

**DREAMS AND THE PASSIONS IN
REVOLUTIONARY ENGLAND**

Richard J. Scott

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Abstract

Between 1640 and 1660, England suffered a profound political, religious and social revolution, with its roots in the broader crisis over the nature of religious truth precipitated by the long Reformation. This thesis explores one element of this crisis over divine truth—the nature and origins of dreams, their status as reliable knowledge, and pragmatic and psychological responses to them as experiences. Dreams are explored as a powerful conceptual category in a number of contexts, including medical literature and theological writings concerned with the soul, prophecy and cosmology; the sermons and confessional literature of puritan and Anglican divines; and a diverse range of ‘radical’ and ‘occult’ texts imported to England and produced at home after the lapse of censorship in the 1640s. The study not only gives renewed attention to changes in the concepts, identities and practices constructed around dreams in intellectual discourses, but demonstrates the many ways in which they were in contestation; draws out their intimate relationship to wider intellectual struggles of the day in greater depth than previous studies; and highlights a variety of heretofore unappreciated attempts to integrate regard for and study of dreams into Christian philosophical thinking in the seventeenth-century.

CONTENTS

	<i>Introduction</i>	1
I.	Trembling Spirits: Sleep, Dreams and Human Nature	39
II.	The Eye of God: Dreams and Revelations in Revolutionary England	85
III.	Climbing Jacob's Ladder: Sacred and Profane Dreams in Protestant Conscience Literature	119
IV.	The Wisdom of Daniel: On the Interpretation of Dreams	193
V.	Conclusions	194
	Bibliography	200

Abbreviations

MS	Manuscript (plural MSS)
Vol.	Volume (plural vols)
f.	Folio(s): sheet number, when referring to a manuscript source in which sheets are numbered on the front face only (plural ff.)
di.	Early English Books Online document image
BL	British Library
HP	<i>The Hartlib Papers: A Complete Text and Image Database of the Papers of Samuel Hartlib (c. 1600-1660)</i> Held in Sheffield University Library, 2nd ed. (Sheffield, 2002) [also available online at http://www.hrionline.ac.uk/hartlib]

“**T**O draw a curious picture of a shadow, or elegantly write the history of a dream, may be an ingenuous kind of foolery; but the end will not allow it the name of Wisdom.”

— Richard Baxter

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