the treasure of God's love," and His healing "balm," "cure," and "refreshment" (15.250, 247, 254). This sensory imagery demonstrates the "Principles'" original analysis of how correct worship *feels* and places Hutchinson among the seventeenth-century Calvinist theologians who, in their clarification of the doctrine of assurance, added to the measurable evidences of salvation, such as sanctification, more "subjective grounds of assurance," including internal feelings or experiences of God.¹⁰⁶ In

Calvin's commentary on Genesis 22 refrained from New Testament parallels and "subtile Allegories," because, he claims, "I see not what ground or force they haue"; Willet, 236; Henry Ainsworth, *Annotations vpon the Five Bookes of Moses, and the Booke of Psalmes* (London, 1622), sigs. R-R^v (annotations for Gen. 22:2, 4, 6, 9); Calvin, *Commentarie vpon Genesis*, 482.

¹⁰³ Charles Herle, *Abrahams Offer Gods Offering: In a Sermon Preached before the Right Honorable, the Lord Mayor...at Christ-Church on Easter-Tuesday Last* (London, 1644), 12.

¹⁰⁴ Herle, 12. Cf. Zach. 13:1.

¹⁰⁵ Calvin, *A Commentarie vpon Genesis*, 474

¹⁰⁶ Joel R. Beeke, *The Quest for Full Assurance: The Legacy of Calvin and His Successors* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1999), 129.

reconciling God's requirement of a "guiltless sacrifice" with His goodness, the onlooker at the providential fountain "Forever quits his sorrow and his fear" (15.244, 256). The bulk of the vision consists of the eight repetitions of "Here," which fix the reader's attention on the Christological fountain as the solution to humankind's sinfulness (15.247–55). Hutchinson's use of "Here" rather than "the fountain of Truth" or "Jesus" summons the viewer to approach the "plenteous flood" and engage with God continually and familiarly (15.245). This worshipful intimacy eradicates the situation's terror and confusion, as the single, line-end rhyme of "fear" falls small and insignificant against the eight, bold repetitions of "here" (15.256).

With this salvific, providential communion comes a providential perspective. Hutchinson and her contemporaries understood God's chosen people in the Old Testament, Abraham's descendants, the nation of Israel, to be an emblem of God's eternally chosen people, the Church, which Jesus's sacrifice establishes.¹⁰⁷ The stanza which begins by revealing Jesus as the providential fountain ends with God's establishment of the Church in a way which thwarts and supersedes earthly hermeneutical authorities, including individual churches, specific generations, and the poet herself. God does not

...to one corner of the earth confine[]
 His glory, but in all the churches shines,
 Delighting more amongst them to behold
 Pure worship than that splendour which of old
 His temples did adorn, and signified
 The inward glory of the heavenly bride. (15.267–72)

God's glory resists being "confine[d]" to a single "corner" of the world, a single nation like Israel, and thus God refuses to belong to only one chosen people. Unable to be confined to

¹⁰⁷ This belief originates in New Testament books such as Hebrews, which compares the Law and Christ, Israel and the Church, and finds the new better than the old.

human expectations, God and “His glory” visually overflow onto the second line of poetry, and again to the fourth, fifth, and sixth lines, breaking Hutchinson’s typical poetic structure which confines clauses to single lines. Like an ever-expanding thing, God’s glory defies confinement to a historical moment. The Church remains millennia away from establishment during Abraham and Isaac’s time, but providential glory transcends this chronology. Contrary to what we might expect in a nonconformist’s poem, God’s glory does not settle in one church or sect, but “in all the churches shines.” Hutchinson is likely not endorsing all churches but, instead, every church that engages in “Pure worship.” This mark of holiness invites rather than excludes: every church that participates can be a temple of God’s glory. Furthermore, this mark of holiness unites rather than divides or separates. We can read Hutchinson’s aversion to sects in these lines.¹⁰⁸ The “Pure worship” of individual churches dissolves their boundaries and makes them one eternal, universal Church. This Church is necessarily singular, as Christ’s “heavenly bride.” Such providential hopes mirror those later expressed by the Hind’s singular authority in Dryden’s *The Hind and the Panther*.¹⁰⁹ In both poems, God reveals His providence and favor in ways that challenge human reasoning, expectations, and divisions.

Rebekah’s Difficult Pregnancy

Hutchinson’s retelling of Genesis 22 subtly and at the end resists contemporaries’ attempts to identify a specific church as God’s chosen church. Her retelling of Rebekah’s difficult pregnancy from Genesis 25 elucidates this message. Canto 17’s account of Rebekah’s

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Hutchinson, *TW*, 190–91.

¹⁰⁹ Cf. Chapter 1, pp. 70–71.

pregnancy raises doubts regarding the spiritual validity and sincerity of conventicle worship, which the Restoration regime viewed as politically dangerous and spiritually subjective. Conformists feared that conventicles gave spiritual impetus to individuals who, whether for political, educational, or spiritual reasons, should not be trusted to interpret scripture's precious truths. Dissenters did not ease this fear. John Owen's writings, for example, demonstrate "a democratizing, or at least universalizing, impulse," which treated laypeople, including women, as capable theologians, who were more qualified by the Spirit's guidance than Anglican clergy were by university training.¹¹⁰ Conformists and nonconformists both affirmed personal righteousness by identifying their beliefs or causes with God's chosen people in scripture. Genesis's multiple pairings of chosen and unchosen brothers (Cain and Abel, Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Manasseh and Ephraim) served as emblematic fodder for distinguishing the righteousness or wickedness of contemporaries and their causes.¹¹¹ Rebekah's twins, Jacob and Esau, were arguably the most popular emblems of God's spiritual and political favor and disfavor.

Biblical commentators paid little attention to Rebekah in Genesis 25 and instead drew key spiritual and political applications from Jacob and Esau. Calvin criticizes Rebekah for her distress over her difficult pregnancy and calls for readers to "bridle and subdue" their emotions. He praises Rebekah for eventually seeking solace in God.¹¹² However, Calvin's primary focus is how Jacob and Esau communicate the nature of double predestination: God chooses Jacob, the

¹¹⁰ David Norbrook, "Lucy Hutchinson: Theology, Gender and Translation," *The Seventeenth Century* 30, no. 2 (2015): 153, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2015.1049413>.

¹¹¹ E.g., the Parliamentary and royalist sermons: John Sedgwick, *Englands Condition Paralleld [sic] with Jacobs for Troubles, Salvations, Hopes. Laid Open in Two Sermons, Lately Preached at Marlborough in Wilts[hire]* (London, 1642); Francis Woodcock, *Joseph Paralled [sic] by the Present Parliament, in His Sufferings and Advancement. A Sermon Preached before the Honourable House of Commons, on Their Solemn Day of Thanksgiving, Feb. 19. 1645.* (London, 1646); Henry Glover, *Cain and Abel Parallel'd with King Charles and His Murderers in a Sermon Preached in S. Thomas Church in Salisbury, Jan 30, 1663* (London, 1664).

¹¹² Calvin, *Commentarie vpon Genesis*, 528–29.

younger son, and rejects Esau, the elder son, before either are born and capable of sinning.¹¹³ In *Grace Abounding*, John Bunyan expresses repeated terror that he might be the damned Esau who forfeited his eternal birthright for a bowl of pottage.¹¹⁴

Though Calvin and Bunyan focus only on predestination's spiritual aspect, God's spiritual and political favor coincided in most early modern minds. Puritan Parliamentarians during the Civil War often fancied themselves as Jacob, the "blessed usurper" of the reprobate Esau's birthright.¹¹⁵ Lauren Shook argues that "republicans so freely associated themselves with Jacob that royalist texts, such as the Stuart *Eikon Basilike* (1649), had to work the story 'to erase the potential subversiveness of the story,' making 'Jacob the legitimate heir and Esau the usurping rebel.'" ¹¹⁶ Abraham Wright's 1662 commentary compares Esau to "*Separatists and Libertines*, that never came to any [parish] Church" but to be buried and, thereby, to infiltrate the chosen Church of England with "Pride and vain-glory."¹¹⁷ Wright infers a necessary separation between this modern Esau and Jacob, dissent and the national church, just as Calvin insists on the spiritual separation of God's many loved Jacobs and hated Esaus, and wartime writers saw their Jacob-like cause as politically and morally unlike their Esau-like enemies.

Hutchinson's retelling of Genesis 25 carries these contemporary political and spiritual threats, but they arise in the solitary figure of Rebekah, not her twin sons. The twins were easily separated into categories of election and damnation, but Hutchinson's focus on an individual prevents this polarization of people and the contemporary groups they were made to represent.

¹¹³ Calvin, 529–34. Cf. Mal. 1:1–2; Rom. 9:10–13.

¹¹⁴ Bunyan's long torment over possibly being like Esau spans *GA*, 44–71.

¹¹⁵ Shook, "'Pious Fraud,'" 197.

¹¹⁶ Shook, 196–97. Shook here quotes Erin Murphy, who draws on David Gelineau; Erin Murphy, *Familial Forms: Politics and Genealogy in Seventeenth-Century English Literature* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 2011), 199; David Gelineau, "Allusion, Legitimacy, and Succession: Milton's Hands Suit Ill with Dryden's Voice," *The Eighteenth Century* 35, no. 1 (1994): 34.

¹¹⁷ Wright, *Practical Commentary*, 38.

Readers would have been surprised by the spiritual and political dangers that the epic identifies in Rebekah. In Genesis 24, God directly answered Abraham's servant's prayer for a wife for Isaac with Rebekah; she was divinely chosen to carry on the Holy Seed and bears no radical associations like Jacob and Esau do. Hutchinson again thwarts the reader's expectations and interpretations, inviting a fresh look at scripture.

In canto 17, Rebekah engages in private worship, which bears subtle connections to politically radical dissent. Her long-awaited pregnancy turns out to be difficult, so she inquires of God the reason:

Forth to the altar of the Lord she went,
 There did her offerings and her prayers present.
 Thence back returning through a private grove
 Haunted by the devout who dark shades love,
 Down by a spring she sat, repeating there
 The late petitions of her anxious prayer. (17.103–8)

Although nothing is irregular about Rebekah's worship at the altar, her continued worship in the grove raises spiritual ambiguity and untrustworthiness. In the Ovidian tradition, groves are places of sexual transgression, and there is no one to protect Rebekah in this "private" grove.¹¹⁸ The grove might be a place "Haunted," or frequented, "by the devout," indicating its appropriateness to a meditative context, or it might be "Haunted" by the memory of "the devout" who used to visit it. The phrase "dark shades" veers from the common association of God with light and encourages a spectral reading. This spiritual misgiving has political undertones. Erin Murphy identifies the extant traumas of the Civil War on the national psyche in the many sightings of

¹¹⁸ Ancient sacred groves were places of refuge which typically honored deities associated with fertility. Ovid uses these associations to alert the reader to a coming act of sexual transgression, such as a god raping a goddess or woman who has retreated to the grove for safety; Robert B. Patrick, Jr., "Groves in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*: Domesticity, Wildness and Transformation" (Gainesville, Florida, University of Florida, 2010), 66–67, 80–81.

soldiers' ghosts reported in the years following the war.¹¹⁹ In *Memoirs* and the "Elegies," Hutchinson associates spectral imagery with the civil wars, and specifically with the war-time toleration of deceit, intrigue, and ambiguous identities to carry out the Parliamentarian's righteous cause.¹²⁰ Ghosts are for Hutchinson a memory of righteous deceit and political plotting, both morally excused because they lead to godly government.¹²¹ The Restoration silencing of political and religious dissent is evident in the "private" setting of Rebekah's worship, as persecution kept nonconformist worship largely confined to secret conventicles. Conformists, who feared "private" "groves," "Haunted" by the specters of dissenters' Interregnum reign, questioned whether conventicles were places of sincere worship. Did dissenters' private cries match their public claims, or were conventicles a cover for continued political plotting?

However, rather than affirm Rebekah's (and, by extension, dissent's) righteousness, canto 17 exacerbates conformist suspicions. The epic's rare ascriptural additions to Genesis 25:21–23 include stretching three verses into over 100 lines of poetry; causing Rebekah, who only speaks in scripture, to act; setting the episode at a fictional "altar" and "private grove"; and introducing an invented visitation from an angel. To my knowledge, these are the epic's only completely fictionalized additions to the biblical narrative. In contrast to *Order and Disorder's* other didactic or prophetic additions, the additions in canto 17 evoke a strong sense of spiritual ambiguity and untrustworthiness.

In the biblical account, Rebekah directs her question of "Why is this happening to me?" neither to nor against God, yet she recognizes that it can only be resolved by God; Genesis

¹¹⁹ Murphy, "I Remain, an Airy Phantasm," 87.

¹²⁰ Murphy, 90.

¹²¹ Murphy, 88.

follows the question with “So she went to inquire of the Lord.” The conjunctive dependence of Rebekah’s action on her question leaves no clear space for passing time or the weighing of alternative options. Her question is one of confusion and her response one of faith. Hutchinson’s account casts Rebekah’s spiritual approach in a very different light: “Why yet doth God let me continue so?/ Why sends he not Death to conclude my pain/ But makes me more than all my sex sustain?” (17.96–98). Calvin likewise, without precedent from Genesis 25, claims that Rebekah “desireth to dy.”¹²² Rebekah recognizes that an elect and a damned twin are at “mortall warre” within her, and therefore, Calvin concludes, “she considereth that it is better for her to dye a hundred times, then that such a horrible monster shuld be set foorth in her.”¹²³ Hutchinson, however, credits Rebekah’s desire to die not to a holy rejection of the damned but to an unholy mistrust of God. In 17.96–98, Rebekah brazenly questions providential goodness and accuses God of injustice. Either out of ignorance or denial, Rebekah only “at length to God applied” for an understanding of her situation, and unlike God’s direct answer in Genesis 25:23, God communicates through an angel in canto 17 (17.100). Rebekah appears to be one whose lack of faith and trust separates her from loving communion with God and from any credible understanding of providence.

Yet, contrary to every expectation and bias evoked by Hutchinson’s retelling of Rebekah’s story, Rebekah’s worship pleases God, who responds with the gift of providential insight. God does not even answer Rebekah at the altar, a typical place to seek His will in the Old Testament and a possible interpretation of Genesis 25:22’s description, “So she went to inquire of the Lord.”¹²⁴ It is instead in the spiritually and politically ambiguous grove and, more

¹²² Calvin, *Commentarie vpon Genesis*, 528.

¹²³ Calvin, 528.

¹²⁴ Jdg. 20:26–27 links the idea of “enquiring of the Lord” to worship and animal sacrifice.

specifically, at a spring where God answers Rebekah. Her worship at the altar ends syntactically after two lines with a period (17.102–3), yet her repetition of worship at the spring flows over its two lines to include God’s response within the same sentence:

Down by a spring she sat, repeating there
 The late petitions of her anxious prayer,
 When to her supplications and her tears
 At last the Almighty bent his gracious ears. (17.107–10)

Rebekah at the spring and God in heaven become syntactically one, and God’s response is one of tender condescension, suggesting a new loving communion between the worshipper and God. As “the Almighty bent his gracious ears” to the suffering woman at the spring, the next line ascends the reader directly to heaven, where “About his throne myriads of angels stand/ Ready to execute his great command” (17.111–12). At the spring, God’s grace and care raise the human perspective from earthly suffering to eternal omnipotence and majesty. Providential grace thwarts all human expectations by being poured out on one who has not clearly trusted God and in a place of danger and possible deceit.

This unearned, unexpected grace illustrates Calvinist election, as confirmed by the themes of eternity and fate which Hutchinson adds to providence’s explanation of Rebekah’s difficult pregnancy. In Genesis 25:23, God explains that the twins in Rebekah’s womb will turn into two, separated nations, with one “stronger than the other” and the elder serving the younger. Canto 17 conveys these points but sees them in reference to eternity and destiny, in line with Calvin’s commentary, and thwarts an application to late-seventeenth-century politics. Jacob and Esau will not be mere temporal nations but will “with each other evermore contend” (17.128). Fate causes this eternal contention. The nations’ “fates or persons” will not “agree”; “The younger’s happier destiny shall prevail,” and the younger will have “Courage and strength in

vain opposing fate:/ Fate whose irrevocable laws decree/ The eldest must the younger's servant be" (17.132, 136, 138–40). Although Hutchinson's other writings often used the pagan names of "fate" or "fortune" to describe instances where God's will bewilders humans, here "fate" is clearly part of the divine order, structured by "irrevocable laws" not chance.¹²⁵ The epic frames this fate as a form of Calvinist predestination, which separates Jacob and Esau into the spiritual categories of the saved and the damned, "as far/ From concord as the light and darkness are" (17.129–30).

God's message of spiritual predestination, revealed and unearned at the spring, quiets narrow human concerns over physical suffering and Parliamentary ghosts and instead highlights weighty, eternal truths. Only in this wide, providential perspective can Rebekah overcome her situation's terror; God sends the revelation so that she will "quit [her] fear" (17.122). This providential perspective also quiets the reader's fears. Even if two children from one womb are divided, as Rebekah's sons will be, and as Britain's royalists, Parliamentarians, Anglicans, and dissenters are, providence's plans are for eternal destinies, not temporal nations or churches. By identifying in Rebekah the spiritual darkness and light that her sons represent, *Order and Disorder* invites its readers to recognize that even those who appear clearly within God's favor are ill-equipped to interpret His will. That God reveals the arc of salvation history, the continued battle between light and darkness, by a spring (over which Rebekah lacks control) rather than the altar (where she must make sacrifices) indicates that providence, not humanity, is the impetus behind history. Thus, whether or not Rebekah was correct in her spiritual approach, God's truth and plans prevail.

¹²⁵ Cf. Patrick, "All That Appears," 344.

Isaac's and Jacob's Pursuit of "Crystal" Waters

The final two inserted providential fountains in *Order and Disorder* move the biblical characters from simply making sense of temporal uncertainties and sufferings within an eternal framework to desiring eternal goodness above all earthly goods. Isaac's and Jacob's unstable earthly fortunes heighten their desire for heavenly blessings, imagined as crystal springs in cantos 17 and 18.

When Isaac's poverty turns into riches, he loses an intimidated Philistine king's favor and protection, which canto 17.328 criticizes as the "changing...tides of princes' grace." Yet, Isaac appears unconcerned, even unimpacted, by the king's withdrawn "grace." Raymond Brown claims that although "millenarian theorists, weaving complex notions of God's future plans" remained throughout the Restoration era, most nonconformist teaching turned towards a "more applied, pragmatic eschatology," which set its hopes on heaven rather than earthly transformation. "Reflecting on heaven was not an exercise in speculative escapism but the incentive for immediate action," specifically, to embrace earthly losses as a catalyst for heavenly desires and a highway to future heavenly gains.¹²⁶ Hutchinson's Isaac enacts these nonconformist teachings with a single-minded, active pursuit of heavenly goods and a total disregard for earthly losses and potential earthly gains.

Seemingly indifferent to his sudden loss of earthly favor and safety, Isaac fixates on redigging his father's old wells, which 17.410 describes as "A crystal fountain," echoing the crystal waters flowing from God's throne in heaven (Revelation 22:1). This same desire for heavenly goods appears in the next scene when God renews His Abrahamic covenant with Isaac.

¹²⁶ Brown, *Spirituality in Adversity*, 88–90 (quotations from 90).

To God's promise to "bless" and "multiply" Isaac's seed in Genesis 26:24, Hutchinson adds the gift of "Perpetual grace," thereby interpreting the covenant through a New Testament lens that Isaac will bless the world through Jesus and His eternal grace (17.423). By applying the word "grace" to King Abimelech's changing favor and to God's eternal favor, canto 17 juxtaposes stable heavenly blessings with unstable earthly blessings, inviting the audience to pursue eternal goods. When Isaac awakens, he meditates "On God's new-promised grace," "erects/ An altar and invokes the Lord's great name," apparently focusing on no other part of God's revelation besides His "Perpetual grace," which is so unlike the "changing...tides of princes' grace" (17.426–27, 423, 328). Eternity and the gospel are to Isaac far more tantalizing than the promise of his descendants becoming a great nation—a promise that insinuates earthly power. While Isaac seems to have felt no real loss at the withdrawal of Abimelech's "grace," he, having tasted God's "Perpetual grace," turns all the energies of his household to pursuing the heavenly waters by searching out "new springs" in 17.429–32.

Isaac's son Jacob also responds to lost and denied earthly fortunes by beginning a quest for "a small crystal stream which singly flows/ From th'upper springs" (18.253–54).¹²⁷ No matter Jacob's situation, he remains "well content/ With the pure fountain of God's blessing" (18.257–58). The pursuit of heavenly waters is a hallmark of the chosen seed in *Order and Disorder*, evident in Abraham, Rebekah, Isaac, and Jacob. These individuals discover the heavenly waters only through the personally arduous, divinely ordained process of transforming their earthly perspectives into providential ones. Yet, once discovered, these heavenly waters satisfy more than earthly blessings could. Furthermore, these heavenly waters alone resolve or avert circumstantial terrors and confusions. Rather than Isaac feeling confusion at Abimelech's

¹²⁷ Isaac sends Jacob in his flight from Esau with "No servants, horses, money, food, nor clothes," and Jacob loses his place with his family (18.245).

sudden, unmerited disfavor, or Jacob feeling terror in his flight from his murderous brother, neither patriarch focuses on his changed earthly fortunes, being so caught up in the pursuit of “crystal” waters.

An Unlikely Worshipper

Although the fountain of Truth may bring transformation to the patriarchs and their wives, who are accepted as “The Almighty’s favourites,” what effect can it have on those individuals whose election remains unclear—or is outright denied—within church tradition (18.252)? Ishmael, the unchosen seed, is such a case in *Order and Disorder*.

The King James Bible’s translation of Genesis 21:9 records, “And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, which she had born unto Abraham, mocking” Isaac. Calvin claims that scripture uses the Hebrew word used to describe Ishmael’s laughter positively, as in “childish or harmesle play,” and negatively, as “a malicious scorning.”¹²⁸ Yet the English Bible translations all read the word in Genesis 21:8 negatively, with the Geneva Bible’s marginal note interpreting it as Ishmael “derid[ing] Gods promes made to Izhak.” Contemporary theologians likewise condemned Ishmael as a model of damnation and spiritual discord. William Allen (d. 1686), a former Baptist who became an ardent conformist at the Restoration, grouped together “*Cain, Cham, Nimrod, Ishmael, Esau, Saul, Ahab, &c.*” as individuals who possessed “more Original Sin than what they had from *Adam*.”¹²⁹ The Anglican Abraham Wright stressed

¹²⁸ Calvin, *Commentarie vpon Genesis*, 455.

¹²⁹ William Allen, *A Discourse of the Nature, Ends, and Difference of the Two Covenants* (London, 1673), A4.

Ishmael's damnation by asserting that "outward blessings are no signes of eternal election" and by portraying Ishmael as born of the flesh not the spirit, since "it was the spiritualness of *Isaac* which rendered him so obnoxious to his Carnal Brother *Ishmael*."¹³⁰ In a series of sermons on Sarah and Hagar, Josias Shute (bap. 1588–1643), a moderate Puritan clergyman and widely respected preacher, agreed that the spiritual "inheritance, is reserved for *Isaac*" who alone is "ordained to salvation."¹³¹ Damned Ishmael rebels against the law like a "mad dog" made "madder for his chayn," or "like a river that is stopped, [which] riseth, and foameth, and swelleth: and thus the Law is said to strengthen sin."¹³² The river is replenished by its source, but because it is "stopped" in its course, restrained by the law without the hope of election, it becomes a threat rather than a source of life or plenty. Evident in Shute's imagery is both condemnation and fear of Ishmael, indicative of royalists' fears of nonconformists on the eve of the English Civil War when this sermon was preached (12 January 1641). In 1667, the Anglican clergyman Richard Allestree (1619–1681) likened Ishmael to belligerent, mocking dissenters who endangered the peace and reputation of the restored national church, "the *right heir* of the Promise": "do we daily thus see *Ishmael* mocking *Isaac*, and shall we not think it time to cast out the Bond-woman and her Son?"¹³³

This reading of Isaac as the Church of England and Ishmael as nonconformity holds special poignancy in considering Hutchinson's interpretation of the Genesis narrative. Like Ishmael, who was a teenager by the time of Isaac's birth, dissenters had enjoyed years as the supposed "son of promise" during the Interregnum. Yet, now they were cast out, replaced by the

¹³⁰ Wright, *Practical Commentary*, 24, 32. Cf. 1 Cor. 2:14.

¹³¹ Arnold Hunt, "Shute, Josias (bap. 1588, d. 1643)," ODNB, September 23, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/25485>; Josias Shute, *Sarah and Hagar, or, Genesis the Sixteenth Chapter* (London, 1649), 153.

¹³² Shute, *Sarah and Hagar*, 166–67.

¹³³ Richard Allestree, *The Causes of the Decay of Christian Piety* (London, 1667), 324.

Anglican church. Was the Anglican church indeed the Isaac of England, providence's choice for the nation? And if so, was the dissenting church damned like Ishmael, as contemporary Anglicans preached, or could it remain within providence's blessing even if it was not the chosen son?

I have found only two, seventeenth-century, published works which consider the possibility of Ishmael's salvation. Without qualification, the Westminster Assembly divine John Lightfoot's (1602–1675) commentary on Genesis states, "There is good *probability of Ismaels salvation*."¹³⁴ The Puritan William Whately fleshed out this probability in his 1640 Genesis commentary. Whately praises Ishmael for his filial obedience in submitting to Abraham's banishment and obeying Hagar in marrying an Egyptian wife, a union God ordained to "increase your godly sorrow for sinne," which, presumably, instigates conversion.¹³⁵ Although Whately acknowledges Ishmael's sins ("a degree of persecution," "a wilde man...that would not be subject to any almost," "a quarrelsome fellow"), he encourages his readers to repent of similar sins, insinuating that Ishmael also could have repented.¹³⁶ Whately suggests that Ishmael's deliverance in the desert was foretold in his divinely-gifted, "sweet" name, which means "*God will heare*." This earlier provision of a sign of divine favor makes Ishmael's election probable. Whately even exhorts his readers to yearn for Ishmael's situation: "O that we could labour to be *Ismaels* in this sense, such as have interest unto this mercy of being heard of God." In fact, Whately reads Ishmael's deliverance as an opportunity to "learne to trust upon him [God] ever after, and not to be carkingly troubled with casting dangers before hand and disquieting our selves with feares, because we see no way out," but instead to have confidence that "God will

¹³⁴ John Lightfoot, *A Few and New Observations vpon the Booke of Genesis* (London, 1642), 14.

¹³⁵ Whately, *Prototypes*, 158–60.

¹³⁶ Whately, 160–62.

have a Well in store and shew it us at the exigent.”¹³⁷

Despite Ishmael’s aptness as a spiritual role model, Whately admits that “we are not sure” if he is among the “Saints.”¹³⁸ Yet, the fact that scripture records Ishmael’s age at death and uses the euphemism, “*He was gathered to his people,*” both of which are used elsewhere only of “good men,” indicates that “some probability is given that he was a good man” and that “he went among the Congregation of good men which went before him.” Ishmael in death, as in life, is a positive, spiritual example for Whately’s readers to emulate: “we must learne by his death to prepare for ours.”¹³⁹ That he is not the chosen son appears inconsequential to his spiritual journey. In fact, his exile and death best illustrate his spiritual potential.

Whately’s popularity makes it likely that Hutchinson, who had access to large libraries throughout her upbringing and marriage, was familiar with his works.¹⁴⁰ *Order and Disorder* expands upon the probability of Ishmael’s election and wrestles with the poignant question of the spiritual outcast’s place within providence. With a cruelty which might have reminded Restoration dissenters of their own experience of exclusion from the national church and public life, Sarah demands that Hagar and her son be cast out from Abraham’s household:

“This slave,” said she, “in her own insolent pride
Hath bred her brat who did my son deride;
Wherefore no more will I sustain their scorn,
Nor shall a slave’s proud son, so basely born,
A share of Isaac’s heritage expect:
Wherefore this Hagar and her son eject.” (14.265–70)

Although Sarah’s request in Genesis 21:10 is simply to cast them out so that Ishmael will not

¹³⁷ Whately, 162.

¹³⁸ Whately, 162.

¹³⁹ Whately, 162–63.

¹⁴⁰ Jacqueline Eales, “William Whately (1583–1639),” ODNB, September 23, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29178>; Norbrook, “Lucy Hutchinson (ODNB).”

share in the inheritance, Hutchinson heightens the vindictiveness of Sarah's language to an extent that causes the reader to question her spiritual rightness more than Ishmael's. Few readers would believe that the central purpose of Ishmael's upbringing was to learn how to "deride" Isaac; yet, he was "bred" to do so, Sarah excoriates. Furthermore, while Sarah appears to be protecting her son of promise, her words reveal that she is thinking mainly of herself when she claims, "no more will I sustain their scorn."

Here is another example of Hutchinson's "contestation of vocabulary" and "dominant tropes" as they were used by the era's political victors to describe the Restoration world in a light favorable to the Stuart cause.¹⁴¹ Sarah's exaggeration and egotism mimics the type of language which conformists like Shute or Allestree used against dissenters to protect the Anglican status as the "chosen" church. Hutchinson's use of the word "eject" (rather than "cast out" in the Geneva and KJV) further evokes images of ejected nonconformist ministers.¹⁴² Although Abraham pities Ishmael, who "Should for one scoff be evermore exiled," he makes no attempt to protect Ishmael from Sarah's cruelty—a passivity reminiscent of Charles II's hollow promises of indulgence (14.274). To evoke public change, Hutchinson highlights the era's injustices without asserting power. This powerlessness results not from republican defeatism, as Susan Wiseman argues, but from submitting to providential priorities that supersede political injustices.¹⁴³ God instructs Abraham to heed his wife's request in 14.315–18 and in Genesis 21:12; it is providence, not Sarah, that ultimately ejects Ishmael from the chosen household.

Yet, this ejection is laced with providential kindness, as Abraham explains to Ishmael in

¹⁴¹ Wiseman, *Conspiracy and Virtue*, 223.

¹⁴² Calvin also names Ishmael's situation an "ejection, and banishment" but expresses no empathy or hope of salvation, like Hutchinson does, making it likely that her "eject" bears contemporary, dissenting sympathies; Calvin, *Commentarie vpon Genesis*, 457.

¹⁴³ Wiseman, *Conspiracy and Virtue*, 226–27.

14.327–36:

“Enforced,” said he, “by your own insolence,
 God knows ‘tis with much grief I send you hence.
 He doth this exile for your pride inflict,
 And I must not his pleasure contradict.
 If this just punishment correct your sin
 And you an humbler course of life begin,
 He will your wandering steps to safe paths guide
 And an establishment for you provide.
 Wherefore I you unto his grace commend,
 Who never leaves such as on him depend.”

Ishmael’s crimes of “insolence” and “pride” are serious. That Abraham calls this punishment an “exile” carries the religio-political associations that Ishmael has been cast out of the Holy State.

Yet, Abraham’s punishment intends his son’s reconciliation with God, with hope that “this just punishment correct your sin” so that Ishmael may “an humbler course of life begin.”

Significantly, Ishmael is cut off from the Holy State, not from God, who will “guide” his “wandering steps” and “Who never leaves such as on him depend.” Abraham garners this assurance from God’s instruction to

...let not longer thy affections flow
 In a divided channel, but bestow
 It whole on him who is ordained thy heir [Isaac],
 And trust thy other child [Ishmael] unto my care. (14.315–18)

Although Abraham must “channel” his “affections” to the chosen son, Ishmael is a stream which will now receive its waters of blessing and provision directly from God.

Ironically, Ishmael and Hagar nearly die in the desert because of the lack of sustaining waters. Hagar “searched the woods but no springs found,/ Then, desperate, flung herself upon the ground,” “Abandoning herself to sad complaint” (14.345–46, 348). In the spirit of historical

vraisemblance, which adds dialogue or thoughts to historical events to elucidate the actors' possible intentions, Hutchinson gives words to Hagar's crying in Genesis 21.¹⁴⁴ Rather than seeking to understand the ways of providence, Hagar wishes away Ishmael's birth, condemns God as "cruel" for not coming to "wretches' cries," and pursues self-empowerment over divine provision: "'O that I could,' said she, 'thaw to a spring/ Which might my Ishmael some refreshment bring!'" (14.387, 365–66). Although her motherly sacrifice may appear admirable, Hagar poses this solution before she considers the possibility of God's provision in 14.376–80:

Is mercy both from heaven and earth exiled?
Will not the Lord employ his gracious power,
Either relieve us with a gentle shower
Or cause a spring to rise whereat we may
Our thirst before death seize us yet allay?

Despite "mercy" being a central, divine characteristic, it has been "exiled" from God's and man's dwelling places. God, it seems, is not at home, or perhaps, like Hagar and Ishmael, has been ejected from history. Hagar expects less of God than she did of herself, as she initially wishes for a single "shower" instead of the continual provision of a "spring." Worse still, she quickly abandons her momentary glance at providence by concluding, "No, we must surely die" (14.381). The answering angel condemns Hagar's "unbelieving fears," echoing the superstitious fear and doubt that the "Principles" offers as evidence of damnation (14.395).

In canto 14, Ishmael finds favor with God through penitence, while Hagar confirms her damnation through a lack of faith and a worship-lacking response to providential blessings. In keeping with Genesis 21:17, the angel comes in response to Ishmael's cries, not Hagar's. Although the Geneva Bible comments that God answers "For his promes sake made to Abraham,

¹⁴⁴ Robert Wilcher, "Lucy Hutchinson and Genesis: Paraphrase, Epic, Romance," *English* 59, no. 224 (2010): 37, <https://doi.org/10.1093/english/efp033>.

and not because y^e childe had discretion and iudgeme[n]t to praye,” Hutchinson’s angel informs Hagar, “The penitent prayers of thy afflicted child/ Have him to heaven’s favour reconciled” (14.396–97). These cries become a conversion moment in which Ishmael realizes and confesses his sins and turns to God for salvation. However, even if Ishmael’s reconciliation with God has occurred, Hagar’s has not. The poem emphasizes this point by altering the following details. Rather than God opening Hagar’s eyes to allow her to see the well already there, as in Genesis 21:19, God causes “a fresh spring” to “arise” from the earth (14.409). Hutchinson refuses to give Hagar the eyes of faith with which others in the epic understand providential mysteries. Instead, the Egyptian’s “blearèd eyes” clear only for a moment while “with amazement she at first beheld/ But, ceasing wonder, straight her bottle filled” (14.408, 410–11). Though providence employs Hagar to save the life of one of its own, she remains among the spiritually blind, unable to worship.

Ishmael’s penitence, by contrast, leads to a worshipful trust in God and to providential desires that indicate his election. 14.414–17 expands Genesis 21:20’s brief commentary, “And God was with the lad,” to envision an Ishmael who boldly testifies to God’s goodness:

“Mother,” said he, “since God hath heard our prayer,
 Let not our sad state drive us to despair.
 He who for us produced this crystal spring
 In future times may happier fortunes bring.”

The future remains unknown, even spiritually suspicious, as the choice of the term “fortunes” rather than “providence,” implies.¹⁴⁵ However, Ishmael’s real focus is on eternal rather than earthly realities, as the end-line juxtaposition of “despair” and “crystal spring” suggests. The early modern era considered “despair” as a sure pathway to hell because its complete

¹⁴⁵ Cf. Patrick, “All That Appears.”

hopelessness represented a lack of trust in God.¹⁴⁶ Although Ishmael is the unchosen seed, he engages in the holy, family tradition of seeking providential “crystal springs,” as Isaac and Jacob do. While the biblical narrative records that Ishmael “grew, and dwelt in the wilderness, and became an archer,” *Order and Disorder* expedites this.¹⁴⁷ In 14.418–21, Ishmael assures his mother:

“Meanwhile here let us make ourselves a seat.
I, hunting in these woods, will kill your meat,
And God himself, you see, hath sent us drink,
That we may not beneath our sorrows sink.”

Hunting becomes a present necessity to meet his mother’s desires; Ishmael calls it “your meat,” while finding his own comfort in a reminder of God’s provision of the spring. Neither Genesis nor *Order and Disorder* record Hagar drinking from the spring, but by expanding this section, Hutchinson’s poem emphasizes that Hagar desires meat while Ishmael desires water. Hagar desires the things of the flesh while Ishmael desires the things of the spirit, often represented by water in scripture.¹⁴⁸

After these many signs of election, the epic raises the contemporary counterargument for Ishmael’s damnation by dangerously intermingling the flesh and the spirit when Ishmael obeys his mother in marrying an Egyptian in 14.427. Emily Griffiths Jones argues that in *Order and Disorder*, “God’s love and election are reserved for true believers, for whom marriage can never be a compromise,” as doing so would threaten the Holy State’s spiritual stability and progress.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁶ E.g., Nathan Shannon examines Richard Baxter’s warnings to his wife that her despair was a sinful resistance of God’s mercy; Nathan Shannon, “A Strange Sadness: Margaret Baxter on the Trauma of Conversion,” *Feminist Theology* 30, no. 2 (2022): 150–51, <https://doi.org/10.1177/09667350211055458>.

¹⁴⁷ Cf. Gen. 21:20.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Isa. 44:3, Jn. 4:14, 7:37–39, 1 Cor. 12:13.

¹⁴⁹ Jones, “My Victorious Triumphs,” 175.

Yet is Hagar successful? Does Ishmael turn out to be one of the damned after all? *Order and Disorder* proposes that spiritual election and having an earthly, providential role (such as preserving the Holy State) are not interdependent. Hagar, after all, who bears every mark of a damned soul is used by God to carry out His earthly plans. *Order and Disorder's* retelling of Ishmael's story implies that the favor which the unchosen son finds with God is not a result of his active role in the Holy State, but because he establishes his life around heavenly rather than earthly goods and is marked by love and peace rather than hopelessness and fear.

Ishmael's reappearance in canto 16, alongside his brother Isaac to bury their father, affirms the righteousness of the unchosen son. By the time of Abraham's death, "Fraternal love had chased their youthful feud," and so now, "With mutual kindness each rejoiced to see/ The enlargement of his brother's family" (16.321–24). Ishmael's life, prosperity, and family, begin by moving waters—a positive spiritual sign, as the epic elsewhere indicates: "Along those pleasant banks by whose green side/ Euphrates' gently-flowing waters glide,/ Ishmael first pitched his tents," made a life for himself, and at last "out of the upper world descends/ To th'earth's dark entrails, where his glory ends/ In dust" (16.325–27, 337–39). The Euphrates was one of the four rivers which flowed from the central river in Eden, recorded in Genesis before the Fall.¹⁵⁰ The epic's favorable description of the river in Ishmael's story suggests a tie to this prelapsarian Eden which nourishes his life. Isaac's "Fraternal love" for his brother also insinuates Ishmael's inclusion among the elect, as *Order and Disorder* typically preaches an icy divide between the holy and corrupt states.¹⁵¹ Ishmael enjoys peace and communion with the godly, lives in "the upper world" (an image which echoes Hutchinson's descriptions of "upper springs" and worship's ascension to God), and makes no apparent attempts to preserve his

¹⁵⁰ Cf. Gen. 2:10–14.

¹⁵¹ Jones, "My Victorious Triumphs," 171–77.

personal glory before his death (18.254).¹⁵² Ishmael's life carries out the "Principles" call to inward worship, revealing the unchosen son's providential favor without relation to enacting God's plans.

Whether or not Ishmael can be considered one of the elect—or if that question even can be asked—his godly reaction to the providential spring would have surprised contemporaries. Though Ishmael is unchosen for the earthly role of continuing the Holy Seed, his worshipful penitence and recognition of providential goodness and his thirst for heavenly waters reveal his spiritual election. Meanwhile, God employs for His purposes Hagar, whose failure to recognize divine omnipotence and goodness proves her damnation. *Order and Disorder's* retelling of Genesis 21 thus implies that one's earthly, providential role is unrelated to one's eternal election. Mysterious providence may use the wicked to fulfill His plans and rescind from the elect any earthly purpose. This message bears great comfort to dissenters, ejected like Ishmael from God's earthly plans. Dissenters' ejection from power was no reflection of their spiritual standing, and they need never regain earthly power to live in God's favor and nearness—a deeply needed conviction after nearly two decades of continued oppression.

Conclusion

Order and Disorder's engagement with Lucretius and the Restoration royal court demonstrates a remarkable cultural and social "porosity."¹⁵³ The poem commends Lucretian

¹⁵² Cf. Hutchinson, *TW*, 254.

¹⁵³ Goldie, *Roger Morrice*, xxii–xxiv.

atheism's rejection of superstition and the 1670s aversion to reading changeable circumstances as terrifying providential signs, but reimagines these ideologies within an orthodox, providential framework. This graceful reading of opposing worldviews allows the poem to build intellectual common ground with nonconformists' enemies—to praise the same stream as true but propose that this stream originates from a different spring than contemporaries suppose.

The poem's rejection of circumstances as reliable indicators of divine favor or judgment allows it to entertain the election of those who might otherwise appear condemned. *Order and Disorder* extends the possibility of God's favor to court atheists, to devout individuals whose reason challenges providence or whose conduct appears spiritually and politically suspect, and to the son ejected from providence's earthly designs. Hutchinson's 1670s writings minimize earthly differences and invite an eternal perspective, gained through worshipful communion with God. Through this loving communion, the worshipper learns to interpret all circumstances as flowing from providence's combined omnipotence and goodness and, thus, feels neither terror nor confusion over life's changeability. This dissertation's final study explores how the published hymnbook of the Restoration period's leading nonconformist, Richard Baxter, employs worship to resolve contemporary, ecclesial divisions.

5

*Concordant Discord:***Richard Baxter, Hymnody, and a “Mere Christian” Church**

In 1681, Richard Baxter published a 135-page, octavo collection of sixteen original poems and hymns entitled *Poetical Fragments: Heart-Employment with God and Itself, The Concordant Discord of a Broken-Healed Heart*. The book is an outlier in Baxter’s vast canon, otherwise dominated by works of practical divinity. Though its poetry bears Baxter’s distinctively candid and conversational style, the volume was never a success, going through only two editions in Baxter’s lifetime (1681, 1689) and three posthumously (1699, 1821, 1971). Seven new poems were printed as *The Additions* in 1683 and later included under a separate title page in the more affordable, duodecimo editions of *Poetical Fragments*. Most, if not all, of the poems were composed between 1642–64 and respond to the nonconformist experience during these turbulent decades. Baxter chose not to publish “some Fragments of Poetry” in 1664, because they, among other manuscripts withheld from publication, “savoured of discontent, & would be interpreted as *against* the *Byshops*, & the times.”¹ There is no evidence that Baxter

¹ Baxter, *RB*, 1:I. 496, §{211.}. Citations from Baxter’s journals are taken from Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr Richard Baxter’s Narrative of the Most Memorable Passages of His Life and Times*, ed. N. H. Keeble, Tim Copper, John Coffey, and Tom Charlton, 5 vols. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020–21), abbreviated as *RB*. Unless otherwise stated, reference is to volume, part, page, and section number. Citations from *Poetical Fragments* are taken from Richard Baxter, *Poetical Fragments: Heart-Employment with God and Itself, The Concordant Discord of a Broken-Healed Heart* (London, 1681), hereafter abbreviated as *PF*. Note that the 1681 edition misnumbers its second through eleventh poems (“The Resolution” through “The Return”) as 3 through 12

revised the poems and hymns for publication in 1681, but he introduced them with a preface, dated 7 August 1681, which situated the volume in contemporary conversations on sacred music.²

This chapter reads the publishing of *Poetical Fragments* in 1681 as part of Baxter's renewed efforts between 1679–85 to secure nonconformist comprehension into the Church of England, which he had long argued was providence's will.³ Baxter had long petitioned to redefine church membership and orthodoxy only on adherence to the core and ancient tenets of the Christian faith, or what he called, "Mere Christianity."⁴ While serving as the leading Presbyterian delegate in the early-1660s church settlement discussions, Baxter wrote a Prayer Book alternative *sans* instructions on forms or ceremonies, leaving such *adiaphora* (that is, matters not essential to salvation or not expressly commanded in scripture) to parochial discretion.⁵ Yet, to Baxter's lasting grief and frustration, the delegates—who, remarkably, agreed on all major doctrinal issues—divided over ecclesial non-essentials, and nonconformists were ejected from the Church in 1662.⁶ Concerns over *adiaphora* redoubled in the early 1680s as conformists calcified in their demands for nonconformist compliance and most nonconformists forsook lingering hopes of ecclesial inclusion.⁷ The yet undefined form and practice of the nascent genre of hymnody, on which *Poetical Fragments* draws, tangibly demonstrates Baxter's

and then picks up correct numbering again on p. 102 for "The Lamentation" (12). In this chapter, I number the poems by their placement in the volume, not by early printings' misnumbering.

² Baxter rarely revised his writings; *RB*, 1:I. 499, §212.

³ Keeble elucidates this campaign well but without recognizing *PF*'s participation therein: Keeble, "Rewriting the Public Narrative," 109, *passim*.

⁴ Baxter coined "Mere Christians" in *Five Disputations of Church-Government and Worship* (London, 1659), 137. For a list of what Baxter includes and excludes from "Meer Christianity": Richard Baxter, *The Reasons of the Christian Religion* (London, 1667), 464–65.

⁵ Cf. Glen J. Segger, *Richard Baxter's Reformed Liturgy: A Puritan Alternative to the Book of Common Prayer* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014), 169–71, *passim*.

⁶ Jacqueline Rose, "The Debate over Authority: *Adiaphora*, the Civil Magistrate, and the Settlement of Religion," in *Settling the Peace of the Church": 1662 Revisited*, ed. N. H. Keeble (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 31.

⁷ Rose, 54.

argument that worship practices have no bearing on orthodoxy and thus should not determine church membership. I do not claim that Baxter originally wrote *Poetical Fragments* to be a literary microcosm of his proposal for ecclesial reform. Yet, this is how he frames the volume in 1681, offering the divided English church a providential pathway to unity and holiness through the cacophony of religious practices.

Poetical Fragments's subtitle "*The Concordant Discord of a Broken-healed Heart*" likely originates with Baxter, whose other early-1680s defenses of nonconformity repeatedly use the terms "concord" and "discord." For example, an EEBO word search of Baxter's *The True and Only Way of Concord of All Christian Churches* (1680) reveals 41 censures of ecclesial "discord" and 185 pleas for "concord." *Poetical Fragments* offers these terms not in opposition but as a single matter—the phenomenon of a broken heart's healing, or, as this chapter proposes, Baxter's hope for the broken English church's healing in the aftermath of the 1640s, 1650s, and, particularly, 1662. The concordant discord of a broken-healed church would look like a national church that allows a discord of practices per parochial preferences but remains concordant across all parishes in the fundamentals of belief. Baxter's use of the nascent genre of hymnody—which this chapter demonstrates to be still indefinite in practice, though an ecumenically enjoyed avenue for worship by 1681—illustrates such "Concordant Discord."

While an old favorite of theologians and ecclesial historians, Richard Baxter has recently become of increasing interest to early modern literary scholars and historians.⁸ Credit for this must go to Neil Keeble, who has spent four decades elucidating the significance of the man to our understanding of nonconformity and its literature and to the events, politics, and people of late-seventeenth-century England. Keeble's first book, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters*

⁸ Most notably, J. I. Packer's 1954 DPhil thesis, *The Redemption and Restoration of Man in the Thought of Richard Baxter: A Study in Puritan Theology* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 2003).

(1982), remains the most comprehensive study of Baxter's writings to-date. Baxter's writings offer peerless fodder for historical and literary study, due to his proclivity to write about almost everyone of any religious, political, intellectual, or social significance, as recently studied by Keeble; his detailed records of, and private and public responses to, current events; and his involvement in public debates and engagement with religious and political leaders.⁹ Baxter will undoubtedly continue to take even greater prominence in early modern studies, as critics respond to the new, five volume edition of his journals, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, and the forthcoming, nine volume edition of his letters.¹⁰

Poetical Fragments speaks to these current interests but has received scant scholarly attention. Critics applaud the preface's seemingly un-Puritan praise of poetry and its tribute to George Herbert but ignore the poetry following—except to pilfer quippy autobiographical details.¹¹ The only extended study of *Poetical Fragments* quotes one poem and analyzes none, basing its argument that the volume is “an extension of Baxter's works of practical divinity” almost entirely on the volume's reception and preface.¹² The volume has been overlooked because misinterpreted as an outpouring of personal grief.¹³ Baxter's preface, written three weeks

⁹ N. H. Keeble, “Richard Baxter Meets John Milton,” *Bunyan Studies* 25 (2021): 6–27. Tim Cooper illuminates Baxter's responses to the Civil War, Protectorate, Restoration nonconformity, and Savoy Conference in *Owen, Baxter, and Formation of Nonconformity*; “Richard Baxter and the Savoy Conference (1661),” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 68, no. 2 (April 2017): 326–39, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022046916001482>.

¹⁰ The forthcoming edition of Baxter's letters (<http://emlo-portal.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/collections/?catalogue=richard-baxter>) expands and updates the *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter*, ed. Geoffrey F. Nuttall and N. H. Keeble, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1991).

¹¹ The 1971 edition's forward elevates Baxter's preface above his poems, and Keeble's *Richard Baxter* references *PF* (and, specifically, its preface) only once—to demonstrate Baxter's “appreciation for the arts”; Richard Baxter, *Poetical Fragments (1st Edition Reprinted with a Biographical Note by V. de S. Pinto)* (Farnborough: Gregg, 1971), [iii]; N. H. Keeble, *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), 106. Among countless references to Baxter's tribute in Herbert criticism, Helen Wilcox opens her critical edition of Herbert's poems therewith; George Herbert, *The English Poems of George Herbert*, ed. Helen Wilcox (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), xxi. For biographical uses of Baxter's poems: Keeble, “Richard Baxter (ODNB).”

¹² Sylvia Brown, “‘Whom I Never Knew to Poetize but Now’: Grief and Passion in the Devotional Poetry of Richard Baxter,” in *People and Piety: Protestant Devotional Identities in Early Modern England*, ed. Elizabeth Clarke and Robert W. Daniel (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020), 233. Cf. Brown, 225, 227.

¹³ Brown, “‘Whom I Never Knew to Poetize,’” 231; Keeble, “Richard Baxter (ODNB).”

after his wife's death, opens by attesting that "my grief for her Removal, and the Revived Sense of former things, have prevailed with me to be passionate in the open sight of all," that is, to publish these poems, which "were mostly written in various Passions."¹⁴ However, the preface makes only one other reference to Margaret Baxter, and just two of the sixteen poems are connected to her—most of them composed before the couple's marriage.¹⁵

I suggest that Margaret's death was the tragic impetus for re-addressing the other great "death" in Baxter's life: the exclusion of nonconformists from the Restoration Church. Baxter links his current experience of loss to "the Revived Sense of former things" that inspired similar outpourings of grief—presumably, things before his marriage, which he highlights as "Nineteen Years" earlier.¹⁶ They married on 10 September 1662, three weeks after the Great Ejection on August 24th.¹⁷ Baxter was among the first to describe the Great Ejection in terms of death as Bartholomew's Day, a tragic repetition of the massacre of French Protestants by French Catholics ninety years earlier.¹⁸ Ejected ministers framed their farewell sermons as "*the words of dying Men*," a point strengthened by the fact that two of the ministers died around the same time.¹⁹ Most compilations of farewell sermons include the funeral sermons for Simeon Ashe and James Nalton, which reveals how the "editors considered these extra texts intrinsic to the Bartholomean message."²⁰ Baxter's linking of Margaret's death with "former things" recalls the early Bartholomeans' association of their social and legal "death" with physical death. Every

¹⁴ Baxter, *PF*, A3^v.

¹⁵ "The Covenant and Confidence of Faith" (8) loosely versifies a personal covenant with God that Margaret wrote, and the concluding poem is the epitaph that Baxter wrote for Margaret's mother's (and later also Margaret's) grave; *PF*, [A5]^v, 81–3, 135.

¹⁶ *PF*, A3^v.

¹⁷ Keeble, "Richard Baxter (ODNB)."

¹⁸ Cf. Baxter, *RB*, 2:II. 185, §278.

¹⁹ *The Farewell Sermons of the Late London Ministers* (London, 1662), a4.

²⁰ Appleby, *Black Bartholomew's Day*, 7.

poem in *Poetical Fragments* touches on the theme of death, directly or as the inevitable predecessor to arriving in heaven.

The dated poems, particularly, map nonconformists' ecclesial triumphs, throes, and fall. "Upon the sight of Mr. Vine" (13), dated October 1656, idealizes the Puritan, ecclesial reformers of the 1650s. Their ministries are marked by unity, being "washed in one stream:/ And... enlightened by one beam," "Much more One Church: for we agreed,/ Both in One Method, and one Creed[] / ...As animated by one Soul."²¹ In "The Lamentation" (12, part I), dated 18 January 1661, Baxter anticipates being sent into "the Wilderness, the secret Cell,/ ...Where I may Die alive, and Live in Death" three months before the Savoy Conference sealed nonconformists' fate.²² Though early negotiations exceeded Baxter's hopes, Venner's Fifth Monarchist uprising in January 1661 doomed nonconformists' chances of comprehension by irreparably yoking dissent to sedition.²³ "The Resolution. *Written when I was silenced and cast out, &c.*" (2), dated 3 December 1663, viscerally articulates the nonconformist experience of ejection. The poem recounts Baxter's mistreatment by the authorities; his sense of betrayal from old colleagues; his loss of home, property, and church; and the fear of imprisonment.²⁴ The poem's subtitle employs the description of nonconformist ejections, "*silenced and cast out,*" that *Reliquiae Baxterianae* later employs.²⁵ By connecting Baxter's present mourning in 1681 with wartime religious divisions, Interregnum reforms, and early Restoration events which ended in nonconformists' unprecedented, ecclesial expulsion, *Poetical Fragments* proclaims the unresolved nature of England's ecclesial settlement.

²¹ Baxter, *PF*, 125.

²² *PF*, 104–5. For an insightful study of why nonconformists failed at Savoy: Cooper, "Richard Baxter and the Savoy Conference."

²³ N. H. Keeble, ed., "*Settling the Peace of the Church*": *1662 Revisited* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 11, 14–15.

²⁴ Baxter, *PF*, 51–56, esp. stanzas 3–4, 6–8, 12, 20.

²⁵ *RB*, 2:II. 186, 1696, | §279. See also 2:II. 21, §{32}; 111, 1696, | §150; 119, §164; 271, §421.

The Restoration ecclesial settlement became newly urgent in the early 1680s. Even moderate Anglican clergymen like Edward Stillingfleet (1635–1699), a champion of nonconformist comprehension since the early 1660s, now demanded obedience. Stillingfleet met with Baxter and others in 1675 to negotiate a comprehension bill and engaged in similar negotiations as late as 1679. However, the impending threat of James ascending to the throne and appointing Roman Catholic magistrates caused Stillingfleet to renege on his commitment to comprehension.²⁶ Stillingfleet's sermon *Mischief of Separation* (1680) demands a united Protestant church based not on the inclusion of differences but uniformity. The sermon condemns nonconformists as irrational schismatics, who occasionally justify attending Anglican services but choose separatism over total conformity.²⁷

Baxter had Stillingfleet's demand for conformity in mind when he published *Poetical Fragments*. Friends advised Baxter not to publish his poems, but he attests in the 1681 preface,

Common painters serve for poor men's work: And a Fidler may serve at a Country-Wedding: Such cannot aspire to the Attainments of the higher sort: And the Vulgar are the greater number. Dr. *Stillingfleet* saith, *I seldom follow my Friend's Advice*: In this I justifie him: Though in other things my Advisers contradict him.²⁸

Baxter subtly jabs at Stillingfleet's Janus-facedness in siding with nonconformists like a friend but then advising like nonconformists' enemies. Baxter would have been unwise to share his strongly nonconformist poetry with a potential Episcopal ally; the "Advice" he references concerns conforming, not publishing. Using the *adiaphora* of art and music, Baxter reiterates why he must disobey Stillingfleet. Different practices suit different audiences. The "higher sort"

²⁶ Barry Till, "Stillingfleet, Edward (1635–1699)," ODNB, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/26526>.

²⁷ Edward Stillingfleet, *The Mischief of Separation a Sermon Preached at Guild-Hall Chappel, May 11, MDCLXXX* (London, 1680).

²⁸ Baxter, *PF*, [A5].

of Episcopal practices suited conformists, but they chafed the “vulgar[s]” consciences. The “higher” practices, like good poetry, are commendable; however, Baxter seeks to accommodate “the greater number.”

This mirrors the logic of Baxter’s “Mere Christian” ecclesiology. When the members of the ecumenical Worcestershire Association of Ministers in the 1650s debated the deity of the Holy Spirit, Baxter turned his colleagues’ attention from whether the doctrine was true to “whether it be necessary for every woman or illiterate person to their salvation.”²⁹ Only those things necessary to salvation, necessarily understood and believed by every Christian, should be included in the Association’s core principles. *Poetical Fragments*’s addressed audience of “Women, and vulgar wits” is the baseline that Baxter established in the 1650s for determining ecclesial essentials and prerequisites for church membership.³⁰

In its cacophony of worship practices, *Poetical Fragments*’s demonstrates that, contrary to assumptions made by Restoration Episcopal leaders, nonconformist practices were neither seditious nor unorthodox. Baxter’s hymns are grief-stricken, angry, and often bitter. Yet, for all of their psalmic candor, they never veer into rebellion. Baxter’s publication of such hymns decades after their composition implies a spiritual constancy untouched by the disappointments of the Restoration experience and a continued plea for nonconformists to be judged only by Christian essentials. In alignment with the practices of early hymnody (which the next section examines), *Poetical Fragments* takes worship as its primary concern and seeks to resolve temporal injustices and providential uncertainties through a deeper reliance on Jesus and scripture’s promises.

²⁹ Paul Chang-Ha Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty: Richard Baxter’s Puritan Ecclesiology in Its Seventeenth-Century Context* (Boston: Brill, 2004), qtd. 169.

³⁰ Baxter, *PF*, [A8]^v.

The *Adiaphora* of Sacred Music

Strangely, only Helen Wilcox and J. R. Watson acknowledge the existence of hymns in *Poetical Fragments*. Wilcox demonstrates that many nonconformists valued poetry's spiritual utility but distinguishes Baxter for also finding spiritual value in the emotions which poetic harmonies raise.³¹ While *Poetical Fragments* certainly reveals a Puritan thinker who is more liberal in his creative allowances than most, Baxter's concern was not poetic. Among his over 140 publications, he published in his lifetime only *Poetical Fragments* and *The Additions* thereto. His psalm versifications and communion hymns were published posthumously.³² Rather, *Poetical Fragments*'s creative liberality works towards the cause at the forefront of Baxter's career: attaining a united national church.

J. R. Watson's charming history of the English hymn analyzes *Poetical Fragments*'s three hymns that survive in modern usage, "He Wants Not Friends that Hath Thy Love," "Lord, It Belongs Not to My Care," and "Ye Holy Angels Bright."³³ Watson's insights underscore Baxter's debt to George Herbert and focus on heaven and on the heart's relationship with Christ—matters on which I build.³⁴ However, Watson studies only those hymns which *look like hymns* to modern audiences. I contend that hymnody had no such definite shape in 1681.

³¹ Helen Wilcox, "Voices and Echoes: Poetical Precedents from Herbert to Bunyan," *Bunyan Studies* 22 (2018): 16.

³² Richard Baxter, *Paraphrase on the Psalms of David in Metre* (London, 1692); Richard Baxter, *Monthly Preparations for the Holy Communion* (London, 1696), 149–72.

³³ These hymns are extracts from "The Resolution" (3), "The Covenant and Confidence of Faith" (8), and "A Psalm of Praise" (9); Baxter, *PF*, 51–61, 81–89.

³⁴ J. R. Watson, *The English Hymn: A Critical and Historical Study* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997), 115–21.

Herein I differ from previous studies on seventeenth-century English hymnody—though they be few in number. Like Watson, Thelma Thompson, Sharon Achinstein, Jenna Townend, Sarah Apetrei, John Coffey, and the contributors to *Dissenting Praise: Religious Dissent and the Hymn in England and Wales* (2011) consider only seventeenth-century hymns which are meant to be sung, typically congregationally.³⁵ And as hymns were not used in parish churches until the evangelical revival (and then, irregularly) and not granted equal status with psalmody by diocesan consistory courts until 1820, these critics' narrow focus leads them to assume that seventeenth-century hymnody was a primarily nonconformist practice.³⁶ Furthermore, as only psalmody had been used for congregational singing since the Reformation, most of these critics read early English hymns as acts of religious and/or political resistance. Achinstein describes seventeenth-century hymns as “acts of opposition to the official state church”; Townsend as “defiance” against “the prescriptive liturgies of the Established Church”; Thompson as expressions of partisan doubts, fears, and beliefs; and Apetrei as demonstrations of anti-formalism among radical sectarians.³⁷ I do not deny that the hymn was sometimes used in such ways, especially during the tumultuous mid-1600s. However, my findings suggest that the seventeenth-century English hymn was far more ecumenical in its appeal and use, far less definite in its expression, and far more concerned with the worship of God than with religious

³⁵ Thelma B. Thompson, *The Seventeenth-Century English Hymn: A Mode for Sacred and Secular Concerns* (New York: Lang, 1989), 1; Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent*, Chapter 6, esp. p. 221; Jenna Townend, “[S]weet Singer of Our Israel’: Psalms, Hymns, and Dissenting Appropriations of George Herbert’s Poetry,” *Bunyan Studies*, no. 22 (2018): 39–62; Sarah Apetrei, “The ‘Sweet Singers’ of Israel: Prophecy, Antinomianism and Worship in Restoration England,” *Reformation and Renaissance Review* 10, no. 1 (2008): 3–23, <https://doi.org/10.1558/rrr.v10i1.3>; John Coffey, “Between Puritanism and Evangelicalism: ‘Heart-Work’ in Dissenting Communion Hymns, 1693–1709,” in *Heart Religion: Evangelical Piety in England and Ireland, 1690–1850*, ed. John Coffey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 29–49; Isabel Rivers and David L. Wykes, eds., *Dissenting Praise: Religious Dissent and the Hymn in England and Wales* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 17–18; 197–201.

³⁶ For eighteenth-century parochial hymnody: Rivers, *Vanity Fair and the Celestial City*, 340. For the 1820 ruling: Nicholas Temperley, *Studies in English Church Music, 1550–1900* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 107.

³⁷ Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent*, 213; Townend, “[S]weet Singer,” 41; Thompson, *Seventeenth-Century English Hymn*, 193; Apetrei, “Sweet Singers,” 6–7, 20.

politics or reforming congregational worship. *Poetical Fragments* uses these traits of early hymnody to encourage unity and, especially, holiness, not resistance to the Stuart regime or episcopacy.

What piqued my interest in Baxter's use of sacred music is his curious naming of the volume's unfinished, unsingable, fifty-page, opening poem a "Hymn."³⁸ The fragmented poem gives the book its title and, thus, can be said to characterize the entire volume. "Love Breathing Thanks and Praise" (1), composed in 1642, is a history of providence's engagement in Baxter's life up until his first year of ministry in Kidderminster, Worcestershire. The poem breaks off suddenly after lambasting the outbreak of "*England's* horrid Civil Wars," in which "striving factions Charity defy'd" and "fill'd the Church with strife."³⁹ Baxter follows the poem with a prose paragraph explaining its incompleteness. The phrasing echoes the 1681 preface, indicating that Baxter added the explanation for publication: "I purposed to have recited the most notable mercies of my Life, in continuing this Hymn of Thanksgiving to my gracious God; but the quality of the Subject, and the Ages Impatience stopt me here, and I could go no further, and my painful and spiritless Age is now unfit for Poetry."⁴⁰ The poem and explanation ground the reader in the national and ecclesial divisions over providence's way in 1642 which remain, for all intents and purposes, unresolved in 1681. If a nonconformist expression of worship made 1642 England "Impatien[t]," 1681 England is "unfit" for it.⁴¹ The hymn's fragmentation implies that contemporary divisions stunt worship. Baxter's rebuke of an unreceptive, "*spiritless*" audience suggests that these divisions stem from contemporaries' lack of attunement to providence's ways (my emphasis).

³⁸ Baxter, *PF*, 50.

³⁹ *PF*, 47–48.

⁴⁰ *PF*, 50. Cp. to first parenthetical on A3^v.

⁴¹ *PF*, 50.

On one hand, Baxter's naming the first poem a "Hymn" simply indicates its intention to praise God.⁴² However, *Poetical Fragments's* preface focuses repeatedly on contemporary uses of sacred music, and five of the volume's sixteen poems include musical settings. By 1681, the hymn was a popular form for congregational worship in nonconformist conventicles, although hymnals for congregational use did not emerge in print until the 1690s.⁴³ In 1676, Baxter mentioned the common use of original hymns (alongside psalmody) in nonconformist congregations.⁴⁴ Baxter's addition of the word "Hymn" in 1681, paired with the volume's wider engagement with sacred music, raises a difference in practice by which conventicles were becoming distinct from parish churches.

Yet, Baxter does not beg his "painful and spiritless Age" for toleration to praise God in a nonconformist way, nor does he offer *Poetical Fragments* for congregational use. The volume's addressed audience of "Women, and vulgar wits," and "afflicted, sick, dying, troubled, sad and doubting Persons" indicates domestic and private devotion.⁴⁵ Indeed, Baxter so opposed separatism that he refused to begin his own conventicle after 1662 and took care that his itinerant preaching never interfered with the parish church's schedule.⁴⁶ Rather, the hymnist begs for the comprehension of nonconformists, with their varying practices, into the Church of England. After Baxter declares England "unfit for Poetry" (and, specifically, for this nonconformist "Hymn"), the volume continues with another fifteen poems. The apparent contradiction raises the possibility that late Restoration England may yet be receptive to nonconformist practices. If

⁴² Cf. "hymn, n.," 1 (OED).

⁴³ Coffey, "Between Puritanism and Evangelicalism," 35–37.

⁴⁴ Richard Baxter, *The Judgment of Non-Conformists about the Difference between Grace and Morality* (London, 1676), 101.

⁴⁵ Baxter, *PF*, [A8]^v.

⁴⁶ Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity*, 150.

so, that the providential story which Baxter begins in his “Hymn of Thanksgiving to my gracious God” may yet find a conclusion better aligned with God’s will than ecclesial discord.

Early modern sacred music lent itself particularly well to an argument for ecumenical unity through freedom in *adiaphora*. Jonathan Willis argues that “music was if not more controversial then at least more complex a matter than most other ecclesiastical ceremonies,” because it could not be “a matter of simple binary opposition” like iconoclasm or clerical vestments were.⁴⁷ Sacred music was something supported by, even commanded in, scripture. Yet, the ancient psalm tunes were lost, and the New Testament’s instruction to sing “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” was ambiguous enough to incite debate (Ephesians 5:19, Colossians 3:16). Sacred music differed from other *adiaphora* debates in its lack of clear party lines. Unwillingness to kneel to receive communion, for example, was a strongly nonconformist objection. However, sacred music evoked discord within party lines and engendered points of common ground with religious enemies.

In the mid-seventeenth century, nonconformist and Episcopal moderates interpreted “psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs” only as songs found in scripture.⁴⁸ Yet, poets and clergymen on both sides, including Baxter, also claimed scriptural or spiritual sanction to compose original hymns.⁴⁹ In 1676, Baxter wrote of nonconformist churches, “[W]e hold it lawful to use such as are *invented by men*, that are no Prophets; seeing we are commanded to

⁴⁷ Jonathan P. Willis, *Church Music and Protestantism in Post-Reformation England: Discourses, Sites and Identities* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2009), 64.

⁴⁸ E.g., see such claims by the Independent ministers Nathanael Homes and Cuthbert Sydenham, who condemned radical sects, and the Episcopal minister Joseph Bentham, a Puritan who encouraged conformity to Laudian reforms in the 1630s; Nathanael Homes, *Gospel Musick, or, The Singing of Davids Psalms* (London, 1644), 16; Cuthbert Sydenham, *A Christian, Sober and Plain Exercitation on...Infant Baptism and Singing of Psalms* (London, 1653), 173, 179; Joseph Bentham, *The Right of Kings by Scripture...Together with a Defence of Psalm-Singing* (London, 1661), 64, 81–82.

⁴⁹ For Puritan and Anglican examples, respectively: Elizabeth Clarke, “Hymns, Psalms, and Controversy in the Seventeenth Century,” in *Dissenting Praise: Religious Dissent and the Hymn in England and Wales*, ed. Isabel Rivers and David L. Wykes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 13–32; Watson, *English Hymn*, 86–90, 92, 97.

use *Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs*, (which confineth us not only to Scripture words).” Since *ex tempore* singing is impractical for congregational worship, “those [hymns] that are used by all, must be *invented by some*.”⁵⁰ Many Restoration parish churches and nonconformist conventicles upheld the familiar, sixteenth-century, “Old Version” psalm versifications and tunes by Thomas Sternhold and John Hopkins as the best forms for psalm-singing. Yet, individuals on both sides questioned the spiritual value of the archaic language, certain of the tunes, liberties taken with scripture’s words to fit the meter, or disharmonies created in the name of scriptural fidelity.⁵¹

Alternative psalters proliferated throughout the seventeenth century to address these shortcomings and render psalmody more edifying.⁵² Yet, neither side could agree on the *how*. Baxter’s preface mentions how the Anglican John Patrick’s 1679 psalter “hath so far reconciled the Non-Conformists, that divers of them use his Psalms in their Congregations, though they have the old ones, *Rouses*, Bishop *Kings*, Mr. *Whites*, the *New Englands*, *Davisons*, the *Scots*, (agreed on by two Nations) in competition with it.”⁵³ Critics of early modern sacred music have demonstrated that questions over whether instruments should be used; whether psalms were best read, lined out, or sung in unison, and used in domestic or congregational worship, or both; and whether psalm versifications should be stripped of “aesthetic considerations entirely” to allow closer textual adherence to scripture or “dress[ed]...in English poetic forms worthy of the (notional) elegance of the Hebrew originals” all centered on how to render sacred music most

⁵⁰ Baxter, *Judgment of Non-Conformists*, 100–101.

⁵¹ Beth Quitslund, “Singing the Psalms for Fun and Profit,” in *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (London: Routledge, 2016), 243; Hannibal Hamlin, *Psalm Culture and Early Modern English Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 19–22.

⁵² Hamlin studies multiple of these alternatives in *Psalm Culture*, 69–144.

⁵³ Baxter, *PF*, [A8].

edifying.⁵⁴ Willis demonstrates that people's stances on these issues were "linked to the power of different musical forms to edify."⁵⁵

In stark contrast, *Poetical Fragments's* preface offers no clear guidance on most edifying forms or practices. After wondering at "such learned discreet Men, that know not what a Tune is, nor can difference one from another," Baxter exclaims,

For my self, I confess that Harmony and Melody are the pleasure and elevation of my Soul, and have made a Psalm of Praise in the holy Assembly the chief delightful Exercise of my Religion and my Life; and hath helped to bear down all the Objections which I have heard against Church-Musick, and against the 149, 150 *Psalms*. It was not the least comfort that I had in the converse of my late Dear Wife, that our first in the morning, and last in Bed at night, was a Psalm of Praise (till the hearing of others interrupted it.) Let those that savour not Melody, leave others to their different Appetites.⁵⁶

Baxter's praise of music's form is general: "Harmony and Melody." His support of congregational and domestic uses of sacred music offers little in the way of practice, beyond the ecumenically normalized practice of singing with others ("the holy Assembly" or his wife) and the common Puritan practice of morning and evening domestic psalmody.⁵⁷ Yet, even this domestic worship lacks the practice formulae instructed in seventeenth-century devotional manuals that domestic psalmody be "only a part of regular prayers."⁵⁸ The phrase "a Psalm of Praise" could indicate singing scripture's Psalms, or could refer to any song of praise. Baxter

⁵⁴ Hamlin, *Psalm Culture*, 144, 66. Hamlin examines how the Old Version psalter was claimed as best suited to domestic and congregational use and how Puritans became known for their domestic psalmody—a practice which, Quitslund notes, was associated with hypocrisy. Temperley examines early modern musical practices, noting that the practice of lining out, in which the congregation repeats each line after the minister, was widespread through the Restoration despite opposition, and that polyphony and instruments were typically only used in cathedrals or affluent homes due to widespread doubts over their benefit and to musical unproficiency; Hamlin, 31–34, 36; Quitslund, "Singing the Psalms," 248; Temperley, *Studies in English Church Music*, 91, 5, 8.

⁵⁵ Willis, *Church Music*, 77.

⁵⁶ Baxter, *PF*, [A5]^v–[A6].

⁵⁷ Cf. Quitslund, "Singing the Psalms," 245–49.

⁵⁸ Quitslund, 249.

gives this same title to one of his original hymns.⁵⁹ Baxter's disapproval of "all the Objections which I have heard against Church-Musick" is even more vague than his praise, and he offers no counterevidence supporting the Old Version versifications or the tunes of the 149th and 150th Psalms. He simply disapproves of those who censure sacred music or fuss over practice particulars. The wording of "those that *savour* not Melody" and "different *Appetites*" renders music a matter of personal taste rather than a carefully honed formula for edification, as contemporaries framed it (my emphasis). The impropriety of judging others' worship practices is underscored by how the unnamed neighbors or servants eavesdrop on the Baxter's singing in bed, "interrupt[ing]" an intimate moment between husband and wife and with God.

However, Baxter's demoting of the importance of music's forms does nothing to diminish music's spiritual effect. He names music "the chief delightful Exercise of my Religion and my Life."⁶⁰ Beth Quitslund argues that seventeenth-century theorists began to apply the term "exercise" to sacred music to encourage it as "a regular practice designed to strengthen the spiritual sinews and deepen the relationship with God," rather than merely an enjoyable pastime.⁶¹ Baxter also credits sacred music with the "elevation of my Soul."⁶² Jonathan Willis argues that to early modern people psalmody "had an almost talismanic ability to bring about a renewal of faith and to restore mind, heart and soul to a state of sublime delight."⁶³ This "sublime delight" was distinctly heavenly, as music was considered a gift from God that allowed earthly worship to echo angelic.⁶⁴ Yet, these spiritual benefits occur in *Poetical Fragments* outside of the usual context of psalmody. J. R. Watson identifies "a passion for heaven" in Baxter's hymns and,

⁵⁹ Cf. Baxter, *PF*, 84.

⁶⁰ *PF*, [A5]^v.

⁶¹ Quitslund, "Singing the Psalms," 239–40, 256.

⁶² Baxter, *PF*, [A5]^v.

⁶³ Willis, *Church Music*, 194–96.

⁶⁴ Willis, 77, 19.

indeed, all sixteen visualize the reality of heaven.⁶⁵ In that expectation of eternal rest, seeing Jesus's face, or participating in heavenly worship, the worshipper's faith is renewed and he finds hope, peace, or joy in temporal sufferings.

Helen Wilcox reads the preface's list of poets that follows Baxter's thoughts on music simply as a Puritan's identification of acceptable poets to aid in spiritual devotion.⁶⁶ Yet, I suggest that Baxter makes a case for the use of original poems for sung worship, in keeping with his 1676 defense of congregational hymnody. Baxter prefaces this list by lauding sacred music.⁶⁷ He interrupts the list to criticize "good men that were skilled in Musick, and much delighted in it, and yet had a conceit that it was unlawful in a Psalm, or holy Exercise."⁶⁸ He concludes the list with a paragraph on the unifying possibility of, but ecclesial disagreements over, psalmody.⁶⁹ The implication is that *all* of the poets Baxter lists—scripture's poets, poets who versified psalms or other scriptures, and poets who composed devotional, prophetic, and emblem poems—could be used in the practice of sacred music. (He gives orthodox deference to "the Scripture Poems" as surpassing all others.⁷⁰) The preface's jumping between congregational and domestic sacred music raises the possibility of original poems for congregational use, even if Baxter, who lacks a congregation to shepherd, will not use his hymns so.

Baxter's interspersing of hymns and poetry in *Poetical Fragments* aligns with Isabel Rivers's argument that eighteenth-century hymnody was treated as a subset of, rather than a distinct form from, holy poetry.⁷¹ Even after the genre's standardization, hymns were not restricted to congregational worship but were published in contemporary collections alongside

⁶⁵ Watson, *English Hymn*, 117.

⁶⁶ Wilcox, "Voices and Echoes," 18–19.

⁶⁷ Baxter, *PF*, [A5]^v–[A6].

⁶⁸ *PF*, [A6].

⁶⁹ *PF*, [A8].

⁷⁰ *PF*, [A7].

⁷¹ Rivers, *Vanity Fair and the Celestial City*, Chapter 11.

poems, without distinction, since both forms “promoted piety.”⁷² Rivers’s findings underscore piety as eighteenth-century hymnody’s primary purpose, and I find this true of *Poetical Fragments* and, as later discussed, of seventeenth-century hymnody in general. The standard by which Baxter judges poets is not their poetic or musical practices; rather, “that is best to me which is most holy.”⁷³ Thus, the 1630s poet George Herbert, whom Baxter claims lacks the Restoration proclivity to “Wit and accurate composure,” is to Baxter “above all his Contemporaries.” Baxter explains, “*Herbert speaks to God* like one that *really believeth a God*, and whose business in this world is most *with God. Heart-work* and *Heaven-work* make up his Books.”⁷⁴ Baxter’s other favorite, the writer and traveler George Sandys (1578–1644), is praiseworthy because Sandys’s scripture versifications capture scripture’s “original Glory,” and because Sandys “retire[d] to God” in the countryside in his latter years, being “tired with seeing all the Vanities on Earth.” However, Baxter laments Sandys’s decision not to “turn[] the *Psalms* into Metre fitted to the usual Tunes,” ostensibly, that they might be sung by audiences untrained in reading music and, therefore, unable to follow the 1636 psalter’s new musical settings by Henry Lawes.⁷⁵ To the blatant disregard of popular or traditional styles and forms, Baxter holds these poets’ personal relationships with God and their prioritization of God, heaven, and scripture above all earthly matters to be the only indicators by which to judge their worship’s holiness.

This is a microcosm of Baxter’s argument that orthodoxy and church membership be based on “Mere Christianity” alone. By using only the standard of holiness, Baxter’s list unites

⁷² Rivers, 340.

⁷³ Baxter, *PF*, [A6].

⁷⁴ *PF*, [A7]^v.

⁷⁵ *PF*, [A7]^v. Lawes’s tunes were suited primarily to the aristocracy’s skilled, private worship; Hamlin, *Psalms Culture*, 69–70.

and intermixes in the work of worship royalists and those loyal to the Church of England like Herbert, Sandys, Abraham Cowley (1618–1667), Samuel Woodford (1636–1700), and Katherine Philips (1632–1664), with the French Huguenot Guillaume de Salluste du Bartas (1544–1590), the Puritan Francis Quarles (1592–1644), and George Wither (1588–1667), a Parliamentarian associated with the radical Levellers sect.⁷⁶ Baxter’s list offers a survey of the century’s bestselling poets, adding a familiarity with popular poetry to the plethora of theological and historical books the autodidact elsewhere recommends.⁷⁷ These poets wrote very different types of holy poetry. Cowley wrote an (unfinished) epic on King David.⁷⁸ Quarles published emblem poems, which explored Christian truths by drawing spiritual allegories from accompanying pictures.⁷⁹ Woodford composed a popular psalter, in part inspired by Cowley’s psalm versifications in *Davideis*.⁸⁰ Wither wrote prophetic and devotional poems, original hymns, and scripture versifications.⁸¹ Yet, Baxter makes no distinction about (or much mention of) the forms the poets use, besides praising Cowley and Quarles for their wit and admitting that later generations may dislike Woodford’s tendency to “expound” on scripture.⁸²

Neither does Baxter distinguish between the poets’ ecclesial or political loyalties. Wither and Quarles were ensigns of the Puritan faith and literature and, notably, the only nonconformists on Baxter’s list. Wither was a Parliamentarian soldier and pamphleteer, an emblem of religious

⁷⁶ All biographical details are drawn from the ODNB.

⁷⁷ N. H. Keeble and Tessa Whitehouse, eds., *Textual Transformations: Purposing and Repurposing Books from Richard Baxter to Samuel Taylor Coleridge* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 2 (see also footnote 7).

⁷⁸ Abraham Cowley, *Davideis*, in *The Works of Mr. Abraham Cowley* (London, 1668), Ee2–Aaa2^v.

⁷⁹ Francis Quarles, *Emblemes* (London, 1635).

⁸⁰ N. H. Keeble, “Woodford [Woodforde], Samuel (1636–1700),” ODNB, October 4, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29918>. Cf. Samuel Woodford, *A Paraphrase upon the Psalms of David* (London, 1667).

⁸¹ George Wither, *Halelviah, or, Britains Second Remembrancer* (London, 1641); George Wither, *The Hymnes and Songs of the Church* (London, 1623).

⁸² Baxter, *PF*, [A6]^{f–v}.

enthusiasm. He was imprisoned in the Restoration for his seditious writings.⁸³ In contrast, Cowley served the royals in exile and was imprisoned by Cromwell's Protectorate.⁸⁴ He was the most famous poet in England in the 1650s and 1660s, and, though he died in 1667, his wit and Pindaric odes shaped the elite Restoration literature and court culture "which in so many official ways turned its back on the Dissenters."⁸⁵ *Poetical Fragments* does not specify which of Cowley's poems Baxter considers holy, leaving open the possibility that even those texts most representative of his enemies might prove spiritually valuable.⁸⁶ Woodford dedicated his psalter to George Morley, the bishop who drove Baxter out of Kidderminster in 1661.⁸⁷ Yet, even this personally triggering difference in loyalties does not impact Baxter's inclusion of Woodford's psalter. Baxter mentions none of these conflicting loyalties and makes no excuses for his inclusions. Baxter's summary of his list of holy poets focuses only on the poetry's spiritual undergirding and effect: "Sure there is somewhat of Heaven in Holy Poetry. It charmeth Souls into loving Harmony and Concord."⁸⁸ Holy poetry reveals, echoes, contains "somewhat of Heaven." This heavenly work of worship brings individuals of otherwise no commonality into harmony, love, and concord—traits to which Baxter's other early-1680s publications repeatedly call the divided English church.⁸⁹

Thus, *Poetical Fragments*'s preface treats worship as the work of a diverse community with diverse practices, united in the pursuit of holiness and heaven. The *adiaphora* of sacred

⁸³ Michelle O'Callaghan, "Wither, George (1588–1667)," ODNB, May 29, 2014, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/29804>.

⁸⁴ Alexander Lindsay, "Cowley, Abraham (1618–1667)," ODNB, February 11, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6499>.

⁸⁵ Wilcox, "Voices and Echoes," 19.

⁸⁶ Cf. Baxter, *PF*, [A7].

⁸⁷ Woodford, *Paraphrase upon the Psalms*, A3; Keeble, "Richard Baxter (ODNB)."

⁸⁸ Baxter, *PF*, [A8].

⁸⁹ See even just the subtitles of Baxter's publication nos. 88–90D, 92–94, 99–103, 107–8A, 118–22, in *RB*, 5: "A Baxter Bibliography," 305–44.

song achieves its spiritual good without regard to its form or execution. I argue that Baxter's proof lies in the example of contemporary hymns. Baxter's strange use of the word "Hymn" to describe an unsingable poem led me to execute an EEBO search of every reference to the word "hymn" in extant publications in England between 1640–1681.⁹⁰ I acknowledge the shortcomings of such an exercise, which cannot account for manuscript examples. Yet, this is not the place for a thorough study of pre-eighteenth-century English hymnody, though such a study is needed. I limit myself to printed sources to mirror Baxter's own decision to print his hymns. The date boundaries allow me to focus on how contemporaries used the term "hymn" during *Poetical Fragments's* gestation period, from first composition to publication. I include some earlier publications, reprinted during these years, penned by authors Baxter knew. I have chosen only typical or popular examples of the nascent genre, which had, therefore, a likelier impact on other budding hymnists. Baxter's writings reference many of these hymnists, and the popularity of those he does not mention made them likely known to such a voracious reader. I exclude examples from non-religious texts as irrelevant.⁹¹ My purposes here are limited to demonstrating the wide variety of forms and practices that the word "hymn," as an expression of Christian worship, encompassed in Baxter's day. I list the examples in chronological order to demonstrate that there is no perceptible trend of standardization in practice. This standardization arose only with the genesis of published, nonconformist communion hymnals in the 1690s, as studied by John Coffey.⁹²

Among the earliest examples of English hymns likely familiar to Baxter were the Episcopal leader Daniel Featley's "preparatory hymns," which are interspersed with prayers and

⁹⁰ *PF*, 50.

⁹¹ For a study of secular hymns: Thompson, *Seventeenth-Century English Hymn*, Chapter 6.

⁹² Coffey, "Between Puritanism and Evangelicalism."

scripture passages in his bestselling devotional aid *Ancilla Pietatis* (1626; ninth edition, 1675). Featley's hymns are non-metricized centos of scripture verses on appropriate themes for each ecclesial rite or ceremony, intended for use in private devotions to prepare the heart and mind for church. Featley claims to have penned the devotions in the wake of his heated and rather inconclusive debate against the Jesuit priest John Fisher in 1623, rendering the devotions a sort of practical defense and affirmation of the Protestant Church.⁹³ In 1659, Baxter defended the long-since deceased Featley's victory for Protestantism in this infamous debate and, in 1664, criticized the Westminster Assembly for having unjustly expelled Featley from its ranks in 1643 and lost "so Learned a Man."⁹⁴ The Episcopal spokesperson was to Baxter a voice of the true, reformed Church.

The century's next prolific hymnist was a man vastly unlike Featley in loyalties, style, and learning, but whom Baxter also admired. The radical Parliamentarian soldier and prophetic poet George Wither—whom *Poetical Fragments* lauds as "very acceptable as to some for his Prophecies, so to others for his plain Country-honesty"—published sixty-two "Hymns Occasionall," "Hymns-Temporary," and "Hymns Personall" in 1642.⁹⁵ These original songs, with instructed psalm tunes, invite worship of God in every imaginable human experience, ranging from marriage, birth, and death; to specific vocations; to "sheep-shearing" and "rid[ing] for pleasure."⁹⁶ The hymns' specificity implies their use for private devotion but not in preparation for church worship, like Featley's hymns. Instead, Wither's hymns appropriate the tunes of the Established Church to offer a Puritan alternative to the metrical scriptures and holy-

⁹³ Daniel Featley, *Ancilla Pietatis, or, the Hand-Maid to Private Devotion*, 9th ed. (London, 1675), A.

⁹⁴ Richard Baxter, *A Key for Catholicks* (London, 1659), 199; Baxter, *RB*, 1:I. 378, §117. Cf. Arnold Hunt, "Featley [Fairclough], Daniel (1582–1645)," ODNB, January 3, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/9242>.

⁹⁵ Baxter, *PF*, [A6]^v.

⁹⁶ Wither, *Halelviah*, title page, 33–34, 68–70.

day hymns that Wither published for ecclesial use in James I's reign and dedicated to Prince Charles.⁹⁷ The 1642 hymnal challenges the traditional boundaries of the church, encouraging a life saturated with religious devotion, as well as individuality of religious expression.

Also during the Civil War, the Independent ministers William Barton and John Goodwin published "hymns" which consisted of original poetry and liberally paraphrased scriptures. Intended for conventicle worship and days of public thanksgiving, these hymns overlay Parliamentary victories with ancient Israel's, and royalists with ancient Israel's enemies, to argue God's favor on the Parliamentary cause.⁹⁸ Baxter admitted to having "*made much use*" of Barton's psalm versifications in his own *Paraphrase on the Psalms* (1692), and a Calvinist enemy in the 1650s accused Baxter of subscribing to Goodwin's Arminianism.⁹⁹

Amidst the Commonwealth's religious oppression, the later bishop Jeremy Taylor concluded his detailed defense of the Church of England's liturgy with twenty-one original "Festival Hymns," which commemorated liturgical services "according to the manner of the Ancient Church."¹⁰⁰ Taylor republished these in 1667, with an added, vituperative preface denouncing the "Supplanters and Underminers" who had "discountenanc'd an excellent Liturgie."¹⁰¹ Baxter referenced Taylor in 1681 to support his argument to the Episcopal leaders that no amount of oppression will change people's—and specifically, now, nonconformist

⁹⁷ Wither, *Hymnes and Songs*; O'Callaghan, "George Wither (ODNB)."

⁹⁸ William Barton, *The Choice and Flower of the Old Psalms* (London, 1645), A3 (following p. 164), A4^v; William Barton, *Psalms and Hymns Composed and Fitted for the Present Occasion of Publick Thanks-Giving, October 24, 1651* (London, 1651); John Goodwin, *Two Hymns, or Spiritual Songs, Sung in Mr Goodwins Congregation on...24 Oct 1651* (London, 1651).

⁹⁹ Baxter, *Paraphrase on the Psalms*, [A9]; Baxter, *RB*, 1:I. 463, §{162.} 7.

¹⁰⁰ Jeremy Taylor, *The Golden Grove* (London, 1655), 145–69.

¹⁰¹ Jeremy Taylor, *A Choice Manual Containing What Is to Be Believed, Practised, and Desired Or Praied For* (London, 1667), A4.

ministers’—convictions: “Your Bishop *Taylor*, and many of your own, can tell you, how opposition inflameth the opposed party into a greater zeal.”¹⁰²

Yet, more commonly, the persecuted wrote straightforwardly devotional hymns, which facilitated in print an avenue of worship otherwise denied them. In the 1650s and 1660s, the Catholic converts Richard Crashaw and John Austin (under the pseudonym William Birchley) published renditions of ancient Catholic Liturgy of the Hours, which they interspersed with original, metrical hymns about scripture, the Spirit’s engagement with the soul, and the saints.¹⁰³ These fundamental, devotional emphases attracted a remarkably ecumenical audience. Austin’s popular devotions were adapted for Anglican use in the 1680s, and various hymns were included in miscellaneous collections, including Samuel Speed’s pro-royalist *Prison Pietie* (1677) and John Wesley’s first hymnbook, *Collection of Psalms and Hymns* (1737).¹⁰⁴

Both sides of the Restoration’s politico-religious divide made use of the increasingly popular genre. In 1660, royalists wrote original songs and poems they called “hymns” to celebrate Charles II’s Restoration and reestablishment of Anglican ways.¹⁰⁵ The 1662 edition of the Book of Common Prayer first incorporates the word “hymn.” New special liturgies for the navy and a new annual service commemorating Charles II’s birth and restoration include non-metricized centos of Bible verses, called “hymns.”¹⁰⁶ The 1662 prayer book also relabels as

¹⁰² Richard Baxter, *An Apology for the Nonconformists Ministry* (London, 1681), 195–96. Baxter likely alludes to Taylor’s *A Discourse of the Liberty of Prophesying* (London, 1647).

¹⁰³ Richard Crashaw, *Carmen Deo Nostro, Te Decet Hymnus* (Paris, 1652); William Birchley, *Devotions in the Ancient Way of Offices* (Paris, 1668).

¹⁰⁴ J. Blom and F. Blom, “Austin, John [Pseud. William Birchley] (1613–1669),” ODNB, May 28, 2015, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/908>.

¹⁰⁵ Henry Oxinden, *Charls Triumphant* (London, 1660), A2–3; John Douch, *Englands Jubilee, or, Her Happy Return from Captivity in a Sermon, Preached at St. Botolphs Aldersgate, London* (London, 1660), A3; Ogilby, *Relation of His Majestie’s Entertainment*, 38.

¹⁰⁶ Cf. Brian Cummings, ed., *The Book of Common Prayer: The Texts of 1549, 1559, and 1662* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 619–20, 662.

“hymns” the medieval songs *Te Deum* and *Benedictus* (Luke 1:68–79).¹⁰⁷ Other Anglican ministers followed suit by labeling the *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46–55), *Nunc Dimittas* (Luke 2:29–32), and *Gloria Patri* as “hymns.”¹⁰⁸ These “hymns” invest a relatively new genre—and perhaps by extension, the new regime—with the authority of longstanding tradition and orthodoxy.

Others used the new genre didactically, particularly to guide younger audiences. The ejected ministers Samuel Crossman, a moderate who rejoined the Establishment in 1667, and Benjamin Keach, a controversial Particular Baptist, concluded their theological books with hymns. These lyrical poems without instructed tunes summarize the books’ messages in a pleasurable, digestible form for youthful readers.¹⁰⁹ Baxter did the same in various works of practical divinity, later republishing the poems in *Poetical Fragments*.¹¹⁰ Around 1670, Thomas Ken composed three original, liturgy-oriented “Hymns for Morning, Evening, and Midnight” for the boys’ devotions at Winchester College. Ken published the hymns in the 1690s, after his appointment to a bishopric, and his doxology “Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow” still features in Anglican services today.¹¹¹

In the 1670s, bishop Robert Sanderson, an enemy of Baxter’s, claimed he sometimes added to the liturgy “an *Hymn* of my own composing, gathered out of the Psalms,” that is, a cento of psalm verses.¹¹² The Anglican minister Samuel Woodford, whose psalter *Poetical*

¹⁰⁷ Cummings, 243, 246.

¹⁰⁸ Benjamin Laney, *A Sermon Preached before His Majesty at Whitehal, April 5, 1663* (London, 1663), 24; J. R., *A Sermon Preached at a Visitation in Honiton in Devon, on W. in Easter Week, 1676* (London, 1676), 10.

¹⁰⁹ Samuel Crossman, *The Young Mans Monitor* (London, 1664), 8–10 (on S^v–S2^v); Benjamin Keach, *War with the Devil*, 4th ed. (London, 1676), 116–28. Cf. Stuart Handley, “Crossman, Samuel (bap. 1625, d. 1684),” ODNB, November 14, 2018, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/6809>; Beth Lynch, “Keach, Benjamin (1640–1704),” ODNB, 2004, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/15202>.

¹¹⁰ Richard Baxter, *A Treatise of Self-Denyall* (London, 1659), 2Y–2Y7; Richard Baxter, *The Poor Man’s Family Book* (London, 1674), 105–9 (on [G5–G7]). Cf. PF, “Self-Denial” (7), “A Psalm of Praise” (10).

¹¹¹ Thomas Ken, *A Manual of Prayers...to Which Is Added Three Hymns* (London, 1695), 141–51. Cf. William Marshall, “Ken, Thomas (1637–1711),” ODNB, January 3, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/15342>.

¹¹² Robert Sanderson, *Bishop Sanderson’s Judgment Concerning Submission to Usurpers* (London, 1678), 9. For Baxter’s and Sanderson’s mutual dislike at the Savoy Conference: Izaak Walton, *The Lives of John Donne, Sir*

Fragments praises, called his 1679, non-psalm scripture versifications “*select Hymns.*”

Woodford’s versifications claim scripture’s divine inspiration while also aspiring to the poetic greatness of Pindar, Horace, Spenser, Cowley, and Milton, thereby elevating scripture’s songs to or above what Restoration audiences deemed poetry’s greatest heights.¹¹³ Less concerned about scripture’s cultural immediacy, Baxter’s friend Thomas Wadsworth, who closely shaped his ministry on Baxter’s advice, composed hymns to be used only “for the putting of himself into a spiritual frame” on Sunday mornings before church.¹¹⁴ Wadsworth’s 28 hymns, published posthumously in 1680, are imaginative, mostly first-person meditations on the soul’s relationship with God in light of the New Testament. They focus on Jesus and the comparative insignificance of earthly blessings and sufferings to heaven.¹¹⁵

As this overview evinces, contemporaries treated a variety of forms, practices, and focuses as valuable ways to shape “hymns,” that is, the praise of God. Early English hymnody was an indefinite genre; sung and read; with original and scriptural lyrics; used in private, public, and congregational devotion; enabling new and ancient methods of worship; and addressing temporal and spiritual matters. The hymn gave oppressed Christians on both sides an opportunity to worship when congregational worship was denied them. It also served as a supplement to the established liturgy and conventicle worship. Like psalmody, early English hymnody intended to edify and raise the heart to God and heaven. Unlike psalmody, hymns could be shaped to address any situation, communicate New Testament doctrines, meditate on Jesus, and express personal

Henry Wotton, Richard Hooker, George Herbert, and Robert Sanderson (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), 404; Baxter, *RB*, 2:II. 153, §227.

¹¹³ Samuel Woodford, *A Paraphrase upon the Canticles, and Some Select Hymns of the New and Old Testament* (London, 1679), [title page]; [c7]^v; b2, c3^v; c2^v; [b6]^v–[b7]^v, c3.

¹¹⁴ Thomas Wadsworth, *Wadsworth’s Remains* (London, 1680), 69; Alexander Gordon and J. William Black, “Wadsworth, Thomas (1630–1676),” ODNB, January 3, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28391>. For Baxter’s high praise of Wadsworth: *RB*, 2:III. 450, §{205}.

¹¹⁵ Wadsworth, *Wadsworth’s Remains*, 126–65.

faith and spiritual experiences. Anglicans, Roman Catholics, and moderate and radical nonconformists wrote hymns. The hymn was not part of the established liturgy, but it typically did not oppose established practices.

Some, like Barton, Goodwin, and Taylor, used hymns for political resistance in charged political moments. Yet, critics wrongly read this mid-century radicalism into later hymnody. Sharon Achinstein admits that the hymn “underwent a wholesale whitewashing” after the failure of the Revolution, “a radical depoliticization, with the removal of topical reference” to political radicalism, including in reprintings of Barton’s hymns.¹¹⁶ Yet, her chapter reads like an extended contradiction, a wholesale nonconformist ruse played against the Restoration regime. Restoration nonconformists’ hymns *say* something spiritual, doctrinal, and non-political but secretly mean something politically radical, she argues—based on little other evidence than that is how some used hymns during the war. Achinstein’s personal dislike of hymns (she questions at one point, “Why are hymns so bad?”) blinds her to the possibility, the probability, that hymnists meant what they said.¹¹⁷

Jenna Townend just as unconvincingly reads Restoration hymnody through the lens of Civil War hymnody. Civil War dissenters “claimed the form as a radical departure from scriptural literalism” and Episcopal ceremonialism, and nonconformists maintained these uses through the 1690s, after which hymnody lost its controversial edge.¹¹⁸ Townend takes as proof a 1697, nonconformist hymn-adaptation of George Herbert’s *The Temple*, and its allegedly defiant censorship of Anglican ceremonies. However, the hymnist’s replacement of Anglican vocabulary like “Whitsunday” with the scriptural alternative, “Pentecost,” challenges Townend’s own

¹¹⁶ Achinstein, *Literature and Dissent*, 218.

¹¹⁷ Achinstein, 232.

¹¹⁸ Townend, “[S]weet Singer,” 41.

argument that early hymnody broke from scriptural literalism.¹¹⁹ Here, the hymn restores scriptural fidelity.

More accurately, Elizabeth Clarke's study of seventeenth-century, Puritan hymnody finds in early hymnists a driving desire to worship God in a way faithful to scripture. This spiritual "scruple" was so strong that it made "the emergence of the 'dissenting hymn' almost an impossibility," as hymnists feared overreliance on human originality.¹²⁰ Clarke thus reads William Barton's expunging of political references in later editions of his hymns as done "in the cause of being faithful to Scripture, not of a changing politics."¹²¹ J. R. Watson and John Coffey also read worship, not politics, as the purpose of early English hymnody. Coffey argues that hymnists' earliest, driving aim was to craft sung worship which communicated core Christian beliefs. The New Testament, the Gospel, and Jesus and His Passion were matters *essential* to the Christian faith and experience but which the ancient Hebrew psalms could express only by shadow or allusion.¹²² Watson finds these emphases true of seventeenth-century nonconformist and Anglican hymns, including hymns by the aforementioned Wither, Ken, Woodford, Crossman, and Keach.¹²³ My findings agree with Clarke, Watson, and Coffey and add that the genre was adaptable to meet the hymnist's or audience's preferences or needs. Such adaptability implied that God could be well and truly praised in various ways.

Poetical Fragments employs early hymnody's emphasis on Christian essentials and its lack of practice norms to challenge the spiritual validity of Restoration ecclesial divisions. The sheer variety of forms used in early hymnody offered an example of how a church established

¹¹⁹ Townend, 53.

¹²⁰ Clarke, "Hymns, Psalms, and Controversy," 18.

¹²¹ Clarke, 18.

¹²² Coffey, "Between Puritanism and Evangelicalism," Chapter 1, esp. pp. 35–49.

¹²³ Watson, *English Hymn*, Chapters 5 and 6.

only on essentials might function. Early hymnists' use of a variety of forms and practices enacted Baxter's belief that ecclesial forms and ceremonies were matters of personal and parochial preference. As Baxter believed that the Established Church should regulate only core Christian beliefs—the purpose of and reason for the Church's existence—so the early hymn's primary purpose was worship.

In the following two case studies, I investigate how *Poetical Fragments's* hymns treat worship's forms as spiritually indifferent and, thus, non-essential to worship's effectiveness. *Poetical Fragments* denies any spiritual value even in the forms of the era's most trusted worship exemplars: scripture's psalms and George Herbert's poems. Treating *adiaphora* as truly irrelevant to holiness raises the possibility that God might use even ostensibly condemnable forms—like a secular dance tune—to communicate His Gospel. *Poetical Fragments* thus questions both the Church of England's desire to enforce certain practices and nonconformists' unwillingness to engage in practices with which they disagree. If non-essentials do not impact Christian essentials, non-essentials should not be used to justify exclusion or separation from the Established Church.

George Herbert and the Psalms

Poetical Fragments's third and fourth hymns, “Divine Love's Rest (Written on Herbert's Poems)” and “On David's Psalms,” are tributes to the era's most beloved and trusted exemplars of true worship: scripture's psalms and George Herbert's poetry. As endemic in contemporary ecclesial controversies, contemporaries agreed on both sources' spiritual value and orthodoxy but

disagreed on the most compatible worship style. We have seen these disagreements over psalmody already. Herbert's poetry, often perceived by contemporaries as a modern book of psalms, suffered a similar fate.¹²⁴ Sharon Achinstein describes Herbert's legacy in the Restoration as a "dual canonization."¹²⁵ She demonstrates that both sides revered the 1630s Church of England clergyman as an authority figure and spiritual guide in the era's ecclesial controversies. Anglicans found in Herbert's poetry arguments for conformity, social harmony, and the liturgy. Nonconformists just as convincingly found the values of true devotion and commitment to God's Word over imposed ceremonies.¹²⁶ For both sides, the value of Herbert's poetry lay in its ability to communicate true worship. However, nonconformists and Anglicans disagreed on what this true worship was.

Baxter was reading Herbert at least as early as 1642, as his hymn from this year draws on the imagery of an "Altar" and "my *Whole*, though *broken* heart" from Herbert's poem "JESU."¹²⁷ *Poetical Fragments* liberally uses Herbert's favored name for God, "Love," as well as Herbert's poetic style of conversations with God. Baxter's hymn "The Return" (11), the focus of the next section, takes its allegorical framework from Herbert's imagining of God as a landlord in "Redemption."¹²⁸ Baxter evidently was still reading Herbert when he readied *Poetical Fragments* for publication in 1681. The description of "*our dull and drooping Souls*" in the preface's concluding prayer comes from Herbert's poem "Dulnesse."¹²⁹ The way that Herbert's voice, like that of the psalmists, is seamlessly, even promiscuously, woven into *Poetical Fragments*'s language suggests that Baxter read Herbert often and meditatively, until *The Temple* was part of

¹²⁴ Cf. Wilcox, "Voices and Echoes," 21.

¹²⁵ Sharon Achinstein, "Reading George Herbert in the Restoration," *English Literary Renaissance* 36, no. 3 (2006): 433, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-6757.2006.00089.x>.

¹²⁶ Achinstein, 446–64.

¹²⁷ Baxter, *PF*, 18; Herbert, *English Poems*, 105, lines 8–10.

¹²⁸ Cf. Herbert, *English Poems*, 26.

¹²⁹ Baxter, *PF*, [A8]^v; Herbert, *English Poems*, 108, line 1.

his spiritual psyche. When explaining his remarkable pastoral success in Kidderminster in the 1650s, Baxter quotes from the Bible and Herbert's "Church Militant" in succession to support his point that the town's poverty made it more receptive to the Gospel.¹³⁰ Herbert's verse disciplined and guided the minister like scripture did, and multiple of Baxter's pastoral writings, beginning with *The Saints Everlasting Rest* (1650) through posthumous publications, praise the 1630s clergyman's poetry.¹³¹

One wonders if Baxter found the 1630s figure especially encouraging and relevant because Herbert's greatest pastoral success occurred after his death. The posthumously published *Temple* (1633) pastored an entire nation, shepherding Episcopal Christians as effectively as it did moderate Puritans and radical sectarians. It is surprising that the twenty-seven-year-old, green minister of Kidderminster—dealing in 1642 with his new congregation's grumblings about his pastoral and preaching styles; with public traducing and one mob attack after the outbreak of war turned the townspeople against him; and with chronic illness—had the bandwidth to write anything, let alone a fifty-page poem.¹³² Faced with such ministerial disappointment and imminent death, Baxter perhaps grasped for a pastoral legacy like Herbert's. That Baxter briefly considered publishing his poems in 1664 suggests a renewed resonance of this pastoral avenue after his ejection. However, Baxter employs Herbert's legacy for a unique purpose in 1681: to assert that the Restoration church's prescriptive standards are irrelevant to true holiness.

"Divine Love's Rest (Written on *Herbert's* Poems)" (3) and "On *David's* Psalms" (4) are clearly a pair. The poems are unique in the volume for their brevity, bear the same poetic structure (10.10.10.10, *aabb*), and tell parallel tales of the soul's salvation, sanctification, and

¹³⁰ Baxter, *RB*, 1:I. 423, 27°.

¹³¹ For a list of references: Baxter, *RB*, 1:I, 423 (footnote 734).

¹³² Keeble, "Richard Baxter (ODNB)."

ascent to heaven using parallel imagery.¹³³ Both claim the divine inspiration of the “cælestial fire” within—a poetic authorization only elsewhere claimed, then lost, in “Love Breathing Thanks and Praise.”¹³⁴ Yet, the poems are strikingly reticent to make any claims about true worship. Instead, using Herbert’s example, “Divine Love’s Rest” and “On David’s Psalms” frame uncertainty over worship practices as a providential gift, which leads the worshipper to rely on God rather than on their “correct” worship of God.

“Divine Love’s Rest” opens in allusion to Herbert’s poem “The Pulley.” “The Pulley” recounts God’s creation of humankind, and His gifting of every blessing imaginable on humans except for rest. In the voice of God, “The Pulley” concludes,

For if I should (said he)
Bestow this jewell also on my creature,
He would adore my gifts in stead of me,
And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature,
So both should losers be.

Yet let him keep the rest,
But keep them with repining restlesnesse:
Let him be rich and wearie, that at least,
If goodnesse leade him not, yet wearinesse
May tosse him to my breast.¹³⁵

In allusion to Saint Augustine’s declaration that our hearts are restless until they rest in God, Herbert imagines “repining restlessness” as protecting the soul from relying on earthly things and damningly forgetting its Maker.¹³⁶ It is an earthly lack, a limitation, that Herbert’s poem

¹³³ Apart from three, short, concluding poems, *PF*’s other hymns are multiple pages long, making hymns 3–5 unique. “The Threefold Nativity” (5) mirrors hymns 3 and 4 in length and focus on salvation history but lacks their shared imagery; Baxter, *PF*, 64.

¹³⁴ *PF*, 9, 21.

¹³⁵ Herbert, *English Poems*, 147, lines 11–20.

¹³⁶ Cf. Augustine, *Confessions*, ed. and trans. Carolyn Hammond, vol. 1 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2014), 3.

claims as God's greatest gift, since therein the soul receives God. Restlessness is the "pulley" by which God reverses the direction of the soul's love from the creation to the Creator.

Baxter bookends "Divine Love's Rest" and "On David's Psalms" with the word "REST," emphasized by capitalization. "Divine Love's Rest" opens with the image of a compass, in place of Herbert's pulley:

THE amorous Needle knows no other REST,
But at its dear attractive Loadstone's breast.
Though lying dead before the Potent touch,
Its Object and Affection were not such.¹³⁷

As the loadstone struck against the needle magnetizes it, God's "Potent touch" at salvation magnetizes the soul to orient itself to God. Herbert's image of a "pulley" allows for the back and forth, up and down motions of earthly experience, as the sinful creature strays from God and is drawn back by divine grace. Baxter's navigational image of a compass has one directional motion and journey in mind. As the magnetized compass needle only orients north, God's "Potent touch" orients the soul on a journey toward God's "breast." The speaker expects this journey to end in heaven, the place of "the saint's everlasting rest," as Baxter's bestselling 1650 book depicted it.¹³⁸ The hymns depict heaven as the place of the perfected, united Church, "Where all the Saints are one in God their Center," and as perfected worship.¹³⁹ "On *David's Psalms*" concludes with the heavenly expectation that "Perfect Love and Praise shall be my REST."¹⁴⁰

¹³⁷ Baxter, *PF*, 61.

¹³⁸ Richard Baxter, *The Saints Everlasting Rest* (London, 1650).

¹³⁹ Baxter, *PF*, 62.

¹⁴⁰ *PF*, 63.

However, the hymns deny the worshipper any understanding or experience of these heavenly perfections. The speaker in “On David’s Psalms” claims of his heart,

Long it hath search’t in hope to find the Art,
 To raise and warm a dull and heavy Heart:
 And now I find it practised by One,
 That now is praising thee before thy Throne.
 Here are the sacred words: Here’s *David’s* Lyre:
 But where’s the quickening cælestial fire?¹⁴¹

The speaker supposes his lack of intimacy with God to result from his lack of devotional “Art.” Yet, he worryingly receives no providential insight into this art’s nature even in his miraculous vision of King David’s heavenly worship. The speaker sees “the sacred words” and “*David’s* Lyre,” but these make no sound.

This silence challenges contemporaries’ custom of justifying their sacred music as likely imitations of heavenly worship. For example, John Playford’s *Psalms and Hymns in Solemn Musick* (1671) opens with “A HYMN on the Divine Use of MUSICK,” which traces God causing human thoughts to grow into words and dumb instruments to play so that those on earth can “rehearse/ ...the *Musick* of the Universe.”¹⁴² Early modern music theorists linked earthly and heavenly music so closely because they believed that “sound” itself had the “power...to transmute [the hearer’s] sense of place.” Music’s sounds were believed “capable of raising the spirit to heavenly things, even in a sense prematurely to heaven.”¹⁴³ For Playford, “we do imitate the Heavenly Choires” through a “cheerful Ayre” and “high Notes.”¹⁴⁴ Specific music practices

¹⁴¹ *PF*, 63.

¹⁴² John Playford, *Psalms and Hymns in Solemn Musick* (London, 1671), [opposite title page].

¹⁴³ Willis, *Church Music*, 21.

¹⁴⁴ Playford, *Psalms and Hymns*, [opposite title page].

bring heavenly perfections down to earth. In contrast, the Spirit in Baxter's hymns denies insight into the "Art" of heavenly worship—its forms, sounds, or notes.

Yet, as in Herbert's "The Pulley," God's denial of something good (here, knowledge of heavenly worship) turns out to be a providential gift of something better: intimacy with God. In "Divine Love's Rest," the Spirit's "kindling the Cælestial fire" leads to one, telling, divine sound, voiced by "Love" Himself, Herbert's favored name for God in *The Temple*. "Love is now panting, groaning in my breast," the speaker exclaims.¹⁴⁵ "[P]anting, groaning" is unmusical, wordless, nebulously internal, and unpleasant. Groaning is an admission of humanity's hermeneutical limitations; yet, it is also an opportunity for intimacy with God. The image of God groaning draws on Romans 8:26's claim that "the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered." Groaning is God's mercy, grace, and provision for believers in "our infirmities" and when "we know not what we should pray for as we ought." Raymond Brown presents Christ's heavenly intercessions as "a prominent feature of Restoration Nonconformist spirituality."¹⁴⁶ Persecuted dissenters took heart that Christ's divine wisdom and power, which made His intercessions perfectly effective, paired with His roles as the Incarnate God, who empathized with human limitations and suffering, and as Savior, who delighted in and patiently exercised mercy towards His people.¹⁴⁷ Baxter accentuates this sense of intimacy with Christ—of knowing and being known by Christ—by locating Love's "groaning *in my breast*" rather than in heaven (my emphasis).

Herbert's poetry also uses groaning to represent intimacy gained. Helen Wilcox argues that Herbert "[o]ften used" groans "to indicate the beginning of a return to God, the start of the

¹⁴⁵ Baxter, *PF*, 62.

¹⁴⁶ Brown, *Spirituality in Adversity*, 163.

¹⁴⁷ Brown, 164–68.

music of praise.”¹⁴⁸ In “Ephes. 4.30. Grieve not the Holy Spirit, etc.,” Herbert’s speaker realizes that his sin makes God “grone” and so desires to “tune [his lute] to a strain,/ Which may with thee [God],/ All day complain,” as “There can no discord but in ceasing be.”¹⁴⁹ The repentant speaker groans *with* God, and this groaning is a type of music which evokes spiritual harmony. In “Sighs and Grones,” Herbert’s speaker begs for God’s mercy and, although the title’s words do not appear in the poem, the concluding stanza italicizes a series of pairs describing Jesus as “*Judge and Saviour, feast and rod, / Cordiall and Corrosive.*”¹⁵⁰ The speaker’s contrite “Sighs and Grones” are answered by deeper relationship with Jesus, who corrects and blesses his heart. Herbert’s poem “Sion” celebrates the worship of a humbled, repentant heart as more pleasing to God than all the glories of Solomon’s temple, because

...brasse and stones are heavie things,
Tombes for the dead, not temples fit for thee:
But grones are quick, and full of wings,
And all their motions upward be.¹⁵¹

Similarly, Love’s “groaning in my breast” in “Divine Love’s Rest” underscores the speaker’s ignorance of heavenly worship while graciously removing the stinging consequences thereof. After experiencing Love’s “groaning,” the speaker can command his soul, “Up then, my Soul, and swiftly Heavenward tend.”¹⁵² Baxter’s “Divine Love’s Rest” and “On *David’s* Psalms” set the human worshipper in a place both lowly and glorious. The worshipper is ignorant of heavenly realities, uncertain of ideal practices, incapable of harmony or even melody. (He admits at the end of “On *David’s* Psalms” that “low streins with stops, are here my best,” though he

¹⁴⁸ Herbert, *English Poems*, 24, footnote 13.

¹⁴⁹ Herbert, 125, lines 18–22.

¹⁵⁰ Herbert, 76, lines 27–28.

¹⁵¹ Herbert, 99, lines 19–22.

¹⁵² Baxter, *PF*, 62.

hoped that the “cælestial fire” would in his heart “a pleasant Melody begin” a few lines earlier.¹⁵³) Yet, the worshipper’s heart echoes God’s. In fact, his groaning is God’s own song.

Groaning features repeatedly in *Poetical Fragments*, always as an act of worship or repentance pleasing to or conducted by God. This is different from God carrying out His will for the soul despite the soul’s weaknesses and ignorance. Baxter suggests that God uses those very limitations to draw the soul into deeper reliance on and trust in Him. In “The Prayer of the Sick, in a case like *Hezekiahs*” (7), set to the mournful melody of the penitential Psalm 51, the speaker claims, “Love [] gave me groans” and “into groans tunes all my breath.”¹⁵⁴ God gives a different form of sacred music than the hymnist thought best, and a different understanding of what being in tune means. Psalm 51 and King Hezekiah’s prayer in Isaiah 38 were often paired together as some of the most popular, early modern “models of penitential contrition.”¹⁵⁵ Every service of morning and evening prayer in the Prayer Book began with Psalm 51:15 in a responsorial form: “O Lord, open thou our lips”; to which the congregation responds, “And our mouths shall proclaim thy praise.”¹⁵⁶ Hannibal Hamlin contends that Psalm 51’s liturgical usage indicates that “no prayer would be possible at all” without it.¹⁵⁷ Yet, in Baxter’s hymn, God chooses a different form and concept of harmony to evoke penitence and worship. In raising uncertainty over best forms and practices and in charging God with worship’s success, Baxter’s hymns beg the question: who knows what, in Herbert’s words, God might use to toss souls to His breast?¹⁵⁸ God

¹⁵³ *PF*, 63.

¹⁵⁴ *PF*, 78, 80; also 15–16, 78, 90, 94–95.

¹⁵⁵ Micheline White, “Dismantling Catholic Primers and Reforming Private Prayer: Anne Lock, Hezekiah’s Song and Psalm 50/51,” in *Private and Domestic Devotion in Early Modern Britain*, ed. Jessica Martin and Alec Ryrie (London: Routledge, 2016), 98.

¹⁵⁶ Cummings, *BCP*, 241, 252.

¹⁵⁷ Hamlin, *Psalm Culture*, 199.

¹⁵⁸ Herbert, *English Poems*, 147, line 20.

might not choose to use the era's most tried and tested methods of worship. He might not even use music to incite praise.

Herbert used the image of a pulley to describe God's pursuit of human souls and souls' intrinsic longing for God. Baxter uses the image of a mariner's compass. Both are human inventions which offer weak metaphors for the great, providential truths being communicated. Herbert's pulley appears nowhere in the poem; it is a human label to a divine story. "Divine Love's Rest" immediately replaces the image of the compass in lines 1–4 with a flint and spark (lines 5–8), then an oil lamp (lines 9–12), then a soul in bird-like flight (line 15). This explosion of metaphors underscores the deficiency of each. By stunting even musical performance inspired by psalmody and Herbert's "canoniz[ed]" poetry, Baxter's hymns propose that whatever worship practices humans choose will be poor representations of heavenly worship.¹⁵⁹ In a prefatory epistle to Baxter's posthumously-published psalm versifications, Baxter's literary executor Matthew Sylvester recalls his friend's repeated warning that "*We know nothing. We know nothing*" of what "the manner of this great Performance" of the "Heavenly *Chorus*" will be.¹⁶⁰ Baxter's hymns challenge the Restoration Church's assertion of Anglican forms and ceremonies as the best and only forms for the church. If we cannot know what perfected, heavenly worship is like, or what God might use to move and sanctify souls, why enforce a particular practice?

Of course, *Poetical Fragments* is making a strongly nonconformist case for inward worship as more important than outward forms. This was a common argument which nonconformists drew from Herbert's *The Temple*, and Baxter follows suit.¹⁶¹ However, *Poetical Fragments* is not merely arguing for a different way of practicing faith. Freedom in *adiaphora*

¹⁵⁹ Achinstein, "Reading Herbert," 433.

¹⁶⁰ Baxter, *Paraphrase on the Psalms*, A3^v.

¹⁶¹ Achinstein, "Reading Herbert," 458–64.

illustrates an essential spiritual truth for Baxter. The Creator's withholding of rest from the creature in Herbert's "The Pulley" is a divine mercy which protects the creature from choosing worldly goods above God. In a similar way, "Divine Love's Rest" and "On David's Psalms" frame God's withholding of information about best worship practices as a divine gift with salvific implications. The worshipper, unable to attain perfection in worship of his own accord, must rely wholly on God, who conducts the soul's acceptable worship. Adiaphorous sacred music has no spiritual impact of itself; however, freedom in worship practices admits human limitations, putting the prerogative for acceptable worship in God's hands. Thus, freedom in *adiaphora* demonstrates the way of the Gospel, in which our acceptableness to God (that is, our righteousness) rests in God alone and not in anything we can do.

"To the Tune of *Pas. Mes. Galliard*"

Contemporaries were wary to pronounce a type of music as most heavenly, given humanity's ignorance of heaven; yet they readily declared types of sacred music as unheavenly and unscriptural. In its use of a secular dance tune, *Poetical Fragments*'s eleventh hymn "The Return. To the Tune of *Pas. Mes. Galliard*: Or, *To the common Psalm Tunes*" radically challenges the assumption that worship practices can indicate heterodoxy. In doing so, the hymn challenges nonconformists who separate from established religion on the basis of *adiaphora*.

Early reformers set sacred songs to secular tunes to make them more accessible, memorable, and engaging, helping the reformation message to spread more quickly. Yet, what offered cultural immediacy and memorability in the sixteenth century was believed in the

seventeenth century to devalue sacred music and tempt the singer to fleshly delights.¹⁶² “[B]y the turn of the seventeenth century nearly everyone seems to have agreed that the tunes for psalms and for ballads *should* be radically different,” and by the middle of the seventeenth century, no serious psalmist or hymnist set their lyrics to secular tunes.¹⁶³ The use of secular tunes for religious lyrics was a practice associated only with mud-slinging ballads or heretical sects by the late 1600s. A 1674 broadside “Hymn” celebrates the Quakers’ Spirit-led victories over the Baptists to “an excellent new tune, called, The zealous atheist,” a telling melody which discredits the entire song.¹⁶⁴ Heretical sects like the Ranters and the Sweet Singers of Israel notoriously set sacred lyrics to bawdy tunes and vice versa. Sarah Apetrei argues that the Sweet Singers “sought to turn religious forms and ceremonies upside down” to express the unrestrained, divine inward life of antinomian freedom.¹⁶⁵ Baxter is neither a satirist nor an anti-formalist. He particularly loathed the antinomian heresy, which assumes that since salvation is through grace and not works, Christians are exempt from the moral law.¹⁶⁶ Still, Baxter sets a hymn about returning to God and attending to one’s neglected soul—a deeply serious hymn about Christian essentials like salvation and sanctification—to a secular tune.

Furthermore, the tune itself bore troubling connotations. The galliard was a jovial and lively communal dance in triple time, popular throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Its defining feature of many quick turns gave it allegorical potency for contemporary writers, who used the dance to figure religious and political changeability, especially of the dangerous or flippant sort. Writers used the galliard to depict turns of faith that were ultimately

¹⁶² For this shift in tune usage: Temperley, *Studies in English Church Music*, 80–81; Quitslund, “Singing the Psalms,” 252–53.

¹⁶³ Quitslund, “Singing the Psalms,” 252–53.

¹⁶⁴ *The Quakers Ballad, or, An Hymn of Triumph and Exultation for Their Victories* (London, 1674).

¹⁶⁵ Apetrei, “Sweet Singers,” 19.

¹⁶⁶ For Baxter’s rejection of antinomianism: Cooper, *Owen, Baxter, and Formation of Nonconformity*, Chapter 2.

insincere and ineffective. The bishop of Norwich Joseph Hall (1574–1656), whose writings Baxter revered as wards against schism and lukewarm faith, made the galliard a lesson against judging people’s salvation by appearances.¹⁶⁷ Devoted Christians might appear austere and hopeless with penitential “sighs” and “teares,” Hall claims, while those living for worldly pleasures appear confident and joyful. However, the latter “doe but dance a Galliard ouer the mouth of hell, that seemes now couered ouer with the greene sods of pleasure.”¹⁶⁸ The Congregational minister Benjamin Stonham used the galliard to depict conversions which appear genuine but are ultimately ineffective. Though “A sudden Light may rouze” slumbering souls “a little, as did *John Baptist’s* Light those slumbring Jews, which made them Skip or Dance a Galliard,” this will quickly lose momentum and last “onely for an hour.”¹⁶⁹ The galliard’s joviality masquerades as the joy of salvation, but the false convert is eventually unmasked. Most biting is the Oxford don Robert Burton’s (1577–1640) witty anecdote:

An old Doctor which had been a Protestant in King *Edwards* days, a Papist in Queen *Maries* days, and a Protestant again in Queen *Elisabeths*, seeing a Lady dance a Galliard, commended her danceing very much; to which she answer’d, That *she knew she danc’d well enough, only she could not turn so well as he.*¹⁷⁰

If hypocritical conversions for political gain were not bad enough, these are made by a divine, “An old Doctor.” The pastors of the church, not merely the goats passing among the sheep, dance a damnable galliard of false conversions.

¹⁶⁷ For the usefulness of Hall’s writings: Richard Baxter, *A Christian Directory* (London, 1673), 325, 581. Cf. Richard A. McCabe, “Hall, Joseph (1574–1656),” ODNB, 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11976>.

¹⁶⁸ Joseph Hall, *The Works of Joseph Hall* (London, 1628), 493.

¹⁶⁹ Benjamin Stonham, *The Parable of the Ten Virgins Opened, or, Christ’s Coming as a Bridegroom* (London, 1676), 82. For Stonham’s religious affiliation: Warren Johnston, *Revelation Restored: The Apocalypse in Later Seventeenth-Century England* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2011), 107.

¹⁷⁰ Robert Burton, *Versatile Ingenium, The Wittie Companion* (Amsterdam, 1679), 39.

Richard Baxter became implicated in these damnable galliards when John Rogers (b. 1627) denounced Baxter's *A Holy Commonwealth* (1659) as a "*Spanish Galliard* (after Contzen and Campanella)."¹⁷¹ Adam Contzen and Tommaso Campanella were early-seventeenth-century, Catholic philosophers whose utopian commonwealths envisioned rulers as providential instruments who would spread the true faith worldwide.¹⁷² *The Plots of Jesuites* (1653) grouped together the English Jesuit Robert Persons, who participated in an invasion plan to restore a Catholic government in Elizabethan England, with Contzen and Campanella as guileful plotters who desired "to bring England to the Romane religion without tumult."¹⁷³ Robert Appelbaum calls Baxter's *A Holy Commonwealth* a theocratic utopia, which "blended national political ideals with goals of worldwide evangelism," with no mention of the usual utopian concerns of "expanding human capacities or the scope of human freedom."¹⁷⁴

It is easy to see why Baxter's utopia sat ill with a Fifth Monarchist like Rogers. The Fifth Monarchists also embraced the political-ecclesiastical potential of the Cromwellian Protectorate and anticipated a godly world government. However, they believed that spiritually elect men would manage this government, not Christ directly.¹⁷⁵ The Fifth Monarchy emphasis was on the strength and purity of elite human rulers, which made it "the most militant" of the Interregnum's radical sects.¹⁷⁶ For Rogers to call Baxter's utopia a "*Spanish Galliard*" warns that a government without strong, human leadership must be changeable and will eventually lose its self-rule, as

¹⁷¹ John Rogers, *Diapoliteia. A Christian Concertation with Mr. Prin [Prynne], Mr. Baxter, Mr. Harrington, for the True Cause of the Commonwealth* (London, 1659), 77. Cf. Richard Greaves, "Rogers, John (b. 1627)," ODNB, January 3, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/23983>.

¹⁷² Cf. Adam Contzen, *Politicorum Libri Decem* (Mainz, 1620); Tommaso Campanella, *The City of the Sun*, trans. A. M. Elliot and R. Millner (London: Journeyman, 1981).

¹⁷³ *The Plots of Jesuites* (London, 1653), [title page]. Cf. Victor Houlston, "Persons [Parsons], Robert (1546–1610)," ODNB, September 23, 2004, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/21474>.

¹⁷⁴ Robert Appelbaum, *Literature and Utopian Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 173.

¹⁷⁵ Appelbaum, 149.

¹⁷⁶ Appelbaum, 149.

Catholic nations were forced to stoop to papal authority. Rogers's implication is that Baxter's weak, even frivolous "*Spanish Galliard*" would result in the downfall of Puritan rule, leaving England at the mercy of the ungodly. The Spanish galliard, as it turned out, was no real threat to the Protectorate, but the Stuart galliard was. One year later, royalists set their celebrations of Charles II's return and the end of Puritan rule (whose leadership under Richard Cromwell had, as Rogers feared, proven too weak) to the galliard's tune.¹⁷⁷

Baxter never shirked contemporaries' accusations of Catholic leanings. John Rogers only echoed those who had accused Baxter of papism since his first publication, *Aphorismes of Justification* (1649). *Aphorismes of Justification* articulates a soteriological position from which Baxter "never moved": in order to be saved, humans must respond to God's offer of salvation.¹⁷⁸ Baxter develops a parable modeled on the sinner tenant and divine landlord imagery of George Herbert's poem "Redemption" to illustrate his soteriology:

A Tenant forfeiteth his Lease to his Landlord, by not paying his rent; he runs deep in debt to him, and is disabled to pay him any more rent for the future, whereupon he is put out of his house, and cast into prison, till he pay the debt; his Landlords son payeth it for him, taketh him out of prison, and putteth him in his house again, as his Tenant, having purchased house and all to himself; he maketh him a new Lease in this Tenor, that paying but a pepper corn yearly to him, he shall be acquit both from his debt, and from all other rent for the future, which by his old Lease was to be paid.¹⁷⁹

The human sinner under the Old Covenant, the first lease, cannot uphold the Law's requirements of righteousness and is damned until Jesus pays his debts and makes a new covenant with him.

¹⁷⁷ Cf. Robert Le Grosse, *Sionis Reductio and Exultatio, or, Sions Return out of Captivity* (London, 1662), 22–23; Marchamont Nedham, *A Short History of the English Rebellion* (London, 1661), stanzas 18–19.

¹⁷⁸ Keeble et al., "General Introduction to *RB*," 4. For in-depth studies of Baxter's soteriology: Packer, *Redemption and Restoration of Man*; Hans Boersma, *A Hot Pepper Corn: Richard Baxter's Doctrine of Justification in Its Seventeenth-Century Context of Controversy* (Zoetermeer: Uitgeverij Boekencentrum, 1993).

¹⁷⁹ Richard Baxter, *Aphorismes of Justification* (London, 1649), 127. Cf. Herbert, *English Poems*, 26.

Where the parable turned theologically dicey for high Calvinists was the tenant's annual dues under the New Testament covenant of grace. These dues implied a salvation by works and "attracted charges of Arminianism and Popery."¹⁸⁰ Baxter emphasizes this human response in salvation not as valuable in its scope or intensity but simply as a tenant's "homage" to a generous Landlord, a child's "I thank you" to a father's "purse of Gold," a prisoner's "*Thankful Accepting*" of liberty.¹⁸¹ To Baxter, the "peppercorn" represented consent, acceptance, thanks, and obedience—the natural responses to God's undeserved gift of salvation. However, contemporaries deemed the parable damnable. "[T]his one grain will sink us down to hell, so hot a poyson is Mr. *Brs* pepper-corn," the Calvinist rector John Crandon savagely warned in a book which would also condemn Baxter for "follow[ing] the Jesuits every foot and inch in the interpreting of [scripture]" and coin the injurious phrase "Baxterian Faith" to distinguish Baxter's from mainstream theology.¹⁸² Baxter's soteriology would always have the threat of a "*Spanish Galliard*" to high Calvinist opponents.¹⁸³

Baxter's hymn "The Return" (11) dredges up these perilous precedents.¹⁸⁴ It is set to the galliard; it examines spiritual conversion (per the *turn* in its title); and it is an allegory about an indebted human tenant and his divine "Landlord" (stanza 15). The speaker returns to his house, an image for his soul, and is shocked to find it "all disorder'd," "cold," "dark," and "all foul" despite having "left it light," with a burning "fire," and "carefully" swept (stanzas 1–5). Now "Serpents do crawl, and Vermine creep,/ In my polluted Soul" (stanza 5). Worse still,

6. My Gospel-Book I open left,

¹⁸⁰ Keeble et al., "General Introduction to *RB*," 4.

¹⁸¹ Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 129; Richard Baxter, *Catholick Theologie* (London, 1675), 80–81.

¹⁸² John Crandon, *Mr. Baxters Aphorisms Exorcized and Anthonized* (London, 1654), 178, 85, [A3]; William Lamont, "Crandon, John (d. 1654)," ODNB, January 3, 2008, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/66996>.

¹⁸³ Rogers, *Diapoliteia*, 77.

¹⁸⁴ Since the 1681 edition includes stanza numbers for "The Return" (*PF*, 96–102), I cite in-text by stanzas.

Where I the Promise saw:
 But now I doubt it's lost by theft,
 I find none but the Law.

The old and new leases in Herbert's poem "Redemption" and in Baxter's parable of the peppercorn have been switched back. "[O]ne little spark" replaces the "Cælestial fire" which "Divine Love's Rest" and "On *David's* Psalms" identified in the soul (stanza 4).¹⁸⁵ The New Testament covenant of grace is seemingly undone, leaving the soul only with "Serpents" reminiscent of humankind's fall, and "the Law," which is powerless to bring salvation (cf. Romans 8:3–4). To the speaker has befallen the fate of the tenant who fails to pay his annual peppercorn. Baxter's 1649 parable explains that the Landlord does "not cancel the old Lease [the Law], but keepeth it in his hands to put in suite against the Tenant, if he should be so foolish as to deny the payment of the pepper corn."¹⁸⁶

"The Return" seems to validate contemporaries' anxieties about both the galliard and Baxter's soteriology. The tenant's earlier conversion turns out to be false as its identifying marks are undone. The casual way that the tenant left his soul in the first place speaks to the galliard's association with flippant and superficial conversions. The tenant, for failure to maintain his soul, has apparently lost his salvation, indicating a works-based salvation. However, Baxter's infamous "peppercorn" is strikingly missing from the hymn. Hans Boersma's study of Baxter's soteriology captures how Baxter thought that his high Calvinist opponents were the ones at risk of "Romanist" self-justification.¹⁸⁷ Baxter warned that the high Calvinist doctrine of justification put humanity in God's place by framing the individual's faith (even if God-given) as the instrument by which the soul was justified. Baxter agreed that faith was a "condition without

¹⁸⁵ *PF*, 62–63.

¹⁸⁶ Baxter, *Aphorismes*, 128.

¹⁸⁷ Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 190.

which God does not justify.”¹⁸⁸ However, he argued that faith allows the soul to receive Christ, not justification; Christ alone is the instrument, the cause, of justification.¹⁸⁹

In lieu of Baxter’s misunderstood peppercorn, “The Return” develops an allegory that emphasizes Christ’s prerogative over salvation and the tenant’s powerlessness, per the concluding emphasis of George Herbert’s sonnet “Redemption.” “Redemption” opens with a speaker who had “been tenant long to a rich lord” but “Not thriving, ...resolvèd to be bold,/ And make a suit unto him, to afford/ A new small-rented lease, and cancel th’ old.”¹⁹⁰ But, after a fruitless search among the powerful, the speaker finally finds his Landlord among “thieves and murderers”: “there I him espied,/ Who straight, *Your suit is granted*, said, and died.”¹⁹¹ Russell Hillier argues that Herbert also emphasized the “human responsibility” to respond to God’s “gift of grace.”¹⁹² Hillier develops Herbert’s as a “peppercorn” soteriology by examining how *The Temple* frames God’s grace and the human’s active responses thereto as reciprocal, even collaborative, in evoking salvation.¹⁹³

However, “Redemption” destabilizes the “commercial, mercantile relationship” between the human and God which Hillier elsewhere identifies in Herbert.¹⁹⁴ The tenant in “Redemption” has no chance to respond. In fact, before the tenant makes his “bold” request, Jesus the Landlord knows the tenant’s need, takes the initiative to come to earth and sacrifice himself on the cross, and grants the tenant’s suit. The tenant proposes a new economic relationship between himself and the landlord, but his desire for “A new small-rented lease” reveals his ignorance over

¹⁸⁸ Boersma, 194.

¹⁸⁹ Boersma, 187–94.

¹⁹⁰ Herbert, *English Poems*, 26, lines 1–4.

¹⁹¹ Herbert, 26, lines 13–14.

¹⁹² Russell M. Hillier, “Herbert’s Pepper Corn: Responsibility and Reciprocity in *The Temple*,” *Christianity and Literature* 66, no. 1 (2015): 116, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0148333115585281>.

¹⁹³ Hillier, 116–33.

¹⁹⁴ Hillier, 122.

salvation's costliness. Jesus agrees to a new lease but accepts no payment. Jesus *is* the payment, and the tenant's lease is one of free grace. The title "Redemption," with its etymological roots in buying or ransoming back, indicates that nothing more need be paid to secure salvation.¹⁹⁵

"The Return" relies more on the imagery of Herbert's "Redemption" than Baxter's 1649 peppercorn allegory did. By doing so, the hymn defuses the threat of a works-based salvation, which contemporaries perceived in Baxter's soteriology. Baxter's peppercorn allegory never alludes to the crucifixion, but this event, so climatic in "Redemption," puts into perspective the tenant's role in his salvation in "The Return." Initially wanting to avoid dealing with his disordered soul, Baxter's tenant "thought some ease to find" through sleep (stanza 7). However, he "found distress instead of rest,/ Through anguish of my mind," which reads like a nightmarish experience of the crucifixion (stanza 7):

8. For Thorns were put into my Bed,
Where I was wont to sleep:
Grief is the pillow for my head,
On which I lie and weep.

9. And if I slumber, up I start:
My dreams awake my fears:
The thorns have pierced head and heart;
And drawn forth more than tears.

10. The stormy Rain an entrance hath,
Through the uncovered top:
How should I rest when showers of wrath
Upon my conscience drop?

The speaker's bed turns into the torments experienced by Christ on the cross, including "anguish," "Thorns" which "pierced head and heart," a storm, and "showers of wrath"—presumably God's wrath against sin since it troubles the speaker's "Conscience." Amidst these

¹⁹⁵ "redemption, n.," etymology (OED).

Passion images, stanza 8's reference to "Grief" reminds of Jesus's mantra on the cross in Herbert's "The Sacrifice": "Was ever grief like mine?"¹⁹⁶ The human tenant bizarrely stands in the Landlord's place during the crucifixion, which is how Baxter's high Calvinist opponents viewed his soteriology. William Lamont argues that the soteriological debate between Baxter and his opponents, namely, John Crandon, "replay[ed] an earlier debate between John Preston and John Saltmarsh," in which "Preston, like Baxter, emphasized 'so small a condition' but Saltmarsh argued back, like Crandon, that to attribute to man 'some small part in his salvation is really to put salvation in his power entirely.'" ¹⁹⁷ "The Return" plays out such accusations but is clear that the tenant's "Passion" brings no salvation, only torment and hopelessness.

John Crandon warned that Baxter's 1649 peppercorn "Similitude...maketh our Justification mercenary," and he has a point. The allegory drips with the language of payments, rent, leases, and debts.¹⁹⁸ In a recent study of Baxter's impressive impact on the English lexicon, Neil Keeble argues that Baxter repeatedly pleaded for clear diction in contemporary debates, believing that most religious and political discord could be resolved if people only learned to convey their true meanings.¹⁹⁹ Baxter seems to have taken his own advice in "The Return" by carefully revising the diction of his polarizing peppercorn allegory. "The Return" contains but destabilizes transactional language like Herbert's "Redemption" does:

15. How shall I see my Landlord's face?
 How shall I pay his Rent?
 When I have thus abus'd his grace;
 And have his Treasure spent?

¹⁹⁶ Herbert, *English Poems*, 20, lines 4, 8, 12, etc.

¹⁹⁷ Lamont, "John Crandon (ODNB)."

¹⁹⁸ Crandon, *Aphorisms Exorcized*, 173.

¹⁹⁹ N. H. Keeble, "Words and Richard Baxter," *The Seventeenth Century* 37, no. 1 (2022): 146–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0268117X.2021.1900902>.

16. Yet have I one great trusty friend,
That will procure my Peace;
And all this loss and ruine mend,
And purchase my release.

17. When I the Prodigal had plaid,
And all my Portion spent;
He told me he my Debts had paid,
And bade me but *Repent*.

The last line seems to conceal a peppercorn of repentance. However, “The Return” distinguishes this response from the language of payment and transaction. Stanzas 15–17 emphasize the tenant’s total bankruptcy. He is terrified to realize he has “my Landlord’s...Treasure spent” and “all my Portion spent.” The tenant does not seek new economic viability; he relies on Jesus to ‘purchase my release’ and pay his debts. Even the soul’s continued state of salvation depends on God’s payment. The tenant declares in stanza 23, “I’le never more despair,/ ...For he will all my loss repair,/ Though at the dearest cost.” The tenant has no part in paying his debts, not even minuscule peppercorn dues. As in Herbert’s “Redemption,” Jesus makes the full payment on the tenant’s behalf.

The tenant’s cheerful tidying of his house in the poem’s second half clearly responds to Jesus’s command “*Repent*” in stanza 17 but is not transactional. “The Bellows I’le yet take in hand:/ Till this small spark shall flame”; “I mean to sweep all clean,/ And cast out filthy sin”; “Christ again I’le entertain,/ And wait on him within”; “I’le mend the Roof: I’le watch the Door,/ And better keep the Key,” the tenant confidently declares (stanzas 28–30). The only semi-transactional word used loses this meaning in context: instead of “wandering abroad,” the tenant decides, “With my best constant friend at home,/ I’le settle mine abroad” (stanza 27). The meaning of *settling* one’s estate or accounts, paying one’s debts or arranging for the transfer of

one's property, makes no sense here.²⁰⁰ None of the tenant's menial chores could equate with "the dearest cost" which Christ pays, and the tenant returns to his home that he might reside with "my best constant friend" and "entertain" Christ "within." By making lexical distinctions between Jesus's and the tenant's roles—distinctions not made in Baxter's peppercorn allegory—the tenant's responsive repentance in "The Return" reads not as a work necessary to salvation so much as a transformation of life evoked by salvation. The peppercorn may remain—the hymn does not say—but it is not a call to salvation by works or self-righteousness as Baxter's high Calvinist opponents accused.

Keeble concludes his article on Baxter's valuing of clear diction with the caveat that, for Baxter, no exact formulation of words could constitute truth, because limited humans can only ever imperfectly render divine truth in words. From Baxter's perspective, the age's determination to get the correct wording for creeds and tests to affirm orthodoxy was a pointless and needlessly divisive endeavor.²⁰¹ "The Return" ends with the tenant questioning the wording of his dogmatic responses to Christ's call to repent,

33. What have I said? *That I'll do this?*
That am so false and weak?
...

34. I mean, Lord, All this shall be done,
If thou my heart wilt raise.
And as the work must be thine own;
So also shall the *Praise*.

The tenant's clarification of his meaning in stanza 34 muddles the details of his response by using the passive voice, a suppositional "if," and the future tense. The tenant declares only the

²⁰⁰ "settle, v.," 31c, 35 (OED).

²⁰¹ Keeble, "Words and Richard Baxter," 155–56.

phrase “the work must be thine own” with clarity and certainty. “The Return” thus strips Baxter’s soteriology down to God’s certain and independent “work”—the point which Baxter and his nonconformist opponents agreed was the core of salvation—and leaves the soul’s response minuscule and indefinite.

Stanzas 6–10 and 13–17 of “The Return,” which revisit Baxter’s polarizing peppercorn allegory, are the longest stretches of perfect, oral rhymes in a hymn in which nearly half of the stanzas contain visual rhymes.²⁰² These seemingly dangerous studies of Baxter’s soteriology result in the hymn’s oral harmony, and, by implication, the soul’s spiritual harmony. Furthermore, although the galliard seems a damnable tune choice for a conversion hymn, the hymn aligns with church traditions. “The Return” is one of two hymns in *Poetical Fragments* set to the Common Meter (8.6.8.6.), as were a majority of the Old Version psalms, and it features enumerated quatrains which are easier to follow in congregational worship.²⁰³ Baxter’s setting of “The Return” “To the Tune of *Pas. Mes. Galliard: OR, The common Psalm Tunes*” is suggestive.²⁰⁴ To Baxter’s nonconformist opponents, his soteriology certainly seemed better suited to the galliard tune of false conversions and popery. However, the fast-paced galliard must be slowed down to *passamezzo* (2/4 time) to be used as the hymn’s melody.²⁰⁵ The hymn’s rhythm and form are, instead, perfectly suited to the Old Version psalms.

²⁰² “home”/“come” (stanza 1); “away”/“Key (stanza 2); “burn”/“mourn” (stanza 3); “foul”/“Soul” (stanza 5); “waste”/“cast” (stanza 11); “gone”/“undone” (stanza 12); “done”/“own” (stanza 18); “forgive”/“relieve” (stanza 20); “Love”/“prove” (stanza 22); “come”/“home” and “abroad”/“abroad” (stanza 27); “clean”/“entertain” (stanza 29); “Key”/“obey” (stanza 30); “Love”/“remove” (stanza 32); “weak”/“break” (stanza 33); “done”/“own” (stanza 34).

²⁰³ Most metrical psalms used Common Meter, Short Meter (6.6.8.6), and Long Meter (8.8.8.8), with C.M. and S.M. being the most popular; Nicholas Temperley, “The Music of Dissent,” in *Dissenting Praise: Religious Dissent and the Hymn in England and Wales*, ed. Isabel Rivers and David L. Wykes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 201; Temperley, *Studies in English Church Music*, 25. Hymn 8 uses C.M.; Baxter, *PF*, 81–83.

²⁰⁴ *PF*, 96.

²⁰⁵ “passamezzo, n.,” 1 (OED).

Although it raises enemies' prejudices and fears, Baxter's hymn aligns best with traditional, ecumenically accepted forms for worship. However, the worshipper retains the freedom to sing "The Return" to the galliard's tune, despite its heretical, popish, and hypocritical connotations. Baxter thus boldly disconnects orthodoxy from practice particulars. God can carry out His work of drawing souls into repentance, discipline, sanctification, and salvation despite or even through seemingly heterodox forms.

This argument challenges nonconformists who separated from the Church of England over *adiaphora*. Baxter agreed that the Established Church required further reform.²⁰⁶ He also shared his nonconformist colleagues' fear of the spread of popish doctrines within the church.²⁰⁷ However, Baxter's use of sacred music in "The Return" indicates that a church's reformed status should not be discerned by its non-essential practices or by the mincing of words. Otherwise, something so small and misunderstood as a "peppercorn" might destroy all unity and brotherly love.

Conclusion

Despite Baxter's efforts, nonconformists were never granted comprehension, and the Toleration Act of 1689 solidified nonconformity's place outside the Church of England.²⁰⁸ Baxter includes no hymns in *The Additions to the Poetical Fragments*, which he composed in 1682 and 1683 and published in 1683. In the heightened persecution after the Exclusion Crisis,

²⁰⁶ Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity*, 229.

²⁰⁷ Boersma, *Hot Pepper Corn*, 187–91.

²⁰⁸ Cf. Goldie, *Roger Morrice*, xv.

magistrates confiscated Baxter's possessions in October 1682, "even the bed that I lay sick on," and Baxter was forced into hiding.²⁰⁹ Baxter's *Holy Commonwealth* was burnt alongside Milton's works in the Bodleian Library's quadrangle in 1683.²¹⁰ Two years later, Baxter was arrested for sedition in his *Paraphrase on the New Testament* (1685). So infamous was the vindictive trial that it inspired artistic depictions into the twentieth-century.²¹¹ *The Additions* maintains *Poetical Fragments's* focus on salvific essentials. Words like salvation, redemption, Savior, Gospel, repentance, and forgiveness saturate the seven poems. However, Baxter is in 1683 the nonconformist minister sermonizing in poetry to a nonconformist audience on sundry themes like grace, wisdom, madness, and hypocrisy, teaching them how to be faithful in a wicked, spiraling world. The damning censure of the Church of England in the poem "Hypocrisie" includes no means to ecclesial unity, as *Poetical Fragments's* use of hymnody did.²¹²

In *Poetical Fragments*, Baxter was, in some ways, a spiritual visionary before his time. Mark Noll argues that while "[d]octrines, personalities, ethical prescriptions, styles of dress, methods of sermon delivery, favored Bible passages" all divided early evangelicals, hymnody "created the strongest unitive forum in eighteenth-century evangelicalism."²¹³ Noll's description of early evangelical hymnals could hardly better fit with Baxter's call to unify on fundamentals.

²⁰⁹ Keeble, "Richard Baxter (ODNB)." Cf. Baxter, *RB*, 2:III. 191.

²¹⁰ Richard Baxter, *A Holy Commonwealth*, ed. William Lamont (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), ix.

²¹¹ Edward Matthew Ward, *Judge Jeffreys Bullying Richard Baxter*, oil on canvas, c. 1839–77, Sheffield Museums Trust, <https://www-bridgemaneducation-com.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/en/asset/180982/summary>; James Aitken Wylie, *Richard Baxter before Judge Jeffreys*, illustration from *The History of Protestantism*, engraving, 1878, Private Collection, <https://www-bridgemaneducation-com.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/en/asset/621392/summary>; Edgar Melville Ward, *Judge Jeffreys and Richard Baxter*, engraving, 1905, Private Collection, <https://www-bridgemaneducation-com.ezproxy-prd.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/en/asset/2792960/summary>.

²¹² Richard Baxter, *Additions to the Poetical Fragments* (London, 1683), 34–48.

²¹³ Mark Noll, "Hymnody," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Evangelicalism*, ed. Jonathan Yeager (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 364, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190863319.013.34>.

“The saving work of God in Christ, personally appropriated” is the “sole theme” of John and Charles Wesley’s *Collection of Hymns* (1780), Noll argues, and George Whitefield’s hymns

included nothing on formal church order, nothing on the office and duties of ministers, nothing on the Eucharist or Lord’s Supper, no elaborated doctrine apart from soteriology, little on Scripture as such, nothing on tradition as such, no effort to explain the human psyche, no attempt to parse the relationship of divine and human activity in redemption... Instead, the saving life, death, resurrection, and example of Jesus Christ dominated almost entirely.²¹⁴

Such hymns unified early evangelicals in a common identity on which all could agree. Hymnody was “an engine of revival” that helped give the evangelical movement such traction and success across denominations, nations, genders, and races, as well as generations.²¹⁵ Today, the beloved hymns of Isaac Watts, Charles Wesley, and others remain part of most Christians’ identity and regular worship. Baxter was right: a focus on fundamentals in worship could elicit unity and reform within the Church.

²¹⁴ Noll, 355.

²¹⁵ Noll, 360. These views are critical “commonplace[s]”; Coffey, “Between Puritanism and Evangelicalism,” 29.

CODA

Keeping Us at Uncertainties

This dissertation studies nonconformist reassessments of how to think about providence in the Restoration era. The question of how to think about providence is a question about how to read. How do and should we make sense of the scriptures, the ambiguous sign, the riddle, the paradox, the rousing motion, the past, present, and future, this world and the world to come? How do we remain an active, attentive reader of God and His way, knowing that no answer key will be provided? How do we interpret aright when aware of the human propensity for misreading and, more troublingly, our own historic misreadings? How do we scrutinize and test our own and others' interpretations? To what extent can we draw conclusions about things that God has left vague or obscured? So timely were these quandaries amidst the Restoration period's uncertainties that even figures who detested dissent and its ideologies, like John Dryden, were compelled to grapple with similar reconsiderations.

The difficulty of reading providence naturally finds expression in literary turns. The authors studied in these chapters drew on literature's invitation for the reader's active discernment to demonstrate how to engage with providence. Readers have a great responsibility in interpreting a text's (and providence's) meaning. Yet, readers simultaneously concede their secondary role to the (A)uthor in asserting meaning. It is essential that Milton's Samson wrestle with the possibility that his failings have thwarted God's purposes. Bunyan's pilgrim must

approach the ominous lions, and the streams connected to the divine Fountain must course and flow in Hutchinson's epic. The characters would be damnably apathetic, the streams hellishly motionless, without this active and often difficult engagement. Yet, it is equally essential that the *1671 Poems* settles on no conclusion about providence's plans, that Bunyan's lions evoke good and evil simultaneously, that *The Hind and the Panther* ends without hypothesizing about when the true Church will triumph, and that *Poetical Fragments* necessitates the ecclesial variety that had only ever bred disunity among Restoration Christians.

These texts' literary aspects and hidden messages facilitated an engagement in contemporary print culture which sidestepped censorship restrictions and provided nonconformists with an avenue for activism within political quietism. This dissertation demonstrates Restoration nonconformist literature's remarkable attunement to and wrestling with opposing worldviews, as well as to the wider populace's fears and hopes. Restoration nonconformists certainly crafted a unique and vibrant literary and spiritual culture, but they were neither insular nor living in retreat from the era's politics, culture, or widespread concerns, nor predominantly polarizing. Their publications' testing and retesting of beliefs necessitated open dialogue with alternative opinions, ideas, and voices, and discouraged separation or withdrawal from the "other."

Restoration nonconformist literature thus pushes back against the binaries of them versus us, loyalist versus dissident, good versus evil. Bunyan's nonconformist allegory professes remarkable, political loyalty, while Dryden's occasional poem in support of James II's policy of toleration discloses startling political skepticism. Baxter's *Poetical Fragments* espouses enemies' worship practices and raises issue with dissenters' overestimation of their own practices. The republican Lucy Hutchinson's retelling of Genesis embraces as scripturally orthodox a small but

key part of the royal court's deistic ideology. *The Hind and the Panther* humors the possibility of its antagonistic enemy's miraculous salvation and transformation. *The Pilgrim's Progress* refuses to categorize Charles II as good or evil. Milton's *1671 Poems* admits the possibility that Civil War radicals were wrong in their interpretations of providence's plans for the nation. These texts are neither legalistic nor exacting. They are wary of rabbinical distinctions or discriminations, even if they outspokenly condemn sin and spiritual apathy, wherever these are found.

Considering their authors' experience of persecution, these texts demonstrate an extraordinary capacity for seeing possible merit in one's enemies and shortcomings in oneself and for recognizing that dissenters and their enemies held in common many questions, fears, and hopes.

Yet, parallel to these reasons to discard the binaries and categorizations of people and their belief systems must be an acknowledgement of how very heterogeneous these authors and their readings of providence were. The five figures include a painstaking conformist, two political radicals, a royalist dissenter, and a regretful nonconformist; sectarians and anti-sectarians; Calvinists, Arminians, and a Roman Catholic; the highly literate and almost illiterate; the highest professional prestige for a contemporary poet and a poet so anonymous and hidden that her authorship was not known for three hundred years. Although these authors ask the same providential questions and often draw on the same images or ideas to answer these questions, their readings of providence prove as varied as their loyalties and backgrounds. Hutchinson and Milton both encourage their readers to process and read together the Old and New Testaments. However, *Order and Disorder* suggests that such co-reading lends insight and clarity, whereas the printed grouping *Paradise Regained, to Which is Added Samson Agonistes* unexpectedly regresses from the New Testament to the Old and finds God's Word increasingly incomprehensible. *The Hind and the Panther* and *Paradise Regained* both read a scriptural claim

of divinity. Yet, Dryden's text makes the author's interpretation perfectly clear, while Milton's obscures the author's and the character's meaning. *Annus Mirabilis*, *Grace Abounding*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, and the *1671 Poems* all respond to contemporary jeremiads, the book of Daniel, and its apocalyptic themes. However, Dryden's poem repudiates the providential threat and silences apocalyptic interpretations, and Milton's poems validate but postpone the doom. Alternatively, Bunyan's conversion stories reorient the disaster towards hopeful and redemptive outcomes. *Grace Abounding* and *Samson Agonistes* both wrestle with Samsonian riddles, but *Grace Abounding* solves the riddle, whereas *Samson Agonistes* actively thwarts resolution.

And yet, each of these texts (excluding *Annus Mirabilis*) shares foundational hermeneutical and providential processes. Each encourages the reader of providence to hold their readings lightly, to continue indefinitely in a process of testing and rethinking, and to be actively uncertain—or certain but not determinist. The publications encourage readers to be intellectual and spiritual agonists, who, though sure of victory, must patiently, painfully, and actively wrestle and know that they will be tested. Such active and prolonged uncertainty deters attempts to force change—however righteous and however better than the immediate circumstances such change seems—and models instead how to wait on God's agency with attention. Each text identifies something of profound, spiritual value in the experience of uncertainty. Uncertainty provides an opportunity to reorient ambitions to eternal sureties, to develop exercised and active faith, to consider one's eschatological end, to cultivate deeper intimacy with God, or to foster unity within the Church.

Uncertainty is an invaluable state for today's literary reader, also. This dissertation invites us to reassess how we think about the canon of Restoration nonconformist literature, as well as its individual voices. It is remarkable that these heterogeneous publications and authors dialogue,

whether or not they intended to do so. That they speak in the same terms and raise the same questions invites readers to reconsider how we group together people and texts and how we think about the Restoration period. That these texts share an unexpected common ground in hermeneutical processes and spiritual priorities, and that they develop a providentialism that supersedes party loyalties and temporal causes, draws into question simplistic groupings of people or texts on the basis of politics or ecclesiology. Such rethinkings challenge us to read nonconformist and conformist texts together, as this dissertation has done in its inclusion of Dryden and as Aphra Behn's and Andrew Marvell's inclusion in the new *Puritan Literary Tradition* (2024) also does. It is not always helpful to understand the Restoration period and its literature through the binaries of the Ages of Dryden and Milton, conformists and nonconformists, the defeated and the victors. Sometimes these voices speak alike. This study invites us to not marginalize any voice or text. We have a responsibility to weigh Dryden's unwieldy, Catholic poem as carefully as his well-read works; consider how Baxter's uncharacteristic, literary publication might not be an irrelevant outlier but, instead, powerfully aligned with his didactic writings; and grapple with another exploration of eternal providence in a Genesis epic than Milton's alone. As we engage with the recent and forthcoming editions of Baxter's journals and letters, Milton's *Complete Works*, and Hutchinson's *Works*, may we trust that our readings will prove even more meaningful and true if we allow ourselves to be kept at uncertainties.

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