

**'The Quiet of Mankind':
Authority, Spirit, and Enthusiasm in England, 1660-1714**

by

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Presented in fulfilment for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in History
at the University of York

December 2010

Abstract

'Enthusiasm' was a term widely used in early modern England as a pejorative to designate individuals who believed themselves to have direct communication with God. For historians the term has typically been examined as currency in polemical clashes. But this study will approach the subject from a much wider angle by investigating the tensions, in religion and politics, that the controversy over enthusiasm actually signified. It will do so by applying a framework consisting of three parts - authority, spirit, enthusiasm - and suggest that, between 1660 and 1714, one part cannot be understood without reference to the other two. As a study of ideas traced in printed literature and manuscripts, it will proceed by elucidating the various conceptions of piety that were carefully devised to meet two purposes. One, satisfying the basic obligations of Christianity, which entailed some measure of personal engagement with the holy spirit without seeming to be enthusiastic; and two, satisfying the obligations of political and ecclesiastical authority. Whereas the Anglican 'testimony of spirit' attested to the imperceptible influence of the holy spirit on one's virtue and tranquillity of mind, more radical Protestants felt it sensibly on the body, or clearly upon the emotions or thoughts, where it might even dictate divine orders, literally and directly. This study will consequently demonstrate the complexities of inward piety and the role it played in arguments for and against English institutions, how these points are related, and how attitudes to each of these varied along political and religious lines. Additionally it will illustrate their relevance for understanding contemporary attitudes to ecclesiology, conscience, spiritual substance, rational religion, the self, the will, resistance, prophecy, millenarianism, and tradition.

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