

# "This gifte of prophecie"

"This gifte of prophecie": Dialogue, godly identity and freedom of religion in the Separatist controversies of the late Elizabethan-early Stuart church (1575-1615)

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In his *A Brief Discoverie of the False Church* (1590), Henry Barrow attacks the ministry of England for limiting the exercise of "prophesying": "Very hard it were," Barrow writes, "that that heavenly and most blessed exercise of prophecie which was instituted of God for the singular comfort and general inlightning of the whole church, should through the pride and arrogancie of a few, be turned to the utter subversion of the faith of the whole church ... For what part can there be pure, where the doctrine is not sound? Or what can be more miserable than to see with others men's eies, to beleeve with other men's hearts?" The ministers of the Church of England, by restricting the practice of the exercises to the clergy, deny the faithful their opportunity to hear or speak, and "shut it up amongst a few of them ... making it like Osyris mysteries." "What can be more manifest and direct than these places," Barrow continues (citing Paul's declaration in I Corinthians 14 that "you may all one by one, everie one of you, prophecie, that all may learne and all may be comforted"), "that this exercise of prophecie belongeth to the whoole church, and that everie faithful man hath here freedome and power both to be present and to speake also as need requireth, and God revealeth unto him?"<sup>1</sup> Barrow's impassioned defense of the role prophesying plays in the creation of a priesthood of all believers makes clear what was at stake in the controversy over these exercises in the late Elizabethan and early Stuart church. Prophesyings, conducted in England as early as the accession of Elizabeth, were an important component of the institutional church, whereby ministers could come together, train local clergy and develop a godly ministry. But as they evolved in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, from ministerial exercises to public conferences conducted in English to "lectures by combination" and were adopted by Barrowists, Brownists and others, they provided an opportunity for godly parishioners to participate in the life of the church, to discuss and debate Scripture, and to speak as God moved them.<sup>2</sup>

My aim in this article is to explore how the rhetorical features of the prophesyings (comparative textual analysis and exposition, disputation involving the inclusion of opposing arguments, doubts and objections) influenced the pamphlet war generated by the threat of Separatism in the late Elizabethan and early Stuart church. The prophesyings raised questions concerning what it meant to debate and inculcate doctrinal issues. Should they be modelled on academic examinations, shaped by the formal requirements of syllogistic logic, or should they develop their disputations through careful biblical exegesis and precedent, guided by a learned moderator? Should they be more free-flowing exchanges, which included criticism of church reforms and questions of conscience? Should they be open to the public, and should the laity participate? The controversy over these issues reached a climax in 1576-77, when Elizabeth ordered the suppression of the prophesyings, prompting Archbishop Grindal's famous letter to the Queen defending the "ancient" practice of prophesying and warning Her Majesty not to overstep the limits of the Prince's authority in matters of the Church.<sup>3</sup>

While prophesying became an important part of Separatist worship, it would be a mistake to claim that the exercises are, in of themselves, oppositional or presbyterian or proto-Separatist. They were conducted with the oversight of the episcopal government of the church; indeed, the bishops adopted the prophesyings in its development of a learned ministry and in its desire to reform institutional abuses. Elizabethan bishops, in their reports to Grindal, emphasize again and again the importance for the prophesyings in their role of improving the clergy, and their letters focus on how the public nature of these conferences force the ministers to be prepared, thus producing a more learned ministry.<sup>4</sup> The Elizabethan prophesyings have been described as "classis in embryo," in that the exercises were conceived as a unit of administration larger than the local congregation but smaller than the provincial synod, functioning, in some cases, outside of ecclesiastical controls.<sup>5</sup> Irvonwy Morgan describes how the prophesyings cultivated a "Brotherhood of Preachers" and established connections between these conferences and reform-minded magistrates.<sup>6</sup> William Burton, a puritan conformist minister writing in 1606, praised the unifying power of the prophesyings in his dedicatory letter to "the right worshipful, the mayor, shiriffes, and aldermen" of Norwich.<sup>7</sup> Burton waxes nostalgic over the cohesive energy of these conferences, a force that brought the entire community together:

*Oh the heavenly Harmony and sweete Amitie that then was amongst you from the highest to the lowest! The Magistrates and the Ministers imbracing and seconding one another, and the common people affording due reverance, & obedience to them both ... and whose heart was not filled with joy, to see in Norwich the continuall resorte that was every day thorough the yeare, and that for many yeers together unto the holy exercises of Religion, which were continually supported by woorthy and sincere Preachers, and graced by the presence of so many grave and Religious Magistrates?*

As Burton's statement makes clear, the prophesyings thus help cultivate the sense of community and cooperation so important to the bishops and the parish clergy.<sup>8</sup> For Patrick Collinson, the prophesyings represented "the most important single phenomenon of the protestant ascendancy over which Grindal presided," and Collinson stresses the central role they played as a protestant "public show of strength," improving the status of a much-criticized clergy and promoting consensus "based on instruction and assent rather than on ecclesiastical authority."<sup>9</sup> Yet, as we will see, the prophesyings play an important part in the development of Separatist ecclesiology, an ecclesiology based on social cohesion, spiritual community and congregational discipline.<sup>10</sup> As Collinson has noted, an assembly of Christians becomes a separated and gathered church at the moment at which the leaders of these meetings turn from the doctrine of the established Church and expound and interpret the Scriptures, claiming "gifts" of prophesy and the realization of a newly-founded "communion of saints" outside the body of that Church.<sup>11</sup>

For Separatists like Barrow, the "freedom and power" found within the exercise of prophesy is crucial to the formation of this true gathered church.<sup>12</sup> Again and again, Separatist writings criticize the episcopal government for claiming all the "guiftes of grace" found in the prophesyings for themselves.<sup>13</sup> The importance of prophesying for the entire congregation is clear in the order of service at Browne's church at Middelburgh, described in his *A True and Short Declaration* (ca.1583). Browne explains how the process of interpretation is opened to the congregation as a whole, allowing those with "guiftes" to expound on difficult passages.<sup>14</sup> This is an important element in Browne's congregationalist structure, where the church is conceived as a voluntary association, in effect by-passing civil authorities and locating authority in the relationship between God and the individual soul. This church government based on voluntary covenant is of course generated from Separatist beliefs in soteriological assurance, but also through a mutual consent achieved in the process of expounding and interpreting scripture.<sup>15</sup> *A Briefe Discoverie* also makes clear Barrow's desire to move away from deadening repetition, to remove any practices that would "quench and extinguishe the Spirit of

God."16 The power of prophesying as expounded by Paul is not, for Barrow, restricted to those with the "gift of preaching," but open to the entire congregation, "where everie brother is incited to emulate spiritual gifts, the rather that they might prophesie and helpe to edifie the church." For those worried about the Separatist implications of this remark, Barrow quickly adds: "Neither ought this to seeme strange in the eares of anie that knowe what belongeth to the exercise of prophesie or order of the church ... For as the bodie consisteth of manie members, and al members have not one office, etc., so the members of the church being divers and having received divers gifts, are (according unto the grace that it given to everie one) to serve the church, or rather the Lord with the same, as good disposers of the manifold grace of God. If they have the gift of prophesie, then are they to exercise it according to the propotion of faith, speaking as the wordes of God alwaies."17

Prophesyings in England developed from conferences in Reformed churches on the continent designed to improve the learning of future ministers and to establish a consensus on doctrinal issues. At Zurich, for example, prophesyings included the exposition of Hebrew and Latin texts of the Old Testament, the study of Greek and Roman history, and an analysis of rhetoric and logic in the development of a sophisticated reformed theology.18 This legacy can be found in England, where orders for prophesyings at Cambridge explain that the "gifts" of Hebrew and Greek, rhetoric and logic, the study of patristic sources and knowledge of Greek and Latin history prepare ministers to teach the "true interpretation of the Word." The language of these orders makes clear that the "performaunce thereof" is a vigorous debate on specific scriptural interpretation: "the rest shall heare and judge, and then by objecting and answering in good order, confer together of the interpretations till they departe. If they dissent in opynion, they shall make it a question, and so determyne it by disputation, as in questions of doctrine."19 Peter Lake has noted how these orders are put in place to deflect the excessive zeal of any individual minister, and by moving through objections, censure and assent, the exercise provides formal expression of the "collective will" of the college on doctrine and discipline.20 These exercises display a rigorous biblical humanism, where the faith is not threatened, but engaged, by debate - not surprising in men trained in the formal syllogistic logic of the seminaries at Magdalen College, Oxford or Christ's College, Cambridge.21 As John Walker, Archdeacon of Essex, reminded Grindal, the use of dialogue in this manner was as old as the apostles. Did not Paul go to Jerusalem to debate controversies? Had "not Christ used conference with the two disciples goyng to Emaus, Luc. 24, how had theyre eyes bene opened to understande the Scriptures?"22 Dialogue is seen here as a union of human reason and Christian truth; the objections, questions and doubts given voice in the course of dialogue are silenced in the wake of revelation - the many voices reduced to the monologic truth of God.

The prophesyings on the continent also played a role, along with sermons and catechisms, in bringing biblical exposition to lay audiences. As early as 1525, Zurich ministers expounded scripture before their congregations.23 In Hesse, Francois Lambert opened weekly meetings to all church members in order to allow them to ask questions about sermons.24 John à Lasco established the prophesyings in his Calvinist church in the Low Countries as a way for the congregation to respond to ministers and, perhaps more importantly, as a component in Lasco's broader attempt to limit clerical domination.25 Among English exiles during Mary's reign, a church order at Frankfurt called for "Prophesy to be used every fortnight in the English tongue, for the exercise of the said Students, and edifying of the Congregation."26 The Genevan Service Book drawn up by John Knox in 1556 included this passage on "Prophesy or Interpretation of Scriptures":

*Everie weeke once, the congregation assemble to heare some place of the scriptures orderly expounded. At which tyme, it is lawfull for every man to speake, or enquire as God shall move his harte, and the text minister occasion, so it be without pertinacitee or disdayne, as one that rather seketh to proffit than to contend. And if so be any contencion rise, then suche as are appointed moderatours, either satisfie the partie, or els if he seme to cavill, exhorte hym to kepe silence, referring the judgement therof to the ministers and elders, to be determined in their assemblee or consistorie before mencioned. 27*

This "congregational" style of prophesying did not find wide popularity in Elizabethan England. In a typically thought-provoking aside, Collinson notes that prophesying "as dialogue" found on the continent was replaced in England "by 'repetition,' a process of inculcation."28 This distinction is crucial for our purposes. Among the Elizabethan godly "repetition" meant largely the repetition of weekly sermons - one family in Denton repeated the sermon of the previous Sunday on Monday nights, and Saturday's sermon that evening.29 Collinson connects this practice with catechism, that other strategy for religious teaching through memory and repetition.30 The weekly prophesyings developed on the continent establish similar connections between the question-and-answer format and the comprehension of key principles of religion, reinforcing within parishioners what they had heard in church on Sundays. Dutch churches in London in the 1550s employed a mid-week prophesy for precisely this purpose, where members of the congregation could debate and discuss scriptural or doctrinal questions generated by Sunday sermons.31 But we should not transpose continental church orders to English models; in addition, even the format of the exercises in England differed from diocese to diocese.32

The Elizabethan prophesyings were conducted in English, and many of them were open to the public. The letters to Grindal reveal a strong interest in the impact these exercises had on the auditory - on what might be called the "performance of interpretation" - both upon the ministers and on the laity. "Yt were shame for the ministers being so gathered," John Walker, Archdeacon of Essex, writes, "to buyld Godes church and fede his flock to lett the people go away frustrate of theyre expectation and not make them partakers of Godes benefites and fruytes of their studies. So dyd never Christ send the people away unfed." Gilbert Berkeley, Bishop of Bath and Wells argued that public conferences steer ministers away from sin and force them to their books, thus checking lay criticism and simultaneously spurring unlearned men to study and reflection.33 Edward Gaston noted that the prophesyings at Norwich were begun by preachers for "their better exercise and the education of the people."34

How might catechism and prophesy be compared as a method of instruction and assent? In protestant catechesis, the catechist-catechumen structure involves a moderator who guides the process of biblical exposition through simple question-and-answer exchanges, exhorts the pupil to faith and repentance, and in the end summarizes the entire movement of the conference, often concluding with a prayer.35 Dialogue functions here not as a prompt to self-discovery (like that found in the Socratic exchanges in Plato's dialogues) but as an understanding by the catechumen of his incompleteness, that is, a discovery of the necessity of God's grace and the central role of revelation, provided by the self-sufficiency of the Word.36 The prophesyings involve a similar structure of moderators acting as voices of authority, guiding the process of explication and interpretation. But as the letters to Grindal indicate, it was the public performance of expounding and interpreting scripture which leaves its impact upon the mind of the learned and the unlearned. To subject a passage of scripture to rigorous debate and to engage that interpretation with mutual criticism is conceived here as a powerful demonstration of spiritual consensus.

The common procedure in an Elizabethan prophesying was to begin with a morning prayer, followed by hymns to the Holy Ghost, followed in turn by biblical explication from a series of speakers, which could last from one to two hours. The orders for the exercise at Hertfordshire urge

ministers to keep to scripture, avoiding the "hepinge up" of any commentary not "grounded upon the texte," nor "glauncing" at present controversies within the Church. As far as the specific scriptural passage for the day, the Hertfordshire orders describe a sophisticated analysis of rhetorical features of the passage, including how the "playne meninge" is to be interpreted; the literal and figurative uses of certain words; a comparative analysis of how key words are used in other places; how the passage has been deployed (and misused) in the polemic of their adversaries; and how the passage may be used in sermons and in prayers. The ministers then withdrew to private quarters, where they commented and often criticized the performance of their colleagues over dinner and wine.<sup>37</sup>

While most, but not all, the Elizabethan prophesyings were open to the public, only the clergy could speak – although there is evidence where a moderator would ask for objections or confirmations from any learned man in the audience.<sup>38</sup> Contention and controversy were obviously discouraged in these public settings; the private meetings and dinners gave the ministers time and space to confer, to object and to admonish their colleagues. This would not, however, prevent the laity from arguing and debating what they had just heard as the conference broke up,<sup>39</sup> and it was this "dialogizing manner" of prophesying that troubled many bishops. John Scory, Bishop of Hereford, believed it was not "expedient" for laymen "to interpret or put furth questions" but only to "heare," and through such means achieve edification on issues of doctrine.<sup>40</sup> Scory is uncomfortable with the word "prophesy," for it is used "unto that gifte of the spirite that was geuen to some in the primitive church by revelacion or inspiracion to interprete the Scriptures;" and he has heard that at a Shrewsbury exercise a minister had condemned the Queen's bishops. He contrasts that example with the exercises he has witnessed at Emden, which were orderly and in Latin, much like the divinity examinations held at commencement time in Cambridge. Scory wishes English prophesyings could be held "in cathedrall and other great churches," ensuring the presence of learned moderators (including parsons, vicars and curates). Berkeley makes a similar request to place them within cathedral churches, whereby the exercise could be mediated through the authority of the bishop of the diocese and the Queen ("by the waye of disputation as it is used in the universities") eliminating the possibility of "precise and straunge opinions" to be given voice.<sup>41</sup>

Lay participation in the prophesyings was a central point of controversy for Elizabeth and her government, and the bishops' letters repeatedly disclaim any intrusion of the laity in the exercises. Richard Curtis remarked that no "artificers" nor "anye laye man" were allowed to participate at Chichester, and Thomas Bentham, Bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, assured the Archbishop that only learned ministers spoke at exercises in his diocese.<sup>42</sup> What the letters emphasize, by contrast, is the role of learned and discrete moderators, who establish order and control the conferences should they become contentious.<sup>43</sup> (As we will see, the role of a "moderator" in the dialogues of Clapham and Murton is crucial in the polemical construction of consensus in their fictional texts.) Yet their instructional force and novelty for the populace were clear attractions. Curtis believed the "open, often and fitte exercises" reached those families lacking knowledge or fear of God, and many of the bishops, aware of their wide popularity, expressed to Grindal their fear of unrest, should the prophesyings be suppressed.<sup>44</sup> "Moderate" puritan William Harrison, who saw in the suppression of the prophesyings a victory for Antichrist in the fight for the true church, noted the remarkable "thirsting desire" of the people to hear the Word of God discussed at these public conferences. Harrison admitted, however, that even with moderators "some vain and busy head will now and then intrude themselves with offence" in the course of the exercise.<sup>45</sup>

As Collinson has shown, the support the prophesyings received from influential laymen paradoxically spelled their doom.<sup>46</sup> When absorbed within the structures of diocesan episcopacy, they flourished; but when they split allegiances and created rivalries, the Queen quickly acted to suppress them. Thomas Cooper, Bishop of Lincoln, recommended the prophesyings for the development of a learned ministry, but he worried about their potential for generating factions. He feared "theie should be made means to publishe phantasticall opinions and innovations," which, he quickly assures the Archbishop, has not occurred in his own diocese. Cooper believes the people should be excluded, not just to prevent outbursts by young men who will "speake rawlie," but more importantly, "to staie the phantasticall affection that many have to such conferences more than to preching, for it is seen some places not far from me that gentlemen and gentlewomen will come in good ... 6 or 7 miles to a conference, that will hardlie come to a learned mans sermon."<sup>47</sup> A letter written ca. 1582 to the Privy Council, arguing for their re-establishment, also acknowledged the troubles generated by people flocking to this or that prophesying in the years before the Queen's suppression.<sup>48</sup>

Conservatives believed the godly used the prophesyings to separate from their ordinary congregations, and phrases such as "secret conventicles" or "disorderly and unlawfull conventicles" crept into the language of those hostile to their continuation.<sup>49</sup> Even those defending their practice had to meet accusations of schism and separation. Walker assured Grindal that the people assemble not in "secret conventicles as the papistes and sectaries do," but in the church, where "all may com and hear and bear wittnes."<sup>50</sup> The Queen's letter to Whitgift in 1577 is filled with warnings of the division caused by these conferences. All good subjects, the Queen wrote, "become hearers of their disputations and new divid opinions upon pointes of divinitie in these prophesyings farre unmeete for vulgar people. Which maner of proceeding they in some places tearme prophesyenges, and in some oth[er] exercises, by which maner of assembles great nombre of people, specially of the vulgar sort are brought to idelnes and also in maner schismatically divided amonges them selves into sondry dangerous opynions, not onley in townes and parishes but also in some familiees, and manifestly therby incouraged [disregard] of our lawes, and to the breaches of common ordre, and tendeth to the offence of all our other quyet subjectes that desire to serve God according to the uniforme ordres established, whereof the sequele cannot be but over dangerous."<sup>51</sup> For the Queen, public disputation on the rites and ceremonies of the church was a violation of the order established by the settlement of 1559, and with puritans pushing for reforms in one Parliamentary session after another, her decision to silence the exercises is understandable.<sup>52</sup>

In 1590, Thomas Rogers engaged in precisely the kind of disputation on "new divid opinions upon points of divinitie" that Elizabeth wished to silence. John S. Craig has recently published a study of the uproar caused by Rogers at an exercise at Bury St Edmunds, a town troubled by puritan, Familist and Brownist activity.<sup>53</sup> The Monday exercises in Bury St Edmunds trace their origins in the orders for prophecy established by Bishop Parkhurst in 1573; they quickly became an institution and continued into the 1630s.<sup>54</sup> On this day in 1590, the assembled ministers were working their way through a controversial passage in Romans (on the "gifts" given within the church – a text cited by Barrow in the margins of the passage on prophesying in A Briefe Discoverie, cited above). The "ancientest" of the assembly lectured soberly on the text, downplaying any radical interpretation of the passage. At his turn, Rogers, leaving the prescribed format of the exercise, displayed a copy of an anonymous, Robert Waldegrave-published pamphlet (written by Laurence Chaderton), and denounced the author, comparing him to Familists and to papists for interpreting the passage in Romans in a strongly presbyterian light. The ministers were outraged; and the stunned audience apparently disapproved of Rogers' desire to use the occasion to condemn rather than to preach. The senior ministers later barred Rogers from participating in future exercises.<sup>55</sup>

The fact that exercises like that at Bury continued into the last decades of Elizabeth's reign show how the puritan impulse that sustained the prophesyings found other outlets after 1577. Assemblies comparable to Calvinist classes emerged by the 1580s, and the private fasts held by radicals in the same decade were essentially prophesyings under a different name.<sup>56</sup> The unofficial meetings of the "godly brethren" at Dedham (1582-89) are examples of modified Elizabethan exercises, removed from the public arena and conducted at private houses for secrecy and security.<sup>57</sup> Yet prophesying remained important. A petition to Archdeacon George Withers for the revival of the prophesyings emerged from the Dedham Conference in 1582; and at a meeting at Langham, the members of the Dedham Conference noted that on interpreting the scriptures

"amongst ourselves in this exercise that every man should be left to the measure of his gifts, and not to be tied to any certayne and precise order."58 Collinson's research has shown that prophesyings and "lectures by combination" (exercises which provided a single sermon in the public portion, then concluded with a private ministerial conference) continued to thrive in the southern provinces, in the Midlands, and especially in the North, well into the seventeenth-century. These exercises were on the whole not occasions for division, but cultivated a sense of community, an element of "cohesion" in the life of the church.<sup>59</sup> Puritans never gave up on the prophesyings as a force for discipline and brotherhood. As Morgan notes, nearly every puritan council or Parliamentary petition included a call for their resumption.<sup>60</sup> Separatists who fled to Holland, meanwhile, could look back at prophesyings as a mark of a godly discipline now lost. George Johnson, writing in 1603, noted that the exiles of Mary's reign at Frankfort had great care for prophesy, while those at Amsterdam under Elizabeth have "little or no care at all for learning. The exercise of prophecy is quenched among them."<sup>61</sup> This remark is part of a longer complaint by Johnson against those pastors who are unwilling to engage in debate with other learned men. While combination lectures and other exercises created what Collinson has described as "collegiality" with the Elizabethan and early Stuart church, this issue of individual interpretation through prophesy led to fissures within the Separatist movement. As we will see, Separatist brethren split from one another, each group making a claim for clearer "gifts" of this prophesy, leading to disastrous confrontations on interpretations of "right" discipline and "true" worship.

The Hampton Court Conference provides us with another example of how the prophesyings continued to play a part in controversies over a persistent nonconformity. The fact that James held such a conference at all reflects not only James' well-known love of disputation, but also his confidence that ecclesiastical disputes with the puritans could be resolved through an orderly, formal debate. It is worth remembering that James' well-known outburst against presbyterianism on 16 January 1604 was prompted by the suggestion by John Reynolds for the revival of the prophesyings as a part of a program for ecclesiastical discipline.<sup>62</sup> The King's rejection of this system of provincial and national synods has become famous ("Then Jack & Tom, & Will, & Dick, shall meete, and at their pleasures censure me, and my Councell, and all our proceedings: Then Will shall stand up, and say it must be thus; then Dick shall reply, and say, nay, mary, but wee will have it thus") – a bitter parody of the exercise of prophesy itself. For the semi-Separatist Henry Jacob, the reason for the failure of the conference for the puritan cause was primarily because the conference was a stage-managed affair, "plotted" by the bishops to avoid any real dialogue on issues of reform.<sup>63</sup> For Jacob and other puritans, the format of the conference was essential to its success. Only through the "strict forme of Syllogisme" could arguments be made and objected to; only through a detailed confirmation or rejection of minor premises, major premises and consequents in the course of formal dialectical argument could the participants make progress. For Jacob, the violations of this format by the bishops (through interruption, non sequitur and faulty logic) dramatized the failure of the two sides to fully engage on these contentious issues. Jacob also pressed for an unbiased record of the conference, with all parties subscribing to the transcript. Jacob clearly foresaw the future historical problem of judging the accuracy of contemporary accounts of the conference.<sup>64</sup>

The outcome of the Hampton Court Conference was not all negative for the puritans, but James' hostile characterization of them in his opening address to Parliament in March 1604 and his preparation of ecclesiastical canons made clear his desire to press for conformity.<sup>65</sup> The canons issued by royal proclamation in July denounced secret assemblies or "conventicles" or for "any sort of ministers or lay-parsons ... to join together" without the King's authority; Canon 53 stated that there was to be no public opposition between preachers, "because upon such public dissenting and contradicting, there may grow much offense and disquietness unto the people"; Canon 72 explicitly forbade unlicensed "meetings for sermons, commonly termed by some prophesies or exercises, in market-towns or other places."<sup>66</sup> Hampton Court had raised the troubling issue of the conflict between obedience to the Crown and obedience to God; as we will see, these canons, and especially the detested subscription articles of Canon 36, forced one group of ministers to stand with their conscience and to take the extraordinary step of separating from the established Church.<sup>67</sup>

Separatists like Jacob believed the only true godly community could be found in a gathering of "spirituall perfect Corporation of Believers," as he put it in his 1604-5 catechism. This body was constituted "By a free mutuall consent of Believers joyning & covenanting to live as Members of a holy Society together."<sup>68</sup> Prophesying was central to this covenant. Within this "free congregation of saints" "any understanding man" could engage in the "sober, discreet, orderly and well governed exercise of expounding and applying the scripture."<sup>69</sup> The prophesyings continued to play a central role in the formation of this "holy Society" in Separatist groups in England, in Holland and beyond. A letter by Hugo Bromhead, written about 1606, describes Anabaptist congregational practices, where prophesying plays a central role: "The order of the worshippe and government of oure church is 1. We begynne with A prayer, after reade some one or tow sic chapters of the bible give the sence thereof, and conferr upon the same, that done we lay aside our bookes, and after a solemne prayer made by the 1 speaker, he propoundeth some text out of the Scripture, and prophecieth out of the same, by the space of one hour or thre Quarters of an hour. After him standeth up A .2. speaker and prophecieth owt of the said text the like tyme and space. Some tyme more some tyme lesse."<sup>70</sup> Prophesyings also went on to play an important part in the worship of the congregational churches of the Plymouth fathers.<sup>71</sup>

The prophesyings left their imprint on contemporary literature as well. The method of biblical commentary given formal expression in the exercises influenced vernacular editions of the Bible issued on the continent.<sup>72</sup> A number of lectures and sermons originally given at the Bury St Edmunds lectures found their way into print;<sup>73</sup> and Craig shows how the establishment of the library by Miles Mosse in the parish church of St James was a product of the Bury exercise.<sup>74</sup> As we saw above, William Burton's admiration of the prophesyings was strong; his close observation of the question-and-answer format of the Norwich preaching exercises (a tradition in that town from 1564 on) no doubt left their trace on his Calvinist catechism of 1591, and his Epistle Dedicatory to his Seven Dialogues, quoted above, remarks not just on the effectiveness of the prophesyings but also on the power of the dialogue form. John Deacon and John Walker's *Dialogicall Discourses* (1601) is another good example of how the format of the prophesyings could be adapted for polemical purposes. This series of printed dialogues attacked the exorcisms of John Darrell. Darrell, in his lectureships at St. Mary's Church, Nottingham, conducted large public prayer assemblies - meetings that were, in essence, prophesyings – claiming dramatic examples of dispossession of devils and spirits.<sup>75</sup> *Dialogicall Discourses* also resembles a prophesying, from the opening prayer uttered by "Orthodoxus" (and his role as moderator of the conference) to the comparative analysis of specific scriptural and patristic passages in the course of the debate, to the calls for public discussion as a pathway to truth.<sup>76</sup> The authors explain in a note to the "godly affected Reader" that they have spared no time or energy in collecting claims and arguments about possession. Their effort to "trie forth the certaine truth or untruth" concerning alleged cases has been conducted through interrogation and dialogue: "What entercourse of writings? What mutuall conferences? What hot disputes? What arguings? What answerings? What replies, and rejoinders: or ever we could fittly accord about the severall questions propounded between us?" For Deacon, open debate on controversial issues is a source of strength; the fact that their opponents refuse to engage in dialogue is testimony to the weaknesses of their own position. Instead, their opponents "keepe a vengeable coyle in Conventicles and corners, like the Owle in an Ivie bush that dares not endure the birdes of the day."<sup>77</sup> Like other puritan polemical dialogues published at this time, Deacon chooses the dialogue form to re-order a multiplicity of views into a redemptive pattern of consensus, embodied in the dramatic movement of the dialogue. There is a tension in the polemical literature, however, between the propagation of "new dividid opinions" and controversies of divinity by the very nature of the prophesyings, and their established role in the institutions of the Church. An example is Charles Odingsells' work published in 1619 titled *Prophesying, casting out of devils, and miracles: briefly discoursed in two sermons*, in which Odingsells condemns the free-form application of the gift of prophesy on questions of possession, miracles and exorcism.<sup>78</sup>

Only those who are "sanctified and called thereunto," Odingsells writes, are qualified to open up the dark and difficult passages of scripture, not "tradesmen, not such as follow the plough, not they that sit at the distaffe." He provides a four-fold scheme of types of prophesy: the first look into "things done long agoe," the second reveal "things far off or secret," the third, discover "things to come long before" (such as the Old Testament prediction of the coming of Christ) and the fourth is the preaching, or expounding of scripture. This "gift of Prophesying in this sense, is perpetual in the Church, and must not faile," and this is why universities and colleges in England train men in this gift. But he goes on to denounce the misuse and abuse of prophesy in the casting out of devils, which is no true prophesying but used by the unlearned and the vulgar, inspired by wiles of Satan.<sup>79</sup>

Dialogue, as deployed in the imaginative fictions of Henoeh Clapham and John Murton, opens up a space where the individual can validate his or her own authority on matters of faith – an authority guided, however, by scripture and God's grace. At the same time, they dramatize how two or more voices move toward consensus, a movement which is at the center of protestant conceptions of the godly community, and, as we have seen, in the exercise of prophesying itself.<sup>80</sup> Clapham and Murton both envision a similar movement from division to consensus, but of course from different theological and ecclesiological points of view. It is to the dialogues of these two writers that we now turn.

## "Prophetical giuftes; prophetical fooleries":

The anti-Separatist dialogues of Henoeh Clapham

Early in 1606, a group of reform-minded ministers gathered in the home of Isabel Wray in Coventry. Those present at the conference included her husband, Sir William Bowes, Arthur Hildersham, John Dod, Richard Clifton and three younger men, Richard Bernard, John Smyth and Thomas Helwys. The group discussed Hampton Court, the ecclesiastical canons, the elevation of Bancroft to the Archbishop of Canterbury, and the silencing of ministers by the High Commission. Smyth, influenced by the writings of Separatist founder Francis Johnson, declared that the Church of England was no true church. There was no alternative but to follow the example of Johnson's congregation. They must separate from the national church, and, if necessary, sail to Holland to avoid further deprivations. Hildersham, an organizer of the Millenary Petition, and who, along with William Bradshaw, had sustained the "famous exercises" at Burton-on-Trent, Repton and Ashby, urged in this case conformity; Bernard wavered, unconvinced of Smyth's arguments. What emerged from this peaceful meeting was the formation of two congregations, one headed by Clifton at Scrooby and the other at Gainsborough under the leadership of Smyth and a deprived lecturer named John Robinson. After Helwys' wife Joan was arrested in July 1607 and several Scrooby men were fined for church absence – the Clifton-Smyth congregations decided to sail in 1608 to the Low Countries in search of religious freedom.<sup>81</sup>

This was the fourth wave of English Separatists to sail for Amsterdam, after Browne and his group in 1582, the Barrowists in 1593 and Johnson's congregation in 1597. On Smyth's arrival, one of the congregations he encountered was headed by Henoeh Clapham, who had led a Separatist group of his own in the mid-1590s, but who had now conformed. To Smyth, Clapham was an apostate from the true cause, and Smyth venomously denounced the former Separatist in print for returning to the fold.<sup>82</sup> Clapham, in turn, engaged in a fierce pamphlet war with Separatism. He wrote a number of theological and polemical works, including two of his most important, *Error on the Right hand and Error on the Left Hand*, both published in London in 1608.<sup>83</sup> Few historians have touched upon Clapham's curious career, and his writings remain obscure, lost in the footnotes of histories of English dissent. But a close reading of his dialogues allows us to examine objections raised by "mainstream" puritans to the impact of Separatism on English social and political life.

Clapham's dialogues trace the spiritual and physical wanderings of Malcontent (a representative of the puritan ministry critical of the national church but unwilling to separate) and Flyer (representing those who flee to Holland) and their various encounters with Separatist figures including Anabaptist, Romanist (a recusant Catholic), Legatine-Arian (or what we might call an "English Seeker"), Familist, Libertine and Atheos. The action shifts from the port at Gravesend, to Holland and back to England, with conversations taking place on highways and in taverns. Both Malcontent and Flyer move from one religious crisis to another, and they jump from sect to sect, all in the search for an elusive spiritual truth, until they are brought home to the Church of England.<sup>84</sup>

Clapham travelled in both Separatist and conformist circles, tracing an erratic spiritual odyssey, much like the characters in his polemical dialogues. The self-portrait Clapham draws in his writings is a man carried from one religious crisis to another, travelling in and out of England, finally aligning himself with the conformist position. The chronological sequence of his life is difficult to outline with certainty, but he tells us that by 1584 he abandoned the study of poetry, and by 1585 he was ordained a minister by William Wickham, bishop of Lincoln. He ran into trouble with the authorities throughout his life. He publicly ministered in Lancashire in 159-2, but his Puritan views landed him in the Clink (possibly along with Francis Johnson and a group of Barrowists in 1592-3). Soon after he left England to pursue religious liberty, and by 1595 he was a leader of an English-speaking congregation in Amsterdam. He worked as a minister in London during the severe plague of 1603, but was thrown into prison for inciting panic by writing *An Epistle discoursing upon the present Pestilence* in the same year. He remained in prison for about three years, but was then released, for we know he was made vicar of Northborne in Kent in 1607. Clapham was in trouble again in December 1609, when Edwin Sandys denounced him for being disorderly and drunk,<sup>85</sup> but his fortunes rose again once more, for he dedicated a work in 1609 to Sir Edmund Anderson, the powerful chief of the Court of Pleas, and no friend to puritans. He writes against Separatism until his death around 1614-15.<sup>86</sup>

The metaphor of the voyage is of course common in the tradition of dialogue, but for Clapham, this metaphor resonates with his own personal journey ("First into the Low-countries I went," he writes in a biographical note in *Antidoton*, "Afterwards into Scotland: And againe into Netherland, & Sometimes haled by this faction, sometimes pulled by that faction").<sup>87</sup> Further, the search for a covenanted community outside of the national church is, for Clapham, Separatism's greatest danger. Metaphors of the labyrinth, of wandering, of being carried away, of being entangled and lost in dark corners and by-ways, are used throughout his books. Separatists provoke people to search "without the church, in Woods, Milles, by-Stables, Barnes, and Hay-loftes; whereupon, all the speech now is, Goe out, goe out of Babel, come into the secret places" (*Right Hand*, A2r). And in an allusion to the Chaderton pamphlet attacked by Rogers at the Bury exercise, Flyer condemns the secretive nature of Separatist conferences, which he calls "Conventicles, where your privat Disciples might privately applaud you. And if you remember he tells Malcontent at the beginning of their talk, I was one of your Classis, when in Cambridge you (in secret) chattered out that Sermon upon Rom. 12. Which afterwarde was published without name" (*Right Hand*, 3).

While his dialogues are marred by jarring changes of scene and awkward entrances and exits, Clapham's use of vivid idiomatic speech, physical "stage" action, and the revelation of character through dialogue make them highly dramatic; they almost demand to be read aloud, and could easily be adapted for performance (they are both subtitled, after all, "Acted by way of dialogue"). Beyond this, Clapham clearly believes in the instructional power of the form in his campaign against the lures of Separatism. In his letter to the reader in *Error on the Left Hand*, Clapham notes that the dialogues were written to "helpe the slow conceited," that is, those "about the citie of London, who are ordinarily toyled with the

Factionous" (A5r). What is fascinating is Clapham's focus not just on how his dialogues function as manuals for the uneducated, but how the form allows him to capture the voices of radical dissent in print. Beneath Clapham's passing comment above is the tantalizing suggestion that his dialogues were perhaps read aloud to London bricklayers or carpenters in inns or private houses. Clearly Clapham believes that familiarization with Separatist arguments inoculates the poor and unlearned from heretical belief.

By participating in Malcontent's discovery of his identity as a "True Visible Christian," and by studying how he negotiates with pro-Separatist and anti-Separatist positions, Clapham's Christian Reader learns to refute error and discover salvation within the English Church. The dialogues demonstrate not just how to defend and protect oneself against the persuasive rhetoric of heresy, but how to cut through the dissimulation and disguise that plagues the internal battles of the Christian Church. As John Joope's dedicatory letter to Clapham's *True Visible Christian* (1599) makes clear, false Christians are potentially even more dangerous than open enemies: "More heed is to be had of rendinge Wolves clad in sheepish conversation, as in skynnes: rather then of open Beares, Lyons, and Leopards sittinge in the midst of the temple and Catholike wheatfielde I meane the Church."<sup>88</sup> Separatists come "in Sheepe-like conversation," Clapham writes in the note to the reader in *Error on the Right Hand*, "and by such sheepish outward moralitie, labour to cover their Wolvish, pricking, Schismaticall Doctrine" (A3v).<sup>89</sup> Clapham's dialogue creates a cacophony of these widely divergent voices - be they Familist, Papist, Anabaptist - in order to rise above them; Clapham points to an authority above and beyond these spurious claims of prophesy. The figure of "Mediocritie" provides a middle way of peace and salvation, guiding Separatists out of their labyrinth and back to the established church in order to reconcile what are non-essential controversies over discipline. As *Mediocritie* puts it, claims of voluntary association or individual biblical interpretation will lead to nothing but political and social unrest: "For privat conceits, as you may have yours, & I may have mine, a third, may have a third, and so on without end; must these be causes why every one of us must exclaime one upon another: and all of us agree in one to disturbe the Church? So there shall never be communion, never any order, & so consequently not any peace" (*Right Hand*, A3r).

Clapham equates the Separatists' desire for independence on matters of discipline with their irreverence towards all constituted authority: "And so, when they have separated from all, condemned all (good and bad ... condeming sic the substance of faith and manners all they must every head beginne a new field, a new Church, and all new. And because all are not of one mind, therefore every one begins a Church (spicke and span new) of a sundry fashion."<sup>90</sup> Clapham defends the Church of England, by contrast, as a source of political and social order. Yes, the external church may have its faults. Yes, parishes might be filled with corrupt preachers and parishioners consumed with sin and error. But is this enough, he asks, to abandon the English church? Just as the visible government of the church does not guarantee a community of perfect christians, corruption within that same church does not condemn the entire government or community as Anti-Christian.<sup>91</sup> Clapham denounces, as does King James, the extremes of Puritanism on one hand and popish error on the other, arguing instead for a mean between these radical positions in a true Christian "Catholicity."<sup>92</sup>

Clapham's dialogues employ the self-condemning speech, a technique as old as Plato and Lucian and used widely in Reformation and Counter-Reformation dialogue.<sup>93</sup> This notion of a religious identity formed through language is crucial in Clapham's attacks on Separatist extremism. These voices, he tells us, have become nothing but a "multiple & variable noyse of language" (*Right Hand*, 74). Clapham knows there is nothing as damning or as funny as the intemperate speech of schismatics to bring their own arguments down: "by that forme of introducing sic them that is, in dialogue form in their mutuall brablings, wherein, as sometimes one of them confuteth another, so, much of their extravagant speech is so absurd ut recitare, idem est quod refutare. As the bare repetition is a sufficient refutation" (*Left Hand*, A5r-A6v). Like Ben Jonson's satiric treatment of Anabaptists and Puritans in his plays, Clapham's characters are filled with words, words and more words. "We that have travailled externall Regions," *Libertine* says in a tremendous understatement, "delight in discourse" (*Left Hand*, 19). These characters are consumed with a precise language of their own devising, and obsessed with definition and usage. The *Legatine-Arian*, for example, becomes caught up in his own fastidiousness when he tells *Flyer* he will use the word "substantially" instead of "essentially" when describing qualities of the true Christ. When *Flyer* warns him that these words are tainted with the Latin of papal Rome, the *Legatine-Arian* announces this cannot be helped, for language is marked by the intersection of social, religious and political forces: "as the Apostle could not sayle thorow the Seas, but in the Shippe whose badge was the prophaine Castor and Pollux; so, neither can wee sayle thorow these Discourses, but in wordes stamped with the image of the Beast" (*Right Hand*, 42-4).

Dialogue also allows Clapham to dramatize the more serious issue of how these "English factors" employ dissimulation through speech (a topic of great concern in the wake of the Gunpowder Plot and the controversies involving the Oath of Allegiance of 1606). With their claims of prophecy, their assurances of "true" Christian religion, and their pronouncements of a perfect belief separate from the established Church, these voices of Separatism cultivate insurrection and treachery. James made the same argument in his defense of the Oath that diversity in belief was nothing but a cloak for rebellion; in the language of the Oath, the subject acknowledges the authority of the king "in all his dominions," and he must declare that his conscience is free from any mental reservation. Clapham's Separatists are great dissemblers and equivocators, breaking oaths and re-defining their identity within institutional discourse in a strategy to survive within an hostile English society. The *Libertine's* and the *Romaniste's* arguments for equivocation and mental reservation are Clapham's examples of a Separatist identity constituted within what has been called the "realm of discursive privacy," that is, a self-contained religious identity detached from the legal, political and religious constraints surrounding it.<sup>94</sup> Clapham wants to show how Separatists twist conventional meanings of language into contingency and instability.<sup>95</sup> Clapham also ridicules the Separatists' lack of university training as another reason for their ignorance and their inability to lead the church. The *Legatine-Arian* and the *Anabaptist* proudly announce that they "care not a straw for Hebrew, Greeke, or Latin" and that they "hate this prophane learning and language" (*Right Hand*, 33).<sup>96</sup> The rejection of these traditions cuts them free from the authority controlled by the magistrate and sustained by the ordinances of the Church.

There is a tension, however, between Clapham's delight in the dialogue and his uneasiness with the form's potential for giving "voice" to dissent in these "Dialogicall Prosopopeia" as he calls them. Clapham apologizes for putting the views of these "schismatikes" into print ("I grant that some things be much unworthy," he confesses at the beginning of one dialogue, "both my writing & many their hearing" *Left Hand*, A2v). He also asks the reader to forgive the comic energy he devotes to his parody of Separatist voices: "consider it is but the naturall character of that spirit: and that it is but as a feeling of that spirites pulse, without any commemoration or dwelling upon it" (*Right Hand*, A3r). He repeatedly justifies his use of the dialogue as a weapon of religious controversy: "If thou canst well relish the Matter, but not the Maner of handling," he writes in the note to the reader in *Error on the Left Hand*, "I then referre thee to my Antidoton, my New Jerusalem, my Manuall of the Bibles doctrine, together with divers of the heades, sparsed in my Bibles briefe, in my poeme Aelohim, and five parts of my labours of Salamons Song" (A5v-A5r).

For those readers uneasy with the reproduction of sectarian discourse, Clapham points them to his treatises of straightforward Biblical explication. In addition, he provides guides in both dialogues for the reader in introductory notes and epistles, and he frames each with little doctrinal essays and summaries in an attempt to contain the individual schismatic voices he reproduces in the body of the text.<sup>97</sup> The source of Clapham's uneasiness in these passages is clear: To what extent does giving dissent a "voice" within a text paradoxically give it legitimacy? Clapham deals directly with this issue in *Error on the Left Hand*, when *Mediocritie* answers criticisms that the author has been "caryed away (or

entangled) with Anabaptisme, Arianisme & – that is, in his reproduction of these voices he has in fact absorbed much of their heretical teachings. To criticize Clapham for this, he argues, is to criticize fathers of the church like Augustine, who fought schismatics in the same way (91).

At the center of Clapham's broader polemical strategy in these dialogues is to explore moments of true and false conversion. Conversion narratives have been an important component of dialogues from their classical origins, for conversion is at the core of the dialogue form's fundamentally pedagogic and therapeutic strategy. Sixteenth-century protestant dialogues often dramatize the fact that godly identity is achieved through interrogation, and the path toward spiritual regeneration involves the peeling away of false identities.<sup>98</sup> Separatist autobiography shares with mainstream puritan autobiography the centrality of moments of conversion. Barrow was transformed from a puritan to a Separatist position after his encounter with a book written by Browne and by further debate with Separatist leaders.<sup>99</sup> Johnson's "conversion" to Separatism is another well-known example. Johnson, no friend of Separatism at the time, was ordered to burn one of Barrow's books in 1591 while he was a minister in Middelburg. Johnson saved two copies of the book from the flames, ostensibly so "that he might see their errors," but he was so impressed by their arguments that he sailed to London to confer with Barrow and Greenwood in prison, "after which conference he was so satisfied and confirmed in the truth," he stayed in London and was elected pastor of a Barrowist congregation in 1592.<sup>100</sup> There are moments of true conversion in Clapham's dialogues; indeed, the general movement of both texts is the re-integration of Malcontent and Flyer back into the fold of the English Church through their final dialogic encounters with Mediocritie. Malcontent is told "for by thy conversion God will have his mercy made glorious; and therefore being converted, see thou also do help to strengthen thy brethren" (Left Hand, 66).

But there is a sense in Clapham's dialogues that these moments of conversion, generated by dialogic exchange, while powerful, can be illusionary. Clapham satirizes Separatist claims of conversionary power, as when the Anabaptist is convinced of his prophetic and evangelic abilities: "I shall turne the hearts of many Fathers to the Children; and the heartes of Children to the Fathers" (Right Hand, 26-7). Romaniste tells Malcontent: "I hate[d] the Church of Rome till now; but the holy Angell no sooner breathed upon me, but my bowels yearned after her presense, yea, methought such a light flashed upon my senses, as therewith all, all intricate scruples banished" (Left Hand, 11). Clapham develops the "gifts" of individual belief and "freedom and power" cherished by these Separatists and distorts them into monstrous versions of anarchy and self-possession. The Libertine-Arian provides an example of one William, who fled from England to the Netherlands, "who running from the English Church here, to the Brownist; from the Brownist, to a particular faction of his owne, wherto he did baptize himselfe; from that to one sect of the Anabaptists, where they baptized him againe; from that to another sect of the Anabaptists &c., finding no rest in any, till hee setle [to] heare all, to walke with all" (Left hand, 22-3).

Where most protestant polemical dialogues include one central conversion usually occurring in the final pages,<sup>101</sup> Clapham's dialogues contain examples of multiple conversions, one after another, to dramatize the lightly held faith of these radicals. Engaging in dialogue (or "Dialoguizing" as one of his characters puts it) is crucial in the formation of a godly identity, but in Clapham's texts it can also mislead a wavering will. In every dialogic exchange in Clapham, there is a lingering uncertainty, a sense that godly identity is in continual flux, shaped easily by orthodoxy at one moment and heresy at another. Clapham wants to satirize claims by leading Separatists like John Robinson, who believed that just as "the inward, and invisible hand of the Spirit must seize, and take hold of the heart ... so must the Lord's outward, and visible hand, his Word, seize, and take hold of the outward man, at the least, and be effectual visibly and externally."<sup>102</sup> Clapham instead shows how this self-possession urged by Separatists literally separates one's identity from oneself (in an opening monologue, Malcontent admits he is "divided in my selfe" Left Hand, 4) and how these false identities are formed through a language unhinged by zeal. In an earlier work, Clapham describes his own fall into Separatist thought as a series of misleading conversations, each pushing him into further and further stages of heresy,<sup>103</sup> and within the fiction of his dialogues, Clapham shows how easily men and women can be fooled by those skilled in debate and disputation. Flyer, after talking a few minutes with Anabaptist, tells him he is ashamed of his previous religious associations, and declares "I firmly betake my selfe to your Fayth, till death us depart" (26). He declares the truth has suddenly burned into his heart, and he wants to jump into a "passage-Card, and prophecie Fire upon England and all English Sectaries" (Right Hand, 27). A few pages later, however, after Flyer has listened to the Legatine-Arian/Anabaptist dialogue, he explains how in the course of "discoursing with the Anabaptist about Religion, I verily resolved to joyne with him and his Congregation. But perceiving by your Dialoguizing with him, that al is meere foolerie, to beleeve, that either Hee, or Brownist, or Mal-content, is of any true Church" (Right Hand, 36).

Coupled with this caricature of conversion is the comic take on the priesthood of individual believers. Flyer asks to join Legatine-Arian's congregation, but Legatine-Arian reminds him that there is no such thing as a true visible Christian church. Further, Legatine-Arian argues it is Anti-Christian practice to admit "any unbeleever or stranger to the fayth, unto the Pastorall exercise: For is it not written in 1. Cor. 14. 22. Prophecie serveth not for them that beleeve not, but for them which beleeve"? There follows this exchange on the exercise of prophesy:

*Flyer. Then I perceive, that all such, as I have left behinde me, have served Antichrist in hypocrisie; for they suffer any Infidell to come unto their exercises of Prophecie, or Preaching. But my COUNTRYMEN the Flyers, have herein sinned above all: for they permit infidelious Marchantes and others, to come on the Thursday unto their exercise of Prophecie, when (ten to one) by reason of some brabbling cause then to be pleaded, the Congregation meeteth, stayeth, and departeth, without any Prayer at all, or exercise of their propheticall giftes.*

*Legatine-Arian. Propheticall giftes; Propheticall fooleries. Tom Lace-seller, and Abraham Pin-seller (so I thinke M. Harry Barrow spoke in the Fleete) must come out and spatter their meanings; and this must be called the exercise of Prophecie.*  
(Left Hand, 38-9)

Here is the spectre of lay participation once more; the prophesyings degenerate into babbling and misguided biblical explication by the inclusion of the unlearned. Clapham's dialogues stress, by contrast, the importance of the figure of the moderator. Malcontent, through his dialogue with Mediocritie, comes to an understanding of a passage in Collosians: "I could never enter into the Apostles true meaning; which now (after these few words of yours) are so plainly evident, as the Sunne at Noone-daies. God have the praise for it" (Left Hand, 83). Private reading here is insufficient; the minister acts as interpreter, and his role is crucial for full comprehension of the true faith. The final sequence of Error of the Left Hand, is, in effect, a catechism in miniature. Not only does it calm Flyer's doubts, but it enacts a profound conversion within him. Mediocritie's voice is a corrective to the wanderings of Flyer's individual conscience through this landscape, and thus is crucial in the formation of his godly identity as a member of the Church of England.

Recent historical studies have shown how Brownists, Barrowists, Anabaptists, Familists, once seen as disaffected groups, working in secret "undergrounds," cut off one from another, should be seen as having affiliations with puritans at all levels of English society. Christopher Marsh's study of the Family of Love is probably the best-known example.<sup>104</sup> Marsh shows that Familists were constables, witnesses to wills, even churchwardens, and thus participated in all aspects of their community. Perhaps the best name for these Separatist groups is Barrington White's "impatient" or "hasty" puritans, or Collinson's description of a "puritanism beyond puritanism" in their desire to return to a primitive Christian worship and to what Browne called a "covenanted community" of godly believers. And as scholars of English dissent from Champlin Burrage to White have shown, protestantism cannot be disentangled from the act of separation itself. Foxe's Book of Martyrs immortalized those protestants who gave their lives in separating from the anti-Christian Church of Rome, and English protestants often pointed to medieval sectarians as foreshadowing their own separation from Roman jurisdiction.<sup>105</sup> Clapham works hard in his texts to destabilize this connection and to stress the salvation found within the Church of England.

Peter Lake has called for further study of contemporary polemical reactions to puritanism. Such an approach, Lake argues, allows us to see how "different views of the relationship between the cause of social order and of true religion" emerge from ecclesiological debate and personal attack.<sup>106</sup> Clapham's dialogues provide us with just such a window into conformist conceptions of the Separatist threat. This is, of course, not to say that Clapham works as Jacobean anthropologist, providing us with case studies of Separatist figures "toying" with London bricklayers, carpenters or painters – Clapham's satiric and comic impulse colors his view of the landscape of London and Amsterdam too intensely for that. But these dialogues do show us how this "underground" was perceived by conforming puritans like Clapham working within an ideology of conformity. And this perception is crucial in our understanding of puritan polemic regarding claims of godly identity and social order, for the voices in Clapham's dialogues vividly demonstrate how puritan identity was an area of intense contestation and conflict in these early years of James' reign. Yet where Clapham and other anti-Separatist writers condemned the move by Separatists toward individual judgment, and denounced their growing impatience with the intervention of the civic magistrate into religious belief and practice, radical groups like baptists and Anabaptists placed the privacy of religious conscience at the center of their defenses against persecution.

In March, 1612, Edward Wightman, a mercer from Burton-upon-Trent, Staffordshire, was condemned for heresy. He was tied to a stake in the marketplace at Lichfield, and according to official records, when the fire "scorched him a little," he quickly "cried out that he would recant." At this moment, the crowd surged forward, trying to pull Wightman from the flames, some of them burned in the process. Wightman was then handed a recantation, "which he there read and professed, before he was unchained from the stake." Three weeks later, on April 11, Wightman was brought before the consistory court to formally recant. But Wightman "blasphemed more audaciously than before," the writ was executed, and Wightman was sent back to the stake where (again according to the official record) he "died blaspheming." Wightman has become known to history as the last person burned for heresy in England, but less is known about the beliefs for which he died. He was a self-confessed Anabaptist, and though Wightman apparently held other heretical and messianic views, his burning was a vivid reminder to everyone that dissent from the Church of England would not be tolerated. A few years before his execution, Wightman is said to have attended Burton exercises, where he aired his views on infant baptism. Bishop Neile quickly made the connection between Wightman's views and the Burton exercise.<sup>107</sup>

James and his government published extensive counter-propaganda identifying radical positions like Wightman's as heretical and treasonous. In the same year that Murton's dialogue is printed in Holland, a dialogue entitled *God and the King*, published by royal command in London, reconfirmed the duties owed by a subject to his King and defended the pressures placed upon the conscience by the Oath of Allegiance.<sup>108</sup> While James worked hard to present the image of a pacific king who ruled a country united by protestant uniformity, and recent work by Nicholas Tyacke, Kenneth Fincham, Lake and Collinson has supported James' claim of a broadly conforming national church. I would argue that the Separatist controversy in the early Stuart church, although short-lived, contributed to what Lori Anne Ferrell has called the "rhetorical laboratory" of James' anti-Reformation discourse developed in the course of his reign.<sup>109</sup>

The same year that Wightman perished at Lichfield, a small Anabaptist sect, led by Thomas Helwys and John Murton, returned to England after a difficult exile in Amsterdam. After breaking from their congregation's leader, John Smyth (whose associations with the Mennonite church they found increasingly problematic), this group founded the first Baptist church on English soil, in Spitalfields, outside London's city walls. Though the Conventicle Act of 1593, the ecclesiastical canons of 1604 and the Oath of Allegiance of 1606 had created a dangerous climate, Helwys believed his congregation belonged in England, where "thousands of ignorant souls were perishing for lack of instruction."<sup>110</sup> Helwys, the author of what many have called the first declaration of religious freedom in English (A short declaration of the mystery of iniquity), was imprisoned in Newgate, and upon his death in 1612, the leadership of the group fell to John Murton. Murton, a young furrier from Gainsborough, was also imprisoned (he is noted as "a Teacher of a church of the Anabaptists in Newgate" by one contemporary source). While in prison, he wrote a defense of Anabaptist claims for freedom of religious practice and liberty of conscience titled *Objections: Answered by way of Dialogue*, published in Amsterdam in 1615.<sup>111</sup> *Objections: Answered* wants to question the act of persecution in itself; persons should not be punished for their religious practice "be it true or false," as the Epistle Dedicatory phrases it, as long as they testify their allegiance to the crown.

## 'Faithful subjects'

Freedom of religion in John Murton's *Objections: Answered by way of Dialogue* (1615)

*Objections: Answered*, a dialogue between "Christian" (Murton's representative), "Antichristian" (the voice of the Church of England), and "Indifferent Man" (an ambivalent figure who is of course persuaded by Christian's argument in the course of their talk), dramatizes how open, free debate on controversial issues leads to the discovery of truth. This extends to the broader issue of persecution: "And instead of disputing and writing by the word and Spirit of Christ against their adversaries," Christian comments, "the King's magistrates will cruelly persecute and fight by fire and sword" (47-8). Christian regrets the impact that forced exile has had upon his brotherhood. When the leading lights of reform fly to Holland, he remarks sadly, they "deprive many poor ignorant souls in their own nation of their information, and of their conversation amongst them" (176 – emphasis added). Dialogue for Murton is a model of spiritual self-examination, a part of those exercises of teaching, reading and debate crucial in the development of a community of godly believers.

Murton tells us he chose to write his work "dialogue-wise" because "first, for the understanding of the simple, to whom especially God's mysteries appertain, more than to the wise and prudent of the world. Secondly, because all the objections that we have met with, might be set down, and the plainlier answered."<sup>112</sup> The use of dialogue as a way of instructing the young or the "simple" is a common justification in dialogues of this period;<sup>113</sup> what is interesting here is Murton's claim that the inclusion of opposing arguments is the best method of answering them once and for all, a common sentiment in many Separatist writings, and, as we have seen, an important element in the exercise of prophesy. Murton also chooses the dialogue form because it can literally enact the mutual coming together so important to separatists.<sup>114</sup> Smyth, Helwys, Murton and their followers broke from an older Separatism which held that the church was a covenant of the elect, to a more radical view that believer's

baptism, as a sign of voluntary conversion, was the true sign of this covenant. The narrative movement of Murton's dialogue reflects this fellowship as the foundation of the church. By contrast, in the government's catechism-like dialogue, God and the King, the movement of the talk is the Pupil's ("Philaethes") acquisition of a higher knowledge (theological and political) embodied by the figure of the Teacher ("Theodidactus"). The Proclamation announcing the publication of this text explains that the dialogue is "fit for the capacities of Youth, whereby in their tender yeeres, the truth of that Doctrine may be bred and settled in them, and thereby they the better armed, and prepared to withstand any persuasions, which in their riper yeeres may be offered and used towards them, for the corrupting of them, in their duetie and Allegiance."<sup>115</sup> (I pity the Scottish schoolchildren who were commanded to memorize this tedious tract.) God and the King interweaves royal discourse into its own argument (like Murton's dialogue, it too includes the full text of the Oath of Allegiance), and it also emphasizes how dialogue or "conference" can clarify complicated political and religious issues. In the course of explicating the language of the Oath and its application to the conscience, there are moments of insight from the Pupil: "I confesse I do conceive the principal contents of the oath more clearly than before" (30), Philaethes says at one point. "And so at length," Theodidactus says at the close, "I have proved unto you that nothing can free subjects from their fidelity and allegiance unto their prince" (84). Throughout this "conference" the two figures work out the state-as-household metaphor ("as the husband is the head of the wife, so is the Prince of his subjects," Theodidactus intones in the opening pages 2-3; 19) and the rest of the work develops the implications of this formula: the King's absolute prerogative in spiritual and ecclesiastical affairs and the subject's duty to the prince.<sup>116</sup>

In the fiction of Murton's dialogue, however, the characters "Christian" and "Indifferent Man" are witness and judge at once, brought together by "God's word and spirit" (172). No figure of higher authority (other than scripture) plays a central role in judging the outcome of their conversation as it does in *God and the King*.<sup>117</sup> Significantly, "Antichristian" is pushed out of the conversation about mid-way through. Christian and Indifferent Man thus work toward a consensus by themselves, judging, condemning, all within a narrative of conversion. While Antichristian drops out, unconvinced, Indifferent Man is struck by the light of self-knowledge. His speeches are peppered with phrases like "Well, I bless God, I see this as clearly as the sun shining in his brightness" (120), or "I give you hearty thanks for your pains with me in these things, and I trust I shall not let them slip, but remember them all my life, and put them in practice" (175). He also provides commentary on Revelations, remarks on the excesses of the Family of Love, and quotes from Perkins on the nature of baptism, all in the development of Christian's arguments.

Murton's dialogue uses Socratic-style interrogation and includes self-condemning arguments to re-situate and re-define key terms in the Separatist controversy. In a discussion about the King's power to compel the conscience, for example, Christian guides Antichristian through a series of questions which inevitably lead to the condemnation of Antichristian's own arguments (127). For most readers in early Stuart England, the word "anabaptist" smacked of heresy, communism and anarchic violence,<sup>118</sup> and Murton uses the dialogue form to destabilize these connotations. By redefining the word in the minds of his interlocutors and his readers, Murton regains it from the polemical strategies of the English Church.<sup>119</sup> At another point he describes to Indifferent Man how the King's ministers, when they cannot understand arguments for separation from an unholy church, label those who put forward such positions as "schismatic, Brownist, Anabaptist, and what not, to make the multitude abhor your doings" (153). In this way, Murton not only distances himself from continental Anabaptism, but he also directly engages with a Jacobean polemic that generated stereotypes in its campaign against "hotter" Puritans.<sup>120</sup> Beyond this, Murton incorporates James' own writings into the language of his argument, a striking rhetorical move.<sup>121</sup> Throughout the text, Murton quotes from James' Premonition to all Christian Monarchs, his speeches to Parliament and at Whitehall, the full text of the Oath of Allegiance, and excerpts from the Apology for the Oath of Allegiance to support his own positions. Christian's arguments are prefaced by phrases like "by his majesty's own words" and "as his majesty confirmeth by his own testimony." These words include, as would be expected, James' famous remark in a speech to Parliament in 1609 that "I never found, that blood and too much severity did good in matters of religion" (140-41). The appropriation of royal discourse is a strategy which allows Murton's controversial positions on liberty of conscience to be heard. Whether James listened is another question.

The separation of the political from the theological found in Murton's text can be traced back to the baptists in Henry VIII's reign, through them to the Swiss Anabaptists, and ultimately, as Abraham Friesen has recently restated, to Erasmus' introduction of his New Testament and his Annotations of the 1520s.<sup>122</sup> What we find in these early seventeenth-century writings is a move away from Erastian conceptions of a national church. A Baptist confession of 1611, also published in Amsterdam, argued that as the Word of God comes into every church, no particular church should challenge the prerogative of any other.<sup>123</sup> For Anabaptists, since the church is a gathered church, based upon those who seek, voluntarily, the sacrament of baptism, compulsion by the civil authorities is a violation of this spiritual community.<sup>124</sup> This concept is found in fellow baptist Leonard Busher's extraordinary plea for toleration, *Religions Peace*, published in Amsterdam the year before Murton's pamphlet. Busher writes that "the King and State may defend religion's peace by their sword and civil power, but not the faith, other than by the word of God."<sup>125</sup> Helwys' A short declaration contains this equally notable passage: "For men's religion to God is between God and themselves. The King shall not answer for it. Let them be heretics, Turks, Jews or whatsoever, it appertains not to the earthly power to punish them in the least."<sup>126</sup> Again and again, Helwys and Murton make the distinction between the faith of the King's subjects and the allegiance of "faithful subjects."

Murton's dialogue argues that when the King forces "his faithful subjects to dissemble to believe as he believes," the desire for religious conformity in fact leads to political instability. (This idea is developed in Busher's *Religions Peace*, where Busher argues that the persecution by the King's bishops and his ministers led directly to the Gunpowder Plot of 1605.) If the King accepts those who come to his church without their conscience, this will create an environment of spiritual decay and political intrigue: "And therefore you," Murton writes, "compelling me by tyranny to bring my body whereunto my spirit cannot be brought, you compel me to hypocrisy with God and man; for if my heart were not faithful in sincerity to his majesty's crown and dignity, as I take God to witness [it is], these courses would rather harden my heart to work villainy than otherwise" (139). (James made the same argument in his defense of the Oath of Allegiance, that diversity in belief is nothing but a shield for rebellion and treachery.) In the language of the Oath, as explicated in *God and the King*, the subject acknowledges the authority of the king "in all his dominions" and he further declares that his conscience is free from any mental reservation or equivocation. Subjects owe their duty and their oaths to this higher power, Theodidactus explains, and not even a tyrannous or heretical ruler can break this inviolable bond. The Oath was directed at Catholic recusants, and can be seen as an act of religious tolerance: It recognized the Bishop of Rome while re-asserting the King's authority as monarch; if Catholics signed the Oath the King promised to leave them alone. But this distinction did nothing for other recusants like the Helwys-Murton congregations. As Helwys put it in a petition to the House of Commons, his people remain in prison "only for conscience" while "Popish recusantes" go free after signing the Oath.<sup>127</sup>

Religious identity in *Objections: Answered* is something joined to the State through political, and not religious, affiliation. As Murton explains in the Epistle, only God is the "lawgiver to the soul" (100). True religion, Christian insists, is activated "by the hearing of the word of God" and not the compulsion of any earthly authority. The Oath requires only civil, and not spiritual, obedience (135). While Christian acknowledges the authority of the King's "earthly magistrates," should those same magistrates compel him to attend church services, he would only bring his body, and not his "willing mind" (113). When Antichristian answers that treason will follow if freedom of religion is granted, Christian answers in a twofold way: first, those who practice reform in religion come in peace, and not in treachery; and second, he repeats his position that treason in fact is generated by religious compulsion. Christian pushes this idea further in a remarkable passage where he claims that if Catholics were given freedom of religion, they would in fact become obedient subjects. Look to other nations, he tells Antichristian, "where no such compulsion is used; for if papists might

have freedom in their religion unto their faithful allegiance to the king, the fear of the king's laws would make them live more inoffensively in that respect" (114). In contrast to the positions put forward in *God and the King*, where the subjects' relation to his prince is one of subjugation and obedience in a hierarchy of royal power and control, in *Objections: Answered*, this relationship is seen as more cooperative, at least in the realm of religious conscience. Just as subjects must be faithful and obedient unto their prince, Christian argues, so should princes be "just and equal" to all their subjects; for his lord bishops to excommunicate and punish for religion is to become just like the Pope and his "bloody" practices (116-17).

It would be a mistake to characterize these early baptist calls for religious toleration as evidence of the forces unleashed by the Reformation and Christian Humanism, forces that in turn led to advances in liberal thought, climaxing with expressions of religious freedom in seventeenth-century New England, as historians have often done.<sup>128</sup> Separatist and Anabaptist codes of tolerance and religious liberty were hardly expansive or inclusionary in the modern sense.<sup>129</sup> As a recent collection of essays published by Cambridge University Press a few years ago demonstrated, early modern claims of toleration must be considered in their political and social contexts. Demands for pluralism of religious practice or liberty of conscience are invoked more often than not for pragmatic, and not higher philosophic, reasons. As Andrew Pettegree argues in his essay on the Dutch Republic in that book, the call for toleration "was likely to be the party cry of the disappointed or the dispossessed."<sup>130</sup>

Murton's dialogue surely fits into this category. In his *Epistle* he writes of laying in "filthy prisons, in hunger, cold, idleness, divided from wife, family, calling, left in continual miseries" (97). One of the scholars of the dissenting tradition in England has written that the publication of *Objections: Answered* probably made little impression, as English Anabaptists were generally perceived as a splinter group of no real importance in the threat to conformity.<sup>131</sup> "Mainstream" puritans (including those in Amsterdam like the non-separatist English Reformed Church based in Begijnhof) increased their hostility to separatists because of their potential for tearing apart the community of the godly. And intercentine battles within the various Separatist congregations raged in pamphlet wars for all to read. By Murton's death in 1626, the movement had seriously lost momentum in England.<sup>132</sup> This is not to call into question Murton's high principles. There is an intensity to this dialogue's message, and unlike the separatist tracts of Henry Jacob or Robinson or Busher, Murton's argument for a wide-ranging religious liberty is strong and made without concessions to the civil powers. But as he wrote *Objections: Answered* in prison, Murton must have realized a full dialogue with the King and his bishops would be an impossibility. James' rejection of nonconformity at the Hampton Court and his equally strong dismissal of concerns about "Christian liberty" (a phrase he said "smelt very rankly of anabaptism") made the crown's hostility to more vigorous reform quite clear.<sup>133</sup> Still, Murton writes his dialogue as a way of imagining consensus on the liberty of the conscience, and by extension, a foundation for communicating with the King. The consensus reached by his fictional characters is thus a strategy of legitimization; for Murton, the possibility of dialogue is the pre-condition both he and the King must acknowledge if dialogue can take place at all.

I have used the intersection of the tradition of the prophesyings and the deployment of dialogue as a literary form in the polemical literature as an heuristic device to explore issues of godly identity and liberty of conscience given voice in the controversies over Separatism in the early Stuart Church. As we have seen, Clapham and Murton choose the dialogue form for different reasons when they engaged with these issues. For Clapham, dialogue allows him to mock the voices of Separatist extremists who claim "gifts" of prophesy; it also allows him to dramatize the spiritual journey of an individual who disentangles himself from the lures of Separatism and who seeks the broader circle of believers found in the English Church. Holland is a world of shifting identities in Clapham's dialogues, where lost souls are consumed by a heresy shaped through language: "All the time was there taken up," Flyer tells Mediocritie, "the matter of the Tongue ... I am sure, that a man can not passe there by the by-way, but he shall be assaulted with one transformed spirit or another" (*Left Hand*, 57). Flyer prays that the wandering souls he has encountered will become, one day, "as one flocke, under that one great Archbishoppe of our soules, Christ Jesus" (*Left Hand*, 63). As Clapham notes to the reader, Mediocritie embodies this force for unification and peace, "a Meane; which held and kept according to knowledge may keepe our people from flying out into extreames" (*Left Hand*, A6v). The point is pushed further when the dialogue of *Error on the Left Hand* changes to monologue in the final pages, where Clapham's voice joins with the authoritative voice of the Church of England. For Murton, the literary form works on two levels: Dialogue illustrates how open debate can lead to truth (especially on issues of religious freedom and individual conscience), and it also dramatizes the mutual coming together so important to Separatist worship. Murton sees his dialogue as progressive, in that words are redefined, objections are answered, and an eventual consensus by his "faithful subjects" is reached. But this is a consensus only possible without the threat of persecution. Like the prophesyings, Clapham's and Murton's dialogues value disputation as a defense of truth and as a weapon in the confutation of error; like the prophesyings, they engage in systematic and comparative analysis of a wide variety of texts to defend their positions; like the prophesyings, both foreground the process of debate and conference as a method of instruction and assent – to the auditory in the case of the preaching exercises, and to the reader in the case of the printed works. In his letter to Grindal, William Bradbridge, Bishop of Exeter, believed that the public performance of the prophesyings, as a method of instruction, were more powerful than even the sermon: "The dyversitye of translacions conferred together, the interpretatione of the tonges and the severall gyftes that men have in the utterance, do the more delighte the auditorye and pierceth depelier more deeply the senses then the spech of one mouthe at one tyme."<sup>134</sup> Clapham and Murton could make the same claims of the persuasive power of their own texts. The invocation of dialogue by both writers is a polemical strategy in the effort to establish authority, an authority conceived as univocal and united with the Word of God.

1 Henry Barrow, *A Briefe Discoverie of the False Church* (The Writings of Henry Barrow 1587-1590. Leland H. Carlson, ed. Elizabethan Nonconformist Texts, Vol. III. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1962), 524-25.

2 For Elizabethan prophesyings, see Strype, *Annals of the Reformation* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1824), II:i 133-40; II:ii 612-13; III:i 476-79; A. F. Scott Pearson, *Thomas Cartwright and Elizabethan Puritanism* (Cambridge UP, 1925), 155-57; M. M. Knappen, *Tudor Puritanism* (Chicago and London: Chicago UP, 1965), 253-357; Irvonwy Morgan, *The Godly Preachers of the Elizabethan Church* (London: Epworth P, 1965), 68-101; and Patrick Collinson, *Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California P, 1967), 168 ff. For an example of an exercise as conducted by a puritan faction at Norwich, which included "the parity of all brethren" and where the proceedings were open to all "whom God should move," see *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 213.

3 Lehmborg, 128-41.

4 Strype, *The Life and Acts of Archbishop Grindal* (Works of John Strype, IX: 326). See also Lehmborg, 107. Collinson's footnote (473 n4) in "Lectures by Combination," provides source materials tracing the development of the prophesyings out of ecclesiastical orders.

5 *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 178. Thomas Bentham, Bishop of Lichfield and Coventry, noted the exercise at Southam was conducted independently of his own or Grindal's supervision (see S. E. Lehmborg, "Archbishop Grindal and the Prophesyings," in *The Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church* 34 (1965), 114; see also G. J. R. Parry, *A Protestant Vision: William Harrison and the Reformation of Elizabethan England* (Cambridge UP, 1987), 181.

6 Morgan, 84.

- 7 William Burton, *Seven Dialogues*, pithie and profitable London, 1606 STC 10457, A3r.
- 8 Collinson, "Lectures by Combination," 497; see also John Spurr, *English Puritanism: 1603-1689* (London: Macmillan P, 1998), 68-9.
- 9 Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 175; 179. See also Collinson's "Lectures by Combination: Structures and Characteristics of Church Life in 17th-century England," in *Godly People, Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London, 1983), 487-88, for the receptivity of the bishops to the exercises into the 1630s.
- 10 Stephen Brachlow, "John Robinson and the Lure of Separatism in Pre-Revolutionary England," *Church History* 1 (1981), 295.
- 11 Collinson, "The English Conventicle," in *Voluntary Religion*. W. J. Shiels and Diana Wood, eds. *Studies in Church History* 23 (Oxford, 1986), 244.
- 12 For separatist views, see Walter H. Burgess, *The Pastor of the Pilgrims: A Biography of John Robinson* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Howe, 1920), 77-154; Champlin Burrage, *Early English Dissenters*, 2 Vols. (Cambridge UP, 1912); Geoffrey Nuttall, *Visible Saints: The congregationalist way 1640-1660* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1957), Chapter 1; W. K. Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1965), 261-273; Edward B. Underhill, *Tracts of Liberty of Conscience and Persecution 1614-1661* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1966); B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition: From the Marian martyrs to the Pilgrim Fathers* (London: Oxford UP, 1971); Murray Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints: The Separate Churches of London 1616-1649* (Cambridge UP, 1977); Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the French Revolution*, Vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1978); Stephen Brachlow, "John Robinson and the lure of separatism in pre-revolutionary England" *Church History* 1 (1981), 288-301; R. J. Acheson, *Radical Puritanism in England 1550-1660* (London and New York: Longman, 1990), 19-27; Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth-Century England* (London and New York: Verso, 1990), 52-62.
- 13 "[F]or if anie such guiftes spring up in any," Robert Harrison writes in *A Treatise of the Church*, "for want of stirring up of such guiftes & practicing it is quenched as the talent hidden in the ground, so that their parishioners are not by these guiftes & callinges joyned together as fellow members, or knit by these as by the sinews & bandes of the Church" (*The Writings of Harrison & Browne*. Albert Peel and Leland H. Carlson, eds. London: George Allen and Unwin, 1953, 36).
- 14 "Likewise an order was agreed on for their meetings together, for their exercises therein, as for praier, thanckes giving, reading of the scriptures, for exhortation and edifiing, ether by all men which had the guift, or by those which had a speciall charge before others. And for the lawefulnes off putting forth questions, to learne the trueth, as iff anie thing seemed doubtful & hard, to require some to shew it more plainly, or for anie to shew it him selfe & to cause th rest to understand it." See Champlin Burrage, *The Early English Dissenters*, 2 Vols. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1967), 1:98.
- 15 See W. K. Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration* (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1965), 267-69. On Separatist biblical ecclesiology, see Brachlow, 295-97.
- 16 This desire to remove all sense of repetition is made clear in Barrow's response to Bishop Aylmer and Lord Burghley in 1588/9, when he stated that prayer should not be "tied to any place, manner, time nor form"; "Prayer," he continued, "I take to be a confident demanding which faith maketh through the Holy Ghost according to the will of God" (quoted by Edward H. Bloomfield, in *The Opposition to the English Separatists, 1570-1625* Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1981, 11-12).
- 17 Barrow, 526-27.
- 18 Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 169.
- 19 *Seconde Parte of a Register* Albert Peel, ed. (Cambridge UP, 1915), 1:133-34. Grindal argues for the same humanist foundations of the prophesyings in his letter to the Queen: "Men must attaine to the knowledge of the Hebrewew, Greeke, and Latin tongues, &c., by travell and studie, God giving the increase. So must they also attaine by like meanes to the guift of expounding and interpreting the Scriptures. And amongst other helpes, nothing is so necessarie at those above-named exercises and conferences amongst the ministers of the church" (Lehmburg, 136-37).
- 20 *Moderate puritans and the Elizabethan church* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1982), 43.
- 21 For an examination of how this tradition of formal syllogistic logic intersects with literary dialogue in Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, see my "Conversation and conversion: Dialogue and protestant polemic in sixteenth-century England," in *Printed Voices: A Comparative Outlook on Renaissance Dialogue* (forthcoming, 2000).
- 22 Lehmburg, 107.
- 23 Andrew Pettegree, *Foreign Protestant Communities in Sixteenth-Century London* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1986), 69.
- 24 Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 169; Collinson, "Lectures by Combination," 473.
- 25 Alastair Duke, *Reformation and Revolt in the Low Countries* (London: Hambledon P, 1990), 287.
- 26 Philip Hughes, *The Reformation in England* (3 Vols. London: 1950-54), 2:182-83 n3.
- 27 *The Liturgical Portions of the Genevan Service Book*, William D. Maxwell, ed. (London: Faith P, 1965), 104. Knappen notes, however, that in the second edition, published at Middelburgh two years later, this privilege was explained "as a means of training men for the ministry, perhaps to meet Anglican criticism" (*Tudor Puritanism*, 287).
- 28 "Lectures by Combination," 473.
- 29 Collinson, "The English Conventicle," 241.

- 30 "The English Conventicle," 241-42; see also Ian Green, *The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c.1530-1740* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1996), 30.
- 31 Pettegree, 63.
- 32 See, for example, the Bishop of Salisbury's letter to Grindal, who notes that "I here that one manner of exercise is not used alike in all places, for in one dioceise a text of the Scripture is chosen to be entreated of, and certeyn be appoynted to shewe their myndes of it and the rest be hearers. And in an other dioceise a common place is handled by some appoynted to speake thereof. And in the thyrd dioceise a common place is taken out of Musculus or of Calvine, and everie minister is commaunded to speake his mynde of the said place accorddinge to the doctrine of Musculus or Calvyne" (Lehmberg, 118).
- 33 Lehmborg, 109, 111, and 126.
- 34 Morgan, 72.
- 35 Green, 64.
- 36 I owe this point to Stanley Fish's reading of the role catechism plays in Herbert's poetry (see *The Living Temple* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1978), 15-25).
- 37 See the orders for Hertfordshire, in Lehmborg, 93-96; see also David Kemp's letter, Lehmborg, 102-3.
- 38 See Richard Davies' letter to Grindal, Lehmborg, 121-22. See also Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 175. The order for the exercise at the diocese of Chester allows "people and the whole congregation" at the sermon, but the exercise itself is restricted to the clergy (Strype, *Annals of the Reformation* [II:i 549]).
- 39 Collinson cites one observer of a public exercise who noted that "men and women, boys and girls, labourers, workmen and simpletons" would discuss and debate the texts explored in that morning's conference (Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 175); see also Knappen, 255.
- 40 Lehmborg, 115-16. Although Collinson reminds us that Scory had virtually no direct experience with nonconformity (see Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 194-95), Scory's impression of the dangers is still valuable as a register of how these exercises were perceived.
- 41 Lehmborg, 116-17; 126-27.
- 42 Lehmborg 110; 113.
- 43 Bentham recommends that "grave and sober" moderators be used, "otherwise I see and know they maye do harme" (Lehmberg 114). See also Lehmborg 95-6; 120. Even a moderator, however, might not prevent disputation and disorder. Scory, Bishop of Hereford, told Grindal he discontinued exercises in his diocese for the lack of learned moderators (Lehmberg, 115). This is codified by Grindal with his issuing of "Orders for reformation of abuses about the learned exercises" in 1576 which included items prohibiting lay participation and requiring a "Divine, or else some one other grave learned graduate" to moderate the exercises (cf. Strype, *Life and Acts of Grindal*, IX: 327).
- 44 Lehmborg, 111. See Sandys' letter to the Privy Council, Lehmborg, 99-100.
- 45 See Hughes, 186 n2; Parry, 182-83.
- 46 Elizabethan Puritan Movement, 193.
- 47 Lehmborg, 124.
- 48 "For that the poore vulgar people, whome it was fitter to have bene at their labours and occupations, leaving their ordinarie parishes, resorted thither from places farre distant, to heare matters and points of divinite disputed and decided farre unfit for their capacitie, fearing least some Schisme growing hereby, thorough the diversitie of opinions should have a daungerous sequeale, to the disturbance of her Majesties most peaceable government" (Seconde Parte of a Register, I: 153).
- 49 See, e.g., Bancroft's *Dangerous Positions* (1593): "The sectaries devided themselves from their ordinary congregations and meeting together in private houses, in woods and fieldes, and had kept there their disorderly and unlawful conventicles" (quoted by R. G. Usher, ed., *The Presbyterian Movement in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth as Illustrated by the Minute Book of the Dedham Classis 1582-1589*. (London: Royal Historical Society, 1905), 3.
- 50 Walker goes on to describe how the proceedings end with a prayer for the preservation of the "whole church, for the Queenes Majestie and the state of the realm," sending the people away "in peace and unities of myndes" (Lehmberg, 109).
- 51 Lehmborg, 142-43. Barrow, in *A Briefe Discoverie*, turns this polemical charge on its head when he characterizes the prophesies conducted within the English church as "conventicles": "This place they most perniciously pervert, in that from hence they derive their propheticall conventicles and classical synods, assuming hereby into their owne hands the key of al knowledg, and shutting up the Scripturs, yea all God's graces, even the Holy Ghost it self: as also into their classes of select priests the scepter of Christ and absolute government of al churches, to whome it is left but to receive and execute the reverent decrees of this famous classes of priestes" (*The Writings of Henry Barrow*, 526).
- 52 Lehmborg, 93; see also Nicholas Tyacke, "The 'Rise of Puritanism' and the Legalizing of Dissent, 1571-1719," in *From Prosecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel and Nicholas Tyacke, eds. (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1991) 19-22.

53 John S. Craig, "The 'Cambridge Boies': Thomas Rogers and the 'Brethren' in Bury St Edmunds," in *Belief and Practice in Reformation England: A Tribute to Patrick Collinson from his Students*, Susan Wabuda and Caroline Litzenberger, eds. (Aldershot: Ashgate P, 1998), 156-57; 159.

54 Craig, 160; "Lectures by Combination," 477. The ministers who participated in the prophesyings were required to sign a confession acknowledging the sufficiency and ultimate authority of the Holy Scriptures and condemning Romish abuses and Calvinist expositions of free will and justification of works. See

V. J. K. Brook, *A Life of Archbishop Parker* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1962), 279-81; 326-27.

55 Craig, 162.

56 "Lectures by Combination," 474-75.

57 Usher, 25 n2; *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 224.

58 Morgan, 69; Usher, 30.

59 "Lectures by Combination," 480-97. See also Claire Cross, *The Royal Supremacy in the English Church* (London: George Allen, 1965), 99.

60 Morgan, 69.

61 See Michael E. Moody, "A Critical Edition of George Johnson's A Discourse of Some Troubles and Excommunications in the Banished English Church at Amsterdam (1603)" (Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate School, 1979), 207.

62 William Barlow, *The Summe and Substance of the Conference London, 1604* (English Experience No. 711 (Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1975), 78-9. For the type of reforms Reynolds was proposing, involving provincial and national synods, see Frederick Shriver, "Hampton Court Re-visited: James I and the Puritans," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33:1 (1982), 60. On James' proficiency at debate, see Barlow's passage, for example, on the ending of day one of the conference, where James is described as the greatest of scholars, able to "outstrip" any learned man present (20). See also Jenny Wormald, "James VI and I: Two Kings or One?" *History* 68 (1983), 188. See also James' well-known letter to Henry Howard, Earl of Northampton about the conference, where the King ridiculed the puritans' dialectical abilities: "if any of them had been in a college disputing with their scholars, if any of their disciples had answered them in that sort, they would have fetched him up in a place of a reply; and so should the rod have plied upon the poor boys' buttocks" (Strype's *Life of Whitgift* III:407-8).

63 Shriver, 58. There are moments, however, when the King reminded the participants of the order of formal debate, as when he admonished the Bishop of London for interrupting Reynolds on the second day. According to Barlow, James told the Bishop "there is no order, nor can be any effectual issue of disputation, if each party might not be suffered, without chopping, so to speak at large what he would" (*Summe and Substance*, 28).

64 See Arnold Hunt, "Laurence Chaderton and the Hampton Court Conference," in *Belief and Practice in Reformation England*, quoting Jacob's Christian and modest offer, 211. For a discussion of the theological issues involved at Hampton Court, see Peter White, *Predestination, policy and polemic: Conflict and consensus in the English Church from the Reformation to the Civil War* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1992), chapter 8.

65 Hunt, 223-24. For the speech to Parliament, see *The Political Works of James I*, C. H. McIlwain, ed. (Cambridge: 1918), 274.

66 Stuart Babbage, *Puritanism and Richard Bancroft* (London: S. P. C. K., 1962), 88; 94-95. Canon 72 was formulated in the wake of the John Darrell controversy. See below, 24 ff.

67 On Chaderton's struggles with obedience and conscience, see Hunt, 225. On the separation of Smyth and Robinson in the wake of the 1604 canons, see Marchant, 147.

68 Quoted in Burrage, 2:157.

69 Spurr, 64.

70 Burrage, 2:176-77.

71 Alexander Young, in his edition of the *Chronicles of the Pilgrim Fathers from 1602 to 1625* (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1844), provides this interesting footnote on a passage on prophesyings in William Bradford's "Dialogue" (1648): "This religious exercise, in which laymen publicly taught and exhorted, was early practised both in the colonies of Plymouth and Mass. As the church of Plymouth was long without a regular pastor, 'the ruling elder, when he wanted assistance, used frequently to call upon some of the gifted brethren to pray and give a word of exhortation in their public assemblies' ... On the visit of Governor Winthrop and Mr. Wilson to Plymouth in October, 1632, it is related that 'on the Lord's day in the afternoon, Mr. Roger Williams (according to their custom) propounded a question, to which the pastor, Mr. Smith, spake briefly; then Mr. Williams prophesied; and after the governor of Plymouth spake to the question; after him the elder; then two or three more of the congregation. Then the elder desired the governor of Mass. And Mr. Wilson to speak to it, which they did'" (419-20 n2). See also White, *The English Separatist Tradition*, 1-3.

72 *Elizabethan Puritan Movement*, 169.

73 "Lectures by Combination," 495-96.

74 Craig, 172.

75 For the Darrell affair, see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London: Weidenfield and Nicolson, 1971), 483-85; and F. W. Brownlow, *Shakespeare, Harsnett, and the Devils of Denham* (Newark: U of Delaware P, 1993), 53-90.

76 John Deacon and John Walker. *Dialogicall discourses of spirits and divels*. London, 1601. (The English Experience, no. 795. Amsterdam: Theatrum Orbis Terrarum, 1976), 114; 234. At one point, the character "Lycanthropus" wishes to talk apart, but "Physiologus" answers: "Nay not so: for, neither is the matter it selfe so secret, nor we so earnest upon it, but that ... you may all be jointly partakers of our mutuall conference" (7).

77 *Dialogicall Discourses*, A3v. But the elaborate structure Deacon weaves around these dialogues suggests his own uneasiness with the work's reception by a popular audience and the need to control that reception. Deacon employs all the textual devices of the printed book (an alphabetical list of ancient writers cited in the text, a list of the order of the arguments used, printed summaries of each of the six dialogues, etc.) to bring the reader to a proper interpretive position. In the "Epistle Dedicatory," Deacon points to the dangerous pamphlets on possession, on devils, and on exorcism published anonymously in Holland and their impact on an ignorant public: "so many palpable untruths, and such pestiferous opinions (as in those their published Pamphlets and printed Apologies are broached but lately abroad, to the dangerous bewitching and desperate enchanting of many poore ignorant unstable soules) should so passe underhand in the publike view of tagge and ragge: without the timely controlement of any" (A3r). Deacon thus praises the Queen's censorship of offending writers, and welcomes her firm authority over the licensing of the printing press, "for the timely preventing of errors, of schismes, and of factions." Although his dialogue is "open-ended" (in the sense that the opponent, "Exorcistes," remains unconverted to the orthodox position) the final pages finds Orthodoxus articulating the hope that mutual conference will benefit all, and hold within it a purifying conversionary power. Let any opponent, Orthodoxus concludes, "signifie the manner how with the time, and place, for our meeting, and we will be readie from time to time to conferre with them to the full, if they accept our offer" (365).

78 Charles Odingsells, *Prophesying, casting out of devils, and miracles: briefly discoursed in two sermons* London, 1619, STC 18783 1620 reprint.

79 *Prophesyings ...*, A3r.

80 On the formation of the godly community, see Peter Lake, "William Bradshaw, Antichrist, and the Community of the Godly," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 36:4 (1985), 570-89. See also Joseph Puterbaugh, "Your selfe be judge and answer yourself: The formation of Protestant identity in A Conference betwixt a Mother a devout Recusant and her sonne a zealous Protestant (1600)," *Sixteenth Century Journal* (31:2 [2000]), 419-31.

81 For the Coventry conference, see Burrage, 1: 229; W. T. Whitley, *The Works of John Smyth* (Cambridge UP, 1915) lvii-lviii; and Ronald A Marchant, *The Puritans and the Courts in the Diocese of York 1560-1642* (London: Longmans, 1960), 151 and 162. Marchant, however, shows that prosecutions and deprivations against the Scrooby group and other nonconformists at this time were less harsh than older histories would have us believe (164-66). One set of figures shows only between seventy-three and eighty-three beneficed clergy were deprived for non-subscription between 1604-9 (see Spurr, 61). For the tradition of exercises at Burton-on-Trent and Repton, see "Lectures by Combination," 482.

82 See Smyth's *Parallels, Censures, Observations* (1609): "I do therefor Proclame you [Richard Bernard] unto the whole land to be one of the most fearful Apostates of the whole nation that excepting Thomas Whyte, & Clapham, you have no Superior nor equal that I know or remember" (cited in Burrage, 197 n2).

83 Henoah Clapham, *Error on the Left hand. Through a frozen securitie. Acted by way of dialogue* (London, 1608), STC 5342 and *Error on the Right hand, through a preposterous zeale. Acted by way of dialogue. Where to is also added, certaine positions touching church and Antichrist* (London, 1608), STC 5341. Quotations from these works will be cited parenthetically. On other anti-Separatist writers, see "The English Conventicle," 250 n94.

84 For the reader's convenience, here follows a brief synopsis of each work: *Error on the Right Hand* begins on the road to Gravesend, where Malcontent talks with Flyer; the scene changes to Holland, where Flyer meets Anabaptist; Flyer and Anabaptist are met by Legatine-Arrian; the next morning, the scene shifts to a dialogue between Flyer and Legatine-Arrian at a tavern; action then shifts to the road, where they meet the Familist; Legatine-arrian exits and they enter the Familist's "Sleep-huis"; action shifts back to England, at Gravesend, when Flyer returns. *Error on the Left Hand* picks up where the other dialogue leaves off. Malcontent sits alone under a tree and falls asleep, where he is met by Romaniste; the scene shifts to London, where the two men speak with Libertinus and the Host and Hostess of a tavern; Malcontent then walks to Westminster, where he continues his conversation with Libertinus; the action then moves to a tavern at "N." where Malcontent shares a room with Atheos; that night they are awoken by a terrible lightning storm, a bolt from which strikes Atheos dead; Good and Bad Spirits then visit Malcontent, until he is driven to a spiritual crisis and finally meets with Mediocritie, who engages him in a long talk in the course of which Malcontent is converted back to the Church of England.

85 See Theodore K. Rabb, *Jacobean Gentleman: Sir Edwin Sandys, 1561-1629* (New Jersey: Princeton UP, 1998), 42 n23.

86 For summaries of what is known of Clapham's life, see D.N.B. and Burrage, 194-200.

87 Henoah Clapham, *Antidoton: or a sovereign remedie against schisme and heresie: from that parable of tares* (London, 1600), STC 5330, 6.

88 *The discription of a True Visible christian: Right comfortable & profitable for all such as are distressed in Sowle about present controversies in the Church* [Amsterdam, 1599, STC 5337, A3v.

89 In a marginal note in the same work, Clapham writes that "Schismatiks ever have the cloke or visor of Purity and sheepish conversation: but inwardly rending wolves, thornes and thistles" (Biiiv).

90 *Antidoton*, 32.

91 Henoah Clapham, *A Chronologicall Discourse touching, 1 The church. 2 Christ. etc.* Collected about 10 or 11 yeares since (as may be gathered by an epistle but now digested into better order; and first published, by the author himselfe (London, 1609), STC 5336, B2v.

92 The church, Clapham writes, is "Catholike, and in some measure ever visible in this life" (Antidoton A2v). On James' defense of his position between the extremes of papal Catholicism and radical Protestantism, see Lori Anne Ferrell, *Government by Polemic: James I, the King's Preachers, and the Rhetorics of Conformity, 1603-1625* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1998), Chapter 4 (esp. 134 and 205 n50).

93 See Rainer Pineas, *Thomas More and Tudor Polemics* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1968), and Pineas, "William Turner's Use of the Dialogue Form as a Weapon of Religious Controversy," *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval-Renaissance Association* (January 1983), 97-105. See also Joseph Puterbaugh, "Sweet Conversation": Argument and experiment in the dialogue as a literary form in sixteenth-century England," (Ph.D. dissertation, Claremont Graduate University, 1999).

94 The phrase is Janet E. Halley's. See "Equivocation and the Legal Conflict Over Religious Identity in Early Modern England." *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities* 3:33 (1991), 33-52.

95 In *Error on the Right Hand*, for example, the Legatine-Arian describes how, when he was brought before a magistrate in England, he was asked whether he denied Christ to be God. He denies this, and the magistrate releases him. "The foolish Flat-cap thought," he tells Flyer, "that by my granting Christ to be God, I had meant as he meant; namely, God by Nature: whereas I meant, God by Office." To this Flyer remarks: "O notable learning: rare learning" (45). In *Error on the Left Hand*, the Libertine advises subtlety in lying, as when he gives the anecdote of how he was questioned on the Queen's supremacy, and his answer is couched in such a way so that it can be interpreted in two ways. He, too, is let off, while his inward opinion remains unchanged (42).

96 In this, Clapham follows conformist writers like Cartwright, who emphasized the central role of a university-trained godly ministry, as opposed to the separatist rejection of a ministerial elite. See Lake, *Moderate Puritans and the Elizabethan Church*, 88-9.

97 *Error on the Left Hand* ends with a Spenserian "Pastorall Epilogue," and satirical "Epilogues" of those scholars (like "Segnior-ambo," Segnior-drypate," "quendam Fig-fag," and "homunculum Snuffe") who fail to defend writers such as Clapham (103-5); *Right Hand* ends with "Certaine positions to be held for avoyding errorr" (65-76).

98 See Puterbaugh, "Sweet Conversation," Chapter 4 (esp. 124-25) and Chapter 6 (esp. 203-44).

99 Moody, xxiii.

100 White, *The English Separatist Tradition*, 92-4.

101 See for example, *A Dialogue between a vertuous gentleman and a popish priest* (1581), discussed in Puterbaugh, "Sweet Conversation," 211-16.

102 Robinson, *Justification of Separation* (1610), quoted by Brachlow, 297.

103 "In my first looking after religion, my lot was to associate such onely, as onely tasted and affected another kind of ministerie, which (as they said) yet we had not in England ... That platforme once swallowed, I then was easily perswaded that our Bishops, their Ordinations and all ministerie standing under them, it was Antichristian, and an Image of the beast" (Antidoton, A3r).

104 Christopher Marsh, *The Family of Love in English Society, 1550-1630* (Cambridge UP, 1994).

105 See Burrage, Chapter 2; White, Chapter 2; and Anthony Milton, "The Church of England, Rome, and the True Church: The Demise of a Jacobean Consensus," in *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* (Stanford: Stanford UP, 1993), 187-91.

106 Peter Lake, "Puritan Identities" (review article), *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35:12 (January 1984), 117.

107 For Wightman, see D. N. B. and *The Victoria History of the County of Stafford*. Ed. M. W. Greenslade. Vol. III. (Oxford UP, 1930), 59. On this connection, see Collinson, "Lectures by Combination": "As bishop of Coventry and Lichfield, Neile exploited the embarrassing and, so to speak, homeopathic connection of the heretic Edward Wightman ... with the Burton exercise, Hildersham having preached in the exercise against Wightman's doctrine of psychopannychism. Both the Burton and the Repton exercise were suppressed" (490).

108 *God and the King: Or A Dialogue shewing that our Sovereigne Lord King James, being immediate under God within his Dominions, Doth rightfully claime whatsoever is required by the Oath of Allegiance* (London, 1615), STC 14419.

109 For recent work suggesting a Jacobean religious consensus, see Tyacke, *Anti-Calvinists: The rise of English Arminianism c. 1590-1640* (Oxford and New York: Oxford UP, 1987); Fincham and Lake, "The ecclesiastical policy of James I." *Journal of British Studies* 24:2 (1985), and Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1992). For Ferrell's claim of a strain of "anti-Puritanism" in early modern Stuart politics, see *Government by Polemic*, passim.

110 Quoted by Richard Groves, in the "Introduction" to his edition of Helwys' *A short declaration of the mystery of iniquity* (Macon: Mercer UP, 1998), xxv. See Babbage, 87, and Chapter 3 passim.

111 *Objections: Answered by way of Dialogue, wherein is proved By the law of God: By the Law of our Land: And by his Maties many testimonies That no man ought to be persecuted for his reliogn, so he testifie his allegiance by the Oath, appointed by Law* (Amsterdam, 1615) STC 13054. Quotations from Murton's text are taken from Underhill's edition and will be noted parenthetically. The "objections" Murton's dialogue answers are those of congregationalist John Robinson, in his book *Of Religious Communion*, published the year before, itself a response to the writings of Helwys and Murton (See Burgess, 91-114). See also A. F. Johnson, "The Exiled Church at Amsterdam and its Press" (*The Library* 5:4 [March 1951], 219-42). The titles cited by Johnson from 1604-22 suggest the dizzying textual maze of objections and answers by many of these works. For Murton, see Burrage, 1:257-58; A. C. Underwood, *A History of English Baptists* (London: Kingsgate P, 1947) 48-50; and Timothy George, *John Robinson and the Separatist Tradition* (Macon: Mercer UP, 1982), 182-83 for brief summaries. For the Helwys-Murton congregation, see Burrage, 1:251-69.

112 *Objections: Answered by way of Dialogue*, 93.

- 113 William Perkins, for example, in his *Case of Conscience* (1600), tells us he writes his treatise in dialogue form "for the helping of the simple and unlearned"; Arthur Dent, in *Plaine Mans Pathway to Heaven* (1601) explains that his work is "set forth dialoguewise for the better understanding of the simple"; and James VI, in his *Daemonologie* of 1597, writes that he frames his work as a dialogue "to make this treatise the more pleasaunt and facill" for the reader.
- 114 On Anabaptist claims of a "mutual covenant," see Underhill, xxx; Watts, 30; White, 60-2, 135; and Kenneth R. Davis, "No Discipline, No Church: An Anabaptist Contribution to the Reformed Tradition." *Sixteenth Century Journal* 13: 4 (1982), 43-58.
- 115 See James F. Larkin and Paul L. Hughes, *Stuart Royal Proclamations* (Oxford: Clarendon P, 1973), 355 and n2.
- 116 When Philalethes asks whether the private area of confession is free from the strict bonds of obedience, Theodidactus responds that if the priest learns through confession rumors of treason, he must "imitate God" and report these crimes (84-5).
- 117 Theodidactus invokes Romans 13, where the higher powers spoken of by Paul are understood as "such as beare the sword" (55). He further argues that princes may correct and punish "spiritual pastors" and priests through the authority of God (59).
- 118 The bloody Münster riots of the 1530s tainted Anabaptism with associations of fanaticism throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See A. G. Dickens, *Reformation and Society in sixteenth-century Europe* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1966), 125-35; Watts, 8-9; and Keith L. Sprunger, "English Puritans and Anabaptists in Early Seventeenth-Century Amsterdam," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 46:2 (April 1972), 113. The use of "anabaptist" as a term of abuse continued well into the seventeenth century, as, for example, in Robert Baillie's *Anabaptism, the true fountaine of Independency, Antinomy, Brownisme, Familisme, and the most of the other Errours, which for the time doe trouble the Church of England* [London, 1647]. See Irvin B. Horst, "The Anabaptists in English Literature: A Research Note," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 29:3 (July 1955), 236.
- 119 The Epistle is signed "By His Majesty's faithful Subjects: Commonly (but most falsely) called Ana-Baptists" (101), and in the final pages, Christian tries to connect sectarianism with Christ and his apostles: "And if they be anabaptist that deny baptism where God hath appointed it, they, and not we, are anabaptists" (179).
- 120 Ferrell, 5-6.
- 121 Gerald R. Cragg, in *Freedom of Authority: A Study of English Thought in the Early Seventeenth Century* (Philadelphia: Westminster P, 1975), comments, "It had long been common practice to quote Scripture to support one's arguments; Murton was the first to exploit the possibilities latent in the works of James I" (236).
- 122 See Abraham Friesen, *Erasmus, the Anabaptists, and the Great Commission* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1998), Chapter 2. See also Kenneth R. Davis, "Erasmus as a Progenitor of Anabaptist Theology and Piety," *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 47 (1973), 169-74.
- 123 See Edward B. Underhill, *Confessions of Faith and other public documents Illustrative of the History of the Baptist Churches of England in the 17th century* (London: Hanserd Knollys, 1854), 6-7. I owe this reference to Thomas G. Sanders, *Protestant Concepts of Church and State* (New York: Anchor Books, 1964), 365 n19.
- 124 Jordan, 270 n2.
- 125 Underhill, 129.
- 126 Groves, xxviii.
- 127 Burrage, Vol. 2:215-16.
- 128 See, for example, Bloomfield, who connects Separatist conceptions of liberty of prayer with later independency, the English prebyterians of the Westminster Assembly, and finally to the pilgrims of the New World (15).
- 129 Dickens, 137. In a study of the Separatist movement, Joseph Fletcher demonstrates the circumscribed distinction between civil and religious powers found in separatists from Browne to Busher. As Fletcher rightly points out, claims for liberty of conscience in these writings are often restricted or inconsistent (liberty of conscience in Busher, for example, is granted only to those who accept Jesus as the messiah); Fletcher argues that only Murton's *Objections: Answered* sustains its argument for religious liberty, and does not contain concessions to the powers of the State. See *The History of the Revival and Progress of Independency in England, since the period of the Reformation* (London: John Snow, 1848), 43-57. Even Murton's work, however, must be understood within a Christian world-view. While Christian argues against the persecution of the Jews, for example, they are still labelled as "blasphemers" of Christ and his gospel (120).
- 130 See Pettegree's essay in *Tolerance and Intolerance in the European Reformation*. Ole Peter Grell and Bob Scribner, eds. (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge UP, 1996), 198.
- 131 Burrage, 1:259.
- 132 Tolmie, 2-3; Acheson, 23-7. On the hostility of Puritan English churches in Amsterdam toward separatists in this period, see Sprunger, 122-23.
- 133 Fincham and Lake, 174-75.
- 134 Lehmborg, 97-8.