

The Political Use of
the Bible in
Early Modern Britain:
Royalists, Republicans,
Fifth Monarchists and
Levellers

Dr Gai Ferdon



**JUBILEE
CENTRE**
A BIBLICAL VISION FOR SOCIETY

But the Book which hath furnished my Enemies with matter of Reviling (which none must dare to answer) is my Holy Commonwealth: The Occasion of it was this; when our Pretorian Sectarian Bands had cut all Bonds and pull'd down all Government, and after the Death of the King had twelve Years kept out his Son, few Men saw any probability of his Restitution; and every self-conceited Fellow was ready to offer his Model for a new Form of Government: Mr. Hobbs his Leviathan had pleased many: Mr. Tho. White the great Papist, had written his Politicks in English for the Interest of the Protector, to prove that Subjects ought to submit and subject themselves to such a Change; And now Mr. James Harrington (they say by the help of Mr. H. Nevill) had written a Book in Folio for a Democracy called Oceana, seriously describing a Form near to the Venetian, and setting the People upon the Desires of Change: And after this Sir H. Vane and his Party were about their Sectarian Democractical Model, which Stubbs defended; and Rogers and Needham (and Mr. Bagshaw had written against Monarchy before).

Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (London, 1696).

Copyright © Jubilee Centre 2013

The author has asserted her right under Section 77 of the Copyright, Design & Patents Act 1988 to be identified as the Author of this work.

First published in 2013

Unless otherwise stated, scripture taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version®, NIV® . Copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011 Biblica, Inc. All rights reserved worldwide. "New International Version" and "NIV" are registered trademarks of Biblica, Inc. Used by permission.

Published by the Jubilee Centre

Jubilee House, 3 Hooper Street, Cambridge CB1 2NZ

All rights reserved

No part of this publication may be reproduced, or stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the Jubilee Centre.

Contents

Editorial Method and Style	ii
Foreword by Professor John Coffey	iii
Introduction	1
Historical Overview of the Political Use of the Bible in the Seventeenth Century	3
Taxonomy of Early Modern Protestant and Puritan Methodologies	6
The Hermeneutical Relationship Between the Bible and Government: What Constitutes ‘Political’ Material?	9
Royalists: Monarchy Patterned after Patriarchy – Kingly Prerogative	10
Republicans: A Commonwealth of Popular Prerogative in Service of Liberty	19
Fifth Monarchists: Sainly Rule for a Godly Commonwealth	39
Levellers: A Commonwealth Under God – Birthright of Liberty for the “Free People of England”	51
Prospects for Political Hermeneutics	67
Bibliography	74

Editorial Method and Style

All cited seventeenth-century works, which include pamphlets, broadsides, and manuscripts, were consulted through Early English Books Online (EEBO), which includes the Thomason Collection of Civil War Tracts (1640-1661). EEBO, a subscription database, represents a tremendous scholarly resource containing digital facsimile images from 1473-1700 of English, Irish, Welsh, Scottish, and European continental sources, as well as Colonial British North America. These documents are also found in Pollard & Redgrave's Short-Title Catalogue (1475-1640) and Wing's Short-Title Catalogue (1641-1700). EEBO is made possible through the partnership of ProQuest LLC, the University of Michigan, and Oxford University.

Interested readers will of course detect unique spellings and highlights quoted from these seventeenth-century sources, but all such quotations are very readable. First editions were typically referenced, and short titles were used in both the footnotes and the bibliography whenever possible if the sense of an author's subject was adequately captured. As early modern scholars are well aware, the pamphlet literature of the seventeenth century contains lengthy and focused titles, but to include their every word would have added substantially to the length of the paper.

Chicago Manual of Style was adhered to as consistently as possible throughout. When quoting an author within my own sentence structure, I typically lowercased the first letter of the word even if it was capitalised in the original.

All references to the Scriptures, apart from a quoted author's use, are from the NIV.

Foreword by Professor John Coffey

In the final decades of the twentieth century, the relationship between religion and politics became a hotly contested issue. With hindsight, two events in 1979 seem pivotal. The Islamic Revolution in Iran coincided with the foundation of the Moral Majority in the United States. The Ayatollah Khomeini and the Reverend Jerry Falwell were an unlikely pairing, but they became conflated in liberal discourse, as intellectuals reacted with alarm to what a leading French writer called ‘the revenge of God’.¹ Many lamented that the secular foundations of modern politics were being undermined. The American Religious Right and Islamic militancy were part of a larger phenomenon of ‘fundamentalism’ or ‘religious nationalism’. Others suggested that these conservative movements were reacting against the aggressive secularism of the modern West, which posed a threat to traditional religious values and sought to banish all reference to God from public life. In America and Europe, there was talk of ‘culture wars’. Globally, some spoke of ‘the clash of civilisations’.

But the ‘return of religion’ was not confined to the realm of politics or popular piety. The final decades of the twentieth century also witnessed a resurgence of serious religious thought. The Society of Christian Philosophers spearheaded a revival of Christian analytical philosophy. Leading Anglophone philosophers like Alvin Plantinga, Alasdair MacIntyre and Charles Taylor subjected secular thought to searching analysis and critique and defended the rationality and cogency of religious belief. In the continental tradition, Christian thinkers like Paul Ricoeur and Jean-Luc Marion instigated a religious turn in French philosophy. Historians of ideas were increasingly alert to the theistic foundations and scriptural sources of early modern thought. Among literary scholars, there was renewed attention to the theological concerns of canonical writers and a growing interest in the reception history of the Bible. Biblical scholars became attentive to the political message of the Exodus, the Mosaic Law and the Jubilee, the Prophets, Wisdom Literature, the Gospels, the Epistles and the Book of Revelation.² There was lively debate about the anti-imperial credentials of the New Testament. Among theologians, the work of Jürgen Moltmann and Gustavo

Gutierrez confirmed the emergence of political theology as a major field of thought. Both drew creatively on earlier thinkers – Moltmann on Calvinist resistance theorists, Gutierrez on Bartolome Las Casas. In Britain, the Anglican theologians, Oliver and Joan O’Donovan, compiled *A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought*, with readings ranging from Irenaeus to Grotius.³

Gai Ferdon’s study picks up where the O’Donovans left off, in 1625. This was the year in which Charles I ascended to the throne. His reign would end in Civil War and Regicide – in 1649 he was beheaded in front of his own palace at Whitehall. What makes the period intriguing from the viewpoint of political theology is that this was a religious crisis. Charles’ attempt to realign the English Church, moving it away from the continental Reformed churches, sparked fears of a ‘counter-Reformation’. Thousands of nonconformist Puritans migrated to new colonies in New England, and the Scots rose up in rebellion against a ‘popish’ Prayer Book. Charles was forced to recall the English Parliament in 1640. The next two decades witnessed an extraordinary intellectual ferment as contemporaries debated fundamental issues of allegiance and resistance, liberty and authority. In addressing these questions, they turned to the Greco-Roman classics, the English constitution and natural law theory. But they also turned to the Bible, offering a series of competing accounts of the principles of Scripture politics.

The Harvard historian, Eric Nelson, has recently argued that this was ‘the Biblical Century’ in the history of political thought. Christian scholars across Protestant Europe produced an entire genre of works on the Hebrew republic, drawing on the insights of rabbinic scholarship.⁴ Gai Ferdon confirms the importance of the Old Testament to Protestants, but she also shows how contemporaries appealed to New Testament teaching on power and obedience. She introduces us to four political groupings that represent a broad spectrum of English political opinion in the mid-seventeenth century: Royalists, Republicans, Fifth Monarchists and Levellers. Her paper grows out of PhD research at the University of Leicester, which I had the pleasure to supervise. Presented in this format her work combines

¹ Gilles Kepel, *The Revenge of God: The Resurgence of Islam, Christianity and Judaism in the Modern World* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994).

² Richard Bauckham, *The Bible in Politics: How to Read the Bible Politically* (London: SPCK, second edition 2011).

³ Oliver and Joan O’Donovan, eds, *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook of Christian Political Thought, 100-1625* (Grand Rapids: Wm Eerdmans, 1999).

⁴ Eric Nelson, *The Hebrew Republic: Jewish Sources and the Transformation of European Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010).

scholarly precision with accessibility. And here she goes beyond a purely historical analysis to consider the prospects of a biblical politics in the twenty-first century.

But why should twenty-first century Christians take the time and effort to learn about how seventeenth-century Protestants thought about politics? I can think of three reasons. First, it is a means of resourcement. In the contemporary climate, Christians are strongly tempted to follow secular ideologies and neglect the resources of their tradition. But instead of lurching to the Right or to the Left, we need to reengage with the history of Christian political thought. In different ways, Moltmann, Gutierrez and the O'Donovans have encouraged us to draw on the legacy of earlier Christian political thinkers. And while reflecting on the political thought of previous generations of Christians can be taxing, there is no better way to enlarge our reference group and learn from the wisdom (and folly) of past generations. G.K. Chesterton urged us to enfranchise our ancestors in that 'democracy of the dead' called 'Tradition'. Ferdon's paper does just that, convening an animated and rather fractious seminar in which we hear some powerful and utterly distinctive voices: Sir Robert Filmer, John Milton, James Harrington, John Lilburne.

A second reason to look to the past is that there are certain perennial issues and tendencies in Christian political thought. We still find ourselves divided over questions of political power – Who holds it? Where does it originate? To whom are the powerful accountable? How can they be removed from power? British Christians who value the institutions of the monarchy and the established church will resonate with certain aspects of Royalist thought. For American Christians, the conclusions of Ferdon's Republicans may seem like common sense. Human rights activists will find the Levellers' vision of practical Christianity particularly compelling. And as for Fifth Monarchists, one might argue that they are still with us in the shape of theonomists or Christian Reconstructionists (a small movement whose influence has been greatly exaggerated by alarmist commentators). The persistence of these tendencies can be explained in part by reference to Scripture itself – different strands of the biblical text perpetually give rise to different political emphases among Christians. But it also testifies to the seminal character of early modern thought. In Britain, Royalists triumphed at the Restoration and we still have a monarchy and an established church; in America, the republican tradition as mediated by Milton and Harrington exercised a significant influence on the Founding Fathers; our human rights discourse has roots in the theistic natural rights tradition powerfully articulated in the writings of Grotius, the Levellers and Locke; and theonomists justify their aspirations for godly rule by appealing to the godly commonwealths of early modern Calvinism. As the novelist William

Faulkner once explained: 'The past is never dead. It's not even past'. Understanding the past helps us to make sense of our present.

Finally, this study gets us to wrestle with the problem of biblical hermeneutics. We see how different factions in the English Revolution turned to different parts of Scripture as they sought to answer fundamental issues about power. Contemporaries were concerned that the Bible had become 'a nose of wax', that could be twisted in various directions to suit different interests, and there is evidence of this here. This study shows that there are no easy answers when it comes to reading the Bible politically, and it ought to make us more self-critical in our own hermeneutics. Yet we also find evidence of deep and serious engagement with the Bible, and see how the reflecting on the Old and New Testaments was once an integral part of European political thinking. Reading the Bible with the dead can be a valuable exercise. It highlights strands of Scripture that we may have neglected, and suggests levels of meaning that we may never have encountered.⁵ Past thinkers cannot do our thinking for us. But by reading them, we will learn to think more carefully and more deeply about politics. In the light of current controversies over religion in the public square, this could hardly be more necessary.

John Coffey

Professor of Early Modern History

University of Leicester

February 2013

⁵ See John L. Thompson, *Reading the Bible with the Dead: What you Can Learn from the History of Exegesis that You Can't Learn from Exegesis Alone* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2007).

Introduction

The European continental Reformation (1400s-1500s) is known for producing an array of theological scholars whose writings attempted to either reform Roman Catholic institutions or replace them. Protestant Reformers, armed with vernacular translations of the Scriptures and a new approach to biblical interpretation, strategically attacked significant doctrinal assumptions critical to the Church's authority as well as the ecclesiastical and civil institutions developed from them.

The Roman Catholic Church, for all intents and purposes, dominated the flow of information relative to the Scriptures. Most European laity were unschooled in Latin, without direct access to the Bible, and therefore, dependent upon the Priesthood to interpret its divine doctrines, which included its political and governmental truths. It was not until the Scriptures were made available in the language of the common man that individuals were able to infer a political theology with its corresponding civil/institutional emphasis. Protestant readings of the Scriptures resulted in new relational paradigms between individuals, communities and ecclesiastical and civil authorities.

The institutional consequences of the translation of the Scriptures into English, German and French, resulted in a new constitutional relationship between rulers and ruled characterised by limited ecclesiastical and civil authority. Early modern political thinkers of Great Britain's Interregnum (1649-1660) would seek to incorporate Protestant reformed political principles and methods of constitutional design to solve the constitutional crises brought on by the civil wars (1642-1647), sometimes referred to as the Puritan revolutions. Royalist, Republicans, Fifth Monarchists, and Levellers, among other sectarians and political groups, searched the Scriptures for constitutional principles to new-model the government.

The Reformation and the Translation of the Scriptures

The German reformer Dr. Martin Luther (1483-1546) is thought to have formally launched the continental Reformation with his *Disputation of Doctor Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgencies*. Commonly referred to as the 'Ninety-Five Theses,' Luther publicly nailed his points of dispute with the Church to the Castle Church door in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. His subsequent writings would continue to attack the ecclesiastical absolutism of the Roman Catholic Church with its monopoly upon salvation and the Scriptures.

The leading French reformer was none other than John Calvin (1509-1564), who confronted the very platonic assumption that the Roman Catholic Church was the centre and reference for life. Calvin forcefully declared that God alone bore absolute sovereignty over all of life, not the Church, and therefore, every institution must be organised in submission to Him. Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536) was an attempt, in part, at such institutional reorganisation of the church and state through the application of the Scriptures. The Republican city-state of Geneva, Switzerland was Calvin's institutional experiment.

There were a number of reformers who made significant contributions to the Protestant movement. Much could be said of the labours of men like the Bohemian Jan Hus (1369-1415), the Scotsman John Knox (1505[1515]-1572), the Frenchman Theodore Beza (1519-1605), as well as the Swiss reformer Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531). The Reformation not only produced a wave of Protestant leadership, but Bible translations were being rapidly disseminated through Johannes Gutenberg's press with its advent of movable type in 1436. Consequently, the Catholic hierarchy's interpretive supremacy over the Scriptures was forever altered.

It was an Oxford professor who produced the first English translation of the Scriptures based upon Jerome's 382 A.D. Latin Vulgate—the version used by the Roman Catholic Church. John Wyclif (1320-1384), known as the 'Morning Star of the Reformation,' published his Wyclif Bible in 1384. The German Johann Gutenberg (1400-1468) produced the Gutenberg Bible in 1455 and like Wyclif's, was translated from Jerome's Vulgate. The Dutch scholar Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536) published his Greek and Latin Parallel New Testament in 1516 from Greek New Testament manuscripts then available, and therefore, apart from the Vulgate. Erasmus's translation placed greater stress upon the importance of original languages in establishing textual authenticity and interpretation. Another Englishman, William Tyndale (1494-1536), translated the New Testament from Greek into English in 1526. Tyndale's translation was followed by Miles Coverdale's (1488-1569) 1535 English Bible and then another, the very large Great Bible of 1540. Luther published his German New Testament in 1522 and translated the entire Scriptures by 1534.

One of the most controversial translations was the Geneva Bible (Breeches Bible) of 1560, with its first printing in England in 1571. A product of numerous reformed hands, including those who fled persecution in Britain under Queen 'Bloody' Mary (1553-58), the

Geneva Bible was the most widely read Bible in the English-speaking world. It underwent approximately 200 printings from 1560-1644, and was referred to as the Bible of the Puritans of Great Britain and America. It is highlighted by its vast and influential sections of marginalia which incorporated reformed Calvinist interpretation, some of which directly attacked interpretive positions supportive of absolute civil authority. Its profound impact upon early American colonisation is depicted in 'The Embarkation of the Pilgrims in 1620,' (1844) displayed along-side other prominent paintings of American history in the Rotunda of the U.S Capitol. Painter Robert Walter Weir depicts William Brewster sitting conspicuously with an open Geneva Bible—'The Pilgrims' Bible'—on his lap, with other outstanding colonial leaders looking on.

A case of interpretive point is found in 1 Samuel 8 which rehearses Israel's demand for a King like those of the surrounding Gentile nations. This chapter in particular has undergone quite imaginative interpretations over the centuries, and either in support of the absolute authority of Kings, or their very limited authority. As Samuel reminds Israel of the 'manner of the King' in regards to property and servants, the Geneva translators supply their audience with an interpretation which emphasised divine limitations upon the authority of kings. Kings who rule outside their authorised bounds are ruling contrary to His will: "Not y Kings haue this autoritae by their office, but that suche as reigne in God's wrath shuide usurpe this ouer thier brethren contrary to the Law, Deut. 17, 20." This interpretation proved quite unsupportive of monarchs generally, even Britain's, and monarchical authority specifically.

Advent of a New Hermeneutic

Individuals who had access to the Bible advanced alternative interpretive methodologies which conflicted with the Church's standard approach. A Protestant hermeneutic was developing which laid greater stress upon the grammar and original languages of the Bible as well as its historical and literary contexts. Even Rabbinic and Jewish studies were incorporated into biblical interpretation. 'Sola Scriptura' produced, in part, a hermeneutic which employed Renaissance philological techniques with its emphasis upon history, grammar, syntax, original language analysis, and literary forms. Consider William Tyndale's explanation of this new interpretive approach:

Thou shalt understand, therefore, that the Scriptures hath but one sense, which is the literal sense. And that literal sense is the root and ground of all, and the anchor that never faileth, whereunto if thou cleave thou canst never err, or go out of the way. And if thou

leave the literal sense, thou canst not but go out of the way. Neverthelater, the Scripture useth proverbs, similtudes, riddles, or allegories, as all other speeches do; but that which the proverb, similitude, riddle, or allegory signifieth is ever the literal sense which thou must seek out diligently.⁶

Reformation Europe produced new political readings of biblical passages which resulted in radical constitutional ideas. As a result, new political theologies were developing, multifaceted in nature, which challenged old perspectives on civil and ecclesiastical government as well as the authority of magistrates and rulers. These emerging continental ideas were quickly making their way into England in the 1570's as part of the Puritan movement, which included, among others, Republicans, Fifth Monarchists, and Levellers, all of whom contended against the Royalist political assertion that monarchy was God's highest constitutional pattern by which men were to be governed.

⁶ William Tyndale, *The Obedience of a Christian Man, and How Christian Rulers Ought to Govern*. 1548 in *The Works of the English Reformers: William Tyndale, and John Firth*, ed. Thomas Russell. Vol. 1. (London: Paternoster Row, 1831), 339.

Historical Overview of the Political Use of the Bible in the Seventeenth Century

But the Book which hath furnished my Enemies with matter of Reviling (which none must dare to answer) is my Holy Commonwealth: The Occasion of it was this; when our Pretorian Sectarian Bands had cut all Bonds and pull'd down all Government, and after the Death of the King had twelve Years kept out his Son, few Men saw any probability of his Restitution; and every self-conceited Fellow was ready to offer his Model for a new Form of Government: Mr. Hobbs his Leviathan had pleased many: Mr. Tho. White the great Papist, had written his Politicks in English for the Interest of the Protector, to prove that Subjects ought to submit and subject themselves to such a Change; And now Mr. James Harrington (they say by the help of Mr. H. Nevill) had written a Book in Folio for a Democracy called Oceana, seriously describing a Form near to the Venetian, and setting the People upon the Desires of Change: And after this Sir H. Vane and his Party were about their Sectarian Democractical Model, which Stubbs defended; and Rogers and Needham (and Mr. Bagshaw had written against Monarchy before).

Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (London, 1696).⁷

Early Modern Political Use of Classical, Renaissance and Biblical Texts

When discussing the nature of political philosophy, including constitutional forms and the scope and province of civil government, it is acceptable for modern scholars to celebrate and rehearse the political contributions of the early modern period (1500-1800 AD) by highlighting their use of classical and Renaissance writers. A review of the political pamphlet literature alone out of Great Britain's seventeenth century reveals readings representative of Greek and Roman philosophers, and of especial importance are the contributions of Plato (428-348 BC), Aristotle (384-322 BC), and Cicero (106-43 BC). The Florentine Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527AD), considered the most influential Renaissance political theorist,

⁷ Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr. Richard Baxters narrative of the most memorable passages of his life and times faithfully publish'd from his own original manuscript by Matthew Sylvester* (London, 1696), Book 1, 118.

established his mark with *The Prince* (*Il principe*, 1513). Nevertheless, as invaluable as classical and Renaissance texts were, they were not the sole political influences upon the minds of early moderns; the Scriptures also played a profound political role. British, European and American seventeenth-century political thought and development is also representative of a Protestant political theology. Unfortunately, current scholarship tends to either marginalise such biblical political readings or overlook them entirely.

Varied motivations lie behind current historiography's consistent and extensive neglect of the connections between biblical hermeneutics, political theology, and constitutional visions. Despite clear textual evidence of biblical use within the vast political literature of Britain's early modern period, historians continue to ransack this period for the imprint of classical and Renaissance authors. Some conclude that such political readings of the Bible are simply too diverse, obtuse, and unintelligible, and a consistent hermeneutic impossible to locate. Others assert that these religious constitutional contributions are politically predetermined and opportunistic, and intended to satisfy a biblically literate audience only. These professions render the study of the political reading of the Scriptures less than inspiring or simply irrelevant.

These radical and dismissive appraisals of the political reading of the Bible during Britain's early modern period can be linked to the late and highly respected Oxford historian Christopher Hill. In his chapter "The Revolutionary Bible," in *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (1993), Hill asserts rather emphatically that the Bible was "used as a rag-bag of quotations which could justify whatever a given individual or group wanted to do."⁸ Such injudicious and pragmatic political use of the Scriptures is undeniable, and Hill's work contains an element of truth. Even Erasmus of Rotterdam (1466-1536), complained that the Scriptures were read politically "as if they were of wax."⁹ Nevertheless, statements such as Hill's act as the definitive judgment upon an entire era rich in sundry scriptural political readings, and inadvertently justifies a scholarly disregard for the political relevance of the Scriptures during Great

⁸ Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London: Allen Lane, 1993; Penguin Group, 1994), 188.

⁹ H.C. Porter, "The Nose of Wax: Scripture and the Spirit from Erasmus to Milton," *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 14 (November 1963): 155.

Britain's most extraordinary constitutional crises. Some of these early moderns presented constitutional models so significantly shaped by biblical arguments that they cannot be separated from them or their interpretive methods reduced to "rag bag" approaches.

British Political Use of the Scriptures: English Civil War and Interregnum (1640-1660)

Britain's distinct contribution to biblical political readings resulted from the constitutional crises of the Puritan Revolution, also known as the English Civil War and Interregnum periods (1649-60). Not only did the Civil War divide the population between Parliamentary and Royalist sympathies, Parliament's eventual victory, coupled with its swift and public execution of Charles I on January 30, 1649, produced a political vacuum; what would replace the ancient constitution of Monarchy, Commons and Lords? The regicide and subsequent English political events astounded the monarchies of Europe, who now placed themselves on a cautionary foreign policy footing with their 'commonwealth' neighbour across the Straits of Dover.

The Parliamentary victors immediately engaged the constitutional question of settlement, starting with the Putney Debates held at St. Mary's Church, London from October 28 through November 8 of 1647, followed by the Whitehall Debates of December 14, 1648 to January 13, 1649. In attendance were officers and soldiers of Oliver Cromwell's New Model Army, as well as General Cromwell himself, accompanied by pastors and theologians. Intense deliberations often turned on the enduring political relevance of Scripture, especially the Old Testament. At issue was a new constitution, principles of civil government, jurisdiction, liberty of conscience and the political franchise. With the greater freedom to publish, the Putney and Whitehall Debates widened to include the public's perspective on a political settlement, motivating various sects to promote political platforms to new-model the ancient constitution.

The dialogue between various Protestant and non-Protestant groups was often aggressively argumentative and contentious. These constitutional debates are revealed in various correspondences, Civil War pamphlets, treatises, tracts, broadsides, newspapers, Parliamentary speeches and sermons. The Thomason Collection of Civil War Tracts alone includes 22,000 political and religious documents spanning the entire Civil War and Interregnum period (1640-1660). Many ministers and civil servants were less appreciative of the public's input into the settlement crises, including the great English Kidderminster Presbyterian Pastor, Richard Baxter (1615-1691). He remarked with dismay

in his *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (London, 1696), an autobiographical account of his more memorable life moments and perspectives, that once the monarchy had been dismantled, with no reinstatement of Charles II in sight, "every self-conceited Fellow was ready to offer his Model for a new Form of Government."¹⁰ Despite the many concerns on the part of those who shared Baxter's observations, pursuit of a new enduring civil form prompted a focused political reading of the Scriptures resulting in radical theories, often adverse to monarchical forms, and sympathetic with republican and commonwealth models, which incorporated various dimensions of the Hebrew Old Testament polity.

The Bible as a Political Text: Hermeneutics and Conflicting Political Readings

Some early modern British writers developed civil proposals dependent solely upon classical and/or Renaissance texts, while Puritan sects typically combined non-biblical authors with Scripture, or attempted to new-model the government with Scripture alone. Nevertheless, those who did use the Bible politically did not reflect upon it the same way, employ the same hermeneutical approach, or select the same texts from which to deduce civil and constitutional material. Some actually resorted to the Scriptures in a sort of pick-n-mix fashion to decorate their preconceived proposals, or denounce their opponents' models. Simply stated, tremendous contrasts in method and motive exist among those who attempted to contribute a scriptural civil model.

Hermeneutical methods among early moderns range from the literal, grammatical and historical approaches to paradigmatic methods, to the more free allegorical and typological modes of interpretation. Sometimes differences in reading related to models confined to either the Old or New Testament. This was true of Anglican Royalists and Presbyterians, who tended to resort to the Old Testament, especially the polity of ancient Israel, as a normative civil model for England. They attempted to draw exact correspondences and political parallels between the type and extent of governance which Israel's rulers displayed as a positive model for England's Kings or, as negative examples to avoid. Independents and Separatists focused predominantly upon the New Testament and the Gospel dispensation. They read a new Christian liberty in the place of the Mosaic Judicials, a separation between the civil and ecclesiastical spheres, and a democratic approach to installing ecclesiastical leadership within a decentralised New Testament

¹⁰ Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, Book 1, 118.

church, now a model for instituting political leadership and framing civil government.

Diverse, and often times contradictory readings are also evidenced in texts and passages commonly employed by all sides in the constitutional debate as having relevant political import. The Old Testament political authorities of Deuteronomy 17:14-20 and 1 Samuel 8:1-22 were sometimes used to argue for limited authority of kings, popular sovereignty, and supremacy of the Hebrew Commonwealth. Interestingly, Royalists interpreted the 1 Samuel passage as less a command and warning against kingship, and more as a positive kingly prerogative. New Testament political texts such as Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13 were typically used to prove divinely instituted and directed civil authority, but interpretations varied as to the extent of subordination and obedience required on the part of the governed, leading to diverse understandings of civil disobedience. Some sought to incorporate pre-monarchical aspects of the Jewish polity, seeing Jethro's advice to Moses in Exodus 18 as a divinely ordained approach to the choice of civil magistrates. Others ignored such a judicial pattern since it resulted from the advice of a pagan Midianite. Some considered Israel's consent in the wilderness to covenant with God and obey His laws as another divine pattern for the governed and governors to follow when establishing a civil framework; if God governs by way of covenants and covenantal requirements, then man should govern similarly. Still, some found political relevance within the Jewish monarchy itself, and

particularly the righteous rule of David, Hezekiah, and Josiah. Others read prophetic and apocalyptic passages as foreshadowing a rule of the saints in Christ's coming millennial kingdom, when the true Commonwealth of Israel would be established. Some were even convinced that Christ Himself established a political pattern of civil-servant rule from the Zebedee text of Matthew 20, concluding that His warning against tyrannical rule typical of the Gentile Lords represented a wholesale indictment against all monarchies.

More examples could be given, but the Scriptures were simply not read similarly by all parties to the settlement controversy, nor necessarily resorted to in a shrewd manipulative manner to capture the attention of a biblically literate audience. Simply stated, tremendous contrasts in method and motive exist among those who attempted to contribute a civil model to fill Britain's constitutional vacuum. Nevertheless, such variations in political use should not be used to misconstrue all political hermeneutics as irrelevant and opportunistic. Neither should these political models be judged with such disinterest or rendered historically insignificant. As a matter of fact, we may actually be able to learn from these contributions, and possibly apply them to our contemporary concerns; the American colonists most certainly made beneficial constitutional application of these British early moderns in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Surely there still exist biblically-based political and constitutional principles of enduring value for our times.

Taxonomy of Early Modern Protestant and Puritan Methodologies

Early modern British political theorists, typically Protestants (including Puritans and Anglicans), employed different hermeneutical methods, and even different ‘languages,’ or terms from their non-Christian counterparts, by which to convey their political ideas and models. These interpretive methodologies, with their separate languages, can be teased out, in part, by examining the relationship between their political reading of the Bible and political use (or refusal to use) of non-biblical or ‘pagan’ writers, especially the classical authors. Scripture was not necessarily quoted alongside the classics as decorative window dressing to render a political model more acceptable to a biblically literate audience. Some writers were convinced that it was hermeneutically acceptable to include classical authors because all truth, even political truth discerned by a pagan, is God’s truth, and able to confirm scriptural concepts.

J.P. Sommerville in his *Royalists and Patriots: Politics and Ideology in England 1603-1640* (1999), identifies the language of the “law of nature” as incorporating not just a rational enlightened concept, but identified with “God’s law since it consisted of a set of instructions which God had imprinted in human nature at the Creation.”¹¹ An author cannot be tagged as a classical or Aristotelian thinker simply because he employs “law of nature” language, nor, for that matter, identified solely as a “classical republican.”

It might be supposed that the Protestant emphasis on the corruption of human nature would have led to a rejection of natural law. In fact, Protestants believed that corruption had not entirely obliterated people’s ability to distinguish between good and evil. The doctrine of natural law was held to be compatible with a Calvinist theology of grace. . . . Human nature was totally corrupted in the sense that on their own people could do nothing to achieve salvation. Yet nature was not so corrupt that pagans, lacking grace, were wholly blind to God’s laws.¹²

The historiography of natural law and law of nature theories is interestingly immense, and largely outside the scope of this work. Nevertheless, there exists a Protestant approach to the law of nature argument that simply cannot be neatly confined to classical categories. One Republican representative examined here is John

Milton (1608-1674), though often considered only for his poetry, wrote an impressive quantity of political prose in both English and Latin,¹³ which includes a very liberal use of classical Greek and Roman authors. Since Milton employs classical authors politically, he is typically categorised as a classical republican, despite his simultaneous and consistent engagement with the Scriptures for political purposes. Milton even wrote his own theological treatise in Latin titled *De Doctrina Christiana* (1655-1674). A careful reading of Milton indicates that he even utilised the law of nature argument outside the Aristotelian tradition, believing that despite the Fall, all men were created in God’s image, and could still understand truth. This view assists us in understanding his use of classical texts alongside biblical ones. Milton’s *Areopagitica* (1644) not only testifies to liberty of conscience in publishing and reading, but represents a dress rehearsal for the appropriate literary use of classical authors from a biblical perspective.

Another political thinker who typically employed the classics in tandem with the Scriptures was James Harrington (1611-1677), but for different reasons than Milton. Harrington, considered one of the greatest early modern republican thinkers, marshalled the most significant segments of the Hebrew polity into his republican theory, even using it paradigmatically. Unfortunately, such use is often neglected by scholars determined to read only his employment of classical texts, and especially Machiavelli. Suffice to say, the writings of Harrington and Milton, along with others mentioned throughout this work, lead us to conclude that the early modern period also consisted of the language of biblical republicanism, with its various vocabularies, concepts and constructs. In this regard, some early moderns wrote their politics out of Israel as if it were the paradigm, or divine template of political revelation, Harrington being the leading political thinker in this regard.

Various aspects of biblical republicanism and the manner in which the Bible was read politically, turned on schemes of classification which include or question the use of classical authors alongside biblical ones; schemes such as those which adopted various combinations of the relationship between Nature and Grace, or incorporated aspects of Christian humanism. Still others emphasised the use of Jewish and rabbinical political thought.

¹¹ J.P. Sommerville, *Royalists and Patriots: Politics and Ideology in England 1603-1640*, 2d ed. (London: Longman, 1999), 14.

¹² *Ibid.*, 17.

¹³ *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 8 vols., ed. D. M. Wolfe (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press), 1953-1982.

Nature and Grace

According to Arthur Woodhouse in *Puritanism and Liberty, Being the Army Debates (1647-9)* (1974), this “scheme of nature and a scheme of grace” was the rudimentary lens from which Puritan’s perceived the world. The “Puritan mind” could not be understood unless one acknowledged the relationship between Nature and Grace.¹⁴

Nature is understood as that which is natural, earthly, and of human knowledge and understanding only, and identified in literature with non-Christian or pagan writers. Grace, on the other hand, captures what is considered spiritual, heavenly and divine, including special revelation or the Scriptures. Albert Wolters in his “Christianity and the Classics” (1989) delineates five different combinations of this paradigm with analogous attitudes to the classics.¹⁵ This “taxonomy” of hermeneutical positions evidences various levels of continuity and discontinuity between Nature and Grace: Grace replaces Nature, Grace perfects Nature, Grace flanks Nature, Grace restores Nature, and Grace equals Nature.

If Grace replaces Nature, or “opposes nature,” then the “natural is antithetical to the spiritual,” and the newness of life found in the Gospel message is in conflict with the old sinful man, or “old nature.”¹⁶ Hermeneutically, this translates into a “resolute rejection” of classical sources, as “the new life in Christ is simply incompatible with classical culture and must avoid it.” Tertullian’s pronouncement “What does Athens have to do with Jerusalem” summarises this position.¹⁷ Early modern Puritans holding a “Grace replaces Nature” view would have been highly unlikely to consult classical sources for civil modelling, and instead, solely consider the Scriptures in their political writings. Fifth Monarchists certainly held to this position.

Some Puritans believed that Nature, though “imperfect” and “incomplete,” and therefore deficient in declaring

complete knowledge, can nevertheless be enhanced by Scripture which comes alongside to “perfect” it. Nature therefore is “subordinated to grace.” Thomas Aquinas and the early teachings of Roman Catholicism represent this view.¹⁸ In this regard, “classical antiquity points forward or paves the way for the advent of Christianity,” “the supernatural order completes” the natural realm, and “natural reason is perfected by revelation.” The classics then can be used in a positive and instrumental way alongside the Scriptures.¹⁹

The third category is “Grace flanks nature.” Here, the natural stands alongside the spiritual as an independent realm with its own validity,” which “does not need to be validated or in any sense raised to a higher level by grace.”²⁰ If Grace simply confirms Nature, then classical literature acts “as a parallel authority” and “the realms of the sacred and the secular coexist alongside each other.” A common method depicting this attitude is revealed in the use of classical citations in marginalia to buttress a biblical text; “there is great congruence between the proverbial wisdom of pagan antiquity and that of the Bible.” The classics then are “supplemented” by the Scriptures, “but not in a way which subordinates or depreciates” them.²¹ The works of James Harrington correspond closely to this category.

The fourth category is “Grace restores nature,” or “enters into nature in order to renew it from within, to bring it back to its created purpose.”²² This view, which sees Nature as corrupt and fallen, and necessary for Grace to transform, is shared by Augustine and dominate in Calvinism. The classics then can be legitimately used for Christian purposes though scholarly and philosophical care must be taken so as to not be fully absorbed in them.²³ John Milton would tend to find agreement with this category.

Finally, if Nature and Grace are viewed as “equal,” then “all sense of contrast, or even distinction” between them is “eliminated.” This category reflects the view found in “classical liberal theology,”²⁴ and assumes classical literature incorporates Gospel truths in “germinal form.” Christianity is “its natural product or extension.”²⁵

¹⁴ A.S.P. Woodhouse, ed., *Puritanism and Liberty, Being the Army Debates (1647-9) From the Clarke Manuscripts with Supplementary Documents* (London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1974), Introduction, 39. This section on Nature and Grace as well as Christian Humanism is adapted from the Introduction to my 2004 Doctoral Dissertation. See Gai Ferdon, *New Modelling English Government: Biblical Hermeneutics, Jewish Polity and Constitutional Forms During the Interregnum (1649-1660)*. PhD Dissertation, University of Leicester. United Kingdom (uk.bl.ethos, ILS Catalogue Number 13217952). See Introduction, 12-16.

¹⁵ Albert M. Wolters, “Christianity and the Classics; a Typology of Attitudes,” in *Christianity and the Classics, The Acceptance of a Heritage*, ed., Wendy Helleman (Lanham, New York; London: University Press of America, 1989), 189-203.

¹⁶ Wolters, “Christianity and the Classics,” 194.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 195, 196.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 194.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 196-197.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 194-195.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 197-198.

²² *Ibid.*, 195.

²³ *Ibid.*, 198-199.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 195.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 199-200.

Early modern Puritan writers can typically be slotted in the first four categories. Unfortunately, scholars of early modern political thought fail to understand this relationship between Nature and Grace, and therefore, predisposed to slot Harrington and Milton as classical as opposed to biblical republicans by highlighting their use of the classics while ignoring their use of the Scriptures. Others will dismiss, or at the least, grant peripheral considerations to those other Puritan political theorists who solely resorted to the Scriptures when attempting to new-model government, precisely because their models lack classical influence.

Christian Humanism

Harrington and Milton saw no theological contradiction in synthesising pagan classical works with the Christian text to model a commonwealth. Since all truth was God's truth, pagan authors, though retaining a corrupt image of God, could bear witness to political truth, rendering it acceptable to revitalise their secular languages and rhetoric with biblical concepts. Neither was motivated to embellish their political models with divine literary decoration.

Margo Todd in *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (1987), attempts to de-mythologise Puritan scholarship by suggesting that Puritans exceeded Scriptural assumptions, ventured "beyond the Bible or their Reformed heritage for their ideas," and approached both Scripture and theology in a way continuous with their immediate Christian humanist predecessors.²⁶ Christian humanists contributed significantly to social reform, but did so with both Renaissance and classical sources in mind.

Todd maintains that the prominent characteristic of Christian humanism was "devotion to a biblical reformation of Christendom." "The Renaissance demand for a return to the sources became for Christian humanists an imperative to apply the critical assumptions and the exegetical techniques of the Italian humanists to the Christian's most authoritative text."²⁷

Their stance was not simply neo-stoic; nor is it accurate to identify it simply with the civic humanism of Italy. Biblicism, patristic influences, Stoicism and civic humanism were all tightly interwoven in Erasmianism to produce a thoroughly distinctive movement, religious and civic, Christian and humanist. With Seneca and Christ, humanists called for individual self-control; with Cicero, they called for good government; with the Old Testament prophets, they called for social

justice. The search for practical solutions to real problems in this world came to be seen by them as the believer's true calling. This amalgam of pious yet practical social activism should be seen as another hallmark of Erasmian humanism.²⁸

Todd concludes that "Christian humanist social theory was in essence, then, a framework for the reformation of the commonwealth."²⁹

John Calvin (1509-1564), explains in his *Institutes of the Christian Religion* (1536), that the employment of pagan sources was to be qualified by the Scripture's prominent place as the absolute source of truth.

Read Demosthenes or Cicero; read Plato, Aristotle, and others of that tribe. They will, I admit, allure you, delight you, move you, enrapture you in wonderful measure. But betake yourself from them to this sacred reading. Then, in spite of yourself, so deeply will it affect you, so penetrate your heart, so fix itself in your very marrow, that, compared with its deep impression, such vigour as the orators and philosophers have will nearly vanish. Consequently, it is easy to see that the Sacred Scriptures, which so far surpass all gifts and graces of human endeavour, breathe something divine.³⁰

Calvin highlighted his own personal regard for the pervasive wisdom that abounded in the works of the classics; "That admirable light of truth shining in" secular writings can "teach us that, the mind of man, though fallen and perverted from its wholeness, is nevertheless clothed and ornamented with God's excellent gifts."³¹ With its appreciation for these scholarly investigative techniques, Christian humanism demanded "a return to the sources," which consequently drew attention back to a profound appreciation and investigation of ancient historical sources, both patristic and classical. But the "text of the Bible itself was, of course, paramount among Christian humanist concerns."³² This Renaissance extraction of philological approaches to biblical exegesis emphasises a mode of scholarship as opposed to an integration of a new philosophical thrust or tendency.

²⁸ Ibid., 34.

²⁹ Ibid., 51.

³⁰ John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed., John T. McNeill, trans., Ford Lewis Battles, vol. 20 (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1961), Book 1, 82.

³¹ Ibid., 273.

³² Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order*, 22-23.

²⁶ Margo Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order* (Cambridge University Press, 1987), 6, 17.

²⁷ Ibid., 23.

The Hermeneutical Relationship Between the Bible and Government: What Constitutes 'Political' Material?

The nature of the 'political' is often defined by methods of participation to influence the administrative processes of civil government or to lobby civil authorities. Individuals in 'free' societies can pursue numerous avenues to engage public policy issues, governmental reform, and constitutional change. Confronting challenging life-issues through these 'political' avenues is a worthy activity responsive to the dynamic needs of changing societies.

Nevertheless, the Scriptures hardly isolate the 'political' to methods of activism and civil engagement. It primarily emphasises instead the relationship between ruler and ruled, beginning with the sovereignty of God and man's capacity, as vice-regent, for self-government under His moral charge, divine direction, and sovereign mandate. Civil government and the administration of law represent the institutionalisation of human authority for ordered liberty, justice, and judgment to secure God's relational purposes for man in a fallen world. In this regard, the 'political' is primarily 'governmental,' which is not initially 'civil,' but divine administration for blessed relationships, both with God and our fellow man. This 'relational' theme, governmental in nature, is stressed throughout the Scriptures.

One of the most fundamental assumptions from which to understand the nature of divine and human relationships is that God is Lord of creation and bears absolute authority to govern man in every area of life. Stated another way, and albeit refreshingly redundant, the Scriptures reveal the ultimate basis for governing authority as beginning with God as the great uncreated being, relational ruler and providential governor of the universe. His creation of man after His own image includes authorising and commanding him to govern himself individually, and then corporately. Governmental principles, structural paradigms, and relational models should find their ultimate basis in God's character, which comprehend His commands and ordained covenantal relationships, and include His divinely delivered civil model or political paradigm to Israel. Thinking biblically about the 'political' means that we do not first focus or exclusively emphasise civil institutional procedure or external expressions of governing authority, or political activism for that matter;

rather, we prioritise God Himself, His supreme governing authority, and His expectations for human relationships. Civil authority then finds its legitimacy in God's purposes for human relationships; its origin, nature, and purpose follow this first divine sphere of government. Not surprisingly, civil government, as an institutional expression divinely delivered to Israel, is structured so as to acknowledge the sovereignty of God and the self-governing capacity of men.

The origin of civil government, as well as its purpose, function and province obviously constitute biblical 'political' material, though the term 'governmental' is preferred. Questions related to its province concern the subject matter of its authority and power, otherwise known as jurisdiction, or the lawful use of lawful authority.

The nature and form of civil government, whether structurally centralised or diffused, including the organisation and role of courts, is also addressed by the Scriptures. The administration of law, justification of authority, covenantal transactions and commitments, as well as the nature of legal equality is also discussed. The Scriptures also touch upon issues of justice and judgment, defence and punishment, international relations and just war theory, as well as civil disobedience, religious and legal duties, liberty of conscience, and institutional separation between civil and ecclesiastical authorities. The difficulty is determining the ongoing relevance of the Bible's discussion relative to each of these items, and therefore, a hermeneutical issue. How do we move methodologically from the biblical text and its meaning, to significant application in our time, especially when many of these subjects are lodged in the Old Testament?

We will first examine the constitutional proposals of some leading Royalists who engaged the Scriptures to assert a kingly prerogative. There are a few representatives worth considering and royalist pamphlets were already circulating before the first phase of the English Civil War itself, which commenced by late August, 1642 with the royal standard of Charles I established at Nottingham.

Royalists: Monarchy Patterned after Patriarchy – Kingly Prerogative

I humbly intreat those who are contrary minded to consider seriously, how Almighty God in the creation of man, before the woman was made *of him, and for him*, and before he had any child or subject to governe, fixed authority and power for government in the person of *Adam*. This to averre, that government was fixed in a governour before hee had over whom he was to beare rule, is no paradox in Philosophie, . . . nor a more strange thing to consider, then when a *Posthumus*, one borne after the death of his father, by right inheriteth his fathers honour and revenues. Is it not very considerable that God did not make *Evah* of the earth, as he did *Adam*, but made her of the man; and declareth too, made her for man? It is more then probable then, God in his wisdome did not thinke it fit (that he was able to doe it I hope none dare to deny) to make *two independents*, and liked best of all governments of mankind, *The Sovereignty of one*, and that with that extent, that both wife and posterity should submit and subject themselves to him.

John Maxwell, *Sacro-Sancta regum majestas* (Oxford, 1644).³³

Royalists wrote pamphlets and tracts defending monarchy throughout the Civil War crises (1642-1649) and into the Interregnum and Protectorates (1649-1660) under Oliver and Richard Cromwell. Classifying someone as a Royalist though is not so simple. Royalists are typically characterised as favouring monarchy, but royalism, as a political theology, was more varied and nuanced, spanning positions from limited constitutional monarchy to more absolutist perspectives.³⁴ This section attempts to tease out the significant contributions of a few representative Royalists, both constitutional and absolute, within the contexts of the resistance debates of 1642-43. What sort of hermeneutics governed a Royalist approach which concluded monarchy to be the biblical and therefore constitutional norm?

Basic definitions of royalism are in order. David L. Smith's *Constitutional Royalism and the Search for Settlement, c1640-1649* (1994) details its subtle shades of

meaning. One characteristic attribute of a Constitutional Royalist is the belief that a king's royal authority was "inherently compatible" with "constitutional government." These Royalists sought a peaceful settlement between an armed Parliament and King Charles I, were more moderate, and held to a limited monarchy.³⁵ Many, especially members of the clergy, engaged in polemics to defend the King by countering the pamphlets of those who endorsed Parliament's military resistance, or sought to undermine his divine prerogative. Absolute Royalists favoured divine right theories of kingship which asserted that a king's authority was derived immediately from God to whom, alone, he was accountable. The king was sovereign and unlimited in his authority, and therefore, absolutists denied theories of mixed monarchy.

Two reasons are given for the choice of Royalists culled from a significantly large body of adherents. First, the constitutional royalist perspectives presented here are taken mainly from some rather well-known Oxford-based proponents, some of whom were also prominent members of the clergy. Divines were obviously more likely to resort to the Scriptures for their royalist arguments. Secondly, each of these Royalists engaged the resistance debate which centred on a key pamphlet anonymously written by the prominent parliamentarian Henry Parker.

Interregnum royalist perspectives will be mentioned during the discussion of the republican platform since the views of these two political groups present some extreme interpretive contrasts relative to the same biblical passages. Republicans and Royalists were also writing directly in response to each other. Segmenting Royalists this way will situate into proper context those who contended specifically against armed resistance. Once the King was put to death in January 1649, other Royalists presented constitutional models to restore the fallen Stuart monarchy or to respond to their opponents who favoured regicide.

Three Oxford-based constitutional Royalists are considered. One representative is Henry Ferne (1602-1662), considered one of the greatest Anglican Royalist apologists of the Civil War and Interregnum eras. Ferne had been a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge before taking up the position of archdeacon of Leicester in 1641. He was also Charles I's royal chaplain. Ferne was based out of Oxford, and his two significant contributions to the resistance debate are *The resolving of*

³³ [John Maxwell], *Sacro-Sancta regum majestas: or, The sacred and royall prerogative of Christian kings* (Oxford, 1644), 84.

³⁴ See J.P. Sommerville, "Absolutism and Royalism," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700*, J.H. Burns and Mark Goldie, eds. (Cambridge University Press, 1991), 347-373.

³⁵ David L. Smith, *Constitutional Royalism and the Search for Settlement, c1640-1649* (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 7.

conscience (Cambridge, 1642), and *Conscience Satisfied* (Oxford, 1643). Another is Dudley Digges the younger (1613-1643). Digges was a mathematician, and his *An answer to a printed book* (Oxford, 1642), *A review of the observations* (Oxford, 1643), as well as *The unlawfulness of subjects taking up armes* (Oxford, 1653), are all considered. Our final representative in this category is the historian Sir John Spelman (1594-1643). Spelman was a graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge, and an MP for the City of Worcester in 1626. He was also knighted by King Charles I in December, 1641. His most significant work for our consideration is *A view of a printed book intituled observations upon his majesties late expresses* (Oxford, 1642).

Two absolutist Royalists were also chosen: John Maxwell (1590-1647) and Sir Robert Filmer (1588-1653). Maxwell was a graduate of the University of St. Andrews in 1611, and in 1615 became a minister of Mortlack parish church in Banffshire. Apart from holding various pastorates in Edinburg and other very illustrious positions, Maxwell became the archbishop of Tuam for the Church of Ireland in 1645. His most significant work is *Sacro-Sancta regum majestas, or, The sacred and royall prerogative of Christian kings* (Oxford, 1644).

A separate explanation of the use of Filmer's works is in order. He is undoubtedly considered the most ardent Royalist of the period and his *Patriarcha, or the natural power of kings* (1680), presented the most absolutist approach. Filmer was educated at Trinity College, Cambridge (though apparently never received a degree), entered Lincoln's Inn early in 1605, and was subsequently knighted by King James I in 1619.

Patriarcha was not published until 1680 and presumably unconnected with the resistance debate which the other Royalists just mentioned engaged. Despite its late publication, Royalists of the 1640s and 1650s may have had access to Filmer's drafts. As Michael Mendle notes, "the private circulation of *Patriarcha* may have influenced the royalist circles populated by the likes of the younger Digges and Spelman."³⁶ If this is the case, then *Patriarcha* is relevant to the resistance debate. Nevertheless, only a small section of it is resorted to here. Noteworthy are the three direct and systematic attacks levelled against *Patriarcha* shortly after publication: John Tyrrell with his *Patriarcha non monarcha* (1681), John Locke and his *Two treatises of government* (1689), and Algernon Sidney with his *Discourses concerning government* (1698). One very relevant tract that Filmer penned in response to the resistance debate is *The anarchy of a limited or mixed monarchy* (London, 1648).

The Debate of 1642: Origin of Civil Government, Popular Consent, Armed Resistance and Kingly Authority

A fundamental and commonly held assumption about government among early modern British political theorists is that the God of the Scriptures is Lord of creation, and therefore, bears absolute authority to govern man in every area of life. Regardless if one was a Royalist or Republican, Leveller or Fifth Monarchist, each asserted that the ultimate basis for governing authority began with God as the great uncreated being and providential governor of the universe. Initial differences, detailed in the pamphlet literature, arose as to the origin of civil authority: Was it because of sin and the fall, or did God lodge authority in Adam at creation, transferrable to his male prodigy? There was also intense disagreement as to how God disposed of His authority: Was it 'immediately' from Him by way of donation or 'mediated' through people in a collective or representative capacity by consent and delegation? Questions also arose as to whether or not tyrannical authority could be legitimately resisted by force of arms: Could individuals or lower magistrates, such as representative Parliaments, take up arms against the King? Finally, the sort of authority a king could legitimately wield was also questioned: Was unconditional obedience required of the governed and all lesser magistrates? Just how 'sovereign' and 'supreme' was the King?

The preliminary textual soil out of which lawful resistance was defended or challenged was the very public polemic between Parliament and King Charles I which formally opened in mid-1642. One pamphlet in particular which propelled the debate was Henry Parker's *Observations upon some of his majesties late answers and expresses*, July 2, 1642. Parker (1604-1652) was first educated at St. Edmund Hall, Oxford, and then Lincoln's Inn, only to become a well-known political writer, analyst and pamphleteer for Parliament during the Civil Wars. "*Observations*," according to Michael Mendle, "made Parker the Observator (or, sometimes, the Observer), the celebrated but nameless author of the most notorious pamphlet of the day. For an astonishingly long time, well into 1643, royalist authors queued to refute *Observations*, which they still thought of as being dangerous."³⁷

Mendle claims that "Parker was the most aggressive, thoughtful, and provocative parliamentarian writer in the early years of the Long Parliament and civil war era."³⁸ He presented the case for Parliament's authority to secure the people's interest and common welfare by

³⁶Michael Mendle, *Henry Parker and the English Civil War: The Political Thought of the Public's 'Privado.'* Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History (Cambridge University Press, 1995), 132.

³⁷ Mendle, *Henry Parker and the English Civil War*, 90.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, xi.

emphasising popular consent as the foundation and ordination of civil government. “*The King*” states Parker, “*attributeth the originall of his royalty to God, and the Law, making no mention of the graunt, consent, or trust of man therein.*” On the contrary, “God is no more the author of Regall, then of Aristocraticall power, nor of supream, then of subordinate command.”³⁹ Parker asserts that “power is originally inherent in the people, and it is nothing else but that might and vigour which such or such a societie of men contains in it selfe.” A prince’s “power is but secondary and derivative,” while “the fountaine and efficient cause is the people.”⁴⁰

The end and purpose of civil government explains Parker is not for the preservation of a king’s interests, but “the safetie of the people” which “is to bee valued above any right of his, as much as the end is to bee preferred before the meanes.” It is contrary to a policy of justice “for any nation so to inslave it selfe, and to resigne its owne interest to the will of one Lord” such “that that Lord may destroy it without injury, and yet to have not right to preserve it selfe.” It is unnatural and “felonious” for a people to “contract to obey to their owne ruine” or “esteeme such a contract before their owne preservation.”⁴¹

Parker argues that man’s depravity is the origin of civil authority, not Adam’s unique creation as Royalists would contend. Government was necessary because “man being depraved by the fall of *Adam* grew so untame and uncivill a creature, that the Law of God written in his brest was not sufficient to restrayne him from mischief, or to make him sociable.”⁴² Civil government arose out of the necessity to restrain human depravity and sin while popular consent was fundamental for its institutionalisation. Consent was also conditional; it could be revoked, and resistance justified if a king turned tyrant, as his power was derivative, not original, and limited in service to the people.

Parker did not infer a civil relationship from family relationships, though he recognised a wife’s role to her husband as submissive and supportive. Civil government, especially monarchy, did not resemble or embody the same relational particulars or duties by way of analogy or similitude with other classes of human relations, especially marriage. Though “the wife is inferiour in nature, and was created for the assistance of man, and servants are hired for their Lords meere attendance; but it is otherwise in the State betwixt man

and man.” As Parker notes, this represents a “civill difference which is for civill ends, and those ends are, that wrong and violence may be repressed by one for the good of all not that servilitie and drudgerie may be imposed upon all, for the pomp of one.”⁴³ Royalists attacked each of Parker’s arguments, and patriarchy along with paternal authority was their most potent polemic.

Patriarchal Hermeneutics: From Paternal Authority to Regal Authority

Royalist responses were immediately underway with the anonymous publication of Parker’s *Observations* in 1642, which mockingly referred to him as the “Observator” and “Privado.” The immediate context for their heated polemic was the lawfulness of Parliament’s resistance to King Charles I by force of arms; Parliament, as the peoples’ representative, positioned itself as a lower magistrate warring against the tyranny of the King.

To defeat this Parliamentary position, Royalists employed a patriarchal hermeneutic by reading a political primacy into Adam’s creation, and doing so by drawing out particular Genesis passages to justify monarchy by way of patriarchal analogy. Because God created Adam first, authority, and therefore government, began with him. Adam bore original political dominion immediately over his family, his first subjects. Royalists extrapolated this political idea outward to include Adam’s sons who ruled similarly over their households. If it could be proved that a king’s authority was modelled after Adam’s, then armed resistance was unlawful and against God’s ordinance.

Royalists tended to assert monarchy as the superior civil model because they supposed it mirrored family authority, or modelled a national frame after local family government. A king was considered the head of a state or a national family just as a father exercised headship over his earthly family; both derived the substance of their authority immediately from God which was natural to their function. A king’s authority no more rested on the consent of his subjects than a father’s authority did upon his wife and children, his ‘subjects.’⁴⁴

A key scriptural support for this theory of Adam’s political primacy was God’s curse upon Eve, and hence all women and wives, found in Genesis 3:16: “I will make your pains in childbearing very severe; with painful labour you will give birth to children. Your

³⁹ [Henry Parker] *Observations upon some of his majesties late answers and expresses* (London, 1642), A(1).

⁴⁰ *Ibid.* A(1), 2.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 19.

⁴⁴As part of my research on paternalism, I consulted Gordon Schochet’s *Patriarchalism in Political Thought: The Authoritarian Family and Political Speculation and Attitudes Especially in Seventeenth-century England* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975).

desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.” Contrary to a Parliamentary reading, a constitutional Royalist read this text as positive affirmation of the first purposeful, divine enactment of prescriptive human authority originating in Adam. The husband’s rule over his wife and family, or ‘patriarchy,’ was extended by way of analogy through the patriarchs of Israel, now considered local kings, to a national monarchy. Nevertheless, Filmer concluded that governing authority originated in Adam before the fall, and therefore, before God’s curse upon Eve. Adam’s initial creation and pre-fall status represented sufficient grounds for primacy—a significant interpretive difference between constitutional and absolute Royalists.

Parker’s tract was immediately attacked by Henry Ferne with his *The resolving of conscience* (London, 1642). Ferne did not directly address the origin of government from Genesis 3:16—he never even mentioned Adam’s authority over Eve—but he provided a strong case against resistance to the King from Exodus 20:12 with its command to honour one’s biological father and employed it in conjunction with Romans 13:1 and 2 Peter 2:13: “If it be agreed upon as a thing known in this State, that the King is *the higher Power* according to S^t Paul,” and “*the Supreme* according to S^t Peter,” then a king is “*the Father of the Commonwealth* according to the fifth Commandment.” Therefore, “surely it belongs to the Divine to urge obedience, honour, and subjection according to those places, and reprove resistance forbidden there.”⁴⁵ Ferne neglects to draw any links to the parental authority of a ‘mother,’ but employs the Exodus text politically to extend the authority of a father in relation to a family, to that of a king in relation to an entire people.

Ferne’s *The resolving of conscience* was immediately attacked by the Oxford educated Presbyterian theologian Charles Herle (1598-1659) with *An answer to misled doctor Ferne* (London, 1642) and subsequently with *A fuller answer to a treatise written by doctor Ferne, entituled The resolving of conscience upon this question* (London, 1642). Ferne responded from Oxford in April, 1643 with *Conscience satisfied*.

The most relevant aspect of *Conscience satisfied* in regards to the origin of government is found in Section III, “Of the Originall of Governing power, and of the beginnings of Government in this Land.” The Exodus passage is again referenced. Ferne, with the support of Romans 13:1, states that “Governing power . . . flowed

from that providence at first through the veines of nature in a paternal or Fatherly rule and by that as by a pattern in a Kingly Rule or Government, upon the encrease of people and Nations.”⁴⁶ Ferne located evidence linking paternal rule with regal rule from the Genesis account of Noah and his descendants. “The first Fathers of Mankind, were the first Kings and Rulers.” Noah dispatched his three sons to rule the earth, who in turn, generated more sons who became subsequent rulers and “cheife Fathers of those new Progenies, and had the Government, both Regall and Sacerdotal by Primogeniture, unless the chief Patriarch, from whom they all issued, saw cause to order it otherwise.” “Monarchy” then “was the first Government,” not “any Popular Rule, Aristocraticall or Democractical.” “The first Kings were not by choice of the People,” and “Monarchy . . . is plainly *ducta natura*, by nature leading men from Paternall to Regall Govrnment, and *exemplo divino*,” since “the Government that God set up over his people, being Monarchiall still, in Moses, the Judges, the Kings.” This original “power of Kings was as of Fathers, and that the people had no power of coercion over them, more than children over Fathers.” Nevertheless, “the King so chosen is a Father, as in the fifth Commandment, and the people as children in the same relation for obedience and coercion, as at first in the generations of Noah.”⁴⁷

Sir Robert Filmer certainly had much to claim for monarchy by way of patriarchy and used the Genesis 3:16 passage as proof. He devotes his first chapter in *Patriarcha* (1680), “That the first Kings were Fathers of Families,” to the subject.⁴⁸ In light of the resistance debate, he attacked Philip Hunton’s *A treatise of monarchie* (1643) with *The anarchy of limited or mixed monarchy* (1648), which contains some minor polemical swipes at *Observations*. Hunton was a parliamentary constitutionalist and Filmer claimed that his understanding of the English Constitution as incorporating a mixed monarchy would inevitably lead to anarchy given its emphasis upon limited kingship and popular consent. *The anarchy* contains powerful argumentation for absolute monarchy divinely derived, and based in patriarchal interpretations of Genesis 3:16 and Exodus 20:5.

Filmer subtly condemned Hunton’s use of Genesis 3:16 in support of an Adamic and paternalistic origin of government. Hunton’s mistake was to rest a grant of governance to Adam upon God’s curse of Eve and extend it to limited monarchy and popular consent.

⁴⁵ Henry Ferne, *The resolving of conscience, upon this question whether upon such a supposition or case, as is now usually made (the King will not discharge his trust, but is bent or seduced to subvert religion, laws, and liberties) subjects may take Arms and Resist?* (London, 1642), Epistle, 1, 2.

⁴⁶ Henry Ferne, *Conscience satisfied. That there is no warrant for the armes now taken up by the subject.* (Oxford, 1643), 7-8.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 8, 9.

⁴⁸ Sir Robert Filmer, *Patriarcha: Or the natural power of kings* (London, 1680): 8-24.

Filmer argued for absolute monarchy from the creation of Adam and his pre-fall relationship to Eve and their children; Adam was divinely ordained “the *father* of all mankind” and in whom the “originall grant of Government” was first deposited, and in whom was “the fountain of all power” given. The “*law* for obedience to government” is found in “*honor thy Father*” which Adam was the first, and because it was given to him alone, he was, so to speak, the first father-king, whose lineage produced successive fathers and therefore successive kings. If Adam’s grant of absolute authority came by “right of fatherhood from God,” and not by conveyance through consent, the “people have not right or title to alter and dispose of it otherwise.” Thus, “the form of Monarchy must be preferr’d above other forms.”⁴⁹

Filmer understood Adam’s authority as pre-fall, claiming that Scripture locates the origin of government “in the fatherly power, and therefore we find the Commandement that enjoynes obedience to Superiours given in the terms of *Honour thy Father*.” Thus, “not onely the *power or right of government*, but the *form of the power of governing*, and the *person having that power*, are all the ordinance of God.” Adam, as the “first Father had not onely simply power, but power Monarchicall” because “he was a Father immediately from God.” Adam “was Monarch of the World, though he had no Subjects.” Government could not fully exist “untill there were Subjects.” Nevertheless, “by the right of nature it was due to Adam to be Governour of his posterity.” “Adam was a King from his Creation,” “in habit” only, “not in act,” and “Eve was subject to Adam before he sinned.”⁵⁰

Interestingly, the Genesis 4:7 text which relates the death of Abel at the hand of Cain was also read politically to mean that the younger brother would serve the elder, and thus establish a pattern of patriarchal authority. The similar linguistic styles of Genesis 3:16 and 4:7 have led to various and interesting English translations. The NIV, like most modern translations, treats Genesis 4:7 as Cain’s confrontation with sin: “If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it.” The 1611 version of the King James Bible treats the personal pronoun commonly translated “it” in modern versions as “he,” and as an antecedent for Abel, and not sin: “If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and

if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.”⁵¹ The Genesis 4:7 passage was read this way by Dudley Digges the younger.

Digges entered into the debate against Parker’s *Observations* in November of 1642 with *An answer to a printed book intituled, Observations*. Digges argues against the right of political liberty, or consent, by invoking original relational correspondences between family and civil government. He asserts that monarchy is more highly preferred because it represents “the Originall of Governments” and “God was the immediate donor of Regall power.” Monarchy is first manifest in Adam’s original “power or providence” over his own prodigy. Given the long-life spans of the Patriarchs, coupled with rapidly increasing populations, they literally peopled “a Nation out of their own loynes,” and “their subjects” were “their children.” Just as children lack the natural ability to choose their fathers, and since the first fathers also peopled their first subjects who were also their children, subjects do not have a natural right to choose rulers any more than children have a natural right to choose their fathers. Thus “Regal power sprang first from Paternall,”⁵² monarchy was the first form of government, and consent unnecessary to its establishment.

Digges attacked *Observations* again with a smaller tract entitled *A review of the observations upon some of his majesties late answers and expresses* published from Oxford in April, 1643. Digges now draws out the Genesis 4:7 passage in support of patriarchy and primogeniture. Through “propogation, and in propogating,” God “gave the Rule and Sovereignty of the issues propagated, to the Father of whom they were propagated.” With this, He also “gave the Rule of all the younger (and consequently of their descendants too) unto the firstborne, (as we may see where God tells Caine; *Thy Brother shall be subject to thee, and thou shalt beare rule over him*.” Digges claimed all individuals “were born Subjects, either to him that naturally was their Father, or to him that by right of primogeniture was representatively the Father.”⁵³

Digges penned another tract entitled *The unlawfulness of subjects taking up armes against their soveraigne* (Oxford,

⁴⁹ [Sir Robert Filmer], *The anarchy of a limited or mixed monarchy* (London, 1648), 6-7.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 13. See also 32-39 where Filmer references a significant section of *Observations*, and where he addresses Parker’s analysis of the origin of government, doctrine of consent, and limited government.

⁵¹ See David Norton, *A Textual History of the King James Bible* (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 83, note 7, and p. 90, note 15. The 1769 edition is also the same as the 1611. This translation appears to have remained unchanged in the Cambridge editions of 1629 and 1638.

⁵² [Dudley Digges], *An answer to a printed book, intituled, observations upon some of his majesties late answers and expresses* (Oxford, November, 1642), 3, 4-5.

⁵³ [Dudley Digges], *A review of the observations upon some of his majesties late answers and expresses* (Oxford, April 15, 1643), 2.

1643) where he again confirmed that regal authority rests upon patriarchal government, but with a new interpretive twist of the Scriptures by way of Exodus 20:5. Digges claimed that kings are due a supreme allegiance over earthly fathers because kings embody the sum of paternal authority by transference to a Commonwealth. Now, the “King is . . . a common Father to all,” and “what ever power Fathers have over, and consequently whatsoever honor as an effect of this power, was due to them from their children, he hath right to challenge the same of all.” The very creation of a “Common-wealth” actually “united all particular paternall powers in Him” such that supreme obedience is now due to a king. “For divine precept stands in full force, *Honour thy Father, &c.*, and therefore we must confesse, . . . he that begot us is not so much our Father, as the King is.”⁵⁴

Sir John Spelman attacked Parker’s *Observations* with *A view of a printed book intituled Observations upon his majesties late expresses* (Oxford, January 1642), which also includes patriarchal arguments. Spelman characterises “Princes” as “*Gods, Lords, Fathers, &c.* and that therefore subjects must stand by the same relation; as *Creatures, Servants, Children, &c.*” He then mirrors family government with civil government, claiming “that Domesticall government is the very Image and modell of Sovereignty in a Common-weale.”⁵⁵

Royal Prerogative Humanly Derived but Divinely Constituted

A Royalist assumed that if a king’s right to rule rested on Adam’s original political prerogative, then his (king’s) authority was not derivative, or subject to popular consent.

A doctrine of human consent was not essential to the relational similitude between the establishment of the family and civil government. This issue of consent, or political liberty, was already on the periphery in Royalist arguments presented above. Since consent is unnecessary for the operation of family government, by analogy, it is also unnecessary for the function of monarchical governments. As J.P. Sommerville notes, absolute Royalists typically asserted that a king could not be restricted by any sort of “contractual limitations” and consequently be removed from authority if he governed contrary to such. Royalists did not dispense altogether with consent; a people’s selection of a king did not contradict God’s donation of authority to him. The people’s part was procedural, while God’s was

substantive. When Royalists contended that the power of a king rested in God alone, they meant that it was not “derived from an act of transference by the people,” despite their selection. Consent initiates the act of governance, but is not its authoritative foundation. Authority represents a divinely ordained position or prerogative which must be actualised by human choice and ordinance; the substance of authority is not derived from consent but God. A wife may have chosen her husband, but his authority as a husband and father is derived from God; her consent did not transfer such authority to him. It follows then that if a king’s power is divinely “derived,” then “to God alone he was accountable for its exercise.”⁵⁶

There is one particular absolute Royalist who systematically established a doctrine of divine civil ordination and whose work attacked *Observations*. The anonymously written *Sacro-Sancta regum majestas* appeared in January, 1644. It was eventually attributed to John Maxwell, the Bishop of Kill and Achonry, by Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661).⁵⁷ As a matter of fact, Rutherford seems to have undertaken a thorough re-write of *Lex, Rex* as a “detailed refutation” of *Sacro-Sancta*, which he published in October, 1644 as *Lex, Rex, or the law and the prince*.⁵⁸ Maxwell argued that a king’s authority did not originate from the body of the people as a collective, or from Parliament as its representatives. Rather, it was extended solely from God.

Maxwell claimed that “Kings are constituted immediately by God,” asserting that “God is the immediate Author of Sovereignty in the King, and that he is no Creature of the People’s making.”⁵⁹ The doctrines of popular consent and derivation find no place in the patriarchal authority of Adam; “God fixed Government in the Person of *Adam*, before *Evah* or any else came into the world; and how Government shall be.”⁶⁰ His argument is very similar to Filmer’s here, in that Adam’s governing authority pre-dated the fall.

⁵⁶ J.P. Sommerville, “Absolutism and Royalism,” 355.

⁵⁷ Mendle explains that Samuel Rutherford disclosed Maxwell as the author, though Parker was not aware of Maxwell’s authorship. See *Henry Parker and the English Civil War*, 123.

⁵⁸ John Coffey, *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 148. Rutherford directly attacked Maxwell’s patriarchalism.

⁵⁹ [Maxwell], *Sacro-sancta regum majestas*, 19.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 33. See also p. 85: “Is it not very considerable that God did not make *Evah* of the earth, as he did *Adam*, but made her of the man; and declareth too, made her for man? It is more then probable then, God in his wisdom did not thinke it fit (that he was able to doe it I hope none dare to deny) to make two *independents*, and liked best of all governments of mankind, *The Sovereignty of one*, and that with that extent, that both wife and posterity should submit and subject themselves to him.”

⁵⁴ [Dudley Digges], *The unlawfulness of subjects taking up armes against their soveraigne* (Oxford, 1643), 61-62.

⁵⁵ [John Spelman], *A view of a printed book intituled Observations upon his majesties late expresses* (Oxford, January, 1642), 9.

Maxwell explains different methodological aspects of this doctrine of divine immediacy whereby civil government is established. The first is communicated by God through special revelation to Moses who received his grant of power as did Joshua, Saul, and David. Such a divine process did not require human consent. The Apostles were similarly “immediately instituted, constituted, designed to, and invested with Power from above.”⁶¹ Kings receive their authority directly and “immediately from God,” though the process incorporates human interposition by way of “*designation of the person.*” Human involvement appears only incidental; God is “the *proper donor and immediate Author.*” Popular consent is not the cause and origin of a king’s authority.⁶²

Maxwell marshalled a series of Old and New Testament passages to prove God’s immediate constitution of kings: Proverbs 8:15 exclaims that “*By me Kings reign,*” Romans 13:2 clarified that “*The Powers that are, are ordained of God,*” John 19 stated that “*All Power is given from above,*” while Psalm 62:11 asserted that “*God hath spoken it once, twice have I heard it, all Power belongeth unto the Lord.*” “*The Royal Power and Sovereignty of the King is from God primarily, formally, immediately.*” Nevertheless, “*The designation or deputation of the Person, is by election, succession, conquests, &c.*” Zadok the High Priest was installed similarly by God though “the designation of the Person was from *Salomon.*” The process is equated with how “a Father begetteth the Child, but God infuseth the Soul,” or how a woman chooses her husband “but the marital power and dominion is onely from God.” A woman can no more “conferre or transferre that power which was never fixed in her, nay by God and nature she is ruled by her Husband.”⁶³

Maxwell also claimed that the fall did not diminish Adam’s singular authority, but instead, only heightened its necessity. It was in this “state of innocency and perfection God Almighty did establish government, and fix it in *Adam* before his wife was created, or a subject borne.” Man’s “decayed and corrupted state” speaks even more to the need for superiors and subordinates, as well as monarchy; “after the fall it is declared transmissible from *Adam* to the first borne, *Gen. 4.*”⁶⁴ Even before the creation of Eve, Cain, and Abel, “God fixed Government in the person of *Adam* . . . that it should be transmitted to the first born.”⁶⁵

⁶¹ Ibid., 20.

⁶² Ibid., 22.

⁶³ Ibid., 23.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 89-90.

The Law of Establishing Kings: Deuteronomy 17

Royalists generally read Deuteronomy 17, or the law of the king, as emphasising God’s prerogative in choosing Israel’s Kings. The people are only allowed to establish a king over them that God chose.

According to Maxwell, the institution of Israel’s first king must be filtered through the text of Deuteronomy 17. In other words, “the practice interprets the Letter of the Law, . . . Practice is the best Commentary of Law: and it is no lesse a ruled case, that the first president is a ruling case to all following in that kind.” In order to understand the proper political use of Deuteronomy 17, we must first recall the procedure of establishing Saul as King. 1 Samuel 12:13 reveals that the people indeed chose Saul, but God constituted him, and “did vindicate as proper and peculiar to himselfe, the designation of the person of the King, and the investing of him in royall power and Sovereigntie.” The people’s role was “to admit and accept of their King by God so designed and constituted, and to yield all reverence, obedience, and maintenance necessary.”⁶⁶

Resistance to Kings is Unlawful: 1 Samuel 8:1-22, Romans 13:1-7, and 1 Peter 2:13-17

Royalist understood Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17 as commanding complete and absolute obedience to kings and magistrates. “Damnation” follows resistance because one resists God’s ordinance. Maxwell claimed that the Romans passage was parallel to the claim of obedience required in 1 Thessalonians 4:8, though he leaves out the preceding commentary on purity and holiness. “*He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man but God.*” Similarly, when the Israelites complained against the leadership of Moses and Aaron “*They murmure not against you but me.*” Israel’s lament of Samuel’s judgeship was a protest against the rule and authority of God himself.⁶⁷

Ferne also endorses unqualified obedience to magistrates in *The resolving of conscience*. He mined the Scriptures for failed and disastrous methods of resistance which resulted in God’s swift and calamitous judgment. One example is taken from Numbers 16:3, which details the rebellion of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram who found support in “two hundred and fifty Princes of the Congregation, gathering the people against Moses and Aaron, . . . and perishing in their sinne.” Ferne does not narrate how God brought about an earthquake to swallow up the entire households and

⁶⁶ Ibid., 41-42.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 53.

possessions of the three rebel leaders, or how He sent fire to consume the two-hundred and fifty co-conspirators who were officiating at the altar. He simply concludes that those involved “indeed were publicke, but there was no cause for it; Moses and Aaron did not deserve it.” He seems to infer a parallel to Parliament’s “rise in arms” against King Charles I, which he did not deserve.⁶⁸

1 Samuel 8:1-22 depicts Israel’s demand for a king bearing characteristics and policies similar to those of the surrounding nations, which includes Samuel’s itemised list of expected oppressive acts and decrees. Despite the projected tyranny, Ferne claimed there was no cause for armed resistance. Samuel is simply reminding the people “how they should be oppressed under Kings, yet all that violence and injustice that should be done unto them is no just cause of resistance.” The only “remedy” they can resort to is “crying to the Lord.” As a matter of fact, the prophets even rebuked “the Kings of Israel and Judah for Idolatrie, cruelty, oppression,” but did not “call upon the Elders of the people for this duty of Resistance.”⁶⁹

Filmer made a similar claim in *Patriarcha*, stating that “the Unlimited Jurisdiction of Kings is so amply described by *Samuel*,” who “was to teach the People a duitiful Obedience to their King, even in those things which themselves did esteem Mischievous and Inconvenient.” Samuel was merely guiding them as to “what a Subject must Suffer; yet not so that it is Right for Kings to do Injury, but it is Right for Kings to go Unpunished by the People if they do it.” Similar to Ferne’s assessment, 1 Samuel 8 provided Filmer with “no Remedy . . . against Tyrants, but in Crying and praying unto God in that Day.”⁷⁰

Apart from the 1 Samuel passage, Ferne read Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:12 as offering a “clear resolution upon the point” of resistance. The “King is the *Supreme*, as S. Peter calls him; or *the higher power*, as S. Paul” indicates. Peter’s “distinction comprehends all that are in authoritie, *The King as supreme, and those that are sent by him*,” which includes the “two Houses of Parliament.” Nevertheless, “by the Oath of Supremacy it is acknowledged, That there is no power above him without or within this Realm; and that he is in all Causes and over all Persons Supreme.” Parliament in its representative capacity lacks the authority to resist.⁷¹

Ferne even reminded readers of the political and tyrannical context of Rome’s rulers through the Romans

and 1 Peter passages to further prove the unlawfulness of resistance. Rome’s government embodied “a standing and continuall great Senate, which not long before had the supreme power in the Romane State,” and whose character “might challenge more by the Fundamentalls of that State, then our great Council (I think) will, or can.” Furthermore, the “*Supreme*” which Peter refers to and the “*higher power*” which Paul mentions is none other than the authority of the “*Emperour*,” which no one was authorised to resist. “Were not the Kings then not onely conceived to be inclined so and so, but even actually were enemies to Religion, had overthrown Laws and Liberties?” The tyrannical habits of the kings of Rome certainly seemed to be just cause for resistance. Nevertheless, England’s king was hardly as tyrannical as those of Rome. Ferne argues that if that great body of representative officials did not resist Rome, how can Parliament resist the king?⁷²

Finally, Ferne states that one cannot condition obedience to only those “*rulers*” who “*are not a terrour to good works but evil*” and “*a minister of God to thee for good*.” He explains that “the consideration of those times leaves no place for such exception, because the Powers then (which the Apostle forbids to resist) were nothing so, but subverters of that which was good and just.” This command against resistance is “not temporary and fit for those times,” as some have suggested, but “perpetuall, from that order, that good, for which the Powers are ordained of God, which will be of force as long as there is government, and will always be reasons against resistance.” It is impossible to resist “the abuse of the power” without resisting the power itself. If the Roman Emperors of that first century were “absolute Monarchs” and the “people and Senate” did not resist them, then “resistance can be no more made against the Kings of England, then it could against those Emperours.”⁷³

Concluding Comments

The arguments presented here by some leading constitutional and absolute Royalists would reemerge during the Commonwealth and Interregnum periods. Royalists extended the structure of the family by way of similitude to monarchy, even in its most absolute form. To draw such a correspondence, they presupposed that monarchy was relationally linked to family authority and governance.

Royalists also consistently read the Genesis account of the creation of the first couple as more than a description of events, but as a civil principle; either Adam’s created nature embodied sovereign rule over his immediate family turned subjects or God’s curse upon

⁶⁸ Ferne, *The resolving of conscience*, 9.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

⁷⁰ Filmer, *Patriarcha*, 81.

⁷¹ Ferne, *The resolving of conscience*, 10.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

Eve established the same sort of husband/fatherly authority and dominion. Regardless, Adam passed this authority on to his male prodigy, the first Patriarchs, who became kings over their families now translated into subjects. Monarchy was the natural, civil expression of patriarchy, as kings stood as the civil ancestors of Israel's Patriarchs.

Parliamentarians like Parker (and other constitutional thinkers) assumed that God ordained husbands and fathers as heads of their own families, but they never formally connected the family dynamic with civil rule. Neither did they assume that Adam bore supreme authority over his family. They argued that fatherly authority encompassed the sphere of the family only, and any sort of analogous relationship to a community as a national family under a supreme head was hermeneutically illegitimate. Family relationships were distinct from civil ones, and the nature of that distinction also assumed limitations on the part of the husband and a king.

Because Royalists connected the origin of civil authority with paternal authority and by analogy regal authority, the ordination of civil authority by way of consent was not only unnecessary, it was relationally unreasonable. If it could be proved that family government led to civil government, then popular consent could no more establish civil government than family government. Royalists did not dispute the need for human interposition in establishing authority. It was the nature of authority itself that man was incapable of ordaining.

Authority was divinely derived as to its substance, and only humanly instituted. A king therefore was accountable to God alone, and subject to His sanctioning authority. Subjects are bound to obey, and the 1 Samuel, Romans and 1 Peter texts are all rallied in support. Royalists do not begin their monarchical thinking with these three texts; instead, they operate as textual supports for their Genesis readings.

But if there was no relational connection between family government and monarchy as Royalists understood, then consent, it could be argued, might transfer authority to the king. If this is the case, then kings were limited to their obligations, and their tyrannical rule could be resisted by force of arms by a lower magistrate such as Parliament. But what sort of authority could be transferred, and from where did it originate?

Royalist arguments for monarchy and kingly prerogative are all tightly linked. Their understanding of the origin of civil government is their key political text as it lays the basis for patriarchy, and by extension monarchy, divine derivation of kingly prerogative, absolute obedience, and non-resistance. But why did Royalists read the origin of civil government as being in Adam, either as original, or granted by way of the fall? This will become more apparent as we contrast their political readings with their Republican constitutional counterparts.

Republicans: A Commonwealth of Popular Prerogative in Service of Liberty

Oceana, I say, cannot be wounded by piercing the authority of Israel, with which she is armed cap`a-pie.

James Harrington, *The prerogative of popular government* (London, 1657).⁷⁴

If men within themselves would be govern'd by reason, and not generally give up thir understanding to a double tyrannie, of Custom from without, and blind affections within, thy would discern better, what it is to favour and uphold the Tyrant of a Nation. But being slaves within doors, no wonder that they strive so much to have the public State conformably govern'd to the inward vitious rule, by which they govern themselves.

John Milton, *The tenure of kings and magistrates* (London, 1649).⁷⁵

This next section is devoted to investigating the civil models of two prominent representative commonwealthsmen, otherwise referred to as republicans by their political opponents: James Harrington (1611-1677) and John Milton (1608-1674). Each was intensely involved in the constitutional developments of the Interregnum and resorted to the Scriptures to model a civil government. Republican proposals radically differed from their Royalist counterparts; Republicans emphasised the abolition of monarchy, pressed for representative and popular assemblies, and stressed limited executive authority subordinate to a sovereign legislature. Though Harrington and Milton did not read the Scriptures politically the same way, they were both political artisans who attempted to construct a civil model by wielding religious discourse within a Protestant theological tradition. The Bible was the frame, fabric, and foundation of their proposals. Harrington's key republican tract, *Oceana* (1656), makes for an incredibly complex read, and it spawned a constitutional

controversy, the larger constitutional outlines of which Milton denounced in his key republican model *The readie and easie way to establish a free commonwealth* (1660).

Rationale for Choosing these Republicans

Harrington and Milton were chosen in part because they attempted to overhaul England's ancient Constitution with radical commonwealth models. Their political philosophies are often misinterpreted because sections of their models are bracketed from their protestant theology. More attention is often paid to Milton's poetry than his political prose, and Harrington is tagged as the stereotypical Machiavellian writer with little regard to his use of the Bible. Their models also evidence anti-Cromwellian views; even Milton, in the final analysis, chafed politically under the Protectorate.

Though their proposals rest on contrasting political uses of biblical texts, Harrington and Milton were Christian humanists in their approach to biblical interpretation and use of classical sources. Neither saw any contradiction in synthesising pagan classical works with the Christian text to model a commonwealth. After all, pagan authors bore the image of God and could bear witness to moral truths. Finally, Milton wrote his own theological treatise, and both utilised seventeenth-century Rabbinic scholarship, though Harrington to a much greater extent.

Harrington the 'Machiavellian' and Milton the 'Cromwellian'

Both Harrington and Milton were politically inspired by their travels to the European continent. The civil institutions of Venice, Italy especially enamoured Harrington. Milton too visited Italy, but seems to have been influenced by Geneva. Both returned to England stirred to transition into a defining career of political influence.

Harrington claims he was driven to consider the study of government to promote the welfare of mankind. He established himself as a courtier of King Charles I, but his respect for his majesty, displayed even on the scaffold, did not diminish his republicanism. He never held a seat in the Commons, despite his desire to do so early on in the Civil War, and he was largely a historian, political scholar and philosopher.

Harrington is consistently interpreted as a Machiavellian, and considered the measure of English classical republican political theory. Unfortunately,

⁷⁴ James Harrington, *The prerogative of popular government* (London, 1657), 464. Harrington's works are all found in J.G.A. Pocock, ed., *The Political Works of James Harrington* (Cambridge University Press, 1977). Harrington's works will include title, place of publication and date, but page numbers are referenced in Pocock. A full listing of Harrington's works cited here will be noted in the bibliography. This section is also adapted from chapters 3 and 4 of my 2004 Doctoral Dissertation.

⁷⁵ John Milton, *The tenure of kings and magistrates* (London, 1649), 1.

insufficient attention is paid to his prolific use of the Hebrew Polity, though his employment of the Scriptures is considered pragmatic and opportunistic. His inclusion here represents a challenge to the assertion that his model is purely classical and his biblical use inconsequential. Interestingly, some, like the Presbyterian Richard Baxter, accused Harrington of atheism for his use of classical pagan authors, while Royalists, like Matthew Wren and Henry Ferne, chastised him for his overuse of the Hebrew Polity—they read him like the Hebraists that he was!

Harrington wrote anti-Cromwellian treatises, while Milton, an employee of the successive Interregnum administrations, is initially motivated to defend the Protectorate. If John Toland's account of Harrington's *Oceana* bears any affinity with his attitude towards the Protectorate as a "horrid Usurpation," and Cromwell as a tyrant,⁷⁶ *Oceana* was written in reaction to both, and its confiscation by the Lord Protector testifies to its content. Harrington promoted a commonwealth form of popular government which corresponded with England's popular balance of land. If the Protectorate neglected consideration of this balance, the commonwealth would be lost.

Milton was a retrospective anti-Cromwellian writer. Upon returning from Europe in 1639, he immediately engaged the controversy over ecclesiastical reform, and his early polemic is clearly anticlerical, as Harrington's would become. Milton's publication of his anti-royalist tract *The tenure of kings and magistrates* (1649) launched him into the post of Secretary of Foreign Languages which he retained through the Protectorates (1653-1659) and the restored Rump (1659-1660). Milton worked for Cromwell, even penned a sonnet to him, and his early Interregnum writings were conducted under the authority of the Protectorate and on its behalf. It was not until the intense political developments at the close of the Interregnum that Milton reveals his commonwealth model and his attitudes toward Cromwell's government. In the Preface to *Considerations touching the likeliest means to remove hirelings out of the church* (1659), he rejoices over the establishment of the restored Rump Parliament and the Nation's release from a "double bondage under prelatical and regal tyrannie," and freedom from that "slavish dejection, wherein from father to son we were bred up and taught." England was now liberated from that "short but scandalous night of interruption."⁷⁷ These sharp, negative assessments of the Protectorates

may evidence lingering antagonisms Milton suppressed throughout his civil service.

Milton is interpreted as indulging in literary opportunism in corroboration with the Protectorates. His tracts though seem to largely testify against this, and demonstrate a consistency in championing key political principles from 1649 to 1660 and beyond. His constitutional vision was to promote Christian liberty by driving out tyranny in its ecclesiastical and civil forms, and hence, free men from slavery, both within and without. His political theology, in service to England's complete reformation, was affected by republican readings he derived from the Scriptures.

Milton is also categorised as a classical Republican. The historiography is somewhat conflicting as to the exact nature of his classical extraction, and he is often assessed as a lesser sort of political theorist in comparison to Harrington. But Milton evidences a rather strong attachment to certain aspects of the Hebrew Polity, dissimilar to Harrington's use of it, while maintaining the pre-eminence of the Gospel in his struggle for Christian liberty.

Christian Humanism and the Grammatical-Historical Approach to Biblical Interpretation

In order to fully appreciate their constitutional proposals we must consider their use of non-Christian authors and their grammatical-historical approach to the Scriptures; Harrington and Milton were Christian humanists – not Renaissance humanists.

Margo Todd claims that "scholars have failed to see puritans as the heirs of a complex intellectual legacy – classical, medieval, and Renaissance humanist as well as Reformed." It is not uncommon to find "political treatises" of sixteenth-century Protestants "citing Xenophon and St. Paul in the same breath," or "Erasmus and Zanchius in the same marginal note."⁷⁸

The contribution of scholarly Renaissance techniques to scriptural hermeneutical inquiry is too well documented. Todd explains that Christian humanism drew attention back to a profound appreciation and investigation of ancient historical sources, both patristic and classical. Nevertheless, the "text of the Bible itself was, of course, paramount among Christian humanist concerns" though "the pagan classics were servants of Christianity," and Erasmus the towering figure of influence.⁷⁹

Milton, like Harrington, was educated in the classics and a literal approach to scriptural interpretation. He

⁷⁶ John Toland, *The Oceana of James Harrington and his other works* (London, 1700), xix

⁷⁷ John Milton, *Considerations touching the likeliest means to remove hirelings out of the church* (London, 1649), 4, 5.

⁷⁸ Todd, *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order*, 16.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 23, 27.

studied at St. Paul's, founded by the famous English Christian humanist John Colet, and Christ's College, Cambridge. Harrington attended Trinity College, Oxford as a "Gentleman Commoner," in 1629 where he matured in his mastery of Greek and Latin, so clearly evidenced in his writings.

We first learn of Harrington's hermeneutical approach in *Oceana* (1656) and Milton's in his theological treatise *De Doctrina Christiana* (1655-1674). Harrington juxtaposes the relevance for original language training alongside the need to understand the "circumstances, persons, things, times and places" of speakers of the same language. He emphasises the need to analyse the linguistic and contextual particulars of the Bible, or any ancient text, to draw out its meaning. He also reveals his view that *Grace*, or Scriptural revelation, confirms *Nature*, or natural reason; "There is a greater light than the sun, but it doth not extinguish the sun; nor doth any light of God's giving extinguish that of nature, but increase and sanctify it."⁸⁰ Part of Harrington's rationale for utilising the classics rests upon the assumption that the Scriptures confirm man's natural observations.

Milton spends considerable time rehearsing his hermeneutical approach in *De Doctrina*.⁸¹ Proper scriptural exegesis required linguistic skill, syntactical expertise, respect for context, knowledge of original languages, appreciation for authorial intent, and a sense of the significant differences between literal and figurative passages. "Each passage of Scripture has only a single sense."⁸² He also assumed an analogy of faith whereby Scripture must be compared to Scripture to establish doctrine. Though fallen man retained God's image bearing nature, Milton never suggests that this created, now fallen-state, qualified him to understand the Scriptures. Unlike Harrington, Milton's hermeneutical approach incorporated the 'quickenings' of the Holy Spirit who enlivened the text's meaning; since man was fallen and his reason corrupt, he was in need of a renewed mind. Under the Gospel there was now a "double scripture" which consisted of the external word and the "internal scripture of the Holy

Spirit" which God "engraved upon the hearts of believers."⁸³

Though Milton employed pagan classical authors, Scripture's authority surpassed their writings. In *The reason of church government* (1641), he claims that "all wisdom is infolded" in the Scriptures, which is "a better & more ancient authority, then any heathen writer hath to give us."⁸⁴ In *Treatise of civil power in ecclesiastical causes* (1659), Milton argues for liberty of conscience upon the absolute authority of Scripture, the only "divine rule or autoritie from without us warrantable to one another as common ground . . . and no other within us but the illumination of the Holy Spirit so interpreting that scripture."⁸⁵ Despite the possibility of interpretive abuse, Milton argued in *De Doctrina* that "every believer is entitled to interpret the scriptures," and that "no one should be forbidden to read" them.⁸⁶

Milton never suggests a wholesale acceptance of the political pre-eminence of heathen writers, but his resort to classical authors is consistent with his view of man's fallen state. Fallen man retained the imprint of the law of nature upon his heart; "even before Moses' time" there existed an "unwritten law of nature" and a "kind of gleam or glimmering of it still remains in the hearts of all mankind." Romans 1:19, 32, and 2:14-15 reveal that the heathen have a sense of God's will and "do by nature the things contained in the law, . . . they show the work of the law written in their hearts." Nevertheless, the transformative experience of the "regenerate" under the Gospel is distinct from the heathen, as this law "is daily brought nearer to a renewal of its original perfection by the operation of the Holy Spirit."⁸⁷

Milton held to the Holy Spirit's role in the interpretive process and the need for a new birth to sensitise man to the Bible's truths. Harrington never elucidates the Spirit's role in illuminating the Bible, the need for a transformed life, or a renewal of the senses to establish their meaning. He found no contradiction in using human reason alone to investigate the text. This

⁸⁰ James Harrington, *The commonwealth of oceana* (London, 1656), 306-307.

⁸¹ John Milton, *De Doctrina Christiana* (1655-1674). Milton's major prose works are found in *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, D.M. Wolfe, 8 vols. (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1953-1982). Subsequent references to Milton's works relate to the originals, unless otherwise specified in Wolfe. The English translation of *De Doctrina Christiana* is located in volume 6 of Wolfe.

⁸² Milton, *De Doctrina*, CPW, vol. 6, 581.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 587.

⁸⁴ John Milton, *The reason of church government* (London, 1641), Preface.

⁸⁵ John Milton, *A treatise of civil power in ecclesiastical causes* (London, 1659), 5-6.

⁸⁶ Milton, *De Doctrina*, CPW, vol. 6, 583. See also 577.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 516. *Areopagitica* is more instructive for proving Milton a Christian humanist as opposed to a classical one. Milton proposes a Christian ethic of reading, and it abounds with classical allusions and historical examples. Milton even invokes biblical giants as models for his own scholarship to prove liberty of the press.

explains why Harrington never stressed man's depravity as an issue for civil modelling, and exhibited implicit trust in leaving the 'peoples' liberty up to them. Milton approached the text as if its meaning required more than simply exegetical tools. He read it like a liberated man, newly created in Christ, and with his reason renewed. Though he employed the classics, unlike Harrington, he never elevated pagan authors as a parallel authority; *Nature* in this regard, is transformed by *Grace*.

Rabbinic Scholarship and the Political use of the Hebrew Polity

Seventeenth-century political thought was infused with Hebraic literature, its accompanying Rabbinic scholarship, and political considerations of Israel's civil institutions. Both Harrington and Milton were well versed in the Rabbis.

Entire segments of some of Harrington's works are exclusively devoted to explicating the Hebrew Commonwealth through Rabbinic authors. His Royalist opponents recognised his Hebraic scholarship and argued against it. As a matter of fact, Harrington summarises his *Prerogative of popular government* (1658) as "In which two books is contained the whole commonwealth of the Hebrews, or of Israel, senate, people, and magistracy, both as it stood in the institution by Moses, and as it came to be formed after the captivity."⁸⁸ *Prerogative* also contains an itemised list of rabbinical sources Harrington utilised to investigate the government of the Hebrews, thus displaying his dependence upon sixteenth and seventeenth-century Rabbinic scholars, such as John Selden, and Hugo Grotius, who influenced his analysis of many of her political particulars.⁸⁹ Harrington's *The art of lawgiving* (1659) reveals his most extensive erudition of the Hebrew Commonwealth invested in six chapters, "Showing the frames of the commonwealths of Israel and of the Jews."⁹⁰

Pamphlets and Constitutional Platforms

James Harrington's constitutional model, located in *Oceana* (1656), is steeped in Hebraic political overtones and principles. *Oceana* is an incredibly complex treatise often categorised as utopian literature. It describes a "civil history of the sword and civil history of property" rendered within the imagery of a "fictionalised England," which Harrington names *Oceana*. He proposed to transform England from an unequal

commonwealth of "independent freeholders" to that of a republic.⁹¹ His solution to England's settlement crisis rested in recognising her transition to a popular balance of property relationships. For Harrington, empire, or civil structures, follows the distribution of landed property, and England's new balance required a corresponding constitutional shift to a republican form of popular government.⁹² Israel's pre-monarchical polity was Harrington's divine model of a popular commonwealth whose civil structure followed the equal distribution of land in Canaan.

Oceana's constitutional outlines and political mechanisms are thoroughly detailed throughout her thirty orders, summarised in the "Epitome of the Whole Government," and elaborated further in *The prerogative of popular government* (1658) and *The art of lawgiving* (1659). Harrington also published condensed versions of his larger model in *Brief directions* (1658), *The rota* (1660), and *The ways and means* (1660) to either address requests for clarity or engage later interregnum debates on new-modelling the government.

Harrington also made significant political use of the role of Jethro, the Priest of Midian, found in Exodus 18:19-27, whom he considered to represent a positive portrayal of heathen counsel, and therefore, biblical authority for using pagan classical texts. In *Oceana*, Harrington first 'writes' his politics out of nature, as a classical author would, and then parallels his political findings by 'writing' politics out of Israel. He resorts to Israel's civil institutions as a paradigm or template wherein many natural political observations converge. He claims to have "transcribed these principles of a commonwealth out of nature," which contains no other orders, and submits the precision of his analysis "unto God and to the world. Unto God in the fabric of the commonwealth of Israel, and unto the world in the universal series of ancient prudence."⁹³ His analysis of the Hebrew Commonwealth within the tradition of ancient prudence, or natural observation, confirms what *Nature* demonstrates politically; for Harrington, *Grace* confirms *Nature*.

John Milton evidences a rather strong attachment to certain aspects of the Hebrew Polity, though dissimilar to Harrington. He exhibits a distinctive political use of Matthew 20:25-28 which functions as a signature text in his *The readie and easie way to establish a free commonwealth* (1659). Also relevant for understanding his biblical republicanism is his marginalisation of the Mosaic Judicials and by contrast, his prominent use of

⁸⁸ Harrington, *Prerogative*, 389.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 520.

⁹⁰ James Harrington, *The art of lawgiving in three books* (London, 1659), 599.

⁹¹ Pocock, "'Oceana': the circumstances of publication," in *The Political Works of James Harrington*, 43.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Harrington, *Oceana*, 174.

the Gospel dispensation in pursuit of Christian liberty. Milton also reads the Old Testament political authorities of Deuteronomy 7:14-20 and 1 Samuel 8:1-22 to argue for limited authority of kings, popular sovereignty, and supremacy of the Hebrew Commonwealth. He also reads Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13 as relevant for establishing divinely instituted and directed civil authority as opposed to fixing absolute sovereignty within kings and magistrates.

James Harrington's *Oceana* (1656): Writing Politics out of Israel and Nature—The Authority of Israel as Paradigmatic for *Oceana*

Harrington read the Hebrew Polity as the divine original republican paradigm. His ambitious application of it as the authoritative constitutional exemplar among the republics of Athens, Rome, and even Venice, confirms that he was not merely motivated by political expedience. It was hardly a religious accessory to enhance his model, and he suffered a barrage of contentious interchanges with leading Royalists given his incorporation of it. Harrington even used the Jewish monarchy as evidence of the commonwealth's decline and degeneracy, which was an especial affront to them. Royalists wrote politics out of the Old Testament differently, indicating that their political battles with Harrington were hermeneutical in nature. As a matter of fact, *Oceana's* publication was timed to respond to the Jewish readmission issue; Harrington's regard for Jewish laws and patterns of productivity, and his suggestion they be settled in Ireland, confirm his interest in, and appreciation for, their polity.

Oceana is also filled with the words "ancient prudence," which represents the political wisdom of the ancients, or political principles derived from extra-biblical sources. The ancients provided Harrington with a positive basis for the use of natural political observations through the advice of Jethro the Midianite, a heathen ruler, to Moses, located in Exodus 18:19-27. Their historical interchange represents Harrington's fundamental warrant for putting the Hebrew Commonwealth to political use and probing pagan sources, and therefore, writing politics out of Nature.⁹⁴

Writing Politics out of Nature: Harrington's Hermeneutic of Heathen Council—Exodus 18:19-27

Jethro of Midian was the heathen father-in-law of Moses who dispensed commonwealth advice to God's legislator for Israel during his moment of intense judicial burden. Jethro was not only a heathen, but his

advice "heathenish," which Harrington read as scriptural permission to consult "human prudence" within the histories of heathen commonwealths. Such are relevant political sources because the God of the Hebrew Commonwealth, "the original of a commonwealth made by the same hand that made the world," created the natural order from which pagans extracted principles for their own models.⁹⁵

In *Art of lawgiving*, Harrington claims that it is legitimate to compare "heathenish" legislators and commonwealths with Moses and Israel, because "Jethro, being an heathen, informeth Moses of the orders of his own commonwealth, which also was heathenish." Jethro's advice hardly qualified as direct revelation from God, but as civil guidance from Midian's own political experience; "in Scripture is both Jethro joined with Moses, and the commonwealth of Midian with the commonwealth of Israel." If Scripture links the divine commonwealth with a pagan one, then why, asks Harrington, "cometh it to be irreverent or atheistical, as some say, in politicians . . . to compare . . . other legislators or politicians, as Lycurgus, Solon, with Moses, or other commonwealths, as Rome and Venice, with that of Israel?"⁹⁶

Jethro's counsel represents an endorsement for inquiring into the "written" political counsels of all ancient commonwealths, and therefore, a hermeneutic of heathen counsel. It also reveals that Harrington's political use of the Scriptures rests in their capacity to confirm what *Nature* displays. The Scriptures contain "the original whereof all the rest of the commonwealths seem to be copies."⁹⁷ *Grace* does not swallow *Nature*, or overwhelm it, but authenticates and corroborates man's natural political reflections as written in the ancient commonwealths.

Natural Political Orders of *Oceana*

Harrington demonstrates the governmental principles and orders of a commonwealth by first illustrating their derivation from natural political reflection,⁹⁸ and then their affirmation in the Scriptures. Civil principles of power and authority, agrarian balance, and rotation are all 'orders' or constitutional mechanisms which nature displays, which the ancients discovered, and which the Hebrew Commonwealth confirms.

⁹⁴ Ibid., 177.

⁹⁵ Ibid. See also 209, 210.

⁹⁶ Harrington, *Art*, 629.

⁹⁷ Harrington, *Oceana*, 205.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 162-163.

Principles of Ancient Government: Power and Authority

Oceana's most fundamental orders, power and authority, are integral to Harrington's intricate analysis of his naturally derived popular commonwealth model.

Authority represents the internal "goods of the mind" such as "natural or acquired virtues." Power, which Harrington equates with empire, represents the external "goods of fortune" such as "riches," the goods of the "body, as health, beauty, strength," as well as landed property.⁹⁹ Domestic empire, or government, is established upon dominion defined as property in land, money, and goods. The proportioning of lands defines the balance of dominion, and hence the nature or structure of government. The balance of dominion, or its structural role, is the foundation of an empire or government.

The form of government or the superstructure is dependent upon this division and distribution of property. This property-balance leads to either an "absolute monarchy" or a "government of servants," an "aristocratical monarchy," which is a "government of subjects," or a "commonwealth," which represents a "government of citizens," like "those of Israel, of Rome, of Holland."¹⁰⁰ Sole proprietorship of land, or its possession consigned to a few, overbalances the people in their ownership and defines the empire as either a monarchy or mixed monarchy. Conversely, if the people retain ownership of the land, the balance of dominion is united with them, resulting in a commonwealth.¹⁰¹ Government, which is most "natural" to the foundations of any empire, rests entirely upon the division and allocation of property or land distribution; empire follows the "balance of property."¹⁰² Harrington interpreted England's balance of dominion as resting with the people, leading him to conclude the need to transition to a commonwealth arrangement.

Equality in the Foundation: The Balance of Dominion and the Law of the Agrarian

If an empire is to sustain its existence it must establish a law fixing the balance in lands called an "agrarian." The agrarian's primary power is to stabilise and secure the frame of government.

Not just any sort of agrarian law was desirable. Harrington advocated for Israel's agrarian which was

"first introduced by God himself, who divided the land of Canaan unto his people by lots," and secured popular government. Israel's agrarian was "of such virtue that, wherever it hath held, that government hath not altered, except by consent; as in that unparalleled example of the people of Israel, when being in liberty they would needs choose a king."¹⁰³ Israel's agrarian law was also God inspired, administered by Him for His own people, and secured the Hebrew Commonwealth until the people's remarkable request for a king. Israel's agrarian, which evidenced equality in her political foundation, was incorporated into Oceana as a fundamental constitutional pillar.¹⁰⁴ Harrington reads 1 Samuel 8:19 as evidence of a negative alteration in Israel's government, and nothing short of a civil blunder.

Balance of Authority in the Commonwealth Structure: Debate and Result

Authority, like power, must also be balanced. Unity between power and authority rests in the elevation of the common interests of man over the private interests of individuals and parties. Harrington divided man's soul into the rivals of passion, whose reign results in "vice and the bondage of sin," and reason, which "is virtue and the freedom of soul."¹⁰⁵ Man's soul (any man, not simply a saint) bears the image of God,¹⁰⁶ which resides as the empire of reason as opposed to passion. Consequently, an empire of laws, or rule of common reason, is to the liberty of a commonwealth as the reign of reason is to the liberty of the individual. Harrington now proceeds with his principles of debate and result in the commonwealth, or how laws are proposed, debated, and resolved. Only common reason can issue forth in virtuous laws.

Harrington conceded a political difficulty: those proposing, debating, and resolving are mere men, who must overcome the tendency to prioritise their interests above the common good.¹⁰⁷ Harrington never asserted a doctrine of human depravity, commonly associated with his republican counterparts, to overcome this problem.

Mere persuasion will not rid man of this propensity towards private interests or predispose him towards

⁹⁹ Ibid., 163.

¹⁰⁰ Harrington, *Prerogative*, 441.

¹⁰¹ Harrington, *Oceana*, 163-164.

¹⁰² Ibid., 164-165.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 164.

¹⁰⁴ Harrington wrote a poem entitled "On the Political Balance," in his *An essay upon two of virgil's eclogues* (London, 1658), where he alludes to Israel's rejection of God, and hence her original balance.

¹⁰⁵ Harrington, *Oceana*, 169-170.

¹⁰⁶ Harrington, *A system of politics* (London, 1661?), 837.

¹⁰⁷ Harrington, *Oceana*, 171.

choosing the public's good. Passion must be subordinate to reason, which must be exalted "unto the throne of empire."¹⁰⁸ For this to occur, "orders of government as, like those of God in nature" must be established.¹⁰⁹ These orders are the natural civil capacities of dividing and choosing, which Harrington claims God distributed among men.

To demonstrate these orders, Harrington resorts to an unlikely illustration of a private and simple division of a cake between two girls, both of whom have an interest in acquiring as much of the cake as possible.¹¹⁰ If they can agree from the outset that one will divide the cake and the other choose a piece, then both will receive an equal portion. Why? Regardless of who initiates the division, the parts will surely be equal because it is in the interest of the one dividing to make an equal division. If one girl divided the cake unequally she would most certainly forfeit the greater portion since it would be in the interest of the other to take the larger piece. An equal division insures that both parties will receive what is in their best interest, and hence common right. Harrington believed this simple illustration clarified "the whole mystery of a commonwealth, which lies only in dividing and choosing," and part of God's natural ordering. God "distributed" mankind "forever into two orders, whereof the one hath the natural right of dividing, and the other choosing."¹¹¹ If this natural division could be institutionalised, authority would also be balanced.

Constitutionally, "dividing and choosing, in the language of the commonwealth, is debating and resolving."¹¹² Harrington claims that "the debate of the few" represents "the wisest debate," and "the result of the many . . . is the wisest result." God Himself "who doth nothing in vain," actually "divided mankind unto the few, or the natural aristocracy, and the many, or the natural democracy."¹¹³ These natural orders translate institutionally into an aristocratic senate that debates and proposes laws and a democratic assembly that resolves and enacts them.¹¹⁴ He summarises the essence of a commonwealth as consisting "of the senate proposing, the people resolving, and the magistracy executing, whereby partaking of the aristocracy as in the

senate, of the democracy as in the people, and of monarchy as in the magistracy, it is complete."¹¹⁵

Equality in Commonwealth Structure: Rotation and the Election of Magistrates

Rotation relates to the successive elections of magistrates, or alterations in the composition of rulers in the superstructures through popular suffrage and ballot, and guards against a "prolongation of magistracy." Popular suffrage through "an equal rotation" transfers the equality established through the agrarian into "the branch, or exercise of sovereign power."¹¹⁶ Harrington summarises Oceana as an equal commonwealth, or "a government established upon an equal agrarian, arising unto the superstructures or three orders, the senate debating and proposing, the people resolving, and the magistracy executing by an equal rotation through the suffrage of the people given by ballot."¹¹⁷

Harrington concludes that his "reasoned" commonwealth, Oceana, represents "the first example of a commonwealth that is perfectly equal"; history does not evidence the existence of such a model. He does not consider Israel's Commonwealth to have been completely equal since she lacked rotation in her Sanhedrin whose membership was established for life. But Oceana was equal in its entire constitution, or "equal both in the balance or foundation and in the superstructures," meaning her "agrarian law and in her rotation."¹¹⁸ Together, they represent "the fundamental laws of Oceana, or the centre of this commonwealth."¹¹⁹

Writing Politics out of Israel: Moses's Model Commonwealth

Harrington confirms his natural orders scripturally from the Hebrew Commonwealth, which he meticulously details in chapter 2, Book 2 of *The art of lawgiving*, entitled "Showing What Commonwealth Israel Was." His reading of Israel's Polity is incorporated paradigmatically as a civil exemplar into the constitutional details of Oceana, though he never intended to assimilate every particular.

¹⁰⁸ Harrington, *Prerogative*, 415.

¹⁰⁹ Harrington, *Oceana*, 172.

¹¹⁰ See *Prerogative*, 415.

¹¹¹ Harrington, *Oceana*, 172; See *Prerogative*, 416.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 174; See *Prerogative*, 416.

¹¹³ Harrington, *Prerogative*, 416; See *Oceana*, 173.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 417; See *Oceana*, 174.

¹¹⁵ Harrington, *Oceana*, 174.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 181, 231; See *Prerogative*, 472.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 181; See *Prerogative*, 424 and *Art*, 613.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 184, 180.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 231.

Orders of the Hebrew Commonwealth: Power of Israel – Genealogical and Geographic Divisions

“All political methods,” Harrington states, “that are collective of the people must necessarily begin with a distribution or division of the people.”¹²⁰ He locates Israel’s method of genealogical tribal division in Exodus 1:1-4, and tribal rankings in Numbers 1:1-2. The twelve tribes of Israel were also divided geographically as to land allotments to be distributed in Canaan, and fixed by an agrarian law as indicated in Numbers 26:53-56 and 33:54.

Genealogical Division of Israel was Popular

From Numbers 1, Harrington explained that Israel was first divided by “ten tribes, houses or families,” with all the first born as tribal princes or “phylarchs,” while the “princes of families” were “patriarchs.” The tribe of Levi was the exception given its unique service before the altar of God.¹²¹

When Moses called for Israel’s census in Numbers 1:18, he ordered the “congregation,” or as Harrington referred to it, “the political convention of the people,” to assemble “*after their families by the house of their fathers.*” He then conflates the list of tribal heads or princes of Numbers 1: 5-15 with the number of military men counted within each tribe from Numbers 1:20-43, and arrives at the census tally of 603,550 of Numbers 1:46. Harrington referred to Israel’s military population as the “muster-roll in the twelve tribes.”¹²² The phylarchs then led Israel’s “armies of the commonwealth,” into battle, which were divided further into “four brigades” containing three tribes, all surrounding the tabernacle as they proceeded.¹²³

Harrington found a second genealogical division from Numbers 26:5-50, noting the twelve tribes with their various and numerous families and patriarchs. These genealogical divisions represented the “assemblies of the people” who were called together in the wilderness on specific occasions “by trumpets (Numbers 10:7) unto the congregation.” When the “congregation of the people of Israel assembled in a military manner (Judges 20:2)” she “had the result of the commonwealth, or the power of confirming all their laws, though proposed even by God himself, as where

they make him king (Exodus 19).”¹²⁴ Israel’s genealogical division was a ‘popular’ one, but which needed a popular balance in the land to settle a commonwealth.

Geographic Division of Israel was the Agrarian Balance in Canaan

Israel’s next division was geographic, or local, and by lots in the land of Canaan among the twelve tribes.¹²⁵ This represents an order of division which Numbers 26:53-56 and 33:54 indicate Israel was commanded to execute when she entered Canaan. Harrington concluded the establishment of popular government from Israel’s local order of tribal divisions, or the popular division according to families, accompanied by a fixed agrarian law.¹²⁶ The institution of an agrarian law for Canaan, known as the Jubilee Land Law, settled the popular distribution of lands allotted to families such that they “were immovably entailed upon the proprietors and their heirs forever.” But should land be transferred, through sale or otherwise, the Jubilee Law required it to be returned to the original proprietor after fifty years.¹²⁷

Harrington’s use of Israel’s agrarian to prove a commonwealth troubled his Royalist opponents, especially Matthew Wren who asserted that the Scriptures failed to reveal the political nature of Israel’s agrarian, or any land law for that matter.¹²⁸ Harrington countered, arguing that Israel’s agrarian was both political and fundamental to her government and identified three scriptural methods of dominion in support, one of which he claims to have incorporated into Oceana.

Harrington’s first proof of an agrarian performing the political function of a popular balance is situated in Canaan’s division by lot, and from which he concluded that God “intended popular government.” The second is located in the alteration of the popular balance in favour of the nobility, and affected when Israel requested a king in 1 Samuel 8:14. God commanded Samuel to explain to Israel “*the manner of the king,*” who “*will take your fields and your vineyards, and your olive-yards, even the best of them, and give unto his servants.*” Harrington claims that the text demonstrates that “from the balance to the superstructures, a more perfect description of a monarchy by a nobility” cannot be

¹²⁰ Harrington, *Art*, 621.

¹²¹ Harrington, *Oceana*, 174-175; *Art*, 644.

¹²² Harrington, *Art*, 621-622.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 623.

¹²⁴ Harrington, *Oceana*, 175.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 174-175.

¹²⁶ Harrington, *Oceana*, 632.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 634.

¹²⁸ Matthew Wren, *Considerations on Mr. Harrington’s commonwealth of oceana* (Oxford, 1657), 73.

found. His third example is derived from Joseph's role as Egypt's administrator who resolved the famine crisis presented in Genesis 47:19-20. The people approached Joseph saying "Buy us and our land for bread, and we and our land will be servants unto Pharaoh." Joseph's subsequent purchase transformed the balance to that "of a sole landlord or absolute prince, with the miserable and yet necessary consequence of an enslaved people."¹²⁹

Harrington is convinced that these three texts are indisputable proof that the structure of government (empire) follows the balance in land (property distribution), while claiming that the commonwealth of Oceana finds its agrarian exemplar in the commonwealth of Israel. Israel's self-inflicted slavery in Egypt under Joseph and her choice of a human king under Samuel were patterns to avoid. Rather, Israel's agrarian law, divinely established through the ballot of Israel, fixed her popular government and was the model commonwealth. God's popular division of Canaan proved that Israel's dominion was also popular, and the establishment of the agrarian law secured it. God therefore desired popular government, and secured a commonwealth for Israel. It was Israel's agrarian law establishing popular government which Harrington extracted from Israel in his attempt to fix the balance in Oceana, and therefore England. This fundamental constitutional principle was the political mechanism by which to establish popular government; "the balance of Oceana is exactly calculated unto the most approved way, and the clearest footsteps of God in the whole history of the Bible; and whereas the jubilee was a law instituted for the preservation of the popular balance from alteration, so is the agrarian in Oceana."¹³⁰ Harrington employed Israel's agrarian paradigmatically, as the purpose for Israel's agrarian and Oceana's is the same. Israel's Commonwealth and Oceana's would differ only in the particulars of their establishment.

Despite royalist accusations, Harrington was hardly adopting any sort of levelling agenda or program, as property currently in possession is not "stirred, but all entirely left as it was found."¹³¹ Oceana's agrarian law does not follow Israel's method of entailing lands, but incorporates "the regulation of purchases" whereby a "man's land shall not exceed some certain proportions — for example, two thousand pounds a year."¹³² Harrington did not extract Israel's agrarian method, but rather the law itself as a political constitution.

Orders of the Hebrew Commonwealth: Authority of Israel located in the Senate Sanhedrin and Jethronian Judicatures

Harrington considered the members of the Sanhedrin and lower courts as the popularly elected "ordinary magistrates" of Israel's Commonwealth whom Moses proposed as potential candidates to Israel's congregation. He read Exodus 18 as inaugurating two judicial authorities: Moses as a court of appeals, and the Jethronian prefectures as courts of original jurisdiction over lesser judicial matters. Though these judgeships were instituted when Israel was an army, Harrington believed that Deuteronomy 16:18 proves they continued into the commonwealth.¹³³

Israel's Senate Sanhedrin, inaugurated in Numbers 11:10-16, was unique given its divine commissioning, its reception of revealed law, its established life-membership, and executive function. It was "the supreme, and a constant, court of judicature"¹³⁴ whose status was exceptional among commonwealths because Israel's legislator "was infallible," whose laws "were not fit to be altered by men." Israel's Senate also originally operated in an "executive" capacity, or as an administrator of pre-existing law, or "law made (Deuteronomy 17:9, 10, 11)."¹³⁵ Harrington believed the Sanhedrin was popularly elected through "the rule of Moses"¹³⁶ and the locus of authority in the Hebrew Commonwealth. Deuteronomy 1:13 represented his text of popular suffrage whereby Moses propositioned the people to "take ye wise men, and understanding, and known among your tribes, . . . and I will make (or constitute) them rulers over you."¹³⁷ Deuteronomy 1:12-17 also provided Harrington with his scriptural mandate for the popular election of other lesser judicial magistrates.

Israel's judicatory also consisted of lesser magistrates who, upon Israel's settlement in Canaan, administered courts of law consisting of twenty-three elders who sat at city gates throughout the land. These represented "that part of this commonwealth which was instituted by Moses upon the advice of Jethro the priest of Midian (Exodus 18)." They also constituted the "executive magistracy subordinate unto the Sanhedrin."

¹³³ Harrington, *Art*, 629.

¹³⁴ Harrington, *Oceana*, 294.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 176-177. Harrington delineates the exact nature of Israel's complex election methods through the assistance of the Talmud, as well as Grotius and Selden. See also *Prerogative*, 531.

¹³⁶ James Harrington, *A discourse upon this saying: The spirit of the nation is not yet to be trusted with liberty; lest it introduce monarchy, or invade the liberty of conscience* (London, 1659), 739.

¹³⁷ Harrington, *Art*, 628.

¹²⁹ Harrington, *Prerogative*, 462-463.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 463.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 458, See *Art*, 664.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 460.

Harrington referred to these local judicatures as the “inferior courts,”¹³⁸ and even the “lesser Sanhedrim.”¹³⁹ It is important to recall the place of Deuteronomy 1:13 as Oceana’s electoral method, which functioned as Harrington’s scriptural proof of popular prerogative for all levels of magistracy. His employment of this text three times alone in his 1659 *discourse upon this saying* (1659) reinforces its place as his scriptural text for popular suffrage.

The Authority of Israel for Oceana’s Superstructures

Because Harrington determined to use Israel’s commonwealth paradigmatically, he was applying its ‘effect,’ and its distinctions between power and authority, as opposed to its exact numerical or methodological particulars. Numerical differences do occur between Israel’s senators and Oceana’s, but which are inconsequential given their populations; Oceana’s “three hundred . . . exceedeth not that of the seventy in Israel.” Neither was it necessary for Oceana to retain “the succession and dignity of the princes of the tribes and of the patriarchs” which Christ’s coming rendered unnecessary. It was no more constitutionally imperative to model Israel’s senatorial terms as it was to follow her pattern of division in Canaan.¹⁴⁰

The Hebrew Senate found its way into Oceana via its legislative function and electoral method. Leaving aside Israel’s hereditary succession of princes and patriarchs, its number of senators with their life terms, Harrington incorporated the Sanhedrin’s authority by adopting its legislative function of debate; as the Senate of Israel established law with the congregation, so too would Oceana’s Senate establish law with the representative assembly. Even Israel’s local judgeships, established out of Exodus 18 through Jethro’s advice, and later developed into permanent courts throughout Israel’s cities, provided Oceana with its model of phylarch courts with the authority of appeal to the Senate.

Orders of the Hebrew Commonwealth: Israel’s Prerogative and Rotation in the Congregation

Harrington claimed that he had “written the commonwealth of Israel” and “from thence especially rotation is derived.”¹⁴¹ It appears that the rotation he carved out for Oceana related to Israel’s very local tribal

method of choosing monthly a 24,000-member prerogative, also referred to as a representative or congregation, which Harrington believed subsequently chose the senate and lower judiciary. He also understood Israel’s representative as rotating through the population annually. The correspondent between the two commonwealths seems to lie most particularly at Oceana’s first level of election—the parish.

According to Harrington Israel’s prerogative consisted of a congregation of military men numbering 24,000 combined delegates, or 2000 from each of the twelve tribes, who sat for one month terms.¹⁴² 1 Chronicles 27:1-15 lists the twelve tribes as standing monthly along with their commanders and officers, followed by a division of 24,000 under their command. Verses 16-22 include the tribal heads or princes whom Harrington explained remained in their separate provinces as judges, and from where they sent the required military reinforcements.¹⁴³ Israel’s congregation functioned as a military body, “the constant guard of the country,” and as representatives when “they gave the vote of the people at the creation of their laws and election of magistrates . . . monthly.” Each stood for one month terms, and over the course of a year, Israel’s military population was completely rotated. Harrington concludes that “these things rightly considered, there remains little doubt but we have the courses of Israel for the first example of rotation in a popular assembly.”¹⁴⁴

Harrington instances the law-making function of the prerogative from 1 Chronicles 13:1-3, which relates King David’s desire to convey the Ark of the Covenant from Kiriath-jearim to Obed-edom. King David didn’t unilaterally decide to move the Ark, but propositioned the people before proceeding with his plans; “*David consulted with the captains of thousands and hundreds, and with every leader. . . . and David said unto all the congregation, If it seem good unto you, and that it be of the Lord our God.*” The king proposed and the people delivered their prerogative; “*All the congregation said that they would do so . . . the thing was right in the eyes of all the people.*” King David’s authority was not absolute, since he did not establish “any law than by the proposition unto the people.” And though they were “unanimous in their result” in favouring his proposal, their agreeableness should not be interpreted as if “they could do no otherwise by a king, for they did not the like by Rehoboam,”¹⁴⁵ whose kingship they rejected.

¹³⁸ Harrington, *Oceana*, 177, 287.

¹³⁹ Harrington, *Prerogative*, 523.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 464; See *Art*, 673.

¹⁴¹ James Harrington, *A parallel of the spirit of Mr. Rogers* (London, 1659), 758, Note 4.

¹⁴² Harrington, *Art*, 634-635; *Prerogative*, 474-475.

¹⁴³ Harrington, *Prerogative*, 474.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 475.

¹⁴⁵ Harrington, *Art*, 619.

Harrington also claimed from 1 Chronicles 25:1 that the representative capacity of the congregation extended to the election of “priests, officers and magistrates.” Even King Solomon and Zadok the priest were established in their offices through the congregation of Israel.¹⁴⁶

The Rotation of Israel’s Prerogative Paralleled in Oceana

Like the agrarian, rotation represents a fundamental law of Oceana intended to insure that the common interest of the people is maintained through a smooth succession of rulers by including the entire body of people in the process as Israel’s rotation did.¹⁴⁷

Harrington extracted the legislative authority of result and confirmation out of Israel’s congregation. The 24,000 member representative corresponds to Oceana’s constituency of representatives chosen at the local level of parish elections. Just as Israel, through her popular body of armed men, elected magistrates at every level, so too does Oceana through a series of coordinate electoral steps beginning with the parishes, who chose “wise and discerning” leaders. Oceana’s parish system, which Harrington suggested could consist of fifty shires, or parishes, was the smallest electoral unit, and hence akin to Israel’s tribe, her smallest electoral unit. The shires elected officials not only to their representative assembly, but also to the senate and the judiciary, just as he claimed Israel’s tribal representative elected all her magistrates as it cycled through its monthly rotation. Just as every military man in Israel who participated as a ruler left the prerogative experienced, and ready to stand again at another point in the cycle, so too would those in Oceana.¹⁴⁸

Disintegration of Israel’s Orders: Period of the Judges and Monarchy

Dissolution of the Sanhedrin and Jethronian Judges

Harrington’s disregard for monarchy is evidenced in his analysis of Israel’s careless neglect “of the excellent orders of their commonwealth, given by God.” In his rebuttals to Henry Ferne’s insistence of the advantages of monarchy in *Pian piano* (1656), Harrington explained that Israel initially abandoned these orders of the Senate Sanhedrin and lower courts after the death of Joshua and the original court elders. The Hebrew

Commonwealth deteriorated into dictatorial judgeships and civil anarchy, and her state of affairs, coupled with the corrupt judgeship of Samuel’s sons, “was the true cause why the people chose to have a king and so fell into monarchy, under which they fared worse.”¹⁴⁹ Israel’s failure to completely rid Canaan of their enemies weakened their commonwealth foundations, “came now to fail also in her superstructures.” Without an elected senate, Israel’s tribes lacked “any common ligament” which resulted in tribal leagues and inter-tribal war, and provided fertile ground for a ruling figure such as the “judge of Israel.”¹⁵⁰ The frequent phrases in Judges that “*there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes,*” simply meant that “there was neither Sanhedrim nor judge in Israel; so every man, or at least every tribe, governed herself as she pleased.”¹⁵¹

God: Israel’s Original but Rejected King

Harrington’s position on Israel’s improvident institution of monarchy intersects with his republican interpretation of 1 Samuel 8:6-7 and Deuteronomy 17:14-20.

Harrington insisted that Exodus 19:5 established God as Israel’s original King, not Moses, “his sole legislator.” God instructed Moses to propose unto the people, saying, “*Thus shalt thou say unto the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel, . . . Now therefore if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be unto me a kingdom of priests.*” All of Israel “*answered together* (gave their suffrage, . . .) *and said, All that the Lord hath spoken we will do; and Moses returned the words* (that is, the suffrage, or result) *of the people unto the Lord.*” From this Harrington concluded that “God was the king in Israel by covenant, which he proposed by himself or his servant Moses, and resolved by the people.”¹⁵²

1 Samuel 8:6-7 evidenced Israel’s subsequent rejection of God, their original King, and proved their prerogative of power to repudiate proposed law, even which they had “resolved” upon. Rejecting God in this manner meant “the people must have had power to have rejected anything that was proposed, and not confirmed by them.”¹⁵³ If such a privilege extended to all laws which God proposed, then God’s response to Israel’s rejection of His authority modelled Israel’s power of result to depose of earthly magistrates as well; “to reject him, that he should not reign over them, was as civil magistrate to depose him.” Israel’s rejection of

¹⁴⁶ Harrington, *Prerogative*, 475.

¹⁴⁷ Harrington, *Oceana*, 181.

¹⁴⁸ Harrington, See Art, 635; *The rota or a model of a free state or equal commonwealth* (London, 1660), 809; *The ways and means whereby an equal or lasting commonwealth may be suddenly introduced* (London, 1660), 824.

¹⁴⁹ Harrington, *Pian piano* (London, 1656), 378.

¹⁵⁰ Harrington, Art, 638.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 639.

¹⁵² Harrington, *Pian piano*, 374; See *Oceana*, 175.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 374.

God “leaveth little doubt, but that they had power to have rejected any of those laws confirmed by them throughout the Scripture.”¹⁵⁴

By contrast, the Royalist Ferne claimed that Moses was “chief in the whole government,” and Aaron “the chief in the priesthood, and after Moses Joshua.” After they died, God “still raised up single persons to judge his people.”¹⁵⁵ Harrington countered by resorting to Gideon’s proclamation that neither he nor his son would rule over Israel; instead, “*the Lord shall rule over you.*” Given Gideon’s example, “monarchical government, even in the time of the judges, was in this commonwealth to the rejection of God.”¹⁵⁶

Harrington understood Israel’s kings as limited monarchs who ruled under God’s law rather than by divine right. While contending with the Royalist Peter Heylyn in *The stumbling-block of disobedience and rebellion* (1658) over the nature of the Israelite Monarchy, Harrington exclaimed that “if divine right be derived unto kings from these of the Hebrews only, it is most apparent that no absolute king can be of divine right.” Deuteronomy 17:19 proved that Israel’s kings were under law, “as they could neither multiply horses nor wives, nor silver nor gold, without which no king can be absolute; but were ‘to keep all the words of this law and these statutes’.” Consequently then, Israel’s kings “were regulated monarchs.”¹⁵⁷

Wren challenged Harrington’s interpretation of Israel’s prerogative as he had their agrarian, and rejected the logical conclusion that their authority extended to discarding the Decalogue.¹⁵⁸ Wren stated that if the people “had a liberty of dissenting by which they might have exempted from those Laws,” which are the “Ten Commandments,” and if the “people of *Israel* need not have been subjected to them without their own consents, there is no reason but we should enjoy the same privilege.” He concludes that “Mr. *Harrington* proves an huge benefactour to Mankind; for he hath with no greater expence then the withholding their consents asserted them into the mighty Liberty of being free from the whole Morall Law.”¹⁵⁹

Harrington never intended to relieve men from such obligations, and accused Wren of confusing authority with power. Unlike Moses, the “Almighty God” is not a

“mortal legislator,” but bears “another nature which unto him is peculiar, from whom, as he is the cause of being or the creator of mankind, omnipotent power is inseparable.” Nevertheless, “so equal is the goodness of this nature unto the greatness thereof, that as he is the cause of well-being by way of election, for example in his chosen people Israel, or of redemption, as in the Christian church, himself hath preferred before his empire his authority or proposition.”¹⁶⁰ Just as God prioritised His positioning authority over His omnipotence, and hence never asserted His power to command Israel, neither did “Christ in the like, who also is king after the same manner in his church.” Christ himself was even rejected by the Jews, “*that he should not reign over them,*” and therefore, “the law of the gospel came not to be the law of the Jews.” Harrington reasons, “if the Ten Commandments came to be the law of Israel, it was not only because God proposed them – seeing Christ also proposed his law, which nevertheless came not to be the law of the Jews – but because the people received the one, and rejected the other.”¹⁶¹ In other words, God offered and proposed his Law to people, but did not impose it upon them. In this regard, the people exhibited the right of choice through their consent, and hence popular sovereignty.

In conclusion, Oceana and the Hebrew Commonwealth are political correspondents, and not uniform replicas. Harrington jettisoned Israel’s cultural baggage as wholly unnecessary for his model and possibly because such represented categories of power exclusive to its governance. He concludes in *Prerogative* that “these things rightly considered, I have not varied from the authority of Israel in a tittle, there being neither any such necessary use of pedigrees nor uninterrupted succession of elders for life in Oceana.” He highlights his term “authority,” a subtle indication that he is not referring to Israel’s power, or her sovereign province in Oceana’s political and legal life. Rather, Israel’s prerogative over Oceana, or her authority, governs and directs its constitutional framing as to structure and fundamental laws, such as rotation and the agrarian. Harrington exclaims that “Oceana, I say, cannot be wounded by piercing the authority of Israel, with which she is armed *cap`a-pie,*”¹⁶² or from head to toe.

¹⁵⁴ Harrington, *Oceana*, 175. See also 178, 236; *Prerogative*, 423; *The stumbling-block of disobedience and rebellion cunningly imputed by P.H. unto Calvin* (London, 1658), 574.

¹⁵⁵ Harrington, *Pian piano*, 377.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.* See Art, 638.

¹⁵⁷ Harrington, *The stumbling-block*, 576.

¹⁵⁸ Harrington, *Prerogative*, 420.

¹⁵⁹ Wren, *Considerations*, 38-39.

¹⁶⁰ Harrington, *Prerogative*, 421.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 422.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*, 464.

John Milton's *The readie and easie way to establish a free commonwealth* (1659, 1660): A Commonwealth of Civil and Religious Liberty

John Milton (1608-1674) was a prolific English author whose literary talents extended beyond poetry to encompass political and religious-liberty topics. The crisis of England's civil settlement motivated him to argue forcefully for a republican model to replace the monarchy and House of Lords. His distinguished political tract, *The readie and easie way to establish a free commonwealth* (1659, 1660), presents a constitutional proposal to recast the Rump Parliament into a republic devoid of king and House of Lords.

Milton committed his life to discerning the jurisdiction between church and state and he attempted to craft a political theology in its service to further England's reformation. Christian liberty was the core theme which permeated his republican model which consisted of civil and religious institutional limitations in contrast with the slavish and tyrannical features of prelacy and monarchy. This grand pursuit of liberty influenced his scriptural search for constitutional principles for its protection and promotion, shaping his hermeneutic of biblical republicanism.

Like other commonwealthsmen seeking to settle a republic, Milton employed discrete scriptural texts to substantiate his republican model. His political application of Deuteronomy 17:14-20 and 1 Samuel 8:10-19 can be distilled down to anti-monarchy and anti-lordship, the right of revolution coupled with liberty of civil choice, and the divine status of the pre-monarchical Jewish Commonwealth. Milton did not consider the Mosaic Judicials relevant for new-modelling a commonwealth. He believed rather that its institutional mixture of civil and ecclesiastical authorities was voided by the Gospel model of liberty. His liberty-paradigm of limited government is also partly derived from Romans 13:1-4 and 1 Peter 2:13-15 which led him to conclude conditional obedience to civil authorities.

Most interesting is Milton's political use of Matthew 20:25-28—the sons of Zebedee text—with its language of *gentilism*. Milton employs it in his *The tenure of kings and magistrates* (1649), *A defence of the people of England* (1651), and *De Doctrina Christiana* (1655-1674). Three prominent uses are also found in the second edition of *The readie and easie* alone, one of which is part of an augmented section not found in his first edition. So critical was his reading here that his Royalist contenders attacked his political application of it. Milton considered it as conclusive political proof of Christ's command against kingship in government and from it, he cogently arrived at anti-lordship and a

perpetual senate of civil-servants. He also frequently combines Matthew 20 with Deuteronomy 17 and 1 Samuel 8 for a forceful biblical argument against all remnants of royalism. Milton was predominantly concerned that absolute lordship, the very threat to liberty, never be institutionalised. His political language of 'gentilism,' often linked with Israel's choice of a tyrannical heathenish monarch, conveyed this.

Milton was consistent in his political use of these biblical texts throughout the successive Interregnum administrations. Each carried immutable political authority with uniform civil application and linked to a commonwealth void of absolute human authority. He then institutionalised them into a federal commonwealth model consisting of a unicameral perpetual senate, a standing council, and subordinate local judicial bodies.

Gospel Supremacy over Mosaic Judicials and Jewish Polity

Milton dismissed the notion that the Mosaic Judicials were civilly enforceable. He construed them as peculiar stipulations originally and exclusively directed to the Israelites.¹⁶³ Any societal relevance rested in their timeless moral substance which was "grounded in nature" and testified to by the Gospel; that superior covenant which "stands with her dignity most" and "lectures to us from her own authentick hand-writing, and command."¹⁶⁴ Given the primacy of the Gospel, the church, now in a "state of grace," transitioned from the status of servant to son to which now "belongs willingness and reason, not force."¹⁶⁵

Milton also considered the union of the civil and religious offices under the Jewish Polity, where there was "no distinct government or governors of church and commonwealth" as an unworkable pattern for England. Since the New Testament never re-established such a concentration of authority, man is "freed from the judgments of men, and especially from coercion and legislation in religious matters."¹⁶⁶ The Law is now written "upon the heart of every beleever to be interpreted only by the sense of charitie and inward perswasion."¹⁶⁷

The Gospel's jurisdictional requirements rested on the covenant of grace, resulting in the separation between the civil and spiritual swords for purposes of liberty. Milton was not advocating the wholesale dismissal of

¹⁶³ Milton, *De Doctrina*, CPW, vol. 6, 517, 521.

¹⁶⁴ Milton, *The reason of church government*, 11.

¹⁶⁵ Milton, *A treatise of civil power in ecclesiastical causes*, 48.

¹⁶⁶ Milton, *De Doctrina*, CPW, vol. 6, 537-538.

¹⁶⁷ Milton, *A treatise of civil power in ecclesiastical causes*, 48.

the Law, as its “substance . . . love of God and of our neighbour, should not, . . . be thought of as destroyed.” Rather, “only the written surface has been changed,” as the “law is now inscribed on believers’ hearts by the spirit,” which is outside the province of the magistrate.¹⁶⁸ The Gospel’s pre-eminence rendered the Judicials irrelevant as to the enforcement of the “letter,” while the internal enforcement of its substance was now a matter of conscience and liberty. “The law of slavery” has “been abrogated through the gospel,” and “the result is Christian Liberty.”¹⁶⁹ The primacy of the Gospel over the Judicials, with its political implications of “Christian liberty,” required the restriction of civil power in religious affairs.

Limited Authority of Kings, Popular Sovereignty and Supremacy of a Commonwealth – Deuteronomy 17:4-20

Milton’s understanding of the Gospel’s liberty requirements represents a biblical anchor from which he directs political contrasts between the liberty of commonwealths and the slavery of monarchies. His republican reading of Deuteronomy 17:4-20 contradicted the standard royalist ones. Where he inferred the limitation and legal accountability of kings, Royalists reasoned a monarchy as responsible to God alone. Milton claims the Deuteronomy passage “confirme us that the right of choosing, yea of changing thir own Government is by the grant of God himself in the People.”¹⁷⁰ Royalists did not assume it communicated any such right of choice regarding government.

Milton’s civil-liberty theme targeted civil-slavery, which he commonly associated with monarchy. He forcefully frames counter-arguments against absolute kingship in favour of popular sovereignty in *Pro populo anglicano defensio* (1651) where he attacks the Royalist Salmasius’ assertion that a king alone is absolute, supreme, above the law, and accountable only to God.¹⁷¹ Milton confidently rested his case in Deuteronomy 17:14, which bore tremendous political weight because “God himself” spoke. Though originally directed to the Hebrews, Milton read this text to mean “that all Nations are at liberty to erect what form of Government they will amongst themselves, and to change it when,

and into what they will.”¹⁷² Though God providentially intervened within the civil affairs of the Hebrews, Milton claimed that such interposition was unique to them.¹⁷³ God ordains the nature of lawful civil authority and power while leaving the nations at liberty to decide their institutional forms. Milton is not dismissing the Jewish Polity wholesale. Rather, he is simply highlighting God’s unique political relationship with Israel, the liberty of civil choice, and the connection between institutional forms and the moral capacities of nations.¹⁷⁴

Milton extended the political usefulness of Deuteronomy 17 beyond popular choice of government to include the superiority of a commonwealth form generally. “A Commonwealth is a more perfect form of Government than a Monarchy, and more suitable to the condition of Mankind; and in the opinion of God himself, better for his own people; for himself appointed it.” God reluctantly permitted the Hebrews to alter this divine form to a monarchy only after He was “prevail’d” upon, “and at their own importunate desire.” God’s response extended a political choice “to be Govern’d by a single person, or by more.”¹⁷⁵ Milton posits that “the Gospel . . . that Heavenly Promulgation, as it were, of Christian Liberty,” does not “reduce us to a condition of Slavery to Kings and Tyrants,”¹⁷⁶ or to the clergy for that matter. “Unlimited power,” whether “in Temporal things,” or “Ecclesiastical” are equally subversive to liberty. God is just as concerned for “Civil affairs” as he is ecclesiastical ones, and therefore, “he would have the same reformation made in the Commonwealth, that he would have made in the Church.” Moreover, “God has not so modelled the Government of the World” to require “any Civil Community to submit to the Cruelties of Tyrants,” while leaving the “Church at liberty to free themselves from Slavery and Tyranny.”¹⁷⁷

Hebrew Commonwealth: A Divinely Ordained Model for a Reformed Commonwealth – 1 Samuel 8:1-22

Milton read Israel’s request for a king in 1 Samuel 8 as signalling their abandonment of a divinely ordained commonwealth and rejection of God as their supreme sovereign. By illustrating the disastrous civil choice of Israel, Milton claimed God was summoning England

¹⁶⁸ Milton, *De Doctrina*, CPW, vol. 6, 532.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 536-537.

¹⁷⁰ Milton, *The tenure of kings and magistrates*, 15.

¹⁷¹ Milton, *Pro populo anglicano defensio* (London, 1651) is part of Milton’s Latin prose corpus, and this quote is from the 1695 English translation *A defence of the people of England*, 15. I am employing this translation throughout.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 75-76.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 52.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 84-85.

“to liberty and the flourishing deeds of a reformed Common-wealth.” He would bless Israel if they rejected kinship and established Him as “supreme governor” in the likeness of His “ancient government.”¹⁷⁸ The exemplar political pattern which Israel offers England is not, as the Royalists would contend, their choice of a king. Rather, it is their pre-monarchic commonwealth with God as King.

Milton also accuses the Royalist Matthew Griffith of “grosly misapplying” Samuel’s warning in 1 Samuel 8:7, “which were not spoken to any who had *resisted or rejected* a King, but to them who much against the will of God had fought a King, and rejected a Commonwealth, wherein they might have lived happily under the Reign of God only, thir King.”¹⁷⁹ Griffith even interpreted Gideon’s rule in Judges 7:20 “*which couples the sword of the Lord and Gideon,*” as a political model of kingship. Milton, already irritated with Griffith’s exegesis of 1 Samuel 8 because it is “abus’d and most impertinently cited,” claims he did not extend his interpretation of Gideon’s leadership role far enough to cover verses 22 and 23, which clearly states that neither Gideon nor his son would rule over Israel. Instead, Gideon was a “worthy heroic deliverer of his Country” who “thought it best governd, if the Lord governd it in that form of a free Commonwealth, which they then enioyd without a single person.”¹⁸⁰

Limited Submission and Lawful Civil Ends – Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13

Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-16 were commonly referenced as New Testament political texts in the seventeenth century, and Milton’s reading seems to represent the standard republican position – they were not commands of unconditional and categorical obedience to magistrates. Rather, these passages demonstrated limited submission, lawful governance, and even civil choice of magistrates.

Milton augments his Old Testament arguments against unlimited authority of kings with his political readings of these passages. He insists that Peter’s command of submission to magistrates and human ordinances is conditional and to be demonstrated towards magistrates whose governance represents “the punishment of evil-doers, and the encouragement of them that doe well.” Verse 16 further qualifies such submission; that it must be “*as free men*” only.¹⁸¹

According to Milton, Peter emphasised the human role in choosing and constituting magistrates and civil forms, while Paul highlighted the ultimate origin of civil power as divinely ordained (*jure divino*). Milton concedes that Paul’s statement in Romans 13:1, that “*there is no power but God,*” seems to conflict with “*Peter* who calls the same authority an Ordinance of man.” He explains that such a power to command relates only to those who are “*Lawfull and just,*” and “*not a terror to the good but to the evil.*” If any magistrate administers his office to the contrary, he is not “*of God, but of the Devil, and by consequence to bee resisted.*” If kings or magistrates abuse that trust, the people can “*dispose of it by any alteration, as they shall judge most conducing to the public good.*”¹⁸² Milton even resorts to Jewish case histories to illustrate that “*this custom of tyrant killing was not unusual*” to support civil dethronements.¹⁸³ In the final analysis, man is only obliged to obey rulers whose power is divinely ordained, which is demonstrated by their punishment of wickedness and praise of righteousness.

The Political Language of Gentilism: Monarchy as Heathenish Rule – Matthew 20:20-28

Milton would add to this scriptural political corpus his unique civil reading of Matthew 20:20-28, which depicts Christ admonishing his disciples against a rulership reminiscent of the Gentiles. This is Milton’s most forceful use of a New Testament text for endorsing and articulating a free commonwealth form embodying a standing senate of servant leadership. He consistently read from it a civil-servant motif and at times, he combined it with allusions to, and partial quotations from, Deuteronomy 17 and 1 Samuel 8. Interestingly, he intentionally deviates from the Authorised Version (AV) to stress his political use of the passage. His reading here militates against absolute authority in government, the institutional expression of which denies the legitimacy of an English king and House of Lords.

Matthew 20 provided Milton with the political language of *gentilism*, or tyrannical heathenish rule, to reinforce his denunciation of monarchy already inferred from the Old Testament. Contextually, this passage relates Christ’s response to the request of the mother of the sons of Zebedee that they be seated with Him in his kingdom. Milton read Christ’s response as excluding forever civil human lordship, especially kingship, equating it with that domination, tyranny, and political slavery so characteristic among the Gentiles. Milton’s multiple warnings against the “*gentilising*” effects of

¹⁷⁸ Milton, *The tenure of kings and magistrates*, 41.

¹⁷⁹ Milton, *Brief notes upon a later sermon titl’d the fear of God and the king* (London, 1660), 6.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 17.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 18, 19.

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 20.

kingship, stressed four times in his second edition of *readie and easie*, is also given prominent attention by his adversaries who charged him with rendering civilly a passage they claimed was intended for faith alone. Their focus also attests to its political importance in Milton's constitutional proposals.

To stress Milton's use of this text, and the liberties he took in altering its language to press his point of "gentilism," his larger quotations are inserted. The Matthew text is first found in *The tenure of kings and magistrates*, where Milton clarifies Christ's perpetual proscription against exercising gentile-like lordship, or tyrannical rule:

Wee may pass therefore hence to Christian times. And first our Saviour himself, how much he favoured Tyrants, and how much intended they should be found or honoured among Christians, declares his mind not obscurely; accounting thir absolute authority no better than Gentillim, yea though they flourish'd it over with the splendid name of Benefactors; charging those that would be his Disciples to usurp no such dominion; but that they who were to bee of most autoritie among them, should esteem themselves Ministers and Servants to the public. Matt. 20:25. *The Princes of the Gentiles exercise Lordship over them*, and Mark 10:42. *They that seem to rule*, saith he, either slighting or accounting them no lawful rulers, *but yee shall not be so, but the greatest among you shall be your Servant.*¹⁸⁴

Milton departs from the AV in his resort to the terms "Princes" as opposed to rulers, "Lordship" as opposed to dominion, and "Servant" instead of "minister," indicating his personal translation from the Greek Text. What is clear is that he read the text as a civil prescription, and not an ecclesiastical one, the reasons for which he relates in *The readie and easie way*.

Milton resorts again to the Zebedee narrative in his *A defence of the people of England*, and extends his political analysis to include Christ's prescription of a "form of Civil Government" among his disciples – he categorically maintained that "absolute Lordship and Christianity are inconsistent." He combines Christ's admonition against "gentilism" with the Israelites' settlement upon a king in 1 Samuel 8, a similar political combination found in *The readie and easie*. Milton understood Christ's warning as epitomising the Jewish experience of "gentile" like tyranny. "Our Saviour, lest Christians should desire a King, such a one at least, as might Rule as, he says, the Princes of the *Gentiles* did, prevents them with an Injunction to the contrary; *but it*

shall not be so among you." Milton concludes, "What can be said plainer than this? That stately, imperious Sway and Dominion that Kings use to exercise, shall not be amongst you." In this regard, "Christians either must have no King at all, or if they have, that King must be the People's Servant."¹⁸⁵ The sort of "gentile" king the Jews demanded was no different than the sort of gentile princes Christ admonished against. Christ's directive against establishing a rule reminiscent of the "*Princes of the Gentiles*" represents a condensed summary of Israel's destructive experience in desiring a king, which God reluctantly consented to. The continuity of commands regarding civil rule from the Father and the Son also seemed politically authoritative to Milton.

The Matthew passage is also found in *De Doctrina Christiana*, under Milton's discussion "Of Public Duties Towards Our Neighbour" and the nature and form of Christian government. Again, Milton uses terms of authority other than the AV, and is strikingly colloquial in his paraphrasing.¹⁸⁶

The readie and easie way to establish a free commonwealth (1660): Political Gentilism versus a Perpetual Senate of Servant Leadership

Milton's more systematic constitutional proposals of 1659/1660 must be contextualised within the fast paced events of the Interregnum's finale. His first three, *A Letter to a Friend* (October 1659), *Proposalls of Certain Expedients* (November 1659), and *A Letter to Monck* (March-April 1660), are considerably shorter than his two editions of *The readie and easie way to establish a free commonwealth* (1659, 1660), and represent distillations of his constitutional views devoid of scriptural texts. Nevertheless, human-lordship is found nowhere in these three earlier Interregnum proposals, which contain the main features and larger outlines of his republican model commonwealth. Milton proposes that the Rump Parliament be re-crafted into a grand council, or senate, and in most instances, called to sit perpetually as his first preference. Subordinate bodies and local councils were delineated to deal with local judicial matters while electors were to adhere to liberty of conscience in their choice of magistrates, all the while denying a king and House of Lords as a constitutional option. Milton's republican model was somewhat federal in nature; the perpetual senate he envisioned was unicameral with specific powers, along with a standing council, and subordinate local judicial bodies.

¹⁸⁴ Milton, *The tenure of kings and magistrates*, 23-24.

¹⁸⁵ Milton, *A defence of the people of England*, 58-59.

¹⁸⁶ Milton, *De Doctrina*, CPW, vol. 6, 795.

The second edition of *The readie and easie way* (1660) contains Milton's most extensive treatment of "gentilism." He notes on the title page that this edition is both revised and augmented, and in the text, "especially that part which argues for a perpetual Senat."¹⁸⁷ That augmentation includes a use of Matthew 20 not found in the first edition.

Gentilism of Monarchy and House of Lords versus Servant Leadership in a Perpetual Senate

Milton's first instance of civil "gentilism" is found without any changes in both editions, juxtaposed with England's impending return to kingship, and a reminder of God's displeasure over Israel's rejection of its divine commonwealth. He reminds his readers that the "wisest men in all ages" have perceived "a free Commonwealth" as "the noblest, the manliest, the equallest, the justest government, the most agreeable to all due libertie and proportiond equalitie, both human, civil, and Christian, most cherishing to vertue and true religion." He qualifies these descriptives by claiming that a commonwealth, "with greatest probabilitie," was "planely commended, or rather enjoind by our Saviour himself, to all Christians," and "not without remarkable disallowance, and the brand of *gentilism* upon kingship." Milton reiterates that "God in much displeasure gave a king to the *Israelites*, and imputed it a sin to them that they sought one: but *Christ* apparently forbids his disciples to admitt of any such heathenish government."¹⁸⁸ Milton then alters the AV translation of the Matthew text to match his admonition against kingship:

The kings of the gentiles, saith he, exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authoritie upon them, are call'd benefactors: but ye shall not be so; but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger; and he that is chief, as he that serveth."¹⁸⁹

It is only here that Milton inserts "kings" instead of rulers or princes of the gentiles. He continues to use his preferred reading of "lordship" as opposed to the AV's rendering of dominion, though he also adds "authoritie." He even alters the AV's minister, not with the noun servant, but with the verb "serveth." Milton was probably motivated to translate the Greek terms these ways to impress upon his readers the impending dangers inherent in a return to monarchy, and it is only

here that he explains how he reasoned his civil-servant theme.

That Christ is speaking "of civil government," states Milton, "is manifest by the former part of the comparison, which infers the other part to be alwaies in the same kinde." Milton seems to mean that "*the kings of the gentiles*," which "*exercise lordship*," represent the former civil part of the comparison, which directs the character of the latter part, and implies that "*greatest*" and "*chief*" are also civil roles, but whose function it is to serve. Christ then delivered a civil maxim; that "government" which "comes neerer to this precept of Christ," is a "free Commonwealth." Milton poignantly contrasts the nature of a commonwealth with a monarchy by highlighting the characteristics of servant leadership found in the Matthew text, which only a commonwealth embraces, and which a monarchy, by its nature, rejects. "They who are greatest, are perpetual servants and drudges to the public at thir own cost and charges, neglect thir own affairs; yet are not elevated above their brethren." These are qualities far removed from kings, who "must be ador'd like a Demigod." Milton augments the nature of their service as "perpetual," used only here, to endorse his standing senate, to counter the common pleas for successive Parliaments. He amplifies such qualities further as selfless and sacrificial in contrast with the idolatrous demands of self-absorbed kings.¹⁹⁰

Such service harmonises well with the injunction against kings in Deuteronomy 17 to not exalt themselves above the ruled, but which these sons of Zebedee were attempting in Christ's kingdom.¹⁹¹ Milton employs a clipped version of the Deuteronomy passage to enforce his comparison of God's displeasure over Israel's desire for a king, or "heathenish government," with Christ's proscription of such. He also refers to a commonwealth as a "self-governing democracie" embodying "the joint providence and counsel of many industrious equals,"¹⁹² and in support of a senate body. Milton's combined assessment of the prohibitions against this status of civil exaltation, which he read from Deuteronomy 17 and Matthew 20, coupled with his sense of their normative force, since both find their authority as divine commands, seems to illumine his preference for a commonwealth without human lordship, and a perpetual senate of civil servants.

Milton's second and third references to the Matthew text are found in both editions, clipped, and related again to the Deuteronomy 17 text in regards to kingship. Milton stands amazed as to "how any man

¹⁸⁷ Milton, *The readie and easie way to establish a free commonwealth*, Second Edition (London, 1660), 5.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 25-26

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 26-27.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 27-28.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*, 35.

who hath the true principles of justice and religion in him, can presume or take upon him to be a king and lord over his brethren." That a "Christian" king, "can assume such extraordinarie honour and worship to himself," contradicts "the kingdom of Christ our common King and Lord" who "is hid to this world, and such *gentilish* imitation forbid in express words by himself to all his disciples."¹⁹³ Protestantism proclaims that Christ governs his church from heaven, and since he left no instructions for a "vicegerent of his power," how, asks Milton, is it possible that a "Christian-man derive his kingship from Christ," who did not even leave "the least shaddow of a command for any such vicegerence from him in the State"? Rather, Christ "expressly declar'd, that such regal dominion is from the gentiles, not from him, and hath strictly charg'd us, not to imitate them therein."¹⁹⁴ Only here does Milton employ "regal" as opposed to the AV's term "dominion," in order to disassociate monarchy from Christ. Not only does Christ declare against kingship, it is impossible to equate a kingly government with his kingdom; He alone stands as both King and Lord.

Perpetual Senate and Restricted Franchise

Milton extends his application of the Deuteronomy and Matthew passages to election guidelines governing the choice of members to this new and free Parliament. The people were to elect "Knights and Burgesses able men, and according to the just and necessarie qualifications . . . men not addicted to a single person or house of lords."¹⁹⁵ The language here of "men not addicted" is reminiscent of Paul's instruction to Timothy in 1 Timothy 3:8 regarding the qualifications of church Deacons, that they were to avoid "indulging in much wine." Milton does not employ the Exodus 18 text relative to Jethro's advice when discussing the franchise.

Milton explains that should the country proceed with such an election process, "the work is don; at least the foundation firmly laid of a free Commonwealth, and good part also erected of the main structure."¹⁹⁶ This foundation is a "Grand Council," or perpetual senate, where "the soverantie, not transferred, but delegated only, and as it were deposited reside." Its jurisdiction encompasses the greater powers of national concern with the authority to "elect, . . . out of their own number and others, a Council of State."¹⁹⁷ Unlike successive Parliaments, a standing council would be

prompt and swift to confront all occasions with skilful consistency. Since "the ship of the Commonwealth is alwaies under sail; they sit at the stern; and if they steare well, what need is ther to change them; it being rather dangerous."¹⁹⁸

Milton now targets Harrington's proposal. He fails to understand the benefits of "successive and transitorie Parliaments," since they simply "unsettle . . . free government." He reminds his readers that some have emphasised that "long continuance of power may corrupt sincerest men," and proposed, "that annually (or if the space be longer, so much perhaps the better) the third part of Senators may go out according to the precedence of thir election, . . . and this they call *partial rotation*."¹⁹⁹ Milton would prefer "that this wheel or partial wheel in the State, . . . might be avoided; as having too much affinitie with the wheel of fortune," and that such rotation will only deplete the Senate of "the best and ablest," while filling the ranks with the "raw" and "unexperienc'd."²⁰⁰

To augment his discussion further on the necessity of a perpetual senate, he reminds his readers of the stabilising role senates with life tenure play in commonwealths, and then classifies his list of historical examples beginning with the Jewish Sanhedrin and Moses.²⁰¹

Milton considered the life tenure of members of the Sanhedrin as a viable political principle, unlike Harrington, who determined that rotation was in the public interest. Milton warns against Harrington's scheme of an "annual rotation of a Senat to consist of three hundred," and "another popular assembly upward of a thousand." It will be too "unweildie with thir own bulk, unable in so great a number to mature thir consultations as they ought."²⁰² In contrast, Milton proclaims that his proposal is "plane, easie and open before us; without intricacies, without the introducement of new or obsolete forms, or terms, or exotic models." Neither will his proposal require the "circumscription of mens lands and properties," since in his "Commonwealth, temporal and spiritual lords remov'd, no man or number of men can attain to such wealth or vast possession, as will need the hedge of an Agrarian law."²⁰³

Milton's final use of the Matthew text is instanced in combination with 1 Samuel 8 and framed prophetically

¹⁹³ Ibid., 38-39.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., 39-40.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 43.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., 43-44.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., 44-45.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 46.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., 47, 48.

²⁰⁰ Ibid., 49-50.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 51-52.

²⁰² Ibid., 57-58.

²⁰³ Ibid., 65-66.

after Samuel's warnings against monarchy. It is only found in the second edition. He seems to have placed himself in a prophetic posture modelled after Samuel given his itemised list of disconcerting particulars the return of kingship would entail.²⁰⁴ He explains that England's retreat to Monarchy would be a sign of rebellion against God, like "the gentilizing *Israelites*; who though they were governd in a Commonwealth of God's own ordaining, he only thir king, they his peculiar people, yet affecting rather to resemble heathen, . . . clamour'd for a king." Just as Samuel warned of God's disregard for Israel's outcry against their chosen king, so too England, once delivered, will return to the same impending slavery and captivity previously experienced under the Stuarts, hence paralleling Israel's political tragedy.²⁰⁵

Subordinate Judicatures

Milton augments his commonwealth with local courts as institutional replacements for the House of Lords. It is difficult to determine if he derived these in any way from the judicatures of Israel, which were authorised to solve local disputes. His discussion of these local authorities is in the context of his address over the potential "mistrust" of the permanent nature of this new Senate. In this regard, Milton recommends that each county be transformed into a "subordinate Commonalitie or Commonwealth," with one designated "chief town or more" and from "where the nobilitie and chief gentry . . . , may bear part in the government, make thir own judicial laws, or use these that are, and execute them by thir own elected judicatures and judges without appeal, in all things of civil government between man and man." Laws will be "executed fully and finally in thir own counties and precincts," with "fewer laws to expect or fear from the supreme autoritie."²⁰⁶

Milton's description of his civil model of a combined perpetual senate and local judicatures is federal in nature, or "many Commonwealths under one united and entrusted Sovrantie."²⁰⁷

Concluding Comments

James Harrington and John Milton are complex political figures who looked to different aspects of the Bible to support their models. What is common to both is a radical restructuring of England's constitution devoid of king and House of Lords, or any remnants of monarchical elements.

The Hebrew Commonwealth is the heart of Harrington's republican model, and Oceana represents his attempt to "write" out of Israel what can be reasoned from nature. For Harrington, *Grace* confirms *Nature*.

Israel's contribution is found in her popular division of the land of Canaan with its family allotments secured through the Jubilee Land Law. Since the divine division of land allocations held largely with the people and then secured by the agrarian, Harrington concluded that God ordained and fixed a popular government in Israel until the establishment of monarchy. He believed that Scripture confirmed the political function of an agrarian, and considered the example of God's division of Canaan to secure a popular government as superior to the other two methods of dominion he discovered. He then incorporated Israel's agrarian land law into Oceana as a political foundation, or fundamental law. As God established the Jubilee Land Law to preserve its popular balance, and hence popular government, so too Oceana established its agrarian. He was after the law's purpose, which was the same in both commonwealths—the preservation of the popular balance.

Harrington's explanation of the disintegration of Israel's orders reveals his republican readings of 1 Samuel 8:6-7 and Deuteronomy 17:14-20. Not only did the Mosaic Law limit Israel's kings, but that original dynamic of proposition and result turned on God's kingship and the people's consent to covenant with Him as their ruler.

The phrase "writing out of," and terms such as "parallel" and "authority," identify Harrington's political use of the Hebrew Commonwealth as paradigmatic. In this regard, he models Oceana after Israel by recognising and extending her "authority" as opposed to her "power." All these political points of contact seem to suggest that Israel and Oceana were commonwealth correspondents, whereby the authority of Israel is found throughout the fundamental laws, framing, and superstructures of Oceana. Oceana's parallels with Israel include the popular nature of their government, their agrarian, and their rotation in the congregation.

Milton's self-identification as an advocate and defender of the cause of Christian liberty, in steady opposition to slavish tyranny in its civil and religious expressions, pervades his prose, represents his prominent core value, and lies at the heart of his republican model. This indefatigable and all-consuming pursuit most certainly influenced his scriptural search for constitutional principles which expressed and protected its dynamic. A free commonwealth reflects this priority of Christian liberty.

Milton approached the Scriptures as a serious grammatical-historical exegete. Despite man's fallenness, there remained within all men remnants of the divine

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 67-84.

²⁰⁵ Ibid., 76-77.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., 94-95.

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 100.

image, and therefore, even the heathen could discern and declare God's truth. *Grace* can restore *Nature* to its God-ordained place.

Milton prioritised the Gospel over the Mosaic Judicials and sought to extend the benefits of church reformation to civil government, and hence, institutional limitations on civil magistrates. The Judicials combined the ecclesiastical with the civil, which the Gospel sundered, explaining why he never looked to the old priestly and Levitical pattern for England's civil model. Nevertheless, the Gospel dispensation never removed the prominence of the Law's moral authority, which still maintained jurisdiction over men. It now operated as an internal regulator of conscience as opposed to a legislative sword wielded by magistrates. The Gospel dispensation also elevated regenerate man's faculties to approximate God's more perfect pattern, transformed him from a slave to a son, and sensitised him to the nature of true Christian liberty. Milton's proposal of restricted elections and governing qualifications is more easily understood in light of this; those most acquainted with Christian liberty are its best keepers!

The significant political features of Milton's model commonwealth are a unicameral federated republic with a standing senate, local judicatures, and a limited political franchise. These features are linked to his political reading of biblical texts directing attention back to God's divinely ordained commonwealth and Christ's command against gentile lordship. Milton understood Deuteronomy 17:14-18, 1 Samuel 8:10-19, and Matthew 20:25-28 as divine civil commands and warnings emanating from both the Father and the Son, and hence continuous and mutually supportive. For lawful rule to proceed, and liberty to prevail, England's civil settlement must be divested of any remnants of lordship or absolute human authority. Milton remained loyal to these political readings through the successive Interregnum administrations, contradicting common assertions that he was a second-rate political theorist, or that he spun them out unreflectively in moments of civil crises.

Milton's readings of Deuteronomy 17 and 1 Samuel 18, combined with his understanding of Gospel liberty, can also be summarised as anti-monarchy and anti-lordship, popular sovereignty and the liberty of civil choice, and

the lordship of God as England's only governor and king. His unique civil reading of Matthew 20:25-28 as a warning against the "gentilizing" effect of kingship represents his most prominent New Testament political text for establishing a free commonwealth form incorporating a perpetual senate of servant leadership devoid of king and House of Lords. Milton manipulated his translation of this passage in *The readie and easie way* to enforce the impending threat of regal tyranny in contrast to the liberty-serving leadership of a perpetual senate. His powerful political combinations of the Matthew text with Deuteronomy 17 and 1 Samuel 8 enforced his emphasis upon God's dissatisfaction of Israel's choice of "heathenish government," which embodied a king as lord and tyrant. Milton stressed that Israel's civil choice of a king was ruinous, and an example Christ instructed his disciples to avoid, not imitate; a radical contradiction of the political position of his royalist contenders.

Milton's understanding of Romans 13:1-5 and 1 Peter 13:13-16 clarify his view of the divine origin and purpose of civil government, as well as its lawful use. Though he never employs them textually in his model, they represent a pervasive undercurrent of civil limitation.

Finally, Milton did not construe contemporary civil exemplars from Jewish magistrates. Instead, he extracted the great divinely ordained framework of the Hebrew Commonwealth while embracing the Gospel's jurisdictional distinctions between church and state. The exact nature of this pattern might be inferred from his constant references to God ordaining a commonwealth for the Jews, acting as their supreme magistrate and governor, and without any human magistrate competing or acquiring a civil capacity equal to His own. The most relevant political principle to be institutionalised in England was God's sovereignty and absolute lordship. Since the Hebrew Commonwealth also contained the Jewish Sanhedrin which seemed to sit perpetually, Milton may have had this in mind when considering the perpetual nature of his own senate. It still remains to be seen if the local dimension of his form was extracted at all from Israel's court system.

Fifth Monarchists: Sainly Rule for a Godly Commonwealth

That which was spoken enow [was] concerning the conjunction that is between Antichrist, or that mystery of iniquity in the world carried on by men that call themselves the church, thatd certainly it is with the conjunction of men in places of power or authority in the world, with kings and great men. And truly my thoughts were much upon it this night, and it appears to me very clearly from that which God hath set down in his word in the Book of the Revelations—. . . . It is said in the Revelation, that the kings of the earth should give up their power unto the Beast, and the kings of the earth have given up their power to the Pope. . . . Truly I could bring it to this present kingdom wherein we are.

Lieutenant-Colonel William Goffe, the Putney Debates, 1647.²⁰⁸

The most radical and unique group of political thinkers this study incorporates is the millennial sect known as the Fifth Monarchy men. Their constitutional proposals, presented in a few strategic platforms timed in response to key political events, are oftentimes overshadowed by their aggressive rhetoric and failed armed resistance against Cromwell's second Protectorate (1656-58) and the restored Stuart Monarchy (1660). Interestingly, some of the movement's leaders had been officers in Cromwell's New Model Army.

The insurrectionary character of Fifth Monarchism was found in those fringe extremists inspired by a millennial theology wrapped in a radical apocalypticism. They read from Daniel 7 and Revelation 20 a program of action to forcibly install Christ's outward Fifth Kingdom, or Monarchy, prophesied to rise from the destruction of the Beast and his Fourth Kingdom. The movement was considerably theocratic in nature and resulted in unique political and legal reform proposals which found an institutional expression in the short-lived 'Barebone's Parliament.' Sometimes called the Nominated Assembly, or Assembly of Saints/Elders of Christ's earthly representatives, it was established, in the minds of some of its members, to usher in Christ's millennial rule. Those engrossed in the fervour of millennial ecstasy considered the time of Christ's return as King and Ruler, imminent, and therefore, the political window for reform time-sensitive and fleeting. Nevertheless, Barebone's limited and disappointing

tenure of five months (July 4 - December 12, 1653) never produced the reforms it so desperately sought.

Many Interregnum political proposals were presented in response to Cromwell's politics and Protectorates, and the Fifth Monarchy men's perspective of Cromwell altered with their reinterpretation of the signs of the times. From the dissolution of the Rump Parliament on April 20, 1653 and commencement of Barebone's on July 4, Cromwell was lauded as the 'nursing father,' and the 'new Moses.' Numerous biblical parallels were presented to demonstrate how God chose him as His instrument to lead Britain into the promised land of godly reform and establish the New Jerusalem. This of course is not to suggest that Cromwell adopted such descriptions or role, but when the Assembly of the Saints resigned on December 12 of that year, with Cromwell simultaneously establishing the First Protectorate with its new constitution, the Instrument of Government, he was ridiculed as being the 'antichrist,' 'the little boastful horn,' and the 'Beast' of Revelation. He took notice of these radical accusations which soon turned militant. Fifth Monarchists claimed that since he ruled like a 'single person' in a government established apart from the saints, the Protectorate was at war with them in its service to antichrist, and therefore, to be disobeyed. Some Fifth Monarchy men sought to overthrow Cromwell's Protectorate by force, as depicted in the famous uprising of April 9, 1657 led by Thomas Venner who, along with a few others, was imprisoned. Not long after his release, he led another uprising of Fifth Monarchy men and members of his Swan Valley Congregation against Charles II on January 6 - 9, 1661. Twenty soldiers were killed along with another twenty civilians. Venner and twelve others were sentenced to death on January 19, 1661.

We should not be surprised at such exaggerated caricatures and claims not uncommon to radicals who consider their role as salvific, and themselves endowed with a messianic morale for some eschatological agenda. Many scholars though have unnecessarily written off the entire Fifth Monarchy movement as inane and bizarre given the radical and militant activities of its more high profile millennial visionaries. Bernard Capp, the leading scholar on the Fifth Monarchy movement, noted that "millenarianism," of the Fifth Monarchy type, "had little to offer to future political and intellectual trends," and the "movement is still brushed aside as an interlude of insanity. . . . The ridicule of the Fifth Monarchists by many historians stems from an assumption that they

²⁰⁸Woodhouse, ed., *Puritanism and Liberty Being the Army Debates* (1647-9), 39-40.

were an irrational movement, beyond the pale of analysis.”²⁰⁹

Not all Fifth Monarchists were militant, political zealots. There existed then as now theological disagreements over the exact nature and occurrence of Christ’s millennial rule. More muted strains of millennialism were hardly uncommon to the seventeenth century on both sides of the Atlantic, as well as among sixteenth-century continental reformers. Differences were not only constitutional, that is, the sort of civil establishment consistent with saintly rule, but somewhat methodological too, especially in regards to the nature of the Fifth Kingdom’s commencement; would it occur through divine providence alone, or was a more natural, human revolutionary role to facilitate God’s Kingdom plan?

Who were some of the more representative Fifth Monarchist figures? Capp offers an excellent Biographical Appendix in *The Fifth Monarchy Men* from which this very, very short list is drawn.²¹⁰ The works profiled here are from William Aspinwall (1605-1662), a Massachusetts Bay settler, who was forced from the colony because of his antinomian views, and who was a Minister in Ireland; Christopher Feake (1612-1683), a very active personality in the movement, Cambridge educated and Minister at Hertford, then Christ Church, Newgate, and lecturer at St. Anne’s Blackfriars; John Canne (1590-1667), a pastor of an English Separatist Congregation at Amsterdam from 1630-47, and prolific Fifth Monarchist writer from 1653-59; William Medley (1654-1683), part of a Fifth Monarchy uprising known as Venner’s Plot (1657); John Rogers (1627-1670), Cambridge educated, Minister in London, Essex, Dublin, lecturer at St. Thomas Apostle’s, London, and Army Chaplain, who fled to the Netherlands; John Spittlehouse (1643-1659), member of the Army, who published numerous Fifth Monarchy tracts from 1650-1656, and John Tillinghast (1604-1655), Cambridge educated and Independent Minister.

Each of the above figures, as well as numerous others, were influenced by the works of prominent millennial theologians and thinkers, such as the Elizabethan Puritan Thomas Brightman (1562-1607) with his *The Revelation of St. John* (London, 1616); Joseph Mede (1586-1639) and *The key of the Revelation*, 2nd edition (London, 1650) and *Clavis Apocalypses* (1627); John Archer (1629-1642) and *The personall reigne of Christ upon earth* (1641), and the Dutchman Johann Heinrich

Alsted (1588-1638) with *The beloved city* (London, 1643).²¹¹

Millennial and Eschatological Hermeneutics

Capp notes that “the origins of seventeenth-century millenarianism are to be found in the tensions created by the Reformation, and in the new exegesis of the prophetic texts which these tensions produced.”²¹² Hermeneutically, Fifth Monarchists emphasised a more millennial and eschatological hermeneutic by processing political events in relation to scriptural prophecy, and particularly, apocalyptic texts and end-time passages with a scrupulous exposition of Daniel 7 and Revelation 20. They sought earnestly after the one-thousand year reign of Christ and the inauguration of His Kingdom of Heaven upon earth and examined these Scriptures with expectancy. Civil government, administered by God’s earthly but saintly representatives, would act as the catalyst for ushering in this end-time order with Christ as the Fifth Monarch.

Daniel’s Vision of Four Monarchies and John’s Vision of the Apocalypse

Fifth Monarchists interpreted the books of Daniel and Revelation as depicting the ongoing battle between the forces of the Kingdom of Heaven and Hell. Daniel 7 provided them with the prophetic certainty of a Fifth Monarchy governed by Christ with His saints as co-regents, and Revelation 20 guaranteed the ultimate demise of the forces of Antichrist and the commencement of the millennium.

Daniel 7 relates a vision of Daniel which he received during the third year of Belshazzar’s reign, King of Babylon, depicting four imaginative-appearing beasts. The first three he envisioned were a man-like lion-creature with eagle’s wings, a bear with crushing teeth, and a leopard with wings and four heads. The fourth beast was the most striking and sensational, having four heads, iron teeth, claws of bronze, and ten horns from the midst of which sprang a very boastful little horn with eyes similar to a man’s. Daniel then beheld “thrones . . . and the Ancient of Days” which portrayed the splendour, dominion and judgment of God. The little horn is set apart by his boastful tirades, and with the fourth beast, “slain and its body destroyed and thrown into the blazing fire.” As the vision continued, “one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven” appeared, “approached the Ancient of Days” and “given authority, glory and sovereign power.” The

²⁰⁹Bernard Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-century English Millenarianism* (London: Faber, 1972), 15-16.

²¹⁰ See Capp’s Biographical Appendix of leading Fifth Monarchy men in, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*, pp. 239-269.

²¹¹ See Capp, “The Origins and Rise of Millenarianism to 1649,” Chapter 2 in *The Fifth Monarchy Men*.

²¹² Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*, 23.

“dominion” of the son of man “is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.”

Daniel received the interpretation of the vision, that the great beasts he foresaw represented “four kingdoms that will rise from the earth,” or four kings. Nevertheless, “the holy people of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever.” Daniel inquired more particularly into the nature of the fourth beast given its very ferocious and destructive appearance along with the “ten horns on its head and about the other horn that came up, before which three of them fell.” This was “the horn that looked more imposing than the others and that had eyes and a mouth that spoke boastfully.” It was also “waging war against the holy people and defeating them until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favour of the holy people of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom.” This “fourth beast is a fourth kingdom,” unique to all the others, as it “will devour the whole earth, trampling it down and crushing it.” “The ten horns” represent “ten kings who will come from this kingdom,” after which “another king will arise, different from the earlier ones,” and who “will subdue three kings.” This is the little horn, or a unique king who “will speak against the Most High and oppress his saints and try to change the set times and the laws.” With this, “the holy people will be delivered into his hand for a time, times and half a time.” Nevertheless, “the court will sit, and his power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever.” Once this last king and beast which represent this Fourth Kingdom are destroyed, “the sovereignty, power and greatness of all kingdoms under heaven will be handed over to the holy people of the Most High,” whose “kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.” Fifth Monarchists understood this kingdom to represent the Fifth Monarchy.

Revelation 20 describes John’s vision of the Devil, that “dragon,” thrown “into the Abyss” for one thousand years. He then foresaw “the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony about Jesus and because of the word of God”; those who “had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands.” They were resurrected and “reigned with Christ a thousand years.” Once the thousand years is complete, “Satan will be released from his prison” culminating in the great battle of Armageddon and the final judgment.

Core Political Doctrines of Fifth Monarchists

Fifth Monarchists were very systematic in teasing out political ideas from these divine visions to which they compared the fast-paced constitutional events of the Interregnum. Their pamphlet marginalia is laced with

Hebrew terms, history, British common law and Commonwealth decrees, Army Manifestos, speeches, the writings of the continental Reformers, and very rarely, classical Greek and Roman pagan writers. Their political ideas were not altogether unique, and like other theorists attempting to speak into the constitutional vacuum, they demanded legal reform, church reform, social reform, and of course civil reform. They’re distinguished first by their doctrine of the civil rule of the saints with the electoral franchise conducted through Church parliaments. Given this, they highlighted a civil-interventionist role of the church, and the saints as Christ’s representatives on earth—not the people’s representatives in Britain. They advanced the superiority of the Mosaic code over British Common Law; since Christ was the chief legislator and lawgiver, Moses’s judicials should replace Britain’s legal system, including her lawyers! They also demanded total reform of the clergy, including the system of tithes. Their foreign policy doctrine alarmed many; Christ’s judgment and hence millennial rule may have begun in Britain, but it was not isolated to just that nation. Britain’s international authority was to be enlarged, go global, and export Fifth Monarchy principles abroad to facilitate God’s judgment and hence millennial establishment, and topple tyrants in service to Antichrist and his Fourth Monarchy.

King Charles I: Boastful Horn in Service to the Fourth Beast

How did Fifth Monarchists understand the relationship between Daniel’s and John’s visions and the general role and structure of civil authority? There was considerable preoccupation with Daniel’s description and destruction of the Fourth Monarchy with its boastful king. As Louise Fargo Brown notes in *The Political Activities of the Baptists & Fifth Monarchy Men in England* (1912) that those knowledgeable of the “events in England between 1642 and 1650 cannot fail to be struck by the prevalence, among the leaders of the forces as well as among the rank and file, of the idea that they were fighting the battles of Christ, and preparing for his kingdom. Soldiers and preachers alike considered the Parliamentary victories as victories of Armageddon.”²¹³

William Aspinwall published a summary pamphlet in support of the Fifth Monarchy in 1653 entitled *A brief description of the fifth monarchy*. He begins with a survey of the Daniel passages and their relationship to the British civil wars and regicide, and then presents an excellent synopsis of the apocalyptic hermeneutics of the movement with typological links coordinating the

²¹³ Louise Fargo Brown, *The Political Activities of the Baptists & Fifth Monarchy Men in England* (Washington: American Historical Association, 1912), 14.

biblical with Britain's political events and civil institutions. Of especial importance is the interpretive junction between Charles I and that boastful little horn.

I Therefore, that there is such a thing as a fifth Monarchy to be expected in the world, is evident from *Daniels* vision, *Dan* 7. where he saw four Beasts, interpreted to be four Kings or Kingdomes, *v.* 17.23. or four sorts of Monarchy, and all of them arising out of the earth, or modelled & moulded by humane prudence. The last of which Beasts or Monarchies, is differenced from the other three former Monarchies, by the extent of it, and by a distribution of the ten hornes, or Kings that shall arise out of this Monarchy, *v.* 23, 24. And the last of those horns or Kings, is differenced from the rest of the horns, by the extent of his sovereignty over 3 Kingdoms, *v.* 8. 24. and by his fierce and arrogant persecution of the Saints, *v.* 25. and by a determinate extirpation of his Kingdom and Sovereignty, and the reason thereof, *v.* 9, 10, 11, 26. All of which was fulfilled in *Charls*, late King, or absolute sovereign of 3 kingdoms, a fierce & arrogant Tyrant & persecuter of the Saints, . . . ²¹⁴

Aspinwall continues, claiming that the late king's "dominion continued till the judgement was set," as "Parliament, and High Court of Justice, . . . slew the Beast, and utterly overthrew his dominion," doing so by an "Act made against Kingly power." "The Beast or chief Sovereign, was slain or beheaded," which included "the doom of the little horn, or sovereign of 3 Kingdoms." The late Charles I, King of three kingdoms, was the prophesied destined-to-destruction boastful, arrogant King.²¹⁵ Aspinwall expounds on each of the verses in Daniel 7 in *An explication and application of the seventh chapter of Daniel . . . wherein is briefly shewed the state and downfall of the four monarchies* (1653), and extracts sixteen characteristics of this little horn which correspond to the rule and therefore tyranny of Charles I.²¹⁶

John Canne offered a very detailed analysis of each of these horns in *A voice from the temple to the higher powers* (1653). "These ten horns," he claimed, were the "Romane Empire, dissolved into ten parts or Kingdoms," and coordinated his findings with Revelation 17. The

fourth kingdom was now in the process of being destroyed along with "the little horn, that is, the Antichristian State, and Kingdom likewise." Canne considered England to have been "the first of the ten horns," and where judgment began with "*The High Court of Justice . . . in the Year 1648*," the "throne of God" which tried Charles I. Other nations represented the various "horns" Daniel described who would, like Britain, erect similar tribunals of judgment upon their monarchs. As for the "little horn," Canne identified it as "the Antichristian State," or kingdom, which he calculated would end in the year 1660.²¹⁷

Fifth Monarchists tended to understand the first three kingdoms to represent Babylon, Medo-Persia, and Greece respectively, while the fourth symbolised Rome, the last to be overthrown, and synonymous with the Roman Catholic empire which the Stuart Monarchy served. The trial and beheading of the 'tyrant' Charles I, the boastful horn to some, who trampled the saints, was in the service of this last beast, and therefore, in the army of Antichrist, but now stripped of dominion; judgment began with the house of Britain and was expected to progress across the European continent. The Fifth Monarchy, with the millennial rule of Christ and His saints was now imminent. Unless the Rump Parliament was actively promoting and expediting Christ's millennial reign, by default, it too was serving the beast of the Fourth Monarchy, and must also be subdued. Fifth Monarchists do though diverge as to the identity of that last horn, and at times, in light of political events. John Tillinghast attempted to prove in *Knowledge of the time, or the resolution of the question, how long it shall be unto the end of wonders* (London, 1654), that it was not Charles I but the "Romish Antichrist."²¹⁸ Some considered it to be the Roman Papacy, while others focused upon William the Conqueror, and still others, equated it with Cromwell as Lord Protector!

²¹⁴ William Aspinwall, *A brief description of the fifth monarchy, or kingdome that shortly is to come into the world* (London, 1653), A2.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ William Aspinwall, *An explication and application of the seventh chapter of Daniel . . . wherein is briefly shewed the state and downfall of the four Monarchies* (London, March 20, 1653), 26-28.

²¹⁷ John Canne, *A voice from the temple to the higher powers* (London, June 13, 1653), 12, 14, 20. Not all agreed of course on the identity of this 'little horn.'

²¹⁸ John Tillinghast, *Knowledge of the time, or the resolution of the question, how long it shall be unto the end of wonders* (London, 1654). See 77-84.

Constitutional Reform Proposals of Fifth Monarchists

The following examination of Fifth Monarchy reform proposals is situated within the chronology of the execution of Charles I through critical Interregnum political events.

The Rump Parliament to its Dissolution on April 20, 1653

On December 6, 1649, the Army, under the command of Colonel Thomas Pride, purged the Long Parliament (1642-1649) of members reluctant or unwilling to try Charles I. This event, referred to as 'Pride's Purge,' resulted in the forced removal of 231 members, with 86 others grudgingly retreating. Many of those expelled were leading Presbyterians, and those members remaining were referred to as the Rump Parliament, and sometimes 'Rumpers.' From January 1649 to April 20, 1653, the Rump Parliament consisted of approximately 210 members, though possibly 60 to 70 were consistently about the business of legislation.²¹⁹ Subsequent to King Charles I execution on January 30, 1649, the Rump Parliament abolished the House of Lords and Monarchy on February 6 and 7 respectively, and created a Council of State on February 13 to administer critical executive functions. Fifth Monarchists began to petition the Rump for immediate constitutional reform towards establishing Christ's Kingdom, a role they perceived crucial to its sitting.

'Modelling a New Representative': Rule of the Godly through Church Parliaments

The first Fifth Monarchist platform was an anonymous collaboration titled *Certain quaeres humbly presented in way of petition* (1649), and directed to the Rump Parliament. The force of its model is an electoral franchise limited to the godly saints of gathered Independent and Presbyterian churches from whom parliamentary representatives would be chosen.

The authors were promoting the destruction of the remnants of the Fourth Monarchy and admonished against the "setting up of a meer natural and worldly Government, like that of Heathen Rome and Athens."²²⁰ Christ's Kingdom of Saints, drawn from the Church, is "external and visible," and represents the "fifth Kingdom or Monarchy," the "new Heavens and new Earth spoken of" in Hebrews 2:5. Christ's future, visible rule will be

"Monarchical," but until He returns, "Parliamentary" through His "Officers and the Churches Representatives." The Saints (Independents and Presbyterians alike) were to unify, organise, and choose delegates to elect "General Assemblies of Church-Parliaments" who would operate as "Christs Officers."²²¹ As for law reform, "the light of the Scriptures" is a "better Law" in contrast to "the dim light of nature."²²²

The Rump proved to be a rather reluctant body relative to implementing major reform, dissolving itself, or heeding advice on new modelling the next representative. The authority of Oliver Cromwell's presence after his victory at Worcester on September 3, 1651, provoked the Rump to debate the issue more productively, and on the 25, a Bill for dissolving itself to establish another was underway.²²³ Christopher Feake records that some Fifth Monarchists met twice with Cromwell immediately after his victory to hasten the need for godly parliamentary reform. The outcome was not favourable to their cause, and Feake notes in *A beam of light* (1659), that "the General had thus frustrated all our hopes."²²⁴ Cromwell was contending with divergent and contradictory reform ideas from various sects and religious groups.

Some Fifth Monarchists responded to the Rump's Bill on October 15 with an anonymous tract entitled *A model of a new representative* (1651), which, again, broached the issue of installing a new parliamentary body through a saintly electorate and membership. The Commons was encouraged to consider divine requirements for parliamentary members based upon a millennial perspective. God was advancing the "Government of the world into the hands of his Saints," not just Britain. Godly character requisites were paralleled with Moses, who, acting upon the advice of his father-in-law Jethro, encouraged the choice of rulers over designated numbers who were to be "of courage, fearing God, dealing truly, hating coveteousness." The Rump should "cast the honour of governing the Nation upon the heads of his Saints," and specifically, "upon the members of the Churches of God in the Nation." They alone should choose the next Parliament. While *Certain quaeres* singled out Independent and Presbyterian saints for the electoral and civil prerogative, *A model of a new*

²²¹ Ibid., 4, 6.

²²² Ibid., 8.

²²³ "House of Commons Journal, volume 7: 16 September 1651," *Journal of the House of Commons: volume 7: 1651-1660* (1802), pp. 18-19, 20.

²²⁴ Christopher Feake, *A beam of light, shining in the midst of much darkness and confusion* (London, 1659), 40.

²¹⁹ David L. Smith, *The Stuart Parliaments, 1603-1689* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 135, 136.

²²⁰ *Certain quaeres humbly presented in way of petition* (London, 1649), 3-4.

representative excluded Presbyterians, and of course Royalists.²²⁵

Another recommendation was a reconsideration of representative units. Two elected members of approved Churches would replace “Burgesses of small Towns and Corporations” as representatives in Parliament. John Goodwin’s church was specifically excluded, and in part, because “they are such high extollers of Reason.”²²⁶ This is just a small sampling of the movement’s difficulties in determining just ‘who’ a saint was.

Another anonymous Fifth Monarchy tract, *A cry for a right improvement of all our mercies*, (October 22, 1651), qualified the electoral franchise and parliamentary membership even further to restrict it to those loyal to the previous Parliament, Lords as well as Commons, including the current Commonwealth. These loyalists were to also be in “*Church Fellowship with some one or other Congregation, sound in fundamentals of Religion, . . . and holy and regular in their practices,*” and militarily engaged in, or financially supportive of, the war against the Scots in 1650.²²⁷

The Fifth Monarchy movement was gaining momentum, and began conducting a series of intense lectures and prayer meetings at Allhallows the Great and Blackfriars in June of 1652. Those gathered requested “that the *Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ* may be exalted speedily into these Nations, and also all in the earth,” and that all such hindrances be removed, such as passive Parliamentary reform. Not only should “all *Corrupt, Wicked, and ungodly Magistrates* might be removed, and put out of place and power,” and a “*Righteous generation of Rulers*” established, but “that the *Idle, Ignorant and scandalous Ministry* might be laid aside, and put out of their respective Parishes” as well.²²⁸ Church reform must accompany parliamentary reform; if the righteous are to rule the state, they must be firmly established in the gathered congregations.

The Rump was failing to pass legislation enabling the election of a new representative, and falling fast out of favour with Cromwell and his Army whose presence were now commonplace at Westminster. On January 6, 1653, the House proceeded to position a noted Fifth Monarchist and officer, Major-General Harrison, to take the leading role regarding “the Act touching an equal

Representative.”²²⁹ Interestingly, as Austin Woolrych notes, “Harrison took no notice of the Rump’s order, and seems to have done nothing at all about the bill,” suggesting that he may have “already lost all faith in elected parliaments, for he was soon to believe that government should be vested in a Sanhedrin of godly men, chosen solely by the saints.”²³⁰ The Army began pressuring Cromwell to dissolve Parliament, which made little progress on the substance of the Bill for a new representative. To the dismay of Fifth Monarchists, it extended the franchise to property owners on March 30, 1653, but on April 13, it added a religious test of leadership requiring “such as are Persons of known Integrity, fearing God, and not scandalous in their Conversation.”²³¹

Cromwell was now moving quickly. He urgently called for a postponement of elections entirely, and organised a meeting of the leading members of Parliament at Whitehall on April 19 to resolve the representative issue. He desired to dissolve Parliament, though Bulstrode Whitelocke, an MP and friend of Cromwell, noted that some in attendance, including himself, considered it dangerously unwise. Cromwell though, was ready with a proposal for the interim. “Forty persons, or about that number of parliament men and officers,” were to be “nominated by the parliament,” to administer all Commonwealth affairs until a new one met, while the present one was “to be forthwith dissolved.”²³² The meeting adjourned with the assumption that the settlement Bill being debated in Parliament would be sidelined. Incredibly, the Bill was debated the next day by an extraordinary number of attendees, which took Cromwell “totally by surprise.”²³³ Noteworthy historians are divided as to why subsequent events transpired contrary to that evening’s agreement.

Nominated Assembly or ‘Parliament of the Saints’: Barebone’s Parliament (July 4 – December 12, 1653)

Cromwell dissolved the Rump Parliament on April 20, 1653, and details of its dissolution are recorded in a few diaries of the time. Cromwell, feeling betrayed and angry at Parliament’s dawdling and delaying, summoned

²²⁵ *A model of a new representative, now under consideration* (London, October 15, 1651), 2, 3.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 3-4, 5.

²²⁷ *A cry for a right improvement of all our mercies, and all those works of wonder that God hath wrought among us: With some cautions touching the election of the (expected) new representative* (October 22, London), 9.

²²⁸ Feake, *A beam of light*, 41.

²²⁹ *Journal of the House of Commons: volume 7*: 6 January, 1653, 244.

²³⁰ Austin Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution, 1625-1660* (Oxford University Press, 2002), 527.

²³¹ *Journal of the House of Commons: volume 7*: 30 March, 1653, 273; 13 April, 277.

²³² Bulstrode Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs from the Beginnings of the Reign of Charles the First to the Happy Restoration of King Charles the Second*. New ed., vol. 4 (Oxford University Press, 1853), 4.

²³³ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, 529.

elements of the Army into the chamber, dismissed the members, and confiscated the Bill from the clerk before departing the House.²³⁴ Unfortunately, its subsequent disappearance makes it very difficult to determine its contents, and hence explain Cromwell's historic actions. The *Journal* does not record the dissolution, but an entry for April 19, 1653 states, "This Entry was expunged, by Order of Parliament, Jan. 7 1659."²³⁵ Wilbur Abbott, a noteworthy editor of the speeches and writings of Cromwell, explains that "yet with all the patient investigation which has been lavished on the incident, . . . No one now knows exactly what was in the bill which the General thrust under his cloak and carried away with him on that fateful day."²³⁶

Historians remain divided as to Cromwell's motives,²³⁷ but he and his officers were now forced to oversee the constitutional problems of managing the country's affairs without Parliament while making preparations for installing a new one. Fifth Monarchists perceived these events as providential, offered up more political advice, and hailed the formation of the Nominated Assembly, or Barebone's Parliament, which sat on July 4, 1653.

Cromwell the New Moses and Parliament the New Jewish Sanhedrin

Cromwell and his officers published a *Declaration* on April 22 to explain their decision to dissolve the Rump. It stated that the new government would consist of "persons of approved fidelity and honesty," so that "the fruits of a just and righteous reformation, so long prayed and wished for, will, by the blessing of God, be in due time obtained."²³⁸ They quickly established a thirteen-member Council of State on April 29 as a

temporary but functioning government with executive authority to superintend the affairs of the Commonwealth.

The Council debated how to model the next government, and one of two Fifth Monarchists among them, the previously mentioned Major-General Harrison, suggested that Parliament be composed of seventy men, "being the number of which the Jewish Sanhedrim consisted."²³⁹ Cromwell and his Council of Officers resolved to nominate and select the new assembly rather than summon it by way of a saintly electorate.

Fifth Monarchists were keen to address the new political situation as were many others. John Spittlehouse in *The army vindicated, in their late dissolution of the Parliament* (1653), now saw saints in the Army and claimed that "onely members of the Army and their adherents," were best suited to electing and sitting in the new representative.²⁴⁰ Though the churches were the Army's best advocates, the civil power rested with the Army alone. Spittlehouse recommended "that the Commission-Officers of the Army have the vote of election" with only "two Officers out of each Regiment" being necessary and "one out of each Garison." Cromwell, with an assembly of officers, would unseal the written ballots to determine the results. After twelve months a new election could occur or the first representative continued for another year. Not only would the Army benefit, but more importantly, "their Generals General, Jesus Christ," who is "the Captaine General of the Lords Host as to the subduing of all the Nations of the world."²⁴¹

John Rogers presented a broadside with constitutional advice a few days later to Cromwell, referring to him as "the great Deliverer of his People"; as God delivered Israel from Egypt, so Cromwell delivered Britain from the Rump. Britain's political transition also represented a reversal of Israel's. Israel progressed politically from God as their only "Governour" to "Generals, as Moses, Joshua, &c. with their Officers," then "Judges and Synedrions or Parliaments over them; and then Kings." Britain, on the other hand, was progressing "from Kings to Parliaments, from Parliaments to Generals" and eventually to "Governors as at the begining, Isa. 1.26. and till Christ come." Isaiah 1:26 established a primitive pattern of governing authority equated with saintly rule, while the choice of such saints, Rogers believed, fell to Cromwell as opposed to the church or Army. Cromwell, as God's general, had the strategic role of

²³⁴ *The Memoirs of Edmund Ludlow, Lieutenant-General of the Horse in the Army of the Commonwealth of England (1625-1672)*, ed., C. H. Firth, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894), 1: 353, 355.

²³⁵ *Journal of the House of Commons: volume 7*: 19 April, 1653, 280; 7 January, 1659, 805.

²³⁶ *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, With an Introduction, Notes and an Account of His Life, The Commonwealth, 1649-1653*, ed., Wilbur Cortez Abbott (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988), vol. 2, 647.

²³⁷ The two best authorities to consider here are Austin Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, 531-536 and Blair Worden, "The Army Apologias," 345-363, as well as his Conclusion, 364-384 in *The Rump Parliament* (Cambridge University Press, 1974). See also Worden's, "The Bill for a New Representative: The Dissolution of the Long Parliament, April 1653," *English Historical Review* 86, no. 340 (July 1971): 473-496.

²³⁸ "Declaration by the Lord General and the Council on the Dissolution of the Long Parliament," April 22, 1653 in *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution, 1625-1660*, ed., Samuel Gardiner, 3rd ed. rev. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906), 403.

²³⁹ *The memoirs of Edmund Ludlow*, 1: 358.

²⁴⁰ John Spittlehouse, *The army vindicated, in their late dissolution of the Parliament* (London, April 24, 1653), 6.

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 11, 13-14.

choosing these new righteous governors after the pattern of “Moses” who “did choose able men to be Rulers,” and Joshua whom God commanded to “Take you twelve men out of the People, one of a Tribe.”²⁴²

Rogers also suggested the Saints sit in “either a *Synedrin*, *Parliament* or *Council* of seventy, or else *one of a Countie*.” He preferred to model the representative after “The *Commonwealth* of *Israel*,” Britain’s “best pattern” given her “*three sorts of Courts*,” with an emphasis upon “the *Upper Court* (or *Synedrin*) which consisted of seventy *able (fit) men*, joyned with *Moses*, Numb. 11.16, 17.” Another possibility was to choose “one of a *County*, representing that *County*, as one of a *Tribe* did represent the *Tribe*” after Numbers 1:4. Nevertheless, the urgency of the moment might require that Cromwell choose “twelve *Worthies*” as “*Governors*, similar to “*Israels twelve Judges*.”

Cromwell was to be guided in his choice by the same character considerations as Moses and Joshua were. Representatives “must be *men fearing God*, *Nehem. 7.2*, *Exod. 18.21*, *lovers of Truth and Justice*, *Deut 16:18*, *hating bribes and covetousness*, *Deut 16:19*, *Exodus 28.21*, *not respecters of persons*, *Deut. 1.17* and *16.19*” and “*Wise . . . and Understanding*.” They were to avoid governing “as *Lords over Christ*, *Rev. 4.10.11*,” as only He has “*Jurisdiction over Churches and Consciences*.” Finally, “they must govern all for God,” and “not too much for man. *2 Chro 19.6*.” Once chosen, they were to be set apart for their office, just as Israel was, through prayer.

The Council of Officers debated this issue of a saintly membership. Major-General Harrison responded in kind to a letter of Colonel Jones on April 30, 1653 and noted that all agreed “to have in power, men of truth, fearing and loving our Lord, his people and Interest.” The problem, according to Harrison, was how to “gett such: *whether my Lord onelie* shall call them, or the Saints should choose them; very much sweetly said both waies.”²⁴³

Spittlehouse evidenced further the parallels between Israel’s and Britain’s representative history with *A warning-piece discharged* (1653). The title refers to Cromwell as “Moses, as he was their Deliverer, Judge, and General.” Britain should “look upon our present General, as the aforesaid Israelites did upon Moses. . . As the chief Ruler appointed by God over us.”²⁴⁴

²⁴²John Rogers, *To his excellency the Lord-General Cromwell. A few proposals, relating to civil government* (London, April 27, 1653).

²⁴³Major General Harrison to Colonel Jones, April 30, 1653 in Joseph Mayer, *Inedited Letters of Cromwell, Colonel Jones, Bradshaw and other Regicides* (Liverpool: T. Brakell, 1861), 52.

²⁴⁴John Spittlehouse, *A warning-piece discharged, or certain intelligence communicated to his excellencie the Lord General Cromwell* (London, May 19, 1653), 10.

Numerous Fifth Monarchy tracts poured in from the churches as well, which depicted Cromwell as God’s instrument in choosing the new assembly. He and his Council of Officers decided that the new assembly would consist of 140 God-fearing members nominated by them through a simple majority to sit for a definite single term—November 3, 1654—the date the Rump intended to dissolve itself. The Council of State approved those chosen, and Cromwell had signed all writs authorising their seating by June 11. Representative apportionment in England would now rest on a county scheme, and both Ireland and Wales received six members and Scotland five. There were possibly thirteen Fifth Monarchists among the new members, one of whom was Praise-God Barebone, and from whom Parliament received its name.²⁴⁵

The ‘Rule of the Saints’ for a Godly Commonwealth (July 4 - December 12, 1653)

Cromwell’s rather lengthy opening speech to the new assembly on July 4, referred to as “the supreme power,” was fraught with expectation for godly reform. He conveyed the sense that these new caretakers of the commonwealth were charged with a heavenly agenda. He reminded them of God’s providence in the cause of the Commonwealth, as well as the Rump’s singular success at perpetuating itself as opposed to reform, and therefore necessary to dissolve. He claims to have been impressed with two passages for this new body. His first text was Hosea 11:12: as “Judah yet ruleth with God, and is faithful with the Saints,” so too they were “called by God,” to “rule with Him, and for Him.” He then inspired them with 2 Samuel 21:3: “He that ruleth over men, . . . must be just, ruling in the fear of God.”²⁴⁶

It is intriguing to consider whether or not Cromwell indulged in Fifth Monarchy sentiments as some believe. He claimed in his speech “that *this* may be the door to usher in the Things that God has promised; which have been prophesied of; which he has set the hearts of his People to wait for and expect.” He went further: “Truly seeing things are thus, that you are at the edge of the Promises and Prophecies.”²⁴⁷ Cromwell clung to millenarian hopes as many did, but he probably didn’t perceive the sitting of Barebone’s as an ushering in of Christ’s millenarian rule. Woolrych, an authority on this very issue, doesn’t believe Cromwell entertained such Fifth Monarchy sympathies.

²⁴⁵ See Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, 539-540.

²⁴⁶ Oliver Cromwell, “Speech 1, The Little Parliament,” in *Oliver Cromwell’s Letters and Speeches Including the Supplement to the First Edition with Elucidations*. Ed., Thomas Carlyle, 2 vols. (New York: Harper & Brothers, Pubs., 1868), 2: 46.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 51-52.

Cromwell was saluting what he believed to be a glorious occasion, but one of perhaps many that would precede the full establishment of Christ's kingdom, in a future as yet beyond the calculation of man. . . . He expected the coming of the kingdom at a point in future time, as men reckon time; he hoped it might come soon; he dared to speculate that the calling of Barebone's Parliament might be a vital stage towards that realization.

... Nominated bodies were to play a strictly temporal role, and he never suggested that sainthood in itself should confer an implicit right to govern. It may be that in pitching his exhortation to Barebone's Parliament so high he was trying, consciously or unconsciously, to will it to compensate with good works for its dubious constitutional standing.²⁴⁸

Some members of Barebone's certainly possessed Fifth Monarchy assumptions, apparent in their July 12 *Declaration*. "The Dark black Clouds of the Night shall flie before the bright morning Star, and the shakings of heaven and Earth make way for the desire of all Nations," which is Christ. It conveyed a sense of imminence too, claiming "the time is near at hand; for we see the Clouds begin to scatter, and the Dark Shadows flie away; streams of Light appear, and the Day is surely dawned." The *Declaration* ends with the desire and expectation of Christ's "glorious coming, Who is King of kings, and Lord of lords," and the eventual "reign" of God.²⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the Fifth Monarchy element consisted of no more than thirteen members, with three of them playing an intense legislative role.²⁵⁰

John Spittlehouse referred to the new parliament as the "Assembly of Elders" and "heads over the people" with Cromwell as "Moses," locating his textual parallel in Exodus 18:25. He subtly invokes a foreign policy priority in his association between Cromwell and Moses too. Cromwell could avoid Moses's fate on "Mount-Nebo" if he prohibited a peace settlement with "any other Nation which the Lord hath a controversie with," because they're like "Gibeonites," and "designed to destruction." Spittlehouse hoped that God would reveal to Cromwell not only "the Land of Canaan," but lead him "into the Land of the Canaanites,"—to "Holland, France, and so to Rome it self," that he "may pluck up all Antichristian power whatsoever doth oppose Jesus Christ in the least."²⁵¹ Godly reform was to go global, as

this new Parliament represented Jesus and His Kingdom causes, not just Britain's.

John Rogers offered up a similar foreign policy initiative as Spittlehouse with his publication of *Sagrir Sagrir. Or doomes-day drawing nigh, with thunder and lightening to lawyers* on October 20, 1653. Rogers pronounced doom to various sectors of British society he perceived as engaging with the cause of Antichrist. He exclaims that if this new Parliament was to be "in obedience to Gods Word," then "we must not onely endeavor to free our selves, but our neighbors from *Tyranny* and *Oppression*," a foreign policy expressive of the command to "*Love thy neighbour as thy self*." Britain was "bound by the *Law of God* . . . to aid the *Subjects* of other *Princes*, that are either persecuted for *true Religion*, or oppressed under *Tyranny*," and to secure the liberty of other persecuted "*Protestants in France and Germany*" "*Well wo be to us, if we help not the Lord. Judg. 5.23 against the mighty!*"²⁵²

Rogers charged Parliament to secure the settlement of the Fifth Monarchy as opposed to reforming the Fourth, "by bringing in the *Lawes of God* given by *Moses* for *Re-publicue Lawes* (as well as the *Lawes of God* given by *Christ*, which must be in for *Church Lawes*)." But what sort of laws was Rogers referring to? "Hath not God given you a *Booke of Lawes* ready to your hand? and can men make *Lawes* better then God?" Since "*Moses* dare not set up any other *Lawes*, but those *given of God* for the *State*, or *Politicke Government*, how dare you?"²⁵³ Parliament was to wield no legislative initiative, rather, it could only replace all laws and ordinances. "For all the *Laws* and *Ordinances Civill* and *Ecclesiastick* of the *Fourth Monarchy*, must tumble at the entrance of the *fifth*," which Rogers believed would be inaugurated within 40 years.²⁵⁴ Where did Rogers locate God's Law? In "the *Commandments* . . . the *Statutes* . . . and the *Judgements*," or alternatively, the original "*two Tables* given *Moses* on mount *Sinai*."²⁵⁵

William Aspinwall in his *A brief description of the fifth monarchy*, mentioned above, hailed the sitting of the new assembly as ushering in the "end of the fourth Monarchy."²⁵⁶ Now that the saints were sitting in power, Fifth Monarchists emphasised the substance of Christ's millennial civil rule. His power was not

General, with the assembly of elders elected by him (London, July 5, 1653), A3.

²⁵² John Rogers, *Sagrir Sagrir. Or doomes-day drawing nigh, with thunder and lightening to lawyers* (London, October 20, 1653), 13, 14.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, To the Readers of All Sorts.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 124.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 139.

²⁵⁶ Aspinwall, *A brief description of the fifth monarchy*, 9.

²⁴⁸ Woolrych, *Commonwealth to Protectorate*, 149, 150.

²⁴⁹ *A declaration of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England* (London, 1653), 3, 7.

²⁵⁰ Austin Woolrych, *Commonwealth to Protectorate* (London: Phoenix Press, 1982), 194, 209.

²⁵¹ John Spittlehouse, *The first addresses to his excellencie the Lord*

exclusive to the church, but through “acts of Kingly power, as acts of judgment and justice,” as his rule extended “to Civil Government” as Isaiah 9:7 indicates. According to Rev. 11:15 and Dan 7:13-14, Christ “shall be the Monarch, or absolute King and Sovereigne,” and “reign personally upon earth 1000 years.” The “saints shall be his *Vicegerents* during the time of this Monarchy according as it is written, *Dan. 7.27.*²⁵⁷

Christ was not only the sovereign monarch but the chief lawgiver, as he “alone hath this Legislative power, and none but he. So saith *Isaiah*, ch. 33.22. *Jehovah is our Legislator, or Law-giver.*”²⁵⁸ Aspinwall read Matthew 28 as the Father’s delegation of this power to Christ alone, and therefore, law finds its basis in Christ’s delegated authority: “And this wilbe the perfect state & model of Civil Governments under the fifth Monarchy, Christ alone shall be Law-giver, and if he be the Law-giver alone, you may easily conclude that he will own no other Laws, but what himself hath given, which though they be few and brief, yet are they compleatly sufficient and perfect.” Aspinwall denied Parliament had legislative authority in the Fifth Monarchy, defining their function as judicial justice, “to provide that wise, godly, and faithful Judges and Justices, be placed in all meet places of the Nation, to execute judgment and justice, according to the judicials given by Christ.” Their authority also extended to constituting “subordinate Officers in all places of power and trust, and to see they be men thoroughly purged and refined.”²⁵⁹

Barebone’s Resigns: Cromwell Establishes Protectorate with the Instrument of Government (December 12, 1653)

Despite its heralded initiation, Barebone’s went the way of the Long Parliament and the Rump. Cromwell accepted the resignation of his own nominated assembly on December 12, 1653, established himself as Lord Protector, and authorised the Instrument of Government as the new constitution for Britain.

The reasons for Barebone’s resignation are intriguing, the more obvious being the assembly’s lack of expertise in administering legislation and the affairs of state, especially foreign policy and diplomacy. Internal divisions also fractured the body along ‘party’ lines, as radicals and zealots confronted moderates, and the executive was heavily integrated with the legislative, not to mention faltering attendance. The triggering mechanism appears to have been the continuing controversy over tithes and support of the established clergy, which Fifth Monarchists and other religious

radicals demanded be totally jettisoned. On December 12, the moderates entered the Chamber, denounced the majority decision to scrap the system of tithes, and moved that the Parliament dissolve itself. A walk-out was underway, and the resigned marched to Whitehall Palace to inform Cromwell and receive his confirmation. When the public learned of the events, Woolrych notes that “if the Rump had had few mourners but the Rumpers, Barebone’s had fewer by far – not many indeed outside the ranks of the Fifth Monarchy men.”²⁶⁰

Cromwell, “the little Horne be now up in England”

The first Protectorate Parliament sat on September 3, 1654, with Fifth Monarchists postured as its greatest enemy. This parliamentary and constitutional departure so radicalised them that Cromwell, once God’s instrument for inaugurating the Kingdom, was now at war with it, and worse, as a general in the army of Antichrist. Fifth Monarchists reinterpreted events biblically as quickly as they occurred; Cromwell, reviled and vilified from Fifth Monarchy pulpits across London, was now an apostate, nothing less than that little horn which they characterised Charles I as being, and therefore, a persecutor of the saints. Some landed in prison for their prophetic tirades, especially those who preached imminent destruction of and disobedience to the Protectorate. As a result, Cromwell’s Protectorates appeared to unite the militant Fifth Monarchists.

Aspinwall published *The Legislative Power is Christ’s Peculiar Prerogative* on August 20, 1656 before the sitting of the second Protectorate Parliament (September 17, 1656 – February 4, 1657). He rehearsed the need for total legislative reform; that only “*the Judicials of Moses, as the Rules of Judgment in all cases, capital, criminal, or Civil*” should be implemented, but which could be informed hermeneutically by the Scriptures as a whole. He also reiterated Christ’s complete dominion and authority “over all Nations of the world, as well in *Temporal* or *civil* things, as in *Spirituals.*”²⁶¹

He also confronted the issue of the franchise in regards to rule of the saints after the manner of Deuteronomy 1:13, Exodus 24:1 and Numbers 11:24. Nevertheless, unlike some Fifth Monarchists, Aspinwall called for the saints to “*submit unto Civil Powers under the 4th Monarchy,*” as “*Joseph under Pharoah, . . . Obadiah under Ahab, a wicked Prince, and an usurper, . . . Daniel under Nebuchadnezzar and Darius, . . . Nehemiah under*

²⁵⁷ Ibid., 4, 5, 6.

²⁵⁸ Ibid., 8.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 9, 10.

²⁶⁰ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, 558.

²⁶¹ William Aspinwall, *The legislative power is Christ’s peculiar prerogative* (London, August 20, 1656), A2, 4. See also 5-8.

*Artaxerxes, . . . Mordecai under Ahasuerus, . . . Cornelius under the Roman Emperour.*²⁶²

Second Protectorate Parliament and Humble Petition and Advice (Sept. 17, 1656 – Feb. 4, 1658)

Aspinwall's tract appeared quite moderate in comparison to *The banner of truth displayed: Or a testimony for Christ, and against anti-Christ*, published anonymously the following September. Its publication was precipitated by a series of arrests as Fifth Monarchists were becoming belligerent and aggressive in their militancy. The language of warfare permeated this tract, not obedience or submission. It even warned that the Protectorate was illegal and not to be obeyed.

The banner of truth represents an excellent example of an updated interpretation of apocalyptic texts relative to the second Protectorate. It claimed that "we live in the latter part of the last days," "in the last Age of this old world" which Daniel had prophesied of, and "in the very last years of Antichrists reign." Cromwell, was now "the little Horne," "who gradually wears out the Saints of the Most high."²⁶³ Nevertheless, Cromwell, according to Daniel's prophecy, had been allotted three and a half years to persecute the saints before the "Stone" which is the authority of Christ through his saints, destroys him. This "smiting work" would occur considerably earlier, "before the end of the said three years and a half, wherein the Lord will so appear, and work for and in his Saints." This "is a smiting work, or a work wherein the Saints employed shall visibly appear in a military posture for Christ, which we call the great combat between Christ and the Kings and Rulers of the world: For the Saints shall fall upon or smite that great Image."²⁶⁴

The second session of the second Protectorate Parliament was underway by June, 1657 with a new constitution, dubbed the Humble Petition and Advice. William Medley published another Fifth Monarchist manifesto in May of that year titled *A standard set up*, which was clearly insurrectionist in nature and somewhat alarmist too, with forebodings of an uprising underway. The saints were turning militant, and literally attempting to war with the 'Beast', Lord Protector Cromwell.

The tract indicts the Protectorate, which was now warring on behalf of the Beast, and therefore, could legitimately be defied. It also accused Cromwell of

treason for betraying the very cause he once identified with, and apostasy; he "hath dealt treacherously with the people of these Nations." All the saints were "to come out of her, to come from amongst them."²⁶⁵ It details twenty-one separate constitutional principles upon which a new constitution should be built, clearly modelled after the Scriptures.²⁶⁶ The marginalia is also overrun with Scriptural references difficult to associate directly with the text, but indicative of a revolutionary frenzy.

The key constitutional principles cover the executive, legislative, and judicial segments of government and buttressed by numerous Old Testament texts similar to other Fifth Monarchy tracts. Christ alone bears "the supreme absolute LEGISLATIVE POWER and AVTHORITY to make Laws for the governing of the Nations." The "scriptures . . . are the revealed Will and Rule of this LEGISLATOR, to be constantly owned, . . . for the inward and outward man (wherein are Laws, Statutes, Precepts and Judgments for all cases, conditions, and actions of civil, military, and spirituall concerns." "That a SANHEDRIM, or SVPREAM-COVNCELL" be erected which "shall be the REPRESENTATIVE (for our Lord and Kings) of the whole Body of the Saints."²⁶⁷

A standard set up set in motion a covert movement of Fifth Monarchists under the pastorate of Thomas Venner, whose London-based Swan Alley congregation planned the fateful uprising. Their meetings were secret, and they organised themselves into five groups of twenty-five members with very strict communication between them. Only one individual from each was privy to the meetings of the others. They prepared by studying the Protectorate's troop movements, and began to equip themselves with maps, scopes, and arms. The ill-fated and anticipated revolt occurred on April 9, 1657. Venner was imprisoned until February, 1659,²⁶⁸ only to be released to lead another uprising in 1661 under the restored Stuarts, and inspired by a new manifesto, *A door of hope* (1661). Venner was hanged, drawn and quartered on January 19, 1661.

Concluding Comments

The apparent extravagant interpretation and employment of apocalyptic passages of Fifth Monarchists, which altered with the Interregnum's

²⁶⁵ William Medley, *A standard set up . . . or the principles & declaration of the remnant, that have waited for the blessed appearance and hope* (London, May 17, 1657), 8, 26.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 15.

²⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 15, 16.

²⁶⁸ See Capp, *Fifth Monarchy Men*, 119. See Capp's "A Door of Hope Re-opened: The Fifth Monarchy, King Charles and King Jesus," *Journal of Religious History*, 32, no. 1 (March, 2008): 16-30.

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 36.

²⁶³ *The banner of truth displayed: Or a testimony for Christ, and against anti-Christ* (London, September 24, 1656), 15, 19, 26.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 28.

varied political movements, is somewhat of a reversal of good hermeneutics. No doubt their exegesis seemed to lack a definitive set of interpretive rules which resulted in some rather imaginative and subjective expositions unattractive to most. This is where the study of many serious scholars stops. For those “uninitiated,” Medley’s *A standard set up*, the Fifth Monarchist’s second-to-last-manifesto, in the words of Woolrych, their “constitution of the kingdom of Christ, . . . must have looked fitter for cloud cuckoo land.”²⁶⁹

But even if their use of the Scriptures appears unappealing, it certainly cannot mean it is unscholarly or unsophisticated, or wholly wrong-headed. The depth of their conviction, that Christ’s millennial rule was beginning with Britain’s saintly representatives, and to be exported abroad, cannot simply be treated as an expository sideshow. After all, they advanced their scholarship along-side some impressive continental Reformists. The extraordinary lengths they went to analyse the dark and difficult prophecies, which many Christians today hardly trouble themselves with, to understand Christ’s millennial rule, is only matched by their loyal commitment to God above all else. What can we learn from them?

The spirit which drove the more militant among them finds its counterpart in the modern era. Bernard Capp, who has made a study of the Fifth Monarchists as well as other millenarian visionaries and movements, identifies them with a “theocratic agenda.” “The rise of fundamentalist, theocratic Islamist movements in Iran, Afghanistan, and Iraq has made such ideologies all too familiar today, a development paralleled by the emergence of extremist groups within the Jewish and Christian faiths. Paradoxically, it is the Fifth Monarchists rather than communist Diggers who now appear most “relevant” to our age.”²⁷⁰

Fifth Monarchy emphasis upon “King Jesus” as the only legislator, with Moses’s judicials as Britain’s only rule of law, was hardly an uncommon scriptural perspective relative to settling Britain’s constitution. Other millenarian (and not so millenarian groups), including those in the American Colonies, found in the Scriptures evidence for saintly rule in the commonwealth as well as in the churches, believing a property-franchise too limited to prevent the unrighteous from wielding civil and therefore coercive authority over men’s consciences. Other religious sectarians also denied various levels of magisterial legitimacy to the Rump and the Protectorates, and most deferred to some aspect of the Hebrew Polity as a model commonwealth, or at the least, a primitive rule of God’s first governors. But, those apocalyptic and prophetic

passages of extraordinary appearing beasts and talking horns, times and half times, the Dragon, Antichrist, Armageddon and Christ’s thousand-year reign—passages which drove the Fifth Monarchists in their political and religious sentiments—are a difficult set to settle definitively on hermeneutically. These same texts are even heatedly debated within Christendom today by those with no sense of the millennial movements which pre-date their not-so-unique views. This, coupled with their unwavering demand of a parliamentary membership of saints only, elected by churches, who sat for King Jesus more than the faithful (and not so faithful) of the Commonwealth, who viewed themselves charged with a global mandate to pulverise pagan nations and liberate the persecuted saints from their midst, would provoke many to agree with the spirit of Woolrych’s observation: that Fifth Monarchists represented the lunatic fringe of the absolute religiously daft. Nevertheless, their views are not so cosmic and biblically unpalatable as they may seem, as more than mere remnants of them have survived within various modern evangelical movements and denominations.

²⁶⁹ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, 661.

²⁷⁰ Capp, “A Door of Hope Re-opened,” 17.

Levellers: A Commonwealth Under God – Birthright of Liberty for the “Free People of England”

But we must leave off the names of Adjutors now, and take up a new one, since his Majesty in his Declaration hath Christned those Pagan Connsellers, by the name of LEVELLERS; in a most apt Title for such a despicable and desperate Knot to be known by, that indeavor to cast downe and level the Inclosures of Nobility, Gentry and Propriety, to make us all even; so that every Jack shall vie with a Gentleman, and every Gentleman be made a Jack.

Anonymous, *Mercurius pragmaticus* (1647)²⁷¹

The Levellers and their Core Political Values

This very intriguing cast of political characters framed as “Levellers” by their opponents, is led by its key representative John Lilburne (1614-1647). A Lieutenant Colonel in the New Model Army and staunch supporter of Parliament’s cause against the Crown, is aptly described as being committed to the “ceaseless struggle for the principles on whose behalf he had engaged,” which landed him in prison for a considerable period of his short life.²⁷² Lilburne penned at least seventy tracts between 1638 and 1656 which espoused the various principles and platforms of the Leveller cause, some written even in the midst of his numerous arrests for slander against members of Parliament and an army commander. His imprisonments between July 1645 and August 1646 were also due to unlicensed printing, and at times he shared his prison experiences with his colleagues. He was even tried and acquitted for treason in October 1649. Two other figures are largely profiled as spokesmen for the movement too: Richard Overton (1599-1664) and William Walwyn (1600-1681), who composed over fifty tracts between them.

The Levellers have been ascribed with varied political labels by modern historians who refer to them as socialists, democrats, communists, libertarians and even left-wing Puritans. Their contemporaries designated them with their namesake, a derogatory label intended

²⁷¹*Mercurius pragmaticus communicating intelligence from all parts, touching all affaires, signes, humours, and conditions, throughout the kingdome, especially from Westminster and the head-quarter* (London: s.n., 1647-1649, 9th-16th November 1647), 70.

²⁷² Perez Zagorin, *A History of Political Thought in the English Revolution* (Bristol, England: Thoemmes Press, 1997), 8.

to capture, though wrongly, their egalitarian pursuit of property and social distinctions. From the perspective of its main adherents it never entered their “thoughts to Level mens estates.”²⁷³ Rather than endorsing wholesale egalitarianism, the Levellers emphasised, among other political principles, legal and political equality to be institutionalised through an equal and proportionate annually elected representative. The electoral franchise was to be broad, and government secured through a written constitution established with the people’s consent.²⁷⁴

The *Agreements of the People* (1647-1649): Constitutional Structure and Design

The Levellers developed three constitutional proposals respectively known as *An agreement of the people* between October 1647 and May 1649. These proposals were presented and discussed in the midst of Parliament’s continuing cause against the king, which included his trial, the Army’s dispute with Parliament over pay and the prospects of mutiny, and Pride’s Purge. Their utility as constitutional alternatives was considerable enough to be formally discussed at the famous Putney (October 28 – November 11, 1647) and Whitehall Debates (December 14 – January 16, 1649).

The *Agreements* do not explicitly incorporate the political philosophy of their various proposals, or intersperse marginalia to affirm their political use of the Scriptures. Design differences also exist between them relative to the Levellers’ ongoing response to fast-paced political events, making them appear somewhat pragmatic rather than principled. Nevertheless, each *Agreement* contains constitutional principles of equality, popular sovereignty and consent of the governed, representation, liberty of conscience, limited civil jurisdiction in matters reserved to the people, as well as separation of powers and checks

²⁷³John Lilburne, William Walwyne, Thomas Prince, and Richard Overton, *A manifestation from Lieutenant Col. John Lilburn, Mr. William Walwyn, Mr. Thomas Prince, and Mr. Richard Overton styled Levellers, intended for their full vindication* (London, April 16, 1649), 5.

²⁷⁴ One particular source I found most useful for assisting me in organising my research on the political principles of the Levellers is that by Martin Loughlin, “The Constitutional Thought of the Levellers,” *Current Legal Problems*, 60, no. 1 (2007): 1-39. A highly recommended though very expensive volume series containing Leveller writings is that edited and introduced by James R. Otteson, *The Levellers: Overton, Walwyn and Lilburne*, 5 vols. (Bristol, England: Thoemmes Press, 2003).

and balances. Most unique is their emphasis upon a subscribed written constitution as supreme law and devised to perpetually limit the representative. The foundational assumptions of these political principles appear sourced in pre-1647 tracts, which include responses to their critics. This following section is intended to reveal the nature of this constitutional architecture, and the short title of each *Agreement* is given to reveal the essence of Leveller objectives. The next section attempts to tease out their core scriptural political assumptions.

An agreement of the people for a firme and present peace, upon grounds of common-right and freedom
(October 28, 1647): Putney Debates

Formal debates over the constitutional future of England took place at St. Mary's Church at Putney from October 28 through November 9, 1647, which incorporated intense discussions relative to the constitutional principles of the first *Agreement*. In attendance were leading officers of the New Model Army, including Cromwell and his son-in-law Commissary Ireton, interested soldiers, and civilian allies, all keen on offering input into England's constitutional settlement. Many of the participants were sympathetic to, or persuaded by, Leveller political ideas.

Before the Putney Debates formally commenced, initial proceedings on a constitutional settlement which engaged the General Council of the Army were underway. Soldiers selected 'Agitators' or 'New Agents' from regiments to represent their views, who were recognised by the Army's senior commanders called 'Grandees,' and who also sat on the General Council. The Grandees, which included Cromwell and Ireton, were predisposed to negotiate a settlement with Charles 1 which maintained the elements of the ancient constitution of King, Lords, and Commons. They presented *The heads of the proposals* in mid-July to Sir Thomas Fairfax, commander-in-chief of all England's forces, whose military headquarters was located in Reading. Commissary Ireton took the lead in drafting *The heads*, and most likely with significant input from Parliament's Independent element. *The heads* countered Parliament's earlier proposal known as *The newcastle propositions* (July 13, 1646), which the king rejected. The General Council debated and amended *The heads* at Reading, and forwarded it to Parliament on July 20, 1647 who then dispatched it to the king. In the midst of Charles 1's rejection, an attempt to force his reinstatement by radical mob action was underway in early August which the New Model Army peacefully disbanded.

A negotiated settlement between king, Parliament, and Army relative to *The heads* had not been totally extinguished despite these events. Fairfax moved his headquarters from Reading to Putney in September, and scheduled weekly meetings of the General Council at St. Mary's with *The heads* acting as the centrepiece of the settlement debate. With Lilburne imprisoned in the Tower, the Levellers began to escalate the political rhetoric of the proceedings by objecting to any royal restoration recommended by *The heads*, and one prominent Leveller officer, Major Francis White, was expelled for just such an outspoken opinion. The Levellers were now preparing to present their own political manifesto to be advanced though other adherents within the Council, one of whom was Major William Rainborough, all the while soliciting the support of the Army's discontented lower ranks by subverting their faith in their chosen Agitators. This led to the creation of another ancillary group of representatives with strong Leveller sympathies designated 'the agents of the five regiments.' Coincidentally, they signed and submitted *The case of the army truly stated* to Fairfax on October 18, another proposal, which was most likely penned by Lilburne's Leveller friend John Wildman.

The case served to further divide the army rank and file from the officers, and question the settlement offered in *The heads*. It demanded the dissolution of Parliament, proposed a new representative scheme which included radical conditions of suffrage, and appealed for liberty of conscience. This new proposal, already published, and devoid of any negotiated settlement with the king, was presented before the Council on October 21. Though largely rejected, it contained some of the elements soon to be presented in the first *Agreement*.²⁷⁵

An agreement of the people, the first formal Leveller constitution, was advanced before the Council on October 28 at Putney, which Cromwell, not Fairfax, now administered. Its contents were radical and revolutionary in contrast with *The heads* and other proposals. *An agreement* recommended no attempt to resurrect the ancient constitution, or referee the king's return; rather, it outlined four clear and succinct constitutional proposals aimed at preserving "just freedom," preventing "the danger of returning into a slavish condition," and ensuring an effective body of "Representatives." The sundry propositions arrayed within four articles are prefaced by "we declare," and

²⁷⁵ The foregoing context for the first *Agreement* is summarised in large part from Woolrych's *Britain in Revolution*, 361-385.

conclude with “*These things we declare to be our native Rights.*”²⁷⁶

Parliamentary seats would be redistributed in proportion to the number of “Inhabitants” as opposed to their current unequal distribution by “Counties, Cities & Burroughs.” Parliament was to be dissolved by September 30, 1648, with new Parliaments to be elected biennially. The fourth proposal contained a clear emphasis upon the sovereignty of the people by way of consent, delegation, and reservation of power. The “power of . . . Representatives” was “inferiour only to theirs who chuse them, and doth extend, without consent or concurrence of any other person or persons” and a clear negative on the voice and presence of King and Lords. The province of their power related to “enacting, altering, and repealing of Lawes,” as well as the creating and dissolving of “Offices and Courts,” the “appointing, removing, and calling to account Magistrates, and Officers of all degrees,” the power of “making War and Peace,” and conducting relations with “forraign States.”²⁷⁷ The fourth article ends with a reserved power clause: the peoples’ representatives have general power over matters “not expressly, or impliedly reserved by the represented to themselves,” and followed by five such reserved powers.²⁷⁸ Here, *An agreement* implies that certain rights are inherent within the people which necessarily limit the authority of any future Representative. If such rights are indeed inherent as the Levellers argued, then all Englishmen bear a birthright of liberty.

The first reserved power, that of liberty of conscience in “matters of Religion, and the wayes of Gods Worship,” is provided with a divine explanation. Such matters are grounded in the “Consciencs” of the people as they perceive “the mind of God” to be, which no “humane power” has the authority to dictate. A provision though is inserted for the public instruction in such matters as long as it is not “compulsive” in nature.²⁷⁹

The next four prohibit conscription to preserve “freedome,” prevent unauthorised harassment and reprisal “for any thing said or done” relative “to the late publicke differences,” demand equality under the law regardless of “Tenure, Estate, Charter, Degree, Birth, or place,” and appeal to the need for just laws to preserve “the safety and well being of the people.” The provision for legal equality ensured that the representatives would concentrate their focus upon the peoples’ “common

good” by guaranteeing that all laws would “bind all alike, without privilege or exemption”; legislators would even be subject to their own laws. Each of these propositions and “*rules of Government*” is claimed to be part of the peoples’ “*native Rights*,” yet to be secured through “*the settlement of Our Peace and Freedome, upon him that intended our bondage, and brought a cruell Warre upon us.*”²⁸⁰

An agreement was not in the form of a petition, but a constitution to be enacted by way of the peoples’ direct consent via the written document itself as an instrument to bind future Parliaments. In this regard, it was to serve as supreme law, unalterable by Acts of Parliament.²⁸¹

The General Council of the Army debated the various articles of *An agreement*, beginning at Putney on October 28, 1647, and the first article proved to be the most controversial since it entailed a universal male suffrage devoid of property qualifications. Ireton played a leading role in disputing it, unable to reconcile such an equality of choice with the preservation of property throughout the kingdom. Neither did the Council ever arrive at a consensus given its terms and instead, framed a proposal which combined some of its contents with *The heads*. This document was never formally published.²⁸²

Foundations of freedom; or An agreement of the people proposed as a rule for future government in the establishment of a firm and lasting peace (December 15, 1648): Whitehall Debates

The second *An agreement of the people*, also known as *Foundations of freedom*, was not entirely of Leveller extraction, but created by a committee of sixteen men representing four elements of interest: the Army, civilian Independents, certain Independent members of the House of Commons, and the Levellers. This first draft was submitted to the General Council of Officers on December 11, 1648 at Whitehall, though Lilburne never intended the Council to debate it. Nevertheless, that section which occupied much of their debate dealt

²⁸⁰ Ibid., 4-6.

²⁸¹ Ibid., 9.

²⁸² You can read the proceedings at Putney in *The Clarke Papers, Selections from the Papers of William Clarke, Secretary of the Army, 1647-1649, and to General Monk and the Commanders of the Army in Scotland, 1651-1660*, ed. C. H. Firth, vol. 1 (London, Printed for the Camden Society, 1891), 226-363. The more accessible edition is Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty, Being the Army Debates (1647-9) from the Clarke Manuscripts with Supplementary Documents*, noted above. The Army’s proposal which combined, in some respects, *An Agreement* with *The Heads*, is found on 363-367 of *The Clarke Papers*.

²⁷⁶ *An agreement of the people for a firme and present peace, upon grounds of common-right and freedome* (London, November 3, 1647), 1-5.

²⁷⁷ Ibid., 2-4.

²⁷⁸ Ibid., 4-5.

²⁷⁹ Ibid., 4.

specifically with religious liberty.²⁸³ Lilburne published his draft on December 15 despite the Council's deliberations.

This second *Agreement* is more lengthy and precise, and its preamble, similar to the first proposal, specifically addressed the need for establishing the tenure of the Representative, its more equitable constitution, and its effectiveness of service. Among its provisions, Parliament was to be dissolved by the end of April 1649, elected every two years, and representation apportioned through 300 Representatives meticulously allotted to the various counties, cities, and boroughs according to population.²⁸⁴ More particulars were advanced as to the character of "Electors"; they must be "Natives or Denisons of *England*," who "have subscribed this *Agreement*," are at least twenty-one years old, and "House-keepers," who resided "within the Division, for which the Election is." Prohibited from the franchise were those who received "Alms," or were "servants to, or receiving wages from any particular person." Anyone "who have adhered to, or assisted the King against the Parliament in any of these Wars or Insurrections, or who shall make or joyn in, or abet any forcible opposition against this *Agreement*" was prohibited from the franchise until a period of seven years had passed from the dissolution of the current Parliament and fourteen years before they could be elected as members of Parliament. Penalties and sanctions were to be applied to those abridging these rules.²⁸⁵

In order for the Representative to act in its legislative capacity, a quorum of 150 members must be seated for any lawful act to occur. Within twenty-one days of their sitting, the Representative must "appoint a Councell of State for the managing of publique affaires" to sit until the election and convening of any subsequent Representative, but which is restricted by the direct authority of those who appointed them. Provision against factions and "corrupt interests" was lodged in the rule against serving simultaneously in the Representative and any other civil office. With this, a lawyer elected to the Representative is barred from practicing law during such service.²⁸⁶

The next section specifies the jurisdiction of the Representative akin to that indicated in the first *Agreement*, followed by a more detailed enumeration of items reserved to the people only. The liberty of

conscience provision is found by way of a negative on the Representative.

We do not empower our *Representatives* to continue in force, or make any Lawes, Oaths and Covenants, whereby to compell by penalties or otherwise, any person to any thing, in or about matters of Faith, Religion, or Gods Worship, or to restraints any person from the professing his Faith, or exercise of Religion, according to his Conscience, in any house or place (except such as are, or shall be set apart for the publique worship,) neverthesse the instruction or directing of the Nation in a publique way, for matters of Faith, Worship, or Discipline (so it be not compulsive or express Popery) is referred to their discretion.²⁸⁷

The reserved powers continue, and provision against conscription was retained, as was protection against indemnity and equality under the law. Included was a separation of power provision which proscribed the authority of the Representative to that of the legislative function alone; they were to "intermeddle not with the execution of the Lawes, nor give judgement upon any mans person or estate, where no Law hath been before provided." Representatives were also prohibited from holding any other office of trust except that of a member of the Council of State. Interestingly, a rule was inserted which also prevented any Representative from using his office to violate "the foundations of Common Right, liberty or safety contained in this *Agreement*, nor shall levell mens estates, destroy propriety, or make all things common." The Council of State was authorised to convene a Representative in times of "imminent danger or extream necessity" between sessions for a period not to exceed forty days, and to be dissolved two months before the sitting of the next Representative. Security was made for the payment of debts as well as the obedience on the part of military officers to Representative acts; they were to be put to death "without mercy" unless they resist an unlawful act.²⁸⁸

Appended to the second *Agreement* was a list of eleven rights and guarantees the Levellers desired to have included which further restricted the Representative's power. Each is prefaced by the enacting clause "It shall not be in their Power," or, "They shall not continue." The Representative was prohibited from demanding individuals incriminate themselves in "criminal Cases"; from extending cases of appeal beyond four months; from maintaining the law in a language other than English; from restricting domestic and foreign trade

²⁸³ You can read the proceedings at Whitehall in *The Clarke Papers*, vol. 2, 135-186 and in *Puritanism and Liberty*, 125-178.

²⁸⁴ *Foundations of freedom; Or an agreement of the people: proposed as a rule for future government in the establishment of a firm and lasting peace* (London, December 15, 1648), 4-7.

²⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 7-8.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 10.

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

allowed under law; from maintaining an excise tax beyond twenty days once a new Representative convenes; from taxing individuals disproportionate to their property and estates—an equal rate must be applied, though anyone with a net worth lower than thirty pounds shall not be liable to such a tax except what is due to the poor or what is taxable from their own area of dwelling; from exempting parts of an individual's estates from debt service while requiring imprisonment for payment of debt; and from requiring capital punishment for crimes other than murder or the attempt to “destroy this Agreement.” Instead, they are to “propound punishments equal to Offenses, That so mens Lives, Limbs, Liberties, and Estates, may not as hitherto, be lyable to be taken away upon trivial or slight occasion; and shall have special care, to keep all sorts of people from Misery and Beggery.” All defendants in a case at trial must be allowed to have witnesses in his favour, and those against him. Tithes and assessments for public ministers is abolished, conviction at trial requires “twelve sworn men of the Neighbourhood,” and interest rates on loans cannot exceed six percent. Finally, there was to be no prohibition against holding an office of trust for any religious opinion or practice.²⁸⁹

Four more articles are added. Lilburne vents his animosity towards lawyers, and exhorts the ensuing Representative to eliminate “those Vermine and Caterpillars” from the Kingdom. He also recommended that they “erect a Court of Justice in every Hundred” to be presided over by “twelve men of the same” who are chosen by the freeman of each hundred annually and directed by “express and plain Rules in English.” He also pressed for the creation of local record offices in each county and shire to maintain a registry “of Conveyances, Bills, and Bonds” to frustrate “Fraud, Thefts, and Deciets,” and permit the annual local and popular election “of Majors, Sheriffs, Justices of the Peace, Deputy Lieutenants” and others as dictated by the Representative. *An agreement* ends with the request that the Representative ensure that those electable Freemen determine, by the consent of those in the various hundreds, to equally divide the assessed portion of taxes, and “abolish all base Tenures.”²⁹⁰

Lilburne's publication of this second *Agreement* when the Whitehall Debates commenced, did not pre-empt the Council's discussion of its provisions, and they published their own amended version to be presented to Parliament on January 20, 1649.²⁹¹ Parliament's

focus upon the king's impending trial virtually tabled it. Nevertheless, the Levellers, and especially Lilburne, were incensed at the Army's interference and published a third version of *An agreement* from the Tower on May 1, 1649.

An Agreement of the People of England Tendered as a Peace-Offering to this Distressed Nation (May 1, 1649)

Political events were moving very quickly; Britain, now administered by a Rump Parliament after Colonel Pride's December 6 Purge, was the Representative of the Nation, Parliament tried and put King Charles I to death on January 30, 1649, and a third civil war erupted in Scotland and Ireland.

The Levellers questioned the constitutional legitimacy of the Rump as a representative, and characterised the military's new-found role on the Council of State as intrusive and tyrannical. In response to the new political climate, Lilburne penned *England's new chains discovered* on February 26, in which he condemned, among other things, the inclusion of Army Officers within a despotic Council of State, and criticised the Army Council's own *Agreement* previously tendered to Parliament.

This new political outburst landed Lilburne in prison again, along with Overton, Walwyn, and Thomas Prince. All were back in the Tower by the end of March, 1649 on charges of treason, and from where they penned the third *An agreement of the people*, published May 1, 1649. Just prior to its publication, they also produced *A manifestation* on April 14, through which they advocated on behalf of their political engagement, by systematically attacking and denouncing strongly perceived and various sundry myths and untruths about their collective character. They also promised that another *Agreement* would be forthcoming.

The provisions of the third *Agreement* are similar to the second, but enlarged and augmented to include thirty Articles. Unique, in part, is its inclusion of a more elaborate preamble which invokes God and His glory as the highest objective followed by four purposes to which the subsequent articles relate and are expected to achieve.

We the free People of England, to whom God hath given hearts, means and opportunity to effect the same, do with submission to his wisdom, in his name, and desiring the equity thereof may be to his praise and glory; Agree

²⁸⁹ Ibid., 13-14.

²⁹⁰ Ibid., 14-15.

²⁹¹ This version is titled *A petition from his excellency Thomas Lord Fairfax and the General Council of officers of the army, to the honourable the Commons of England in Parliament assembled, concerning the draught of an agreement of the people for a secure and present peace, by them framed and prepared. Together with the said*

agreement presented Saturday, Jan. 20. And a declaration of his excellency and the said General Council, concerning the same. / Tendred to the consideration of the people. By the appointment of the Generall Council of officers of the Army (London, January 20, 1649). The Council debated this Leveller draft up to January 15.

to ascertain our Government, to abolish all arbitrary Power, and to set bounds and limits both to our Supreme, and all Subordinate Authority, and remove all known Grievances.²⁹²

This preamble unmistakably asserts that the “free People of *England*” are the sovereign authority in that they establish their government via consent and within the context of God’s “wisdom,” “praise and glory.” This enacting clause is explicitly covenantal, and to include God, the people, and limited civil government.

Most of the contents of the first two *Agreements* remains in the third. The Rump Parliament was to be dissolved the first Wednesday of August, consist of 400 as opposed to 300 members, elected annually instead of a biennially, with electors being at least twenty-one, barring again servants and those still requiring alms. Gone is the status-requirement of a householder to be a native Englishmen. Even those who assisted the late king appear now to be included in the franchise, though disbarred from serving in Parliament for ten years as opposed to seven. A representative quorum will now consist of 200 members as opposed to 150, and who were to only sit for one consecutive term, but who could be chosen again after an intervening representative. If the Rump failed to dissolve itself, an electoral method was to be followed similar to the election of “Knights and Burgesses.” The maintenance and preservation of liberties contained in Petition of Right (1628) was also the responsibility of the next Parliament. Retained is the “exercise of Religion according to his Conscience,” but gone is the previous provision that Parliament could exercise the function of national oversight over matters of religion and worship within conditions of voluntary submission. The reserved powers of the previous proposal are retained in the third, local government is protected, and included is a provision for the local election of Parish Ministers and an agreement of their wage. The last article could be considered a supremacy article in that any Parliament attempting to alter the provisions of this *Agreement*, or destroy it, all such members, except those who record their “dissent,” can be indicted for “High Treason.” A penalty is to be imposed upon anyone outside Parliament for that matter who attempts the same.²⁹³

The establishment of permanent rules for raising up a military is now explicitly stated, though given the Levellers’ concern for its potential for despotism, the Council of State, which the Rump staffed with military officers, is to be replaced by a Committee to consist of

members of Parliament only. Parliament would retain the authority to establish the military according to the rules set, the choice and nomination of the “General Officers,” including procedures for their “ordering, regulating and commanding.” But the authority to chose and appoint officers of the “Regiments, Troops, and Companies,” including their removal, would now devolve to local electors of Parliament. Payment for the military appears now to be proportioned among locales as well.²⁹⁴

It is also worth noting here the concluding statement, as it captures the essence of the authors’ intentions and subtly hints at one of their political uses of the Scriptures; doing unto others what you would have done unto you. The authors have also given their consent by way of subscription and not parliamentary petition, a method they desired to be modelled within the nation.

Thus, as becometh a free People, thankfull unto God for this blessed opportunity, and desirous to make use thereof to His glory, in taking off every yoaik, and removing every burthen, in delivering the captive, and setting the oppressed free; we have in all the particular Heads forementioned, done as we would be done unto, and as we trust in God will abolish all occasion of offence and discord, and produce the lasting Peace and Prosperity of this Common wealth: and accordingly do in the sincerity of our hearts and consciences, as in the presence of Almighty God, give cleer testimony of our absolute agreement to all and every part hereof by subscribing our hands thereunto. Dated the first day of *May*, in the Yeer of our Lord 1649.²⁹⁵

The next section represents an attempt to tease out the Levellers’ political use of the Scriptures, and this scriptural principle of relational reciprocation is one of the most prominent.

Leveller Political Use of the Scriptures

Critical Leveller themes of constitutional construction detailed in the three *Agreements* include a supreme representative only, devoid of king and Lords; perpetual constitutional limitations on the successively elected representatives—an impossible provision for statutes to enforce since laws rise no further than the parliaments which craft them; liberty of conscience and separation between church and state; unalienable rights and reserved powers; equity in law, and popular sovereignty

²⁹² John Lilburne, William Walwyn, Thomas Prince, *An agreement of the free people of England. Tendered as a peace-offering to this distressed nation* (London, May 1, 1649), 3.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 3-7.

²⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 7.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 8.

and consent. Their proposals were nothing less than constitutions intended to perpetually limit civil government. The question remains as to their theological and scriptural import.

A close examination of Leveller writings reveals a rather distinct political use of the Scriptures in comparison to other sectarians, and accompanied by the language of common law, the law of nature, and right reason. Their *Agreements* do not contain explicit statements of political theology, rendering them somewhat secular in appearance, and possibly sourced in natural reason. This has led some to assert that Leveller political ideas were not animated by theology or religious doctrine. Nevertheless, there is considerable scriptural thrust to them, as is evidenced in their pre-constitutional tracts. Their political theology was impacted by readings of Matthew 7:12 and 25:34-35, James 1:22-27, Isaiah 1:17 and 58:6-7, and Psalm 82:4. From these texts they promoted an individualised policy of seeking the social welfare of the community and liberty of the commonwealth—activities they equated with “true,” “practical,” and “undefiled” religion, and part of the “golden rule” of relationships, as well as a theology of “works,” which the established church not only failed to promote, but subverted. The Levellers were also energised by the pursuit of a commonwealth devoid of a tyrannous and despotic infrastructure for the purpose of liberating individuals to fulfil their moral duties to their neighbours, community, and country, and of freeing churches to fulfil their duty of preaching “true religion.”

This first section targets the manner in which these very relational scriptural passages inspired Leveller service to their community and commonwealth, and situated in the context of their counterarguments against accusations of atheism and anti-scripturalism. Levellers simply read the Scriptures differently from their religious and theological opponents who assailed them as being anti-religious. Walwyn’s response represents the main focus given the considerable amount of attacks directed against him in particular, and reveals not only his own radical approach to political and religious reform, but that of the Levellers generally. The subsequent sections address the theology of their discrete constitutional themes.

“Pure and Undefiled Religion” James 1:22-27: Practical Christianity in Service to Community and Commonwealth

The Levellers found themselves continually arraigned as atheists who denounced the validity of the Scriptures as the divinely revealed word of God. Nevertheless, their numerous writings do not suggest they are irreligious secularists; rather, they read the Scriptures, and especially the New Testament, differently from their

opponents, leading them to assert a view of religion which prohibited civil government from establishing and promoting it.

The Levellers consistently described Christianity as a practical, active, duty-oriented religion, and prioritised the application of the ‘golden rule’ of relationships to the individual, the community, and the commonwealth. They countered accusations of atheism by charging their opponents with practicing an empty, immoral, and superstitious faith devoid of good works and active service towards their country and countrymen. The Leveller’s *Manifestation* of April 16, 1649, submitted to the public by Lilburne, Overton, Walwyn, and Prince while they were imprisoned in the Tower, and immediately prior to their last *Agreement*, was intended to steward their own reputation, and poignantly confront, among various charges, atheism.

Whereas its said we are Atheists and Antiscripturists, we professe that we beleeve there is one eternall and omnipotent God, the Author and Preserver of all things in the world. To whose will and directions, written first in our hearts, and afterwards in his blessed Word, we ought to square our actions and conversations.²⁹⁶

The writers clearly state that God’s “will and direction” (not law) was “written first in our hearts” and “afterwards in his blessed Word,” implying that the law of nature and God’s divine word are complementary and co-equal. They also contrast the nature of true and practical religion with “formall and Ceremonial” religion, indicating their reliance on the New Testament Gospel.

And though we are not so strict upon the formall and Ceremonial part of his Service, the method, manner, and personall injunction being not so clearly made out unto us, nor the necessary requisites which his Officers and Ministers ought to be furnished withall as yet appearing to us in any that pretend thereunto: yet for the manifestation of Gods love in Christ, it is cleerly assented unto by us; and the practicall and most reall part of Religion is as readily submitted unto by us, as being, in our apprehensions, the most eminent and the most excellent in the world, and as proceeding from no other but that God who is Goodness it self: and we humbly desire his Majesty daily

²⁹⁶A *manifestation from Lieutenant Col. John Lilburn, Mr. William Walwyn, Mr. Thomas Prince, and Mr. Richard Overton, (now prisoners in the Tower of London) and others, commonly (though unjustly) styled Levellers* (London, April 14, 1649), 6.

more and more to conform our hearts to a willing and sincere obedience thereunto.²⁹⁷

They also assert a Christian obligation toward advancing a community-oriented good, a public work which corresponds with the “Laws of Nature,” with Christianity’s emphasis upon rendering service to others, and of “Public Society and Government.” Their foundation is a biblical theology of equality of responsibility in service to others rendered within a spirit of doing to others as you would have them do unto you—the ‘golden rule’ of relationships reiterated by Matthew in 7:12: “So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.” This text supplied them, in part, with a moral sense of duty towards one’s neighbour and community which extended to the political good of the commonwealth. The Levellers clearly considered themselves Disciples of Christ who battled similar “Powers and Principalities,” and endured comparable contempt; they were simply attempting to mediate the creation of a commonwealth for the sake of “Freedom and good to the Nation.”

Since no man is born for himself only, but obliged by the Laws of Nature (which reaches all) of Christianity (which engages us as Christians), and of Publick Societie and Government, to employ our endeavours for the advancement of a communitive Happiness, of equall concernment to others as our selves; here have we (according to that measure of understanding God hath dispensed unto us) laboured with much weaknesse indeed, but with integrity of heart, to produce out of the Common Calamities, such a proportion of Freedom and good to the Nation, as might somewhat compensate its many grievances and lasting sufferings: And although in doing thereof we have hitherto reaped only Reproach, and hatred for our good Will, and been faine to wrestle with the violent passions of Powers and Principalities; yet since it is nothing so much as our Blessed Master and his Followers suffered before us, and but what at first we reckoned upon, we cannot be thereby any whit dismayed in the performance of our duties, supported inwardly by the Innocency and evenness of our Consciences.²⁹⁸

The Levellers did not believe any substantive constitutional alterations were accomplished despite the transition from a “Monarchy . . . into a Republike.” The same “Burdens, Grievances, and Bondages” continued

because such changes were only “Notional, Nominall, Circumstantiall.” They again emphasised “Common Duty” as opposed to private introspection and private devotion to “particular callings and employments”; such an individualist approach is unsuitable for settling the kingdom. They modelled this admonition by laying down their lives for their neighbour on behalf of a cause greater than their own personal pursuits. They vindicated themselves against the notion that they “would Levell all men’s estates,” that they disregarded all “distinction of Orders and Dignities amongst men,” that they were against “government,” but for “a Popular confusion,” that they were “Agents for the King and now for the Queen,” or “Atheists, Antiscripturists, Jesuits and indeed anthing, that is hatefull and of evill repute amongst men.”²⁹⁹ It would not be too strained to suggest they considered themselves true patriots of their country, and their admonition the essence of citizenship.

One of the first formal protestations of Leveller political thought subsequent to their publication of *Manifestation* was *Walwyn’s wiles, or the manifestators manifested, . . . declaring the subtle and crafty wiles, the atheistical, blasphemous soul-murder principles and practices of Mr. William Walwyn. . .* (April 23, 1649). Though attributed to John Price, the Dedicatory concludes with the signatures of six Baptist and Independent Ministers.

Walwyn is specifically targeted for his apparent secularism and supposed subversion of core Christian doctrines; for attempting to “raze the very Foundation, and lay his Ax at the very root of Religion,” which includes dishonouring the “authority of the holy Scriptures.”³⁰⁰ Thomas Prince, one of Walwyn’s “fellow-Sufferers,” fired back from the Tower on June 20 with *The silken independents snare broken*. He referred to himself and his captive colleagues as “reall-hearted Christians” who were “scandalized and abused by men that took upon them a meer form of godliness . . . having *no power thereof* in their lives and conversations.” Prince defines “Religion” as a lifestyle of expressions of good works, and even equates such efforts with settling “the Nation in Peace,” a practical characteristic or working out of Christianity Leveller opponents seemed to neglect, fail to embrace, or understand.

You follow the steps of your Fore-Fathers, who made, as you do, great shows of Religion; the former Factions in our dais did the same; so it was in the dais of Christ and his Apostles, and from age to age, men that would neither do good, nor suffer others; we find it true by you:

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 3-4.

³⁰⁰ [John Price], *Walwins Wiles: or The manifestators manifested viz. Liev. Col. John Lilburn, Mr Will. Walwin, Mr Richard Overton, and Mr Tho. Prince* (London, April 23 1649), 7.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 3.

you will neither suffer us, and other good people, so much as to propose any thing to settle the Nation in Peace, nor do it your selves, but cry out against us with reproaches, as other Factions have done against faithful men in all times.³⁰¹

Walwyn responded with *Just defense against the aspertions cast upon him in a late un-Christian pamphlet entituled Walwyns wiles* (1649), and reinforced just such a 'good works' approach in service to community and country. Rather than pursuing the destruction "of Religion" or "the subversion of all Government" he claims he "alwaies profess'd the contrary, and ever practiced the contrary." True religion consists in obeying Christ, who "both by example, and precept invites to practice" doing "the will of my father which is in heaven," ensuring "That our light so shine forth before men, that they, seeing *our good works*, may glorifie our heavenly father."³⁰² He also invoked the Apostles Paul in 1 Corinthians 13:1 and James in 1:27 relative to their restatement of a practical and active faith in service to others. He even refers to James's admonition as "pure and undefiled Religion."

I am sure the Apostle *Paul* (that abounded with reall, not pretended gifts, or acquisitions rather) boasted not of them; but proclaims to all the world, that though he spake with the tongues of men and Angels, and have no Charity, that he was but a sounding brasse, or a tinkling Cymball; and Saint *James*, his pure and undefiled Religion, is, to visit the fatherlesse, and the widowes in their distresse, and to keep our selves unspotted of the world; and saith plainly, that he who hath this worlds goods, and seeth his brother lack, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion, how dwelleth the love of God in him?³⁰³

Walwyn buttresses his position further with, *In the fountain of slaunder discovered* (1649). He observes that despite the "infinite obligations of love and thankfulness" which bind Christians to God, they are nevertheless "extremely averse . . . to the essentiall and practicall part of Religion," which includes

championing the "publique good."³⁰⁴ "Zeal" is an insufficient determiner of true religion, and despite the vast array of religious opinions, "every man is confident" in his own. Walwyn asks, "who then is right in judgement?" Those who "practice" their faith, explaining why there is "so much weakness, so much emptiness, vanity, and to speak softly, so much unchristianity."³⁰⁵ The religious practice of 'doing good' comprehends the welfare of one's country, and for Walwyn, expressed in seeking "the settlement of the Government of this Nation by an Agreement of the People" was "for the good of my native Country"; it was a good work, despite earning "still nothing but evil for my labour."³⁰⁶

The Independent Minister John Canne, who indulged in Fifth Monarchy sympathies, attacked the Levellers in *The discoverer. Wherein is set forth (to undeceive the nation) the reall plots and stratagemes of Lievt. Col. John Lilburn, Mr. William Walwyn, Mr. Thomas Prince, Mr. Richard Overton, and that partie . . . the First Part* (1649). He associated Leveller atheism with national spiritual degeneracy which would necessarily follow the absence of a religious requirement in their *Agreement*. Convinced "that Religion, and the true worship of God," promotes "the safetie and prosperitie of a Common-wealth," when men abandon its "practice" they descend into a "hereticall, atheisticall, and blasphemous wayes" and inflict "Gods curse and plagues upon a Nation." Canne claims that the Levellers "are *Atheists* and *Antiscripturists*, or little better." In "the *Agreement of the People*, which they call, *the standard and ultimate scope of their designs*. Amongst all their *Proposals* and *Articles* (which are thirty at least) there is not one thing proposed, for the holding forth and furtherance of Gods publick worship and service."³⁰⁷

Canne's tract was answered by Dr. Humphrey Brooke, Walwyn's son-in-law, with *The crafts-mens craft. Or the wiles of the discoverers* on June 25. Brooke was astounded at Canne's charge of atheism given the Levellers' "Profession," and "Acknowledgment and Submission to a Deity." Though they disapproved of "the Formal, or rather Suppositious part of Gods Service," since they considered the Scriptures somewhat unsettled here, they endorsed "the real and practical part of his Worship." They considered God's worship as bearing a more applied approach to those very distinct and discernible aspects of faith; "to the Rule and Dictates of Scripture, which are plain, obvious, and indisputable," and

³⁰¹ Thomas Prince, *The silken independents snare broken* (London, June 20, 1649), 2, 5. Medical Doctor Humphrey Brooke, Walwyn's son-in-law, also came to his defense with *The charity of church-men: or, A vindication of Mr William Walwyn merchant* (London, May 28, 1649).

³⁰² William Walwyn, *Just defense against the aspertions cast upon him in a late un-Christian pamphlet entituled Walwyns wiles* (London, 1649), 18, 22.

³⁰³ *Ibid.*, 23.

³⁰⁴ William Walwyn, *The fountain of slaunder discovered* (May 30, 1649), 1, 3.

³⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 10, 11.

³⁰⁷ John Canne, *The discoverer* (London, June 23, 1649), 9, 10.

confirmed by James “to be *Pure Religion*,” such as “*Honour God: viz When our Light doth so shine before men that they seeing our good works, may glorifie our Father which is in Heaven.*”³⁰⁸ “An Atheist” was a “Politician” who lacked “singleness of heart” in service to their country. The fact that *An agreement* did not advance “the holding forth of God’s Worship and Service” is not evidence of atheism or irreligion, but that “We would have the People chuse their own Ministers.”³⁰⁹

At this point, it would be fruitful to briefly trace some of the pamphlet history of Walwyn’s emphasis upon the nature and consequences of true religion, which includes his social and political reading of James 1:22-27. In *A whisper in the eare of Mr. Thomas Edwards minister* (1646) he gives us a glimpse into his own religious transformation which inspired him to pursue “a more publick way” of Christian service which included both church and state.

Before this Parliament I was of full years to be sensible of the oppression of the times, being now forty five years of age, having accustomed my self to all kinds of good reading, and to the consideration of all things; . . . but upon the approbation of some authors and teachers that had captivated my understanding both in things morall, politique, and religious: in the last of which, being very serious and sincere in my application of things to my conscience, my grounds being bad, though much applauded, I found much disconsolation therein, great uncertainty, and at last extream affliction of mind, the Law and Gospel fighting for victory in me, in which conflict, the Scriptures were taken in more singly, and void of glosse, to my assistance, by the cleare light whereof, I saw the enemies I feared vanquished, which wrought real a thankfulnes in me towards *Christ*, which increased with the increasings of faith: insomuch as I set my self daily more and more to do his will: and that in a more publick way then formerly. . . . I, with others, moved for reformation, . . . to move the Parliament to confirm certain infallible maximes of free Government.³¹⁰

Walwyn described the sort of active Christian service he pursued to include labouring on behalf of the liberty of his country. He also details his personal experience of the transformative effects of Gospel-love in *The power of*

love (1643), noting that when you “walk as becometh the Gospel of Christ: you will no longer minde high things, but make yourselves equall to men of low degree,” and “hazard your lives for God, in defence of his truth from error; in defence of your brother or neighbour from oppression or tyranny.”³¹¹ “Tyrants and oppressors” as Walwyn defines them, are those who apply “might and force to pervert al Lawes, and compacts amongst men,” who “pervert the truth of God into a lie,” and skew “his sacred word as patron of their unjust power.”³¹² On the other hand,

true Christians are of all men the most valiant defenders of the just liberties of their Countrey, and the most zealous preservers of true Religion: vindicating the truths of God with their lives, against all ungodlinesse and unrighteousness of men: making thereby the whole world to know that true Christianity hates and abhorres tyranny, oppression, perjury, cruelty, deceit, and all kinde of filthiness.³¹³

In *a still and soft voice from the scriptures, witnessing them to be the word of God* (1647), Walwyn contrasts the nature of irreligion with true religion. Irreligious persons are “but meere morall christians: utterly ignorrant of the cleare Heavenly brightnesse,” which is “inherent, in pure and undefiled Religion.”³¹⁴ Quoting from James 1:27 the “effects of pure and undefiled Religion” are “Feeding the hungry, Cloathing the naked, Visiting the sick, the Fatherlesse, the Widdowes and Prisoners: and in all things *walking as becometh the Gospell of Christ.*”³¹⁵

The political and social place for James 1:22-27 makes its appearance in another of Walwyn’s tracts; *The vanitie of the present churches and uncertainty of their preaching, discovered* (1649), and which includes “freeing a Commonwealth from all Tyrants, oppressors, and deceivers.”

For such as the tree is, such ever will be the fruit; they boast to have the Spirit of God & you see it is but boasting, or their own imagination only: and in the mean time, take the Scriptures for a dead *Letter*; and either reject them, or make them speak according to the spirit of their own Imaginations; and so

³⁰⁸ Humphrey Brooke, *The crafts-mens craft. Or the wiles of the discoverers* (London, June 25, 1649), 5-6.

³⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 7, 8.

³¹⁰ William Walwyn, *A whisper in the eare of Mr. Thomas Edwards minister* (London, 1646), 3-4.

³¹¹ William Walwyn, *The power of love* (London, September 12, 1643), 38, 39.

³¹² *Ibid.*, 39-40.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 41.

³¹⁴ William Walwyn, *In a still and soft voice from the scriptures, witnessing them to be the word of God* (London, 1647), 4.

³¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 9-10.

instead of being reall, are at best by fantastick Christians, uncertain (if not false) Teachers: and such are their fruits. The greatest part of their time, wherein they should be employed to feed the hungry, cloath the naked, or in visiting the fatherlesse & widdow, or in delivering the Captive, and setting the oppressed free (all which are workes, so fully and plainly set forth in Scripture, as most pleasing to God) being spent in talking upon some hard texts of Scripture.³¹⁶

A second political use of James 1:22-27 is also instanced in the same tract.

. . . . Certainly, were we all busied onely in those short necessary truths, we should soon become practicall Christians; and take more pleasure in Feeding the hungry, Cloathing the naked, visiting and comforting of the sicke, releiving the aged, weake and impotent; in delivering of Prisoners, supporting of poore families, or in freeing a Commonwealth from all Tyrants, oppressors, and decievers, (the authors and promoters of all corruption and superstition) thereby manifesting our universal love to all mankind, without respect of persons, Opinions, Societies, or Churches; doubtless there were no way like unto this, to adorne the Gospel of Christ; men and women so exercising themselves, and perservering therein, might possibly deserve the name of Saints.³¹⁷

In another interesting tract issued from the Tower by Lilburne, Prince, and Overton entitled *The picture of the council of state, held forth to the free people of England* (1649), Overton included a letter to the Lieutenant of the Tower written on April 4, which reveals his sense of a Christian's societal responsibility to advance the interests of the Commonwealth, and couched in terms of brotherly love and serving one's neighbour.

As I am in myself in respect to my own personall sins and transgressions; so I am unto self and to God, and so I must give an account; the just must stand by his own faith: But as I am in relation to the Commonwealth, that all men have cognisance of, because it concerns their own particular lives, livelihoods and beings, as well as my own; and my failings and evils in that respect I yeeld up to the cognisance of all men, to be righteously used against me. So that the business is, not

how great a sinner I am, but how faithfull and reall to the Common-wealth; that's the matter concerneth my neighbour, and whereof my neighbour is only in this publick Controversie to take notice; and for my personal sins that are not of a Civil cognisance or wrong unto him, to leave them to God, whose judgment is righteous and just. And till persons professing Religion be brought to this sound temper, they fall short of Christianity; the spirit of love, brotherly charity, doing to all men as they would be done by, is not in them; without which they are but as a sounding brass and a tinkling cymball, a whited wall, rottenness and corruption, let their ceremonial formall practice of Religion be never so Angel-like or specious.³¹⁸

James's "pure and undefiled religion," for the Leveller, was a relational principle which extended to not only a neighbour's every economic need, but to the political needs of the commonwealth. The greatest love a Christian could demonstrate is that of laying down his life for his brother, his community, and his country.

Political Principles Derived from Man's (and Woman's) Divinely Created State

Birthright of Liberty

Leveller arguments for liberty as well as political and legal equality are located in the very nature and ground of man's constitution, and hence, scripturally ontological. The Genesis account of man's creation as an individual male and female, made in God's image, and therefore endowed with attributes and rights, is attested to and confirmed by the common law and the law of nature. No overwrought or undue emphasis is placed on Adam as bearing a birthright of patriarchal rule handed down through generations of eldest sons. All Englishmen, including women, should enjoy their "birthright" of liberty.

John Lilburne rehearsed the "birthrights of free-born Englishmen" by resorting to Magna Carta (1215) and Petition of Right (1628), and especially Sir Edward Coke's interpretation of them.³¹⁹ We find him at his finest in defending England's ancient charters of liberty, with their emphasis upon consent, the right to property, no taxation without representation, as well as due

³¹⁶ William Walwyn, *The vanitie of the present churches and uncertainty of their preaching, discovered* (March 12, 1649), 23-24.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 43-44.

³¹⁸ John Lilburne, Thomas Prince, and Richard Overton, *The picture of the council of state, held forth to the free people of England* (London, April 11, 1649), 44.

³¹⁹ See *Liberty vindicated against slavery* (London, 1646).

process of law, during his occasional imprisonments when his own liberty was in jeopardy.³²⁰

The “Lawes of England,” according to Lilburne, were “the PERFECTION of Reason” if they were consonant with “the law Eternall and Naturall, and not contrary to the word of God.”³²¹ The Levellers generally considered the Scriptures and the laws of nature as complementary, and rights consistent with them pre-existing to civil government, and therefore inherent, inalienable, and inviolable. Civil government was ordained to secure them, and by doing so, achieve the peace, security, and safety of the Commonwealth.

Equality and Equity under Law

The Levellers located a theological foundation for equality in man’s internal nature and created constitution; God fashioned men and women as the most noble of creatures, having made them in His image. Levellers resorted to scriptural texts which emphasised man’s divine image-bearing nature, his capacity to reason, to take dominion over creation, and govern himself, whereas others focused on texts which stressed the Fall, human depravity, and corrupt reason. Lilburne, in *Londons liberty in chains discovered* (1646), inserts an elaborate discussion of God’s creative efforts, and its implications for equality, authority, and government are worth noting here in full. This quote also presents clear contrasts with Royalist interpretations of Genesis chapters 1 and 4 previously discussed.

THE omnipotent, glorious, and wise God, creating man for his own praise; made him more glorious then all the rest of his Creatures that he placed upon earth: creating him in his own Image, (which principally consisted in his reason and understanding) and made him Lord over the earth, and all the things therein contained, Gen. 26, 27, 28, 29. and chap. 5.1. and 9.6. 1Cor. 11.7. Col.3. 10; But made him not Lord, or gave him dominion over the individuals of Mankind, no further then by free consent, or agreement, by giving up their power, each to other, for their better being; so that originally, he gave no Lordship, nor Sovereignty, to any of Adams Posterity, by Will, and Prerogative, to rule over his Brethern-Men, but ingraved by nature in the soule of Man, this goulden and everlasting principle, to doe to another, as he would have another to do to him; but man by his transgression,

falling from his perfection of reason (that Image in which God created him, Col. 3. 10.) became tyrannicall, and beastly in his principles and actions; the effect of which, we see in Caines slaying of Abel; for which he was accursed of God, and all things hee went about, Gen. 4.8, 10, 11, 12. but God taking mercy of Mankind in some measure, and not executing the fulnesse of his wrath, in the 9. of Gen. to revenge that beastliness, bloody, revengfull, and devouring temper of Spirit, that, by the fall, had now entred into the Spirits of all Mankind; . . .³²²

Where Royalists emphasised Adam’s original authority to rule, passed down as the right of the firstborn son, the Levellers emphasised an inherited sonship in Adam, a “birthright” of freedom as opposed to dominion over others via patriarchy. The Fall did not provide the Levellers with principles of patriarchal rule, or Cain’s murder of Abel as grounds for a natural right of rule of the eldest; rather, these Royalist readings provided Levellers with examples of tyranny and oppression. Lilburne also prioritises the internal relational principle, the “goulden and everlasting principle, to doe to another, as he would have another to do to him,” which God fixed in man’s “soule.”

To reiterate the vital role Lilburne’s ontology plays in the development of his political principles, the following quote from *The free-mans freedome vindicated* (1646) emphasises God’s sovereignty, the image-bearing nature of man (as male and female), man’s delegated earthly dominion, equality of authority between the genders, man’s rational nature, and the nature of delegated authority. Lilburne penned this entire passage of one sentence while imprisoned at Newgate.

GOD, the absolute Sovereign Lord and King, of all things in heaven and earth, the originall fountain, and cause of all causes, who is circumscribed, governed, and limited by no rules, but doth all things meerly and onely by his sovereign will, and unlimited good pleasure, who made the world, and all things thereto, for his own glory, and who by his own will and pleasure, gave man (his meer creature) the sovereignty (under himselfe) over all the rest of his Creatures, Gen I. 26. 28. 29. and indued him with a rationall soule, or understanding, and thereby created him after his own image, Gen I. 26. 27. and 9. 6. the first of which was Adam, a male, or man made out of the dust or clay, out of whose side was taken a Rib, which by the sovereign and absolute mighty creating power of God, was

³²⁰ See *The prisoners plea for a habeas corpus* (London, May 9, 1648) and *The lawes funerall* (London, May 15, 1648).

³²¹ John Lilburne, *Londons liberty in chains discovered* (London, November 2, 1646), 41.

³²² *Ibid.*, 17-18.

made a female, or Woman call'd *Eve*, which two are the earthly, original fountain, as begetters and bringers forth of all and every particular and individuall man and woman, that ever breathed in the world since, who are, and were by nature all equall and alike in power, dignity, authority, and majesty, none of them having (by nature) any authority dominion or magisteriall power, one over or above another, neither have they, or can they exercise any, but meere by institution, or donation, that is to say, by mutuall agreement or consent, given, derived, or assumed, by mutuall consent and agreement, for the good benefit and comfort each of other, and not for the mischief, hurt, or damage of any, it being unnaturall, irrationall, sinfull, wicked and unjust, for any man, or men whatsoever, to part with so much of their power, as shall enable any of their Parliament men, Commissioners, Trustees, deputies, Viceroyes, Ministers, Officers or servants, to destroy and undoe them therewith: And unnaturall, irrationall, sinfull, wicked, unjust, divelish, and tyranicall it is, for any man whatsoever, spirituall or temporall, Cleargy-man or Lay-man, to appropriate and assume unto himselfe, a power, authority and jurisdiction, to rule govern, or raign over any sort of men in the world, without their free consent, and whosoeverdoth it, whether Cleargy-man or any other whatsoever, doe thereby as much as in them lyes, endeavour to appropriate & assume unto themselves the Office and sovereignty of God, (who alone doth, and is to rule by his will and pleasure) and to be like their Creator, which was the sinne of the Devils, who not being content with their first station, but would be like God, for which sin they were thrown down into hell, reserved in everlasting chaines, under darknes, unto the judgement of the great day *Jude ver .6.* And *Adams* sin it was, which brought the curse upon him and all his posterity, that he was not content with the station and condition that God created him in, but did aspire unto a better, and had been the everlasting ruin and destruction of him and all his, had not God been the more mercifull unto him in the promised *Messiah*. *Gen. Chap. 3.*³²³

This key passage reveals the theological underpinnings of virtually all of Lilburne's political principles, including his understanding of tyranny and despotism.

³²³ John Lilburne, *The free-mans freedome vindicated* (London, June 23, 1646), 11-12 in *A Postscript, containing a generall Proposition*.

He emphasises man's rationale and understanding, even joining Eve to Adam as a co-regent, both equal in "power," "dignity," "authority" and "majesty". Though Adam was created first, he never bore a right of lordship over Eve and their children, and hence, could assert no intrinsic right of dominion or patriarchy. Lilburne concludes that since such equality of authority was inherent within the created natures of that first couple, neither Adam nor Eve could justify the right to rule the other unless by consent for their "good benefit and comfort," as opposed to "mischiefe hurt or damage." It would be just as "unnaturall, irrational, sinfull, wicked, and unjust," for any individual to submit such power to civil or ecclesiastical magistrates without their consent, and who are bent on their harm. Lilburne equates such a prerogative of authority with idolatry, a pretention to deity, and therefore, a sharing in the spirit of the Devil and his original sin.

Natural Rights: Birthright of Liberty

The Levellers believed that the very created nature of man afforded him an array of rights natural to his constitution which neither he nor anyone else, including Parliament, could divest him of. Overton claimed in *An arrow against all tyrants* (1645) that "by nature we are the sons of *Adam*, and from him have legitimately derived a naturall propriety, right and freedome."³²⁴ The Fall never alienated man from these rights, or the innate power and authority to protect them.

To every Individuall in nature, is given an individuall property by nature, not to be invaded or usurped by any: for every one as he is himselfe, so he hath a selfe propriety, . . . No man hath power over my rights and liberties, and I over no mans; . . . For by naturall birth, all men are equally and alike borne to like propriety, liberty and freedome, and as we are delivered of God by the hand of nature into this world, every one with a naturall, innate freedome and propriety (as it were writ in the table of every mans heart, never to be obliterated) even so are we to live, every one equally and alike to enjoy his Birthright and priviledge; even all whereof God by nature hath made him free.³²⁵

The Leveller political use of Adam's creation, as well as Eve's, contrasts markedly with that of the Royalists' use. Where Royalists read the privilege of sonship through Adam as the birthright of lordship granted to the eldest, Levellers read the birthright of liberty granted to all.

³²⁴ Richard Overton, *An arrow against all tyrants* (London, 1646), 5.

³²⁵ *Ibid.*, 3.

Such freedom and liberty, innate within every human being, is the “fountain or root,” from which “all just human powers take their original.” Overton claims that this power to protect and preserve these original rights is not derived “immediately from God (as Kings usually plead their prerogative)”; but rather, from “the hand of nature, as from the represented to the representors.” God instilled such power within every individual, who alone can consent to lawfully delegate it to those best able to secure these original rights. “Every man by nature being a King, Priest and Prophet in his owne naturall circuite and compasse, whereof no second may partake, but by deputation, commission, and free consent from him, whose naturall right and freedom it is.”³²⁶ Overton derived from the divine creation of man, both male and female, the original of government.

Ecclesiastical Polity to Civil Polity: Consent and Delegation

It appears that both Lilburne and Overton were attracted to Separatism early on, and had been members of Separatist churches, while Walwyn was a fellow traveller.³²⁷ Perez Zagorin notes that Lilburne, “when he first began to write,” was “a pious and enthusiastic Separatist who held no considered political theory.”³²⁸ The Separatists were known for removing themselves from the established Church of England, and their non-conformity rested in their reading of the New Testament church structure from which they extracted consent in establishing church leadership, decentralisation in terms of church authority, and liberty of conscience in matters of religious worship and faith. Separatists also extended these ecclesiastical principles to civil structuring, and it appears the Levellers similarly read this New Testament ecclesiastical pattern as constitutionally relevant. Zagorin claims that Lilburne’s “view on the church were pregnant with possibilities for the redefinition of the political order,” and precisely because he “emphasized the voluntary and contractual character of church government.”³²⁹

One of Lilburne’s first tracts, *A light for the ignorant* (1638), reveals his separatist sympathies. He considered “*The true definition of a true visible Church of Iesus Christ*,” as “a company of people called and separated out of the world”; “Ioyned together in the fellowship of the Gospell by volentary profession of fayth and obedience of Christ”; “an independent body of itself”; “hath power

from Christ her head,” and contains “sufficient ordinary Officers.”³³⁰

In another tract titled *An answer to nine arguments* (1638), Lilburne again emphasises the voluntary nature of consent in establishing a church: “I affirme that the forme of a true Church is for a company of believers who are washed in the blood of Christ by a free and voluntary Consent or willingnesse to enter into that heavenly and holy State, City or Kingdome, which in the word of God is plentifully described.”³³¹ His 1639 Fleet prison tract *Come out of her my people*, printed in Amsterdam, represents a direct attack upon the “Anti-Christian” nature of the Anglican Church. He marshals numerous passages from the Book of Revelation to equate the Church with the “Beast,” and its Clergy more in the Devil’s line of succession as opposed to the Apostles,’ exclaiming “that all Gods people are bound in duty & conscience, to separate from it, & have no communion with it.”³³²

Richard Overton attacked the gentile-like tyranny of the House of Lords by emphasising consent with his *An alarum to the House of Lords: against their insolent usurpation of the common liberties and rights of this nation* (1646), and which landed him in Newgate Prison. He accused the Lords of valuing too highly “Titles and Honours,” calling them “markes of the Gentiles.” By invoking the narrative of the Sons of Zebedee in Matthew 20: 22-28, Overton, like Milton, equated Christ’s warning of gentile rule and lordship with the rule of the House of Lords; a pattern which Christ condemned and admonished his disciples against modelling. “Wee have our Saviours own Warrant for it, who saith, *The Kings of the Gentiles exercise Lordship over them, &c. But it shall not be so among you: Whosoever will be chief among you, (Christians,) let him be your servant: Gracious LORDS, or Favourable LORDS, titles that could not be propper amongst Christians; with whom there was no Ruler, nor Government, but by common Election and consent, agreeable to Our House of Commons: every Ruler had his Rule.*”³³³ There was no constitutional role for a House of Lords in Leveller political philosophy because its presence violated the principle of consent.

³³⁰ John Lilburne, *A light for the ignorant, A treatise shewing, that in the New Testament, is set forth three kingly states or governments* (London, s.n., 1638 but printed in 1641), 20. The word ‘ordinary,’ is misspelled in the text.

³³¹ John Lilburne, *An answer to nine arguments* (London: [s.n.], 1645), 28.

³³² John Lilburne, *Come out of her my people* (Amsterdam, 1639), 35.

³³³ Richard Overton, *An alarum to the House of Lords: against their insolent usurpation of the common liberties, and rights of this nation* (London: s.n., 1646), 3.

³²⁶ Ibid., 4.

³²⁷ See Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution* (Oxford University Press, 1978, 2002), 68-69, 118.

³²⁸ Zagorin, *A History of Political Thought in the English Revolution*, 8.

³²⁹ Ibid., 9.

David Wooton asserts that “the Levellers never claimed that their political philosophy derived from separatist religious principles,” and if it did, the movement’s “support” may have been isolated “to those who were separatist in religion.”³³⁴ Separatist assumptions about the origin and organisation of church government as understood from the New Testament did impact their constitutional theory; consent in the church led to consent in the civil polity. If consent was required for the church covenant—if this was the pattern left by Christ and His disciples—then consent should be applied to the creation of a civil polity, or, a civil covenant. Levellers never drew a fine and tight distinction between the godly and the ungodly in regards to civil leadership and incorporation, and the franchise, and possibly because all men have been made in God’s image, and thus should reap the benefits of natural rights. One could not be ‘put out’ of a political community for being a sinner, as they would be from a church.

Political Supremacy of the People: Consent and Delegation

One of the first significant Leveller manifestos which contained the heart of their political agenda was *A remonstrance of many thousand citizens . . . to their owne House of Commons* (1646), crafted by Overton and Walwyn while Lilburne languished in prison for slandering the Earl of Manchester. *A remonstrance* highlighted the leading Leveller principles of the sovereignty of the people, consent, annual parliaments, and liberty of conscience.

The authors vent their accusatory assault against the House of Commons, now dominated by Presbyterians, for failing to “preserve the Common-wealth in Peace and Happiness,” the grand objective with which they were entrusted by way of delegation via the people’s consent. Instead, their actions and policies were reminiscent of an unelected King and House of Lords bent on preserving their own interests at the expense of the peoples’. They claimed the Commons had been governing outside its legitimate authority since it over extended its sitting beyond the lawfully established annum to five years. Their argument rested in a doctrine of the supremacy of the consent of the people by way of lawful delegation. Since the original authority to govern is inherent within each individual, and entrusted to magistrates by way of delegation and voluntary consent, that original grant of authority cannot lawfully continue beyond its established sitting, and thus revokable. “We possessed you with the same

Power that was in our selves, to have done the same; For wee might justly have done it our selves without you, if we had thought it convenient.”³³⁵

They also accused the Commons of exercising authority over matters of religious worship and conscience, though “neither you nor none else can have any into power at all to conclude the People in matters that concerne the Worship of God, for therein every one of us ought to be fully assured in our owne mindes, and to be sure to Worship him according to our Consciences.” Such a power could never have been lawfully delegated; “for wee could not conferre a Power that was not in our selves, there being none of us, that can without wilfull sinne, binde our selves to worship God after any other way, then what (to a tittle,) in our owne particular understandings, wee approve to be just.”³³⁶ Three times the authors exclaim that the workings of the Commons are tantamount to the work of evil, and part of the “mystery of iniquity” which Paul warns of in 2 Thessalonians 2:7-8.³³⁷

Liberty of Conscience: Separation of Church and State

All three Leveller theorists stressed the illegitimate role of magistrates in matters of conscience and religious worship, and warned of the inevitable persecution which accompanies such intrusive civil authority. Lilburne stressed the priority of the Gospel over the Old Testament law in this regard; that “the *Law and the Testimony of Christ*” was the “straight Rule,” which guided men in matters of worship, not “the *Ordinance, Lawes, Rights and Ceremonies of the Church of the Jewes*,” which “were types, and figures,” now irrelevant since Christ’s “death did abolish,” them. To “persecute for conscience is not of nor from God, but of and from the Diuell, and Antichrist.”³³⁸

William Walwyn was especially outspoken in regards to liberty of conscience. In *Tolleration justified, and persecution condemn’d* (1646), he claimed that the very “ground of Freedome consists” in men’s “practice and exercise of their Religion.” Parliament is to provide for the “safety and Freedome” of the people, “whereof Liberty of conscience is the principall branch.”³³⁹ In A

³³⁵ Richard Overton and William Walwyn, *A remonstrance of many thousand citizens, and other free-born people of England to their owne House of Commons* (London, July 7, 1646), 3.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 12.

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 10, 14, 17.

³³⁸ John Lilburne, *A copie of a letter, written by John Lilburne Leut. Collonell. To Mr. William Prinne Esq* (London, January, 7, 1645), 1, 3.

³³⁹ William Walwyn, *Tolleration justified, and persecution condemn’d* (London, 1646), 7, 15.

³³⁴ David Wooton, “Leveller Democracy and the Puritan Revolution,” in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought (1450-1700)*, eds. J.H. Burns and Mark Goldie (Cambridge University Press, 1994), 436.

word more to Mr. Thomas Edwards (1646), Walwyn exclaims that “for of all liberty liberty of Conscience is the greatest and where that is not: a true Christian findeth none.”³⁴⁰ Again, in *A helpe to the right understanding of a discourse concerning independency* (1645), Walwyn states that men must not be “compelled by fines, imprisonments, or other punishments, to worship contrary to our consciences,” and instead, “beare with one anothers infirmitie.” None can claim to “have an infallibility of judgement”; instead, “everyone ought to be fully perswaded in his owne minde of the lawfullness of the way wherein he serveth God.”³⁴¹

Richard Overton’s *Vox plebis, or, The peoples out-cry against oppression, injustice, and tyranny* (1646) emphasises the image of God as the basis for liberty of conscience. “The conscience,” he claims, “is a Divine impression, or illumination, in the soule of man, . . . the ingraven Character of the mind & wil of God,” and “therefore it is not to bee constrained, or inforced to submit to any other rule, then what the Creator, by his revealed will, according to the Scriptures, hath imprinted in it: And for that cause is onely to bee accountable to him, whose image it is; as being the onely competent Judge of his owne will.”³⁴² In *The araignement of Mr. Persecution* (1645), Overton initiates an entire section on “Liberty-of-Conscience,” and resorts to Christ’s parable in Matthew 13.50 which warns against plucking up the wheat with the tares; “PERSECUTION destroyeth the Innocent with the wicked, contrary to the command of Christ.”³⁴³

Concluding Comments

The three Leveller *Agreements*, though concise, are packed with detailed distillations of constitutional principles and government organisation familiar to the modern reader. The authors use the word ‘agreement’ to engage and enjoin the people to consider their constitutional proposals. They consistently promote republican governments via successive parliaments freely elected by a broad-based franchise. Popular prerogative was to prevail over kingly, and the people could only part with their authority via consent and delegation. Their other key political pillars, largely reasoned from the created nature of mankind, are limited government, liberty of conscience, separation of civil powers, separation between church and state, popular

sovereignty and consent, as well as unalienable rights and reserved powers. Each was conducive to achieving liberty, the greatest political good, and not economic or social levelling as some characterised their programme.

Their reading of James’s admonition in chapters 1:22-27 is a unique extension of religious service to incorporate commonwealth as well as community. Christianity is a practical and relational religion which consists not only of moral duties to care for the economic welfare of one’s neighbour, but the liberty-welfare of one’s neighbour and country too! As for their application of the ‘golden rule,’ what better service can there be than to craft a commonwealth to promote and protect liberty as opposed to tyranny? This was an expression of neighbourly love!

What a marked difference between the political principles of the Levellers and Royalists relative to writing politics out of the creation of the first couple, and the relationship between Cain and Abel. The Levellers stressed a ‘birthright’ of liberty based in the created natures of men and women as divine image bearers, who originally related equally under a sovereign God. This is a critical Leveller narrative, as they do not typically associate specific texts with constitutional design. Rather, their model appears reasoned from the greater creation story in an attempt to tease out principles of government for all human relationships, especially that of civil government. They were also quite unique in their demand for a written constitution to hold magistrates perpetually accountable.

³⁴⁰William Walwyn, *A word more to Mr. Thomas Edwards, minister, concerning the nationall covenant* (London, 1646), 5.

³⁴¹William Walwyn, *A helpe to the right understanding of a discourse concerning independency* (London, 1645), 4.

³⁴² Richard Overton’s *Vox plebis, or, The peoples out-cry against oppression, injustice, and tyranny* (London, 1646), 4.

³⁴³ Richard Overton, *The araignement of Mr. Persecution* (London, April 8, 1645), 22. The entire argument continues to p. 45.

Prospects for Political Hermeneutics

Biblical political ideas are expressed through the description of the institutions, events, and prophecies connected with the government of ancient Israel. Less formally articulated than Greek political thought, the biblical political teaching must be discovered in the same manner that all biblical knowledge must emerge, by careful examination and analysis of the text with careful attention to recurring words and patterns and the reconciliation of apparent contradictions.

Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel* (1995), 12.³⁴⁴

As indicated previously, many seventeenth-century British political thinkers reflected purposefully upon the Bible for timeless political truths, and convinced it consisted of normative God-given civil commands and ideals for constitutional design. Nevertheless, as these four representative categories demonstrate, they did not read the Bible politically and constitutionally the same way, or draw significantly from the same passages, genres, figures or Canons for that matter. Furthermore, they also differed on their understanding of the relationship between *Nature* and *Grace*, which influenced why they prioritised biblical passages over classical ones for their political ideas. Not all concluded a republic either, as some believed God's highest civil order for man was a monarchy; a mirror polity of His own supposed model of governance traceable through patriarchal lines. Political use is even trickier to tease out if diverse polities prioritise the same scriptural passage. Unfortunately, such a mixture of early modern biblical readings and interpretive approaches has emboldened some scholars to relegate their political contributions to either mystical inspirations, or clever literary constructs consisting of a dash of scriptural window dressing to gain an audience, all the while subversively emphasising pagan classical political models.

Principalising and Paradigmatic Approaches

Elazar's perspective above is a simple yet refreshing reminder that the interpretive approach of extracting 'political ideas' from the Scriptures should follow the same methodology when mining its meaning for life

application in other fields. This approach assumes the author and text are superior to the reader's response, that the author's intended meaning for his first audience is the same for subsequent ones, that the original languages take priority over translations, that grammatical and syntactical constructs are fundamental conventions of communication, that literary types and figures of speech come packaged with principles of interpretation unique to them, and that the various levels of context, whether historical, social, ethical, or political all bear interpretive weight. This process of establishing meaning is further augmented by the attempt at significance, or life and relational application, such as governance and political relationships. This approach demands serious scrutiny of textual, contextual, and historical particulars. Nevertheless, this entire interpretive process is complicated by the tendency to prefer the New Testament over the Old Testament, or to prioritise elaborate schemes of substance modification and repetition.³⁴⁵ The "repealed unless repeated" or "mandatory unless modified" perspective will prevent us from determining God's relational expectations for governance or the relationship between rulers and ruled, and in large part, because these interpretive notions subject the Old Testament Law particularly, which includes civil-political mandates, to a level of historical interest only.

Despite the need to investigate all layers of the Scriptural text, deriving a coherent governmental/civil model from the Scriptures based upon a consistent hermeneutical approach is challenging, doubly so given the necessity to concentrate upon the Old Testament and the polity of Israel. Not only must the nature of that polity be determined, but its continued relevance and applicability resolved, despite its neglected mentioning in the New Testament. There must be due consideration to teasing out the inspired principles and normative commands, as well as that form and structure, or model which reflected those dynamic, internal requisites.

The principalising and paradigmatic approaches covet and incorporate each of these interpretive particulars despite some rather nuanced, though not unbridgeable differences. Given their slight methodological disparities summarised below, they share critical assumptions in regards to the ethical use of the Old Testament for contemporary application; one focuses upon the primacy of principles which reflect the righteous and

³⁴⁴ Daniel J. Elazar, *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel; Biblical Foundations & Jewish Expressions*, vol. 1, *Covenant Tradition in Politics* (New Brunswick, NJ; London: Transaction Publishers, 1995), 12.

³⁴⁵ Walter Kaiser Jr., *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987), 147.

holy character of God and their life application, while the other incorporates the application of principles as derived from the broader context of Israel's national experience as God's ethical model to the nations. This last section attempts to argue the need to consider and search for the seed (principle) and the shell (paradigm) so to speak, when investigating the relevance of Israel's polity, as both may bear an authoritative claim on constitutional design, and for that matter, life generally. This both/and approach requires an examination of principles and paradigms to understand the nature and relevance of Israel's polity, or how to 'write politics out of Israel,' as well as the Gospel for that matter.

Such a blended approach is hardly without difficulties. Nevertheless, as Walter Kaiser Jr. points out in his *Toward Old Testament Ethics* (1983), though the very nature of Old Testament ethics speaks to a level of scholarly difficulty discouraging to most who embark upon its study generally, "there still is an enormous need in Old Testament scholarship and in the church at large for an Old Testament ethics that will treat the subject as systematically and irenically as possible." We need continual reminding that it represents "77 percent of the total biblical corpus,"³⁴⁶ which constitutional design and political ethics are an integral part. The principal and paradigmatic approaches may provide a way through the diversity of methods to meet the issue of constitutional design.

The Principalsing Approach: The Bible as a body of Principles and Normative Commands

According to Joe M. Sprinkle in *Biblical Law and its Relevance, A Christian Understanding and Ethical Application for Today of Mosaic Regulations* (2005), the "principalsing approach" examines "each law" to determine "what principle—moral or religious—underlies this regulation," with the objective of reapplying that very principle to modern society. This approach concedes the radical and real differences between the "cultural, historical and theological setting" of the people of Israel in comparison with the modern world, but recognises that principles immediately associated with Israel's heritage are not time-bound but "transcend their original cultural and covenantal setting."³⁴⁷

Principalsing begins with consideration and analysis of "a particular law," whether of a civil, ceremonial, or moral nature, and then proceeds upward through a method of abstraction as opposed to direct application

"to find a more general moral or religious principle that undergirds that law." An interpreter ascends abstractly until he locates the principle, or intent, which gives rise to the command. Once discovered, this "principle . . . is then reapplied today taking into consideration the changed cultural and theological setting under the new covenant." Sprinkle notes Kaiser's use of the term "ladder of abstraction" to describe the process by which one makes biblical application of principles to "analogous situations today."³⁴⁸

Some of the principalsing approach's significant strengths are found first in its recognition and affirmation of the Old Testament's comprehensive profitability toward godliness and righteousness as confirmed in 2 Timothy 3:16-17; "all the laws: moral, civil, and ritual" are relevant for righteous instruction. Furthermore, this method "allows Paul's positive statements about Christians keeping the law (Romans 3:31, etc.) to be true." Though this approach recognises the impossibility of making direct application of all of Israel's laws given the new covenant, it also discourages the unnecessary classification of the Mosaic Law into moral, civil, and ceremonial segments by highlighting the abiding nature of principles supportive of each.³⁴⁹

There seems to be significant internal scriptural support for this approach. Ezra's contemporary application of Deuteronomy 7:1-5, which forbids Israelites from intermarrying with Canaanites, denounced marriages between Israel and "non-Canaanite foreigners" (Ezra 9:1-2). Ezra links two very similar historic situations or comparable particulars separated by centuries with the principle of the same command; just as Israel would be (and was) lead "astray spiritually" by marrying Canaanites, so too would Israel in Ezra's time be tempted to depart from her covenant with God by marrying foreigners of a non-Canaanite extraction. Any foreign marriage was relationally as much of a threat to God's covenant demands upon Israel as Canaanites were. Paul's apparent principalsing of the command against muzzling a threshing ox (Deuteronomy 25:4) to argue against withholding economic support of ministers of the Gospel is another case in point.³⁵⁰

According to Kaiser, the "Ladder of Abstraction" represents "a continuous sequence of categorizations from a low level of generality up to a high level of specificity."³⁵¹ At issue is how we actually conclude

³⁴⁶ Ibid., 2.

³⁴⁷ Joe M. Sprinkle, *Biblical Law and its Relevance, A Christian Understanding and Ethical Application for Today of Mosaic Regulations* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005), 20, 21.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., 21. Kaiser's phrase "ladder of abstraction," is found in his *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1987, 1991), 164.

³⁴⁹ Ibid., 22, 23.

³⁵⁰ Ibid., 23. Sprinkle notes other examples of Paul's apparent use of this method. See p. 24.

³⁵¹ Kaiser, *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament*, 165.

abiding transcendent principles from Old Testament commands using this method. As Kaiser frames it, how do we confront “the problem of how one derives principles, “middle axioms,” from these specific commands of God that were originally addressed to a people in another culture, another time, and another situation than ours?”³⁵²

The issue of the high level of specificity of Old Testament commands must be boldly faced, for much of the Old Testament law comes to us not as moral absolutes and in a book of moral, social, and legal abstractions. Instead, it comes as a host of specific enactments distinctively relevant to particular times, persons, and places. It is the awkwardness of this obviously “dated” material that threatens to doom our whole discussion to failure.

But the problem of particularity and specificity were not meant to prejudice the universal usefulness of these portions of the Bible; rather they were intended in many ways to reduce our labours by pointing directly to the concrete, real, personal, and practical application of the injunctions proffered. Since the text was given primarily for the common people, the message was relayed on a level where they would find it easiest to grasp. Had the truth been confined to abstract and theoretical axioms, the prerogative would have been confined to the elite and the scholarly.³⁵³

The “particularity and specificity” of the law did not prevent its further application outside those initial situations which the law originally aimed at, as evidenced by Old and New Testament illustrations.

Since there is a single underlying principle and since a particular law uniquely aimed at a particular situation could be repeated two or three times in the *Torah*, for quite different applications, it is clear that one and the same law had multiple equity or applications even while it retained a single meaning.³⁵⁴

Our concern is with political and governmental material embedded in Old Testament commands of a moral and civil, and possibly ceremonial nature. What is the procedure for teasing out or abstracting political principles or middle axioms from an assortment of specific commands? The short answer is that it is the same as that for deriving any other matter of wider societal application. Kaiser states that “Scripture itself

must supply” these principles, which in turn, “must not be so general and so all embracing that they give very little guidance in dealing with specific applications.”³⁵⁵ As part of this principalising process, we must recognise that the Bible contains “four levels of generality and particularity,” beginning with God’s supreme command of absolute devotion and obedience to Him as demanded in Deuteronomy 6:5 and Matthew 22:37, and moving to the next relational level of neighbourly love as commanded in Leviticus 19:18 and Matthew 22:39. The Decalogue represents a more specific application of these two primary commands in “ten parts,” and the numerous cases in turn “relate to one or more of the Ten Commandments.”³⁵⁶

The next step renders the specificity of the case laws into “the generality of middle axioms or universal principles,” and does so “by observing the morality and theology that undergirds and informs each law.” To find this substance, it must be determined if a “theological or moral *reason* is explicitly given”; if any “direct *citations* or indirect *allusions*, or historical references” are associated with any situations or lessons which predate the command; if any potential analogous passages which more clearly reveal “dependence on moral law and theology” exist, and then practice the “principle of legitimate *inference* or implication to extend what is written into a series of parallel commands, where the moral or theological grounds for what is written and what is inferred remain the same.”³⁵⁷

The emphasis of the principalising approach is upon the divine perspective and intention for human relationships and conduct. It assumes that God has, fundamentally, delivered propositions, prescriptions and ethical commands to order Israel’s relationships and ours, all of which are universal and absolute in nature, not time-bound and antiquated. The specificity of commands does not result in interpretive paralysis, but provides a means of moving outward towards a universal principle for re-application to modern issues. Kaiser’s summary says it well:

But the fact that the Old Testament *prescribes*—and what it prescribes has an internal *consistency* with the whole Old Testament canon, which has often been derived from what are specific injunctions in which can be discerned general or *universalisable* principles—forms the heart of the case for the possibility of Old Testament ethics.³⁵⁸

³⁵² Ibid., 149.

³⁵³ Ibid., 155.

³⁵⁴ Ibid., 156.

³⁵⁵ Ibid., 157.

³⁵⁶ Ibid., 159.

³⁵⁷ Ibid.

³⁵⁸ Kaiser, *Toward Old Testament Ethics*, 29.

Though various Old Testament commands come packaged in a cultural milieu enveloping real people, issues, and customs, the form of any command tends to contain the essence of a principle, which is absolute and timeless in its application. Cultural distance does not undermine the significance of the specific principle at the heart of a command, and precisely because God Himself represents that “central organizing tenet of Old Testament ethics”; God’s holiness and righteousness, and all His unchanging character attributes, represent the ethical centre of Old Testament commands.

What gives wholeness, harmony, and consistency to the morality enjoined in the Old Testament? Is the Old Testament ethic, in some sense, an ordered whole? And if there is such a thing as a centre to the Old Testament in the ethical realm, how can such a claim be substantiated without giving a detailed examination of every particular ethical directive given in the Old Testament?

Biblical ethics has a distinctive source and content, and it commands a distinctive response from all mortals. The first context in which the ethicist can define his total enterprise is found in the Old Testament ethical depiction of God. The Old Testament writers carefully avoided resting their case for ethics on any conception of man’s moral nature or capacities; rather, their foundation was laid “ . . . in the ethical conception of God, whose character and will had been made known to them both in words and deeds of grace. [This] they found [to be] the one grand and positive principle of all moral life.” The ethical directions and morality of the Old Testament were grounded, first of all, in the nature of God directly. Thus, what God required was what he himself was and is. At the heart of every moral command was the theme “I am the Lord” or “Be holy as I the Lord your God am holy” (Lev. 18:5, 6, 30; 19:2, 3, 4, 10, 12, 14, 18, 25, 31, 32, 33, 36, 37, etc.)³⁵⁹

Interpretive issues of course do arise, such that principles are often isolated from their sociological context, and doubt develops as to whether or not a principle can even be discovered or an author’s intention discerned. What sort of authoritative claim can principles even make on conscience and conduct? The emphasis upon principles is often seen as too prescriptive and demanding, and therefore non-relational, rational and mechanical. How far can one

reasonably make appropriate use of this “ladder of abstraction?” What about extracting life application from other genres apart from discrete legal material? The principalising approach does not negate the ethical use of narrative, proverbial, poetic, prophetic genres, or any other literary genre for that matter, but its focus seems best adapted to the applicational significance of legal material. Another issue is the tendency to overlook the forms; principles come packaged in historical scenarios, institutional structures and relationships and therefore, the potential exists for neglecting their relevance. ‘Paradigms,’ or institutional and relational templates expressive of Israel’s political experience and history must also be considered as having ethical relevance.

Paradigmatic Approach: Israel as a Model Ethical Community

A paradigm is an ideal, an exemplar, or pattern one seeks to emulate and imitate. Israel’s institutional structure and political culture which expressed its civil governing procedures, or the manner in which rulers were to relate to those ruled, is paradigmatic in nature. God delivered relational revelation or relational requirements to a real people – “His people” – as to how to righteously interact with Him, each other, and the surrounding gentile cultures. Consider a summary statement of “the ethical authority of a paradigm” by Christopher J. Wright in *Jubilee Manifesto, a Framework, Agenda, and Strategy for Christian Social Reform* (2005):

In essence it means that early Israel was, intentionally, an example for us of how the relational realities of the created order and the commands to love God and neighbour should shape the life and institutions of a society. It is the coherent interconnectedness of this example that gives it its ‘paradigmatic’ quality and is to be imitated in other contexts.³⁶⁰

Wright claims in *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (2004), that to bridge the “gap” between “our observation of the integrated world of Israel’s faith and society into the world of our own context,” we must “regard the society and laws of Israel as a *paradigm*.” We cannot “replicate Israelite society in our own age by some programme of heavily literal adherence to the Old Testament laws,” or refuse to “bother at all with ‘what

³⁵⁹ Ibid. The portion in italics is quoted from W.S. Bruce, *The Ethics of the Old Testament*, 2nd ed. enl (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909), 2.

³⁶⁰ Christopher J. Wright, “The Ethical Authority of the Biblical Social Vision,” in *Jubilee Manifesto, a Framework, Agenda, and Strategy for Christian Social Reform*, edited by Michael Schluter and John Ashcroft (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005), 69, see note 3.

Israel did'; that is, to dismiss the Old Testament as ethically irrelevant altogether."³⁶¹

One such paradigm, the Hebrew polity, included an institutional structure of constitutional design, or an external form through which civil relationships were governed. Simply because this polity was cast culturally in a milieu pre-dating our own does not disqualify it from our political consideration. Neither can we simply extract the principles which generated it, or even reapply them in a way completely foreign to that original design. Consider the following explanation of the authoritative claims of Israel as paradigmatic generally for Christian social reform:

The social shape of Israel was not an incidental freak of ancient history. Nor was it just a temporary, material by-product of their spiritual message. We cannot set aside the social dimension of the Old Testament as a kind of husk, out of which we claim to extract a kernel of spiritual timeless truths. Rather, the social reality of Israel was an integral part of what God had called them into existence for. Theologically, the purpose of Israel's existence was to be a vehicle both for God's revelation and for the blessing of humanity. They were not only the bearers of redemption, but were to be a model of what a redeemed community should be like, living in obedience to God's will. Their social structure, aspirations, principles and policies, so organically related to their covenantal faith in the LORD, were also part of the content of that revelation, part of the pattern of redemption. God's message of redemption through Israel was not just verbal; it was visible and tangible. They, the medium, were themselves part of the message. Simply by existing and being obedient to the covenant law of the LORD, they would raise questions among the nations about the nature of their God and the social justice of their community.³⁶²

Wright is not suggesting that a paradigmatic approach should move beyond textual particulars to emphasise the social "story" of Israel at the expense of specific universal commands and absolute divine prescriptions. Neither is he emphasising a sociological approach whereby whatever Israel "did," we "ought" to do. A paradigmatic approach does not deny the importance of principalising, with its emphasis upon what a text meant to its original audience and the importance of

discovering abiding principles and normative essentials to apply to analogous situations. Rather, it incorporates principles and commands apart from a very wooden application, conceding that we do not stand in the same sort of relationship to God as Israel did, or abide in the same sort of cultural context. Principles must be considered, but if we tackle our ethical dilemmas by approaching the Old Testament as simply a collection of commands, laws, principles and propositions, we bypass the relational content and context, and reduce our exegesis to a cold, mechanical, rational, and inadvertently non-relational process. We could miss the inspired nature of the broader context if we neglect God's providential dealings with a real people He prepared for Himself. Israel, as a nation, was to be a model for other nations. The key to the paradigmatic approach is to consider the larger social and political context too—not just principles! Paradigms and principles are mutually supportive, and both may make authoritative claims upon our lives, whether corporately or individually. We are hard pressed as Christians to ignore divinely delivered commands *and* social constructs; Israel's social framework may bear authoritative weight and make a social claim because it came directly from God Himself and His requirement that she be a righteous model to the nations. Wright mentions God's long-term vision for Israel as His "priesthood in the midst of the nations," and resorts to Deuteronomy 4:6-8 as a controlling context of Israel's paradigmatic authority.

Considering Israel as a Paradigm includes the Search for Normative Principles

Reformed, dispensational, and theonomic approaches all have inherent hermeneutical weaknesses. Reformed theorists consider only the moral law as the enduring element of the Old Testament, Dispensationalists interpret the Mosaic Code as applicable to Israel only, except where it is repeated in the New Testament, and therefore, the Gospel dispensation has replaced its laws, commands, and structures. Theonomists tend to advance as normative both the Mosaic law and its legal dimensions wholesale, generally discounting the cultural and societal gaps. A paradigmatic approach, like a principalising one, guards against the literal and direct application of Israel's laws and societal forms by approaching the Mosaic Law as a unified whole, by assuming that God's holiness is an essential part of His ethical requirements, by presupposing uniformity between the Canons, and by incorporating the ethical use of Israel as a paradigm for social reform and relational application.

Given then, Israel's role in relation to God's purpose for the nations, and given the law's function in relation to that mission of Israel, we can see that the law was designed . . . to

³⁶¹ Christopher J.H. Wright, *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God* (Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004), 62, 63.

³⁶² *Ibid.*, 62.

mould and shape Israel in certain clearly defined directions within their own historical and cultural context. That overall social shape, with all its legal and institutional structures, ethical norms, and theological undergirding, thus becomes the model or paradigm that Israel provides as a priesthood for the nations. And, furthermore, it was a paradigm intended to have a relevance and application beyond the geographical, historical and cultural borders of Israel itself.³⁶³

The paradigmatic approach perceives “the particularity of Israel” positively, and “not a hindrance to universal application,” since a “paradigm by its very nature is a particular, specific, concrete case that has wider relevance or application beyond its own particularity.”³⁶⁴

The principalising approach bears similar positive sentiments towards specific ethical commands, precepts, and proscriptions because they are assumed to contain God’s universalisable holy and righteous character traits; for this approach, God is *the model*. The paradigmatic approach assumes wholeheartedly that God is indeed the *model* of righteousness, but that the first earthly institutionalisation of His holy and righteous requirements is found in the life and social structures of Israel, His model to the nations. The principalising approach rests on discerning God’s universalisable and equitable ethical requirements (meaning), and their application (significance) to the nations at large. As Kaiser states, “Old Testament ethics are *universal*, embracing the same standard of righteousness for all the nations of the earth as it does for Israel.” As a matter of fact, “never did the biblical writers conceive of justice, righteousness, or the good as the special corner of the truth reserved for Israel alone.”

Indeed, long sections and even books of the Old Testament are specifically addressed to the nations at large such as Isaiah 13–23, Jeremiah 45–51, Ezekiel 25–32, Daniel 2 and 7, Amos 1–2, Obadiah, Jonah, and Nahum. At the heart of those messages, often sent by messengers and ambassadors to the foreign nations (e.g., Jer. 27:3; 51:61), was God’s standard of righteousness. Accordingly, any narrow, chauvinistic, or parochial interpretation of Old Testament ethics that limits its application to a single people in a particular socio-economic setting stands in opposition to the claims of the text.³⁶⁵

The issue is not one of absolute conflicting methodologies per se, or paradigmatic versus principalisation, but possibly one of investigative emphasis; upon finding principles while neglecting the paradigms altogether. Wright asks, “Is there a difference between the paradigmatic method I am advocating here and the familiar idea that, since we obviously cannot simply lift the details of Old Testament laws and apply them in the modern context, what we have to do is ‘extract the *principles*’ that underlie those laws and apply them? In one sense, there is not a huge difference.” Why? Because the paradigmatic approach requires investigating and articulating “the principles the paradigm embodies and then see how they can be reconcretised in some other context.” The main difference, the key divide between these two approaches, is that the ‘look-for-the-principle’ approach *on its own . . .* can lead to the eventual discarding of the specific realities of the Old Testament text, the concrete, earthly history of Israel, the good, the bad and the ugly.” After all, “once you have a principle in your pocket, why keep the wrapping?” Unfortunately, as Wright notes further, “this has been how many people have handled the Old Testament (or rather mishandled it).”³⁶⁶

It appears, as Wright notes, that God did not simply deliver the Scriptures in the form of a “classified collection of principles,” but rather through “the wonderfully particular portrayal of a people through many generations,” depicted “through their narratives, laws, wisdom, worship and visions, their memory and hope, their achievements and failures,” and packaged in “an untidy and incredibly complex assortment of very complex individuals, over multiple generations, in different nations.”³⁶⁷

Treating all this great collection of texts merely as the expendable container for independent universal principles we can express more simply and tidily denies the character of the Bible as God has given it to us, and might even seem to render Bible reading a waste of time. Regarding the biblical texts about Israel as providing us with a paradigm preserves their historical particularity and forces us to observe all the non-reducible hard edges, all the jarring tensions and all the awkward corners of earthly reality within them.³⁶⁸

In conclusion then, the paradigmatic method requires we consider both forms and principles; if “we keep hold of the total paradigm and make sure we are paying close attention to the texts that render it to us, we can of

³⁶³ Ibid., 65.

³⁶⁴ Ibid.

³⁶⁵ Kaiser, *Towards Old Testament Ethics*, 11, 12.

³⁶⁶ Wright, *Old Testament Ethics and the People of God*, 70.

³⁶⁷ Ibid., 70–71.

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 71.

course articulate the principles built into it.” The “concept of a paradigm *includes* the isolation and articulation of principles, but is not reducible to them alone.”³⁶⁹ We can extract principles embedded in laws for contemporary application while being mindful of the broader paradigm they’re associated with. We can avoid the tendency to discard structural forms reminiscent of the various institutional and relational dimensions of Israel’s social, economic, and political life, and thus practice a faithful and focused handling of the entire Old Testament which recognises God’s providential dealings and relational administration of Israel and the nations at large.

Each of our representative figures targeted the Old Testament, but Harrington the Republican and Royalists prioritised it; Harrington incorporated the early Hebrew Commonwealth paradigmatically, while Royalists focused upon the origin, character and inauguration of kingship. Harrington perceived God as divinely instituting Israel’s civil government, and therefore, resorted to the polity of Ancient Israel as a “paradigm” for reconstituting England’s political authority; his understanding of the Agrarian, and debating and resolving, rotation, and popular prerogative in the congregation, are all incorporated into Oceana, Britain’s constitutional parallel. Royalists stopped far short of using Israel’s polity in this way. They were not keen on incorporating Jethronian judicatures or a court modelled after the Sanhedrin, or many of the particulars Harrington teased out. Instead, they saw the seeds of monarchy in Adam’s creation, confirmed in Saul’s inauguration, modelled in David’s kingship, even patterned after God’s own government, and conveyed through Adam’s male prodigy, the Fall notwithstanding. Kings were also commonwealth ‘fathers,’ and could demand their subjects’ obedience in the same way any father of a family could naturally rule over his wife and children. The Royalists adopted a patriarchal hermeneutics, while Harrington’s followed more closely to a paradigmatic method with politics written out of Israel.

Milton straddled both Canons but stressed the New Testament’s Gospel of liberty. From the Hebrew Polity he incorporated God’s absolute rule—not that of human kings—and popular choice of civil magistrates, and from the Gospel, its redemptive power to transform individuals from slavery to personal liberty. He conveyed these principles to a commonwealth of civil and religious liberty governed by servant leaders who shed themselves of the ‘gentilising’ character of monarchy and absolute lordship. Milton did not read Israel’s polity as the divine political template, but instead, teased out timeless truths and normative

commands within the polity transferable to Britain’s constitutional crisis. His was a hermeneutics of religious and civil liberty.

The Levellers extrapolated a whole series of constitutional pillars and principles from man’s created nature and created purpose, and undergirded by the relational ‘golden’ rule of service to community and commonwealth. God made man free, equal, and for liberty, and therefore, the polity that best matched his divine design was a commonwealth of popularly chosen successive Parliaments restricted in authority by a written constitution. Like Milton, theirs was a hermeneutics of civil liberty embodying perpetually limited magistrates. Nevertheless, they proceeded to the next level of application by enunciating government through written constitutions; governors were to be governed under God’s rule of law, and institutionalized through the people’s consent.

Fifth Monarchists do appear quite imaginative and enigmatic to the modern mind, but their model of a ‘godly commonwealth’ and ‘rule of the saints’ is worth the scholarly effort to unravel and unpack. Rather than dismiss them entirely because of such apparent fantastical and fanciful apocalyptic musings, it is productive to understand not only what they concluded politically and constitutionally from the Scriptures, but how. They prioritised the importance of godly rule, and the supremacy of Christ’s kingdom reign, anticipating a kingdom coming where righteousness would reign as at the beginning. Theirs is an eschatological hermeneutics.

One can locate the paradigmatic and principalizing approaches in each of these representative models, as well as their admixture. We can of course ‘appreciate’ them too for their models, and hermeneutical approaches. But my purpose in writing this paper was to move beyond this sentiment towards more practical application. We can best steward their contributions by reinvigorating their methods, models, and conclusions, determine their influence, and consider investigating the proposals and hermeneutical approaches of others who engaged that early modern constitutional debate, towards addressing current constitutional issues and policies problems.

God is the absolute righteous relational model of ethical and social life, and He chose Israel as the earthly societal and national expression to portray, paradigmatically, that righteousness relationally in a fallen world. It is critical to the exegetical ethical task at hand to delve into the institutional and principled dimensions of her political life. Revelation is both propositional and relational, and the fact that the supreme creator of the universe divinely delivered a polity to His people packaged with numerous relational

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

considerations should inspire an investigation into His highest for human governance in a fallen world.

Bibliography

Early Modern British Authors and Editions

- An agreement of the people for a firme and present peace, upon grounds of common-right and freedome.* London, November 3, 1647.
- Aspinwall, William. *A brief description of the fifth monarchy, or kingdome that shortly is to come into the world.* London, April 1, 1653.
- _____. *An explication and application of the seventh chapter of Daniel . . . wherein is briefly shewed the state and downfall of the four monarchies.* London, March 20, 1653.
- _____. *The legislative power is Christ's peculiar prerogative.* London, August 20, 1656.
- The banner of truth displayed: Or a testimony for Christ, and against Anti-Christ.* London, September 24, 1656.
- Baxter, Richard. *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr. Richard Baxters narrative of the most memorable passages of his life and times faithfully publish'd from his own original manuscript by Matthew Sylvester.* London, 1696.
- Brooke, Humphrey. *The crafts-mens craft. Or the wiles of the discoverers.* London, June 25, 1649.
- Calvin, John. *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion.* Edited by John T. McNeill. Translated by Ford Lewis Battles. Vol. 20. London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1961.
- Canne, John. *The discoverer. Wherein is set forth (to undeceive the nation) the reall plots and stratagems of Lievt. Col. John Lilburn, Mr. William Walwyn, Mr. Thomas Prince, Mr. Richard Overton, and that partie.* London, June 23, 1649.
- _____. *A voice from the temple to the higher powers.* London, June 13, 1653.
- Certain quaeres humbly presented in way of petition, . . . and according as it is found agreeable to the Word of God, may be accepted; or if otherwise, rejected.* London, 1649.
- Complete Prose Works of John Milton.* Edited by D.M. Wolfe. 8 Volumes. New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1953-1982.
- A cry for a right improvement of all our mercies, and all those works of wonder that God hath wrought among us: With some cautions touching the election of the (expected) new representative.* London, October 22, 1651.
- A declaration of the Parliament of the Commonwealth of England.* London, 1653.
- [Digges, Dudley]. *An answer to a printed book, intituled, Observations upon some of his majesties late answers and expresses.* Oxford, November, 1642.
- _____. *A review of the observations upon some of his majesties late answers and expresses.* Oxford, April 15, 1643.
- _____. *The vnlawfulnessse of subjects taking up armes against their soveraigne in what case soever together with an answer to all objections scattered in their severall books.* Oxford, 1643.

- Feake, Christopher. *A beam of light, shining in the midst of much darkness and confusion: . . . that groans and waits for the manifestation of the sons of God.* London, 1659.
- Ferne, Henry. *Conscience satisfied. That there is no warrant for the armes now taken up by subjects.* Oxford, 1643.
- _____. *The resolving of conscience upon this question whether upon such a supposition or case as is now usually made (the King will not discharge his trust, but is bent or seduced to subvert religion, laws, and liberties) subjects may take arms and resist?* London, 1642.
- Filmer, Sir Robert. *The anarchy of a limited or mixed monarchy.* London, 1648.
- _____. *Patriarcha: Or the natural power of kings.* London, 1680.
- Foundations of Freedom; Or an agreement of the people: proposed as a rule for future government in the establishment of a firm and lasting peace.* London, December 15, 1648.
- Harrington, James. *The art of lawgiving in three books.* London, 1659.
- _____. *The commonwealth of oceana.* London, 1656.
- _____. *A discourse upon this saying: The spirit of the nation is not yet to be trusted with liberty; lest it introduce monarchy, or invade the liberty of conscience.* London, 1659.
- _____. *An essay upon two of Virgil's eclogues.* London, 1658.
- _____. *A parallel of the spirit of Mr. Rogers and an appeal thereupon unto the reader whether the spirit of the people, or the spirit of men like Mr. Rogers, be the fitter to be trusted with the government.* London, 1659.
- _____. *Pian piano.* London, 1656.
- _____. *The prerogative of popular government.* London, 1657.
- _____. *The rota or a model of a free state or equal commonwealth.* London, 1660.
- _____. *The stumbling-block of disobedience and rebellion cunningly imputed by P.H. Unto Calvin, removed in a letter to the said P.H. from J.H.* London, 1658.
- _____. *A system of politics.* London, 1661.
- _____. *The ways and means whereby an equal or lasting commonwealth may be suddenly introduced and perfectly founded with the free consent and actual confirmation of the whole people of england.* London, 1660.
- Journal of the House of Commons. Volume 7: 1651-1660.* 1802.
- Lilburne, John. *An answer to nine arguments.* London: [s.n.], 1645.
- _____. *Come out of her my people.* Amsterdam, 1639.
- _____. *A copie of a letter, written by John Lilburne Leut. Collonell. To Mr. William Prinne Esq.* London, January, 7, 1645.
- _____. *The free-mans freedome vindicated.* London, June 23, 1646.
- _____. *The lawes funerall.* London, May 15, 1648.
- _____. *Liberty vindicated against slavery.* London, 1646.
- _____. *A light for the ignorant. A treatise shewing, that in the New Testament, is set forth three kingly states or governments.* London, s.n., 1638 but printed in 1641.
- _____. *Londons liberty in chains discovered.* London, November 2, 1646.

_____. *The prisoners plea for a habeas corpus* London, May 9, 1648.

Lilburne, John; William Walwyn; Thomas Prince, and Richard Overton. *An agreement of the free People of England. Tendered as a peace-offering to this distressed nation.* London, May 1, 1649.

_____. *A manifestation from Lieutenant Col. John Lilburn, Mr. William Walwyn, Mr. Thomas Prince, and Mr. Richard Overton styled levellers, intended for their full vindication.* London, April 16, 1649.

Lilburne, John; Thomas Prince, and Richard Overton. *The picture of the Council of State, held forth to the free people of England by Lievt. Col. John Lilburn, Mr Thomas Prince, and Mr Richard Overton, now prisoners in the Tower of London.* London, April 11, 1649.

[Maxwell, John]. *Sacro-Sancta regum majestas: or, The sacred and royall prerogative of Christian kings.* Oxford, 1644.

Medley, William. *A Standard Set Up . . . or the Principles & Declaration of the Remnant, that have Waited for the Blessed Appearance and Hope.* London, May 17, 1657.

The memoirs of Edmund Ludlow, Lieutenant-General of the Horse in the Army of the Commonwealth of England (1625-1672). Edited by C. H. Firth. 2 Volumes. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1894.

Mercurius pragmaticus communicating intelligence from all parts, touching all affaires, designes, humours, and conditions, throughout the kingdome, especially from Westminster and the head-quarter. London: s.n., 1647-1649, 9th-16th, November 1647.

Milton, John. *Brief notes upon a later sermon titl'd the fear of god and the king.* London, 1660.

_____. *Considerations touching the likeliest means to remove hirelings out of the church.* London, 1649.

_____. *De Doctrina Christiana (1655-1674)*, in *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*. Edited by D.M. Wolfe. Volume 2. New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1953-1982.

_____. *A defence of the people of England in answer to Salmasius's defence of the king.* London, 1695.

_____. *The reason of church-government urg'd against prelaty by Mr. John Milton; in two books.* London, 1641.

_____. *The readie and easie way to establish a free commonwealth . . . The second edition revised and augmented.* London, 1660.

_____. *The tenure of kings and magistrates.* London, 1649.

_____. *A treatise of civil power in ecclesiastical causes.* London, 1659.

A model of a new representative, now under consideration. London, October 15, 1651.

Overton, Richard. *An alarum to the House of Lords: against their insolent usurpation of the common liberties, and rights of this nation.* London: s.n, 1646.

_____. *The arraignment of Mr. Persecution.* London, April 8, 1645.

_____. *An arrow against all tyrants and tyranny, shot from the prison of New-gate into the prerogative bowels of the arbitrary House of Lords, and all other usurpers and tyrants whatsoever.* London, 1646.

_____. *Vox plebis, or, The peoples out-cry against oppression, injustice, and tyranny.* London, 1646.

- Overton, Richard and William Walwyn. *A remonstrance of many thousand citizens, and other free-born people of England to their owne House of Commons*. London, July 7, 1646.
- [Parker, Henry]. *Observations upon some of his majesties late answers and expresses*. London, 1642.
- Pocock, J.G.A. Editor. *The Political Works of James Harrington*. Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- [Price, John]. *Walwins wiles: or The manifestators manifested viz. Liev. Col. John Lilburn, Mr Will. Walwin, Mr Richard Overton, and Mr Tho. Prince*. London, April. 23. 1649.
- Prince, Thomas. *The silken Independents snare broken. By Thomas Prince, close prisoner in the Tower*. London, May 28, 1649.
- Rogers, John. *Sagrir Sagrir. Or doomes-day drawing nigh, with thunder and lightening to lawyers*. London, October 20, 1653.
_____. *To his excellency the Lord-General Cromwell. A few proposals, relating to civil government*. London, April 27, 1653.
- [Spelman, John]. *A view of a printed book intituled Observations upon his maiesties late answers and expresses*. Oxford, 1642.
- Spittlehouse, John. *The army vindicated, in their late dissolution of the Parliament*. London, April 24, 1653.
_____. *The first addresses to his excellencie the Lord General, with the assembly of elders elected by him*. London, July 5, 1653.
_____. *A warning-piece discharged, or certain intelligence communicated to his excellencie the Lord General Cromwell*. London, May 19, 1653.
- Tillinghast, John. *Knowledge of the time, or the resolution of the question, how long it shall be unto the end of wonders*. London, 1654.
- Toland, John. *The Oceana of James Harrington and his other works, som wherof are now first publish'd from his own manuscripts: the whole collected, methodiz'd, and review'd, with an exact account of his life prefix'd*. London, 1700.
- Tyndale, William. *The Obedience of a Christian Man, and How Christian Rulers Ought to Govern, 1548 in The Works of the English Reformers: William Tyndale, and John Firth*. Edited by Thomas Russell. Vol. 1. London: Paternoster Row, 1831.
- Walwyn, William. *A helpe to the right understanding of a discourse concerning independency*. London, 1645.
_____. *In a still and soft voice from the scripture, witnessing them to be the word of God*. London, 1647.
_____. *The fountain of slaunder discovered*. May 30, 1649.
_____. *Just defence against the aspertions cast upon him in a late un-Christian pamphlet intituled Walwyns wiles*. London, 1649.
_____. *The power of love*. London, September 12, 1643.
_____. *Tolleration justified, and persecution condemn'd*. London, 1646.
_____. *The vanitie of the present churches, and uncertainty of their preaching, discovered*. London, March 12, 1649.
_____. *A whisper in the eare of Mr. Thomas Edwards minister*. London, 1646.
_____. *A word more to Mr. Thomas Edwards, minister, concerning the nationall covenant*. London, 1646.

- Whitelocke, Bulstrode. *Memorials of the English Affairs from the Beginnings of the Reign of Charles the First to the Happy Restoration of King Charles the Second*. New Edition. Volume. 4. Oxford University Press, 1853.
- Woodhouse, A.S.P. (Arthur Sutherland Pigott) Editor. *Puritanism and Liberty, Being the Army Debates (1647-9) From the Clarke Manuscripts with Supplementary Documents*. London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd., 1974.
- Wren, Matthew. *Considerations on Mr. Harrington's Commonwealth of Oceana: restrained to the first part of the preliminaries*. Oxford, 1657.
- The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell, With an Introduction, Notes and an Account of His Life, The Commonwealth, 1649-1653*. Edited by Wilbur Cortez Abbott. Volume 2. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988.

Books

- Brown, Louise Fargo. *The Political Activities of the Baptists & Fifth Monarchy Men in England*. Washington: American Historical Association, 1912.
- Bruce, W.S. *The Ethics of the Old Testament*. 2nd edition enlarged. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1909.
- Capp, Bernard. *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-century English Millenarianism*. London: Faber, 1972.
- Coffey, John. *Politics, Religion and the British Revolutions: The Mind of Samuel Rutherford*. Cambridge University Press, 1997.
- Elazar, Daniel J. *Covenant & Polity in Biblical Israel; Biblical Foundations & Jewish Expressions*. Volume 1, *Covenant Tradition in Politics*. New Brunswick, New Jersey; London: Transaction Publishers, 1995.
- Ferdon, Gai. 2004. *New Modelling English Government: Biblical Hermeneutics, Jewish Polity and Constitutional Forms During the Interregnum (1649-1660)*. PhD Dissertation, University of Leicester. United Kingdom (uk.bl.ethos.411889).
- Hill, Christopher. *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution*. London: Allen Lane, 1993; Penguin Group, 1994.
- Kaiser Jr., Walter. *Toward Discovering the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1987.
- _____. *Toward Old Testament Ethics*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983, 1991.
- _____. *Toward Rediscovering the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1987, 1991.
- Mendle, Michael. *Henry Parker and the English Civil War: The Political Thought of the Public's 'Privado.'* *Cambridge Studies in Early Modern British History*. Cambridge University Press, 1995.
- Norton, David. *A Textual History of the King James Bible*. Cambridge University Press, 2005.
- Schochet, Gordon. *Patriarchalism in Political Thought: The Authoritarian Family and Political Speculation and Attitudes Especially in Seventeenth-century England*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1975.

- Smith, David L. *Constitutional Royalism and the Search for Settlement, c1640-1649*. Cambridge University Press, 1994.
- _____. *The Stuart Parliaments, 1603-1689*. New York; Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Sommerville, J.P. *Royalists and Patriots: Politics and Ideology in England 1603-1640*. 2nd Edition. London: Longman, 1999.
- Sprinkle, Joe M. *Biblical Law and its Relevance, A Christian Understanding and Ethical Application for Today of Mosaic Regulations*. Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2005.
- Todd, Margo. *Christian Humanism and the Puritan Social Order*. Cambridge University Press, 1987.
- Watts, Michael R. *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution*. Oxford University Press, 1978, 2002.
- Woolrych, Austin. *Britain in Revolution, 1625-1660*. Oxford University Press, 2002.
- _____. *Commonwealth to Protectorate*. London: Phoenix Press, 1982.
- Wright, Christopher J.H. *Old Testament Ethics for the People of God*. Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2004.
- Zagorin, Perez. *A History of Political Thought in the English Revolution*. Bristol, England: Thoemmes Press, 1997.

Articles and Book Chapters

- Capp, Bernard. "A Door of Hope Re-opened: The Fifth Monarchy, King Charles and King Jesus." *Journal of Religious History*, 32, no. 1 (March, 2008): 16-30.
- Loughlin, Martin. "The Constitutional Thought of the Levellers." *Current Legal Problems*, 60, no. 1 (2007): 1-39.
- Porter, H.C. "The Nose of Wax: Scripture and the Spirit from Erasmus to Milton." *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 5th ser., 14 (November 1963): 155-174.
- Sommerville, J.P. "Absolutism and Royalism," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought, 1450-1700*. Edited by J. H. Burns and Mark Goldie. Cambridge University Press, 1994: 347-373.
- Wolters, Albert M. "Christianity and the Classics; a Typology of Attitudes," in *Christianity and the Classics, The Acceptance of a Heritage*. Edited by Wendy Helleman. Lanham, New York; London: University Press of America, 1989: 189-203.
- Wooton, David. "Leveller Democracy and the Puritan Revolution," in *The Cambridge History of Political Thought (1450-1700)*. Edited by J.H. Burns and Mark Goldie. Cambridge University Press, 1994: 412-476.
- Wright, Christopher J. "The Ethical Authority of the Biblical Social Vision," in *Jubilee Manifesto, a Framework, Agenda, and Strategy for Christian Social Reform*. Edited by Michael Schluter and John Ashcroft. Leicester, UK: Inter-Varsity Press, 2005: 67-81.

Correspondence and Speeches

Cromwell, Oliver. "Speech 1, The Little Parliament," in *Oliver Cromwell's Letters and Speeches Including the Supplement to the First Edition with Elucidations*. Edited by Thomas Carlyle. 2 Volumes. New York: Harper & Brothers, Publs., 1868. 2: 34-54.

"Declaration by the Lord General and the Council on the Dissolution of the Long Parliament," April 22, 1653 in *The Constitutional Documents of the Puritan Revolution, 1625-1660*. Edited by Samuel Gardiner. 3rd Edition Revised. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1906. 400-404.

Major General Harrison to Colonel Jones, April 30, 1653 in Joseph Mayer, *Inedited Letters of Cromwell, Colonel Jones, Bradshaw and other Regicides*. Liverpool: T. Brakell, 1861. 52.