

**Heresiography and the Idea of 'Heresy'
in mid-Seventeenth-Century
English Religious Culture**

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Abstract

This thesis examines various and changing meanings of the concept of 'heresy' in mid-seventeenth-century England as a way of deepening our understanding of religion and culture in early modern society. While the varieties of religious sects which flourished during and after the English Civil War have been studied by many historians with differing emphases, there has been little investigation of the meaning of the label 'heresy' which was put upon the sects within the contemporary religious culture. This thesis critically examines various seventeenth-century books and writings on religious sects and questions how the term and the idea of 'heresy' functioned within the polemical exchanges during the Civil War and the Interregnum. Following a detailed study of the 'heresy controversy' in the 1640s, the thesis scrutinizes major contemporary works on the subject. Issues discussed include the languages and imageries used to describe 'heresy' in Thomas Edwards' *Gangræna*, the construction of the 'catalogue of heresies' as a literary genre in Ephraim Pagitt's *Heresiography*, and the development of encyclopedic study of heterodox religions demonstrated by Alexander Ross in *Pansebeia*. It is argued that these works played an important part in constructing the understanding of proper or desirable form of Christianity. The thesis further inquires how the debates about 'heresy' engaged in a process of redefinition of 'religion' as an idea. Attention is paid to the relation between heresiography-writing and religious pluralism as well as the later seventeenth-century discussion of natural religion. The thesis concludes that the debates on 'heresy' reveal not only the unique nature of the Civil War religious politics but also various and changing issues of religion in seventeenth-century England, from anti-Catholicism to the new experimental sciences and rational philosophies.

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Notes

Dates are given in the old style, except the year is regarded as beginning on 1 January and not 25 March. In all quotations, I have retained the original spelling, punctuation and italicization as in the sources, except where modern edition of seventeenth-century books are used. Letters “v” as “u”, and “vv” as “w” are all modernized to avoid confusion. Also in some titles of seventeenth-century books, upper/lower-case usage, capitalization and italicization are normalized for ease of reference.

Following abbreviations are used in the notes.

DNB *Dictionary of National Biography*, 19 vols. (Oxford, 1921-2).

ESTC CD *English Short Title Catalogue 1473-1800 on CD-ROM*, version 1.08
(London, 1998).

Gang. I Thomas Edwards, *Gangræna* (London, 1646).*

Gang. II Thomas Edwards, *The second Part of Gangræna* (London, 1646).*

Gang. III Thomas Edwards, *The third Part of Gangræna* (London, 1646).*

*For *Gang. I*, *Gang. II* and *Gang. III*, a facsimile edition by Rota (Exeter, 1977) is used.

OED *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd edn., 20 vols. (Oxford, 1989).

TRHS *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*

Chapter 1

Introduction and Literature Review

I well understand that I put my hand into a Hornets nest, and shall raise up against me all the spirit of separation, schisme and errour thorowout the Kingdome, from the highest Seeker to the lowest Independent.

Thomas Edwards, *Gangræna* (1646).¹

1. Introduction

Heresy and history

This thesis is an investigation of the idea of ‘heresy’ in mid-seventeenth-century England. The sudden explosion of religious sects is one of the best known features of the Civil War. Following the collapse of the Church of England’s authority, a considerable number of uneducated ‘mechanic preachers’ attracted large audiences, inspiring more laymen and laywomen to put their spiritual gifts into practice. Outside London, religious opinions in the Army were radicalised, and out of this confusion, Baptists and Quakers started to organize their own congregational sects. Large sections of society were increasingly alarmed by these developments, and both Royalist and puritan conservatives continually attacked such sectarian movements as factional and schismatic. In London, the war of print became intense in the mid-1640s, and a considerable number of books, tracts and pamphlets were published criticizing ‘Anabaptists’, ‘Brownists’, ‘Familists’, ‘Antinomians’, ‘Libertines’ and so on. This thesis is based primarily on a study of such books and writings about various religious sects published between 1640 and 1660, commonly known as heresiography.

These sects have long been dismissed by many historians as too trivial or eccentric a subject to be studied seriously. For ‘serious’ scholars, they seemed a topic of lesser historical importance, or even bothersome ‘fringes’ whose study would only please occult fiends outside universities. When George Bernard called them the “nut-cases and fruitcakes of the English Reformation,” he was voicing a not uncommon response.² Indeed studying seventeenth-century ‘heretics’ has itself been largely ‘heterodox’ because they do not fit into the conventional historiography of the English Revolution. Many historians ignore these sects because they conformed neither to the ideal of ‘Puritanism’, which

¹ Thomas Edwards, *Gangræna* (London, 1646), ‘The Preface’, Sig. B2r.

² G. Bernard, ‘Protestant Country,’ *London Review of Books*, xii (1990), p.11.

allegedly played a key role in the evolution of the modern intellectual spirit, nor to their image of whatever *ancien régime* — Roman Catholicism or ‘Anglicanism’ — from which English puritans allegedly departed.

Much of the relative neglect of the sects has stemmed from the enduring legacy of Max Weber’s thesis on the puritan ethic and what he called the spirit of capitalism. Weber’s thesis was developed in the early twentieth century by R. H. Tawney, whose work in turn was a major influence upon the historiography of Christopher Hill and many other British historians of the 1950s and 1960s.³ The relationship between Calvinism and capitalism has been further explored by a number of scholars, though the empirical validity of the Weberian scheme is increasingly questioned by historians.⁴ His hypothesis on the relationship between Calvinism and modernity lies behind much of the debate about the role of Puritanism either as a religion of the middling sort, or as a force for social change and discipline. This strong Weberian strand has not been confined to the historiography of early modern England, nor has it been influential only among Anglo-American historians. It has greatly narrowed the understanding of ‘normal’ Protestantism on the Continent. Anabaptists and Mennonites have been largely marginalized within histories of the European Reformation, while R. Scribner has convincingly criticized the Weberian preoccupation in German reformation studies.⁵

Also this framework has had for a long time an immense influence in Japan, where the ‘Western’ modernization, democracy and economic growth have been central subjects of enquiry for scholars. With such interests, the role of ‘Puritanism’ has long been a subject of debate among both economic and intellectual historians in Japan. This was initiated by two influential scholars: Hideo Otsuka, who, following the first Japanese translation by Tsutomu Kajimaya (1938), popularized Weberian historiography in Japan, and Hideo Oki, who took up the moral-philosophical side of the Weber thesis in

³ R. H. Tawney, *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism: A Historical Study* (London, etc., 1926); Christopher Hill, ‘The Industrious sort of People,’ in *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London, 1964); Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘Religion, the Reformation and Social Change’ in H. Trevor-Roper, *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change*, (3rd edn., London, 1984, first published in 1967), pp. 1-45.

⁴ D. Zaret, *The Heavenly Contract: Ideology and Organization in Pre-Revolutionary Puritanism* (Chicago, 1985); Gordon Marshall, *Presbyteries and Profits: Calvinism and the Development of Capitalism in Scotland, 1560-1707* (Oxford, 1981). For critical studies on the issue, see Paul S. Seaver, *Wallington’s World: A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (London, 1985); P. S. Seaver, ‘The Puritan Work Ethic Revisited,’ *Journal of British Studies*, 19 (1980), pp. 35-53; C. John Sommerville, ‘The Anti-Puritan Work Ethic,’ *Journal of British Studies*, 20 (1981), pp. 70-81.

⁵ Robert W. Scribner, ‘The Reformation, Popular Magic, and the “Disenchantment of the World”’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 33, no. 3 (1993), pp. 475-494.

Puritanism-no Rinri-Shisou ['Puritan Ethics'] (Tokyo, 1966). This trend has had so an enormous importance in Japanese social sciences, including sociology, political studies, history, history of ideas, that some recent scholars still seem to feel they have to explain any 'new' theories in history (especially of England and Scotland) in 'Weberian' terms.⁶

Thus any religious movements which fail to fit into Weberian hypotheses have tended to be neglected due to their unclear roles in this kind of story about 'modernity'. Dissenters who continuously emerged and then disappeared — by persecution or disintegration — consequently do not appear to be a worthy topic of research either for orthodox church historians seeking to establish the genealogy of the 'true church', or for recent social historians arguing that Puritanism was a disciplining tool of social control. In such cases sects are often treated as a 'fringe' phenomenon or as 'deviations' from history, although generally without any deeper consideration of the cultural meaning of 'deviation' itself. What I would stress is that this neglect of 'heresies' is not a simple kind of neglect, the result of careless oversight. The reason historians have overlooked the Anabaptists and the Ranters was exactly because they were *heretical*. The idea of 'heresy', as a heterodox object, is already at work in the historical treatment of religious sects. Part of my object in this thesis is to examine how this mechanism of understanding functioned and functions.

The existing historiography of religion has further problems in writing about the sects. When religious sects are historically scrutinized, they tend to be explained as *something else*. This is due to the fact that the terms 'heresy' (and 'heretics') have become taboo words for historians. Only a few church historians write of 'heresies' in a literal sense, as false beliefs, errors to be eliminated, or crimes against the truth. David Christie-Murray wrote *A History of Heresy* to give "answers that the orthodox worked out in opposition to them," because he believed that "to write the history of Christian heresy adequately would be to compile a complete Church history."⁷ A more popular historiography of pre-industrial Western society also seems to have adapted such a 'straight' or naive concept of 'heresy'. In this context, 'heretics', together

⁶ Toshio Tsuneyuki attempted to synthesize the 'popular culture' theory into the old format in *Shimin-Kakumei maeno Igirisu Syakai* ['English Society before the Revolution'] (Tokyo, 1990), while Haruki Onishi defends the Weber thesis with a help of the Civil War religious sects in *Igirisu Kakumei no Sect Undo* ['Sectarian movements in the English Revolution'] (Tokyo, 1995) and in other papers. Onishi's Japanese translation of Marshall's *Presbyteries and profits* (see above note 4) was entitled *Protestantism no Rinri to Shihon-shugi no Seishin: Scotland ni okeru Weber These* ['The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism: verifying Weber thesis in Scotland'] (Tokyo, 1996).

⁷ David Christie-Murray, *A History of Heresy*, (London, 1976), p.vii.

with witches and alchemists, illuminates the history of occultism in European 'dark ages'. Leonard George, the historian of 'the paranormal', introduced his encyclopedia of heresies titled *Crimes of Perception* in the following way: "Are you fascinated by the strange cosmologies of the ancient Gnostics? Are you moved by the medieval French Cathars, many of whom offered themselves to be burned alive rather than renounce their faith? Does the Holy Inquisition repulse you, intrigue you, or both? Does some part of you cheer for the false messiahs? Why? What are the inner orthodoxies and heresies with which you define yourself and your universe? Read on, learn, enjoy, reflect. [...] From the vantage point of history, one can glean no assurance that the Burning Times will never return. Keep one eye on the door."⁸ But most historians would disassociate themselves from both orthodox-minded theologians and mystics. 'Heresy', for decent historians, is a term too subjective and dogmatic, and cannot be trusted at its face value.

Consequently the term has been replaced with other, supposedly less pejorative and more meaningful, terms, which, of course, have other connotations. This is particularly evident in the denominational historiography of English nonconformity, and in the 'history of ideas' approach to the development of toleration. Their studies have often devoted intense efforts to eliminating this negative image projected onto the sects, and re-evaluating the hidden significance behind the bias created by their opponents. Indeed it is interesting to see how historians have carefully chosen different terms, and blended them in their own historical writings to account for those men and women who were once called heretics. For instance, the term 'separatism' (and 'separatist'), if not 'nonconformity' ('nonconformist'), is sometimes used as a substitute for 'heresy' (and 'heretic'), because it is a more *positive* name. For denominational historians, 'separation' indicates progress, rather than crisis, of religion. B. R. White's *The English Separatist Tradition*, with a subtitle "from the Marian Martyrs to the Pilgrim Fathers," emphasized the English 'separatists' as ancestors of American chapel-goers, and as pioneers of evangelism in the nineteenth century. This line was developed by American Baptist historians, who, viewed the first Anabaptist 'separation' from the Church of England as part of their own history. C. Burrage for instance closed his book *The Early English Dissenters* with the puritan immigration to the New World in 1640.⁹

⁸ Leonard George, *Crimes of Perception: An Encyclopedia of Heresies and Heretics* (New York, 1995), p. xx.

⁹ B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition* (Oxford, 1971); Champlin Burrage, *The Early English Dissenters* (Cambridge, 1912). See Murray Tolmie's discussion in *The*

The term 'dissenter', used by Burrage, is another common epithet for the Civil War religious sects. But, like 'nonconformist', it was not commonly used by contemporaries to describe those sects. The term 'Dissent' was initially used to describe the puritan protest against the episcopalian Church of England after the Restoration, and did not necessarily mean a range of radical religious movements as it does today. Nevertheless, the word 'dissenter' has tended to present an idealized image of religious sects, the image of the simple piety of the 'common people', who were determined to defend their causes. Thus Edward Thompson wrote when comparing artisan 'dissenters' with more prosperous but less socially active Methodists: "Puritanism — Dissent — Nonconformity: the decline collapses into a surrender. *Dissent* still carries the sound of resistance [...] *Nonconformity* is self-effacing and apologetic: it asks to be left alone."¹⁰ Likewise, in the recent collection of essays, *The World of Rural Dissenters*, efforts are made to prove how sixteenth- to eighteenth-century 'dissenters' successfully recruited their members from a wide range of social classes, and how they answered certain spiritual and social needs among ordinary people, needs the established church could not satisfy.¹¹ Here, the choice of the word 'dissenter' diminishes the sensational and scandalous aspects of religious sectarianism, and causes one to overlook the period when religious affiliation was much more complex and was always subject to controversy. It may seem more meaningful to study the history of those who 'dissented' than to write a history which is a list of those who simply erred; but giving too positive an image to the 'dissenters' seems to run a risk of committing historiographical teleology, and of neglecting what it meant to be called a 'heretic' in early modern society.

Similar to the discussion of 'dissent' is the study of the 'development of toleration' during the English Revolution, in which religious sects allegedly took part in the establishment of religious liberty.¹² William Haller emphasized the puritan debates on the 'liberty of conscience' in the 1640s, and Murray Tolmie argued that the political achievement of the Civil War 'saints' was the

Triumph of the Saints: The Separate Churches of London 1616-1649 (Cambridge, 1977), p. x; also W. M. Patterson, *Baptist Successionism* (Vally Forge, 1969).

¹⁰ E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 2nd edn, 1968), p. 385. *Italics* by Thompson.

¹¹ Margaret Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995), esp. chs. 1, 5, 8, 9.

¹² Jordan, W. K., *The Development of Religious Toleration in England: From the Convention of the Long Parliament to the Restoration, 1640-1660*, 4 vols. (Gloucester, Mass., 1965, first published in 1932-1940), esp. vol. 3.

creation of English nonconformity based on religious pluralism.¹³ However, it is still open to question whether the period between 1640 and 1660 truly saw a 'rise' of religious toleration in England. For many of the godly in the 1640s, 'toleration' meant granting freedom to 'heresy', and as Blair Worden puts, it was not "an edifying principle but [...] an impious policy."¹⁴ After 1649, Independents and sects showed little interest in advocating the principle of toleration once they saw the *de facto* establishment of their own congregations. What emerged, Worden argued, was relativism, rather than toleration.¹⁵ Other scholars have emphasized the effect of 'Arminianism', instead of Puritanism, on the enlightenment concept of religious pluralism.¹⁶ Arguably there are limitations in equating religious sects with 'tolerationists'.

Some social historians by contrast seem to prefer the adjective 'radical' and the label 'radicals' to describe the Civil War sects. These words imply that sects were *extreme*, yet at the same time *innovative*. 'Radicals' do not conform either to the genealogy of 'congregational orthodoxy' or to naive 'popular piety'; instead this designation chimes with the history of political ideas. This therefore is a useful term with which to locate sects within the model of the English 'Revolution', in which a large-scale socio-political change allegedly took place. Christopher Hill happily found 'radical' political ideas in "all these groups" — Diggers, Fifth Monarchists, Seekers, Ranters and Quakers — who shared common "democratic political objectives." For Hill, sects were the seventeenth-century proletariat who fought for a Marxist revolution, "which never happened."¹⁷ Hill was right in illuminating the *political* nature of the *religious* matters in the seventeenth century, but by equating 'radical' religious ideas with socialism (that would have to, according to Hill, abolish religion altogether), he too failed to examine the meaning of the 'heresy' accusations made against his sects.

Were those who were called 'heretics' in the seventeenth century 'separatists', 'dissenters' or 'radicals'? In their attempts to disassociate their work from both theological inquisition and occultism, historians sympathetic to

¹³ William Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution* (New York, 1955); Tolmie, *Triumph of the Saints*, ch. 8.

¹⁴ Blair Worden, 'Toleration and the Cromwellian protectorate', in W. J. Sheils (ed.), *Persecution and Toleration* (Oxford, 1984), p. 200.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 206n29. "[T]he distinction between essentials and inessentials, the puritan version of the concept of *adiaphora*, played a significant part in the politics of the Protectorate." p. 216.

¹⁶ Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The religious origins of the Enlightenment', in H. Trevor-Roper, *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change* (London, 1984), pp. 193-236.

the Civil War religious sects have consciously reacted against the slanderous term 'heresy', and tried to re-evaluate the religious sects for their own purposes, with varying terminology. Their principal aim has been to re-discover the identities and the historical significance of those sects, which otherwise would remain obscured by the misleading label of 'heresy'. "If we are to use ... the comments of hostile contemporaries," asserted Murray Tolmie, "we must learn to distinguish the blur in the mind of the percipient from the sectarian activities we are attempting to reconstruct."¹⁸ Fair enough; with the help of historians like Tolmie and White, the nutcases and fruitcakes have greatly recovered their dignity in history. But at the same time, by introducing various terms and concepts with which to rename 'heresy', historians have been drawn into utilitarian perspectives, which contain the assumption that religion has to have something to do with progressive historical change. They have thus failed to question the contemporary meaning of the concept of 'heresy' itself. These sympathetic historians have, ironically, like conventional historians, ignored the 'heretics'.

Yet further more, there is an interesting and important aspect of the very practice of historiographical explanation, which parallels the problems of seventeenth-century heresiographies. It is important to notice that historians' trait of *explaining* 'heresies' is largely a legacy of seventeenth-century writings on the subject. In 1646, listing all the heresies he knew of, Thomas Edwards warned his readers how the spread of such erroneous ideas could lead to the destruction of the nation, and potentially, to atheism. Christopher Hill, echoing Edwards, with his line-up of radical sects in *The World Turned Upside Down* (1972), told his readers that religious sects stood up to overturn the 'pre-revolutionary' society, and could have brought, potentially, a socialist nation.¹⁹ *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, edited by J. F. McGregor and B. Reay in 1984, is a collection of studies of various Civil War sects, from Baptists to the Fifth Monarchists; but the book's format, with each name of religious sects constituting chapter headings, strikingly resembles Ephraim Pagitt's catalogue of heresies, *Heresiography* (1645). The diagram illustrating 'the evolution of old dissent' in Michael R. Watts' *Dissenters* (1978) is in fact a product of the Ramist dialectic and early modern encyclopedism, which fashioned Alexander Ross's

¹⁷ Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1972), pp.72, 15. See also Michael Mullett, *Radical Religious Movements in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1980).

¹⁸ Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints*, p. xi.

¹⁹ *Gang. I*, pp.81-2; Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 182-3 and passim. See also Nigel Smith's critical discussion in 'The Charge of Atheism and the Language of

massive and definitive history of religious sects, *Pansebeia* (1653).²⁰ Although historians have attempted to interpret and translate the historical significance of religious sects in new terms, they have scarcely stepped out of the seventeenth-century framework of representation, in which conservative authors explained what they saw as 'heresies'. Instead of questioning the very mechanism of *conceptualizing* 'heresy', historians have uncritically repeated and reproduced the genre of literature created by early modern heresiographers.

This thesis tries to escape from these historiographical traps and to explore the problems surrounding the understanding of 'heresies' and 'heretics' of the mid-seventeenth century. The ambiguity and anxiety these terms produce today, and the ways in which one desires to clarify their identities, are exactly what I hope to investigate. The thesis thus concentrates on examining the contemporary *studies of 'heresy'*, rather than studying various religious sects themselves and/or their ideas. It inquires how 'heresy' was discussed and related to contemporary problems during the Civil War and the Interregnum. In this thesis therefore, I will try neither to take what the term 'heresy' signifies at its face value, nor to *replace* this term with other words, for doing so would only confine our perspective within the theoretical structure of heresiography.

It may be objected at this point that 'heresy' is only an empty name, or an exaggerated rhetoric at best, and thus can not make a substantial subject of its own. Certainly there is a considerable degree of artificiality about the term 'heresy' in early modern writings. It would also be superficial to discuss a wide range of issues surrounding religious sects by simply picking up such a 'keyword'. Besides, the meaning of the word 'heresy' in the seventeenth century was by no means monolithic. Not all religious sects were called 'heretics', and 'heresy' could be discussed in contexts irrelevant to Anabaptists and Quakers. Still, by focusing on the term and concept, 'heresy', I hope to take advantage of recent work in the textual analysis of the seventeenth-century print culture. In what is often called 'the linguistic turn' of historiography in the last decades, a number of scholars have scrutinized the role of discourse in politics, and demonstrated that it is through (only through) language that the understanding of self and of the world is constituted.²¹ Even though 'heresy'

Radical Speculation, 1640-1660', in Michael Hunter and David Wootton (eds.), *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 131-2.

²⁰ J. F. McGregor and B. Reay (eds.), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984); Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, vol. 1 (Oxford, 1978), p. 6. For Watts' diagram, see also Kristen Poole, *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 132-3.

²¹ Works from this trend in early modern English historiography include: Kevin Sharpe and Peter Lake (eds.), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (London, 1994); Kevin

appears to us as a term which is rhetorical or unsound, it is worth considering the mechanism by which the term appeared plausible and was used by seventeenth-century men and women. I will endeavour to conduct a structural analysis of the mental world of early modern society in which the nature of, and attitude toward, 'heresy' was determined.

To focus on language, or to accept the artificial or even fictional nature of early modern heresiographies, is not to deny the actuality and originality of some truly radical groups and individuals that existed during the Revolution. While commending J. C. Davis' *Fear, Myth and History* (1986) that studied the fictional nature of the Ranters, Nigel Smith warned that "exposing the operation of stereotypes" in heresiographies would complete only half of the picture.²² 'Heresy' as a representation and that as actual radicalism were different things. The Family of Love, for example, was one of the popular 'heretics' during the Civil War, frequently appearing in the pamphlet literature. Yet we cannot deny the fact that the works of Hendrik Niclaes, the guru of the sect, were being printed, translated and published right in the middle of the Interregnum.²³ Likewise scholars have recently discussed various aspects of John Milton's ideas in relation with traditional Christian heresies.²⁴ These radical ideas, whether theological or political, might have been simply incomprehensible to the authors of the heresiographies we are going to study. It is questionable, Smith points out, whether conservative theologians like Daniel Featley, Thomas Edwards and Ephraim Pagitt were actually able to understand the radical

Sharpe, *Remapping Early Modern England: The Culture of Seventeenth-Century Politics* (Cambridge, 2000); idem, *Reading Revolution: The Politics of Reading in Early Modern Europe* (New Haven and London, 2000); R. Malcolm Smuts, *Culture and Power in England, c. 1585-1685* (Basingstoke, 1999); S. D. Amussen and M. A. Kishlansky (eds.), *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester and New York, 1995); Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England 1640-1660* (New Haven and London, 1994). For critical discussion on the 'linguistic turn', see Patrick Joyce, 'History and post-modernism', *Past and Present*, 133 (1991), pp. 217-18; M. Jay, 'Should intellectual history take a linguistic turn?', in D. LaCapra and S. L. Kaplan (eds.), *Modern European intellectual history: reappraisals and new perspectives* (Ithaca and London, 1982); Gérard Noiriel, *Sur la "crise" de l'histoire* (Paris, 1996).

²² "Sceptical historians (Davis) seem to think that exposing the operation of stereotypes is sufficient, without attempting to probe further in order to discover whether there is anything behind the veil cast by the stereotype that might enable us to see a genuine, as opposed to an imaginary, connection between atheism and radicalism." Smith, 'Charge of Atheism', p. 133.

²³ Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion 1640-1660* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 144-184.

²⁴ Stephen B. Dobranski and John P. Rumrich (eds.), *Milton and Heresy* (Cambridge, 1998); A. D. Nuttall, *The Alternative Trinity: Gnostic Heresy in Marlowe, Milton, and Blake* (Oxford, 1998); Poole, *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton*.

political philosophy of Levellers like William Walwyn and Richard Overton.²⁵ Nevertheless, as is demonstrated in chapter 2 of this thesis, research into the number of publications in the seventeenth century shows that 'heresy' was indeed a term frequently mentioned in the 1640s and the 1650s — especially the mid-1640s — exactly when the issue of religious sects was highly controversial. Not all those who discussed sectarianism equated it with 'heresy', but certainly the idea and the term seem to have played a role in shaping the issue. Although this thesis is not a comprehensive and thorough survey of what 'heresy' meant in the seventeenth century, it is hoped that it will supplement our understanding of the religious and political issues of the period.

Rethinking religion in seventeenth-century England

Focusing on the concept of 'heresy' enables us to question the concept of 'religion' in the seventeenth century from a fresh perspective. 'Heresy' as an idea and 'religion' as culture constitute a twofold theme in the course of our investigation. It is generally agreed by historians that 'religion' had an enormous influence on early modern society. Its central importance during the period of the Civil War has been long discussed.²⁶ Unlike the French Revolution whose political character is known to have been secular and anti-clerical,²⁷ the English Revolution is said to have centred 'religion' in the political upheaval. Historians, whether ecclesiastical, social or economic, have investigated how 'religion' affected the characters and the changes of English society. Indeed, 'religion and society' has been one of the common phrases we find in the titles of seventeenth-century studies.²⁸ Such an interest in the *role* of 'religion' in the history of England itself has a long history. Even before Max

²⁵ Smith, 'Charge of Atheism', p. 158.

²⁶ Christopher Hill, 'The Necessity of Religion,' in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill: vol. 2: Religion and Politics in 17th Century England* (Brighton, 1986), pp.11-18; Margaret Spufford, 'The Importance of Religion in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries' in Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters*, pp.1-102; John Morrill, 'The religious context of the English Civil War', *TRHS*, Fifth Series, 34 (1984), pp. 155-178; B. Reay, 'Radicalism and Religion in the English Revolution: an Introduction', in McGregor & Reay (eds.), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, p.1.

²⁷ Suzanne Desan, *Reclaiming the Sacred: Lay Religion and Popular Politics in Revolutionary France* (London, 1990); Timothy Tackett, *Religion, Revolution, and Regional Culture in Eighteenth-Century France: The Ecclesiastical Oath of 1791* (Princeton, 1986).

²⁸ For instance, Dagmar Freist, *Governed by Opinion: Politics, Religion and the Dynamics of Communication in Stuart London 1637-1645* (London, 1997); William Lamont and Sybil Oldfield (eds.), *Politics, Religion and Literature in the Seventeenth Century* (London, 1975); W. A. Hunt, *The Puritan Moment* (Cambridge, Mass., 1983); Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution* (1958); idem, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London, 1964).

Weber, for instance, the French historian Elie Halévy observed that among all nations England was “the most free from revolution, violent crisis, and sudden changes,” and linked this to “a kind of religiosity,” that made England remain “a puritan nation.”²⁹ The idea was echoed sixty years later by Edward Thompson. In his *The Making of the English Working Class*, he argued it was the political conservatism that dwelled in English Methodism which suppressed the plebeian radicalism of English people. It caused the “psychic ordeal in which the character-structure of the rebellious pre-industrial labourer or artisan was violently recast into that of the submissive industrial worker.”³⁰ In these ways, ‘religion’ is understood as “a source of ‘supernatural blinkers’,” as an agent of cultural change, a determiner of people’s social and political behaviour.³¹

However, these studies have used the term ‘religion’ in quite problematic and unreflective ways. Perhaps, as C. J. Sommerville points out, our notion of ‘religion’ is largely an adaptation of “the Puritans’ view of what is acceptable in religion.”³² Ecclesiastical history has remained largely unaffected by the new cultural history. Although since the 1970s many scholars have adapted anthropological concepts of ‘culture’ and provided fresh approaches to various historical issues — such as popular culture, political culture, gender and sexuality, visual and material representations — there has not been much discussion of how ‘religion’ was constituted *not* as a cultural background but as a cultural object, how it was continuously made and remade, and even challenged by members of society. In many studies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries ‘religion’ is treated as a discipline that influenced, if not dominated, politics (or science, art, etc.), and so the political nature of ‘religion’, as well as religious aspects of ‘politics’ are neglected. This thesis aims to demonstrate that early modern ‘religion’ and the idea of ‘heresy’ had a mutual and conceptual relationship, in which they defined and redefined each other.

I hope to make these points clearer by reviewing the existing historiography of Protestantism in early and mid seventeenth-century England. This review is by no means exhaustive. I have decided to focus on the theoretical problems in the historiography, rather than keeping track of every

²⁹ Elie Halévy, *The Birth of Methodism in England*, trans. B. Semmel (Chicago, 1971, first published in French, 1906); J.D. Walsh, ‘Elie Halévy and the Birth of Methodism,’ *TRHS*, Fifth Series, 25 (1974), pp.35, 39. See also Halévy, *A History of The English People*, vol. 1 (London, 1949).

³⁰ Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, p. 404.

³¹ The quote is from Michael Hill, *A Sociology of Religion* (London, 1973), p. 187.

³² “It is worth emphasizing that we have been considering ‘generic’ rather than ‘normative’ definitions of religion.” C. John Sommerville, *The Secularization of Early Modern England: From Religious Culture to Religious Faith* (Oxford, 1992), p. 8.

historical piece written about Puritanism, or about any religious sect, not to mention the English Revolution in general. The following three sections will examine historians that seem to represent different theoretical approaches, ranging from the history of political ideas to the history of 'popular culture'. Again the list is never a complete one, nor does my categorization of historians necessarily correspond with the variety of discussion made by these scholars. Nevertheless I hope this selection will help to bring out some important issues to be examined in this thesis.

2. Literature Review

Heretics as 'nonconformists', or 'revolutionaries'?

Historical discussion of the Civil War religious sects became especially lively in the 1970s, and included works such as A. L. Morton's *The World of the Ranters* (1970), B. S. Capp's *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (1972) and later Michael R. Watts' first part of *The Dissenters* (1978).³³ But the most influential general treatments of the topic were written by Christopher Hill and Murray Tolmie.

For those who study religious radicalism during the English Revolution, Hill remains one of the first places to start from. His most famous book, *The World Turned Upside Down* (1972) is indeed a landmark in the historiography of religious sects. The work not only covered diverse sects that had hitherto been largely neglected, such as the Seekers, Ranters and Diggers, but also contextualized them within the wider geographical, intellectual, political and economic background of seventeenth-century England. The motivation of Hill's attention to those sects was clearly stated; "if we dismiss such ideas because they seem irrational to us," Hill wrote, "we may be depriving ourselves of valuable insights into the society," because "historians are interested in ideas not only because they influence societies, but because they reveal the societies which give rise to them."³⁴ Hill showed how adherents of radical movements shared the same beliefs and characteristics, like the 'spirit of prophecy' and a preoccupation with 'sin and hell.' These were, Hill explained, part of a longer

³³ A. L. Morton, *The World of the Ranters: Radical religion in the English Revolution* (London, 1970); B. S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men* (1972); Watts, op. cit. Others include J. F. McGregor, 'Ranterism and the development of early Quakerism', *Journal of Religious History*, 9 (1977); Mark A. Kishlansky, *The Rise of the New Model Army* (Cambridge, 1979).

³⁴ Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, p. 17.

tradition of English heresy from the sixteenth century.³⁵ “There was then a long tradition of popular materialist scepticism and anti-clericalism; there was the Familist tradition that Christ was within every believer; there was the sectarian tradition of opposition to a state church, to the tithes which paid for its ministers and to the patronage system which ensured that its clergy were appointed by the ruling class. There were also the millenarian hopes built up by the Puritan preachers.”³⁶ The tension was rising; the outbreak of radical sects in the 1640s was, for Hill, hardly surprising.

Therefore, for Hill, ‘heresy’ was a form of social protest against an oppressive regime, which likewise took a form of orthodox Christianity. Sects were participants in the “popular revolt” against “property and social subordination.”³⁷ They united and fought against their prosperous rulers in order to achieve their *political* objectives, namely “communal property, a far wider democracy in political and legal institutions,” rejection of the state church and even of the Protestant ethic.³⁸ Thus Quakers gathered against “oppressive royalist landlords,” and shared ideas with the New Model Army which was a “short-lived school of political democracy.”³⁹ Even the Ranters could be explained as “negative reaction to nascent capitalism, a cry for human brotherhood, freedom and unity against the divisive forces of a harsh ethic, enforced by the harsh discipline of the market.”⁴⁰

While Hill rightly stressed that religious issues affected the very foundation of the social order in early modern England and that theology could become a highly political issue, it is questionable whether the seventeenth-century writers who condemned the sects understood Anabaptists, Quakers and Ranters in the way that Hill did. Blair Worden argued that the conservative puritans’ objection to the toleration of heresies could not be fully explained in terms of social oppression. Such an interpretation of religious sectarianism is largely based on the “supposition that theological statements can be read as if they were merely the seventeenth-century’s way of talking about the twentieth-century’s sociological concerns.”⁴¹ Hill’s model of class conflict also contains

³⁵ *ibid.*, p.91; ch. 8, *passim*; pp. 25-35. For the continuity of English heresies, see Hill, ‘From Lollards to Levellers,’ in *Collected Essays*, vol. 2, pp. 89-116.

³⁶ Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, p. 35.

³⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 13, 161.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 15.

³⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 79, 128.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 340.

⁴¹ Worden, ‘Toleration and the Cromwellian protectorate’, pp. 201-2, n11. Here Worden is, however, referring to Henry Noel Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English Revolution*, (ed.) Christopher Hill (London and Stanford, 1961).

problems. He emphasized that those who engaged in radical religious sects were poor men and women from “lower classes,” and were hostile to the “protestant ethics” of the better sort. A clear dichotomy was drawn between “traditional southern English middle-class Puritanism” and the “Lollard tradition” in the north; between “middle-class Presbyterian Puritanism” and the separatists talented in “mechanic preaching.”⁴² The impression given here was a three-layered hierarchical society, with ‘royalists’ on top, ‘Puritans’ in the middle and the adherents of the radical sects at the bottom. Yet it is highly debatable if the divide between ‘Puritans’ and ‘sects’ reflected the gap between middle and lower socio-economic orders. As will be discussed later, careful analysis of membership of various sects shows that they contained many gentry and clerics, while historians have shown that there was much attachment to the Church of England among very humble people.⁴³

However, the main problem with Hill’s perspective lies in his understanding of the meaning of ‘religion’. In his work, ‘religion’ is *per se* something irrational and unnatural, and something which should, rationally and naturally, invite the dissolution of itself. When Hill argued that the biblical doctrines of sin, the Fall and the hell were “vital” for the “ruling classes,” he implied not only that ‘religion’ was an instrument of dominion but also that this situation contained a structural and theoretical weakness which should and would require a revolution as an inevitable solution.⁴⁴ The rise of religious sects in the seventeenth century is explained within this logic of historical necessity. Thus it was “not surprising” that at the heart of radical religions during the Revolution was the abolition of ‘religion’ altogether.⁴⁵ What Hill propounded was a narrative of seventeenth-century England heading inexorably towards democratic atheism. After the authority of the Bible was “destroyed,” Hill argued, “what should take its place? ‘All comes by nature’ is not a creed for those who wish to turn the world upside down. Until men had worked out a much stronger sense of history, of evolution, atheism could only

⁴² Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 77-8.

⁴³ John Morrill, ‘The Church in England, 1642-9’, in Morrill (ed.), *Reactions to the English Civil War 1642-1649* (London, 1982), p. 90; Margaret Spufford, ‘Can We Count the “Godly” and the “Conformable” in the Seventeenth Century?’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, vol.36, no.3 (1985), pp. 428-438; Spufford (ed.), *World of Rural Dissenters*, *passim*; Patrick Collinson, *The Religion of Protestants* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 191-2.

⁴⁴ Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 151-7.

⁴⁵ “As the lower classes were set free to discuss what *they* were interested in, the social function of sin and hell was increasingly emphasized. But it was easier to demolish than to reconstruct — to suggest that wicked politician had invented sin, or that sin was the product of a competitive society, than to agree on how to organize a society in which sin was no longer a plausible concept.” *ibid.*, p. 182. *Italics* by the Hill.

be a negative, epicurean creed in a static universe." But it was *his* own quasi-Darwinian expectation that anticipated the forthcoming materialism in, for instance, Gerrard Winstanley "who among the radicals came nearest" to a modern man.⁴⁶ As Patrick Collinson puts, "Progressive fissiparation [...] is seen as virtually a law of Protestantism, somewhat resembling the biological law of evolution from simple to more complex forms: Bossuet subsumed in Darwin."⁴⁷ This teleology to seek the impetus of change within Protestantism dominated Hill's argument. For instance, he maintained, "Antinomianism is a democratization of the Calvinist doctrine of election, a logical extension of protestant individualism." The Quakers' 'inner light' was interpreted not only as an attempt to terminate the authority of institutionalized religious discipline but also as a movement leading people to scepticism.⁴⁸ This line is further developed in another essay titled 'Irreligion in the "Puritan" Revolution,' in which Hill claims that "sectarian religion drove Winstanley, Clarkson, and many others, to the verge of denying Christianity altogether," and even that "the roots of irreligious ideas of the English revolutionaries can be traced back to the Lollards."⁴⁹ Despite his insights into the variety of radical religious ideas and movements in the seventeenth century, much damage seems to have been done by Hill's imposition of a twentieth-century view of 'religion' as something arbitrary, unscientific, and unreasonable, as well as his assumption that 'heretics' were, like 'atheists', necessarily democratic and reasonable. As he employed his radical sects for the could-have-been Marxist revolution in England, Hill dismissed the meanings of concepts such as 'heresy' and 'atheism' within seventeenth-century culture.⁵⁰

Murray Tolmie, on the other hand, presented a completely different strand of the historiography of religious sects. While Christopher Hill saw the period as the beginning of the collapse of English Christianity, Tolmie maintained quite

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 182, 183.

⁴⁷ Patrick Collinson, 'Sects and the Evolution of Puritanism', in Francis J. Bremer (ed.), *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith* (Boston, 1994), p. 147.

⁴⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 267, 336.

⁴⁹ C. Hill, 'Irreligion in the 'Puritan' Revolution,' in McGregor and Reay (eds.), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, pp. 206, 210.

⁵⁰ This is a fatal problem in Hill's historiography, as he applies the same framework to 'politics'; convinced that early modern politics was all about 'ruling,' 'power' and 'subordination' (that is, everything an-socialistic), he is less interested in what constituted early modern political culture than how it was endangered. For discussion in the seventeenth-century concepts of 'atheism', see Hunter, 'The Problem of 'Atheism'', pp. 135-157; G. E. Aylmer, 'Unbelief in Seventeenth-Century England', in D. Pennington and K. Thomas (eds.), *Puritans and Revolutionaries* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 22-46.

the contrary. For the congregational historian, the 1640s was the great opening of a new phase of English church history. His work, *The Triumph of the Saints* (1977), is clearly a remarkably detailed study of Independent, Separatist and Baptist sects, and can now be found in the footnotes of almost every historical work on religious sectarianism during the Revolution, though it is less discussed in the body of their texts. Tolmie's stress was on how these sects contributed to the foundation of English nonconformity, Protestant pluralism, toleration and liberty of conscience. When Hill and other historians emphasized 'radicals' like the Ranters, Levellers and Fifth Monarchists, they neglected, Tolmie argued, the well-organized "respectable nonconformity" maintained by the separatist congregations during the 1640s.⁵¹ Equally Tolmie criticized "whig historians," that is, "often Low Churchmen, admirers of Bunyan, tolerant but slightly condescending towards nonconformists," who regard "protestant nonconformity in England as the result of the failure of the puritan revolution and of the consequent ejection of the puritan clergy from the established church in 1662."⁵² It was the 'separatist churches' of those who were falsely branded as Anabaptists and Brownists, and *not* the puritan clergy who left the Church of England after the Restoration, asserted Tolmie, that became the first generation of English nonconformity.

With his rich cache of information from manuscript and printed sources Tolmie drew clear outlines of the activities and networks of the London 'separatists', who were documented by hostile heresiographers like Thomas Edwards. Especial attention was paid to the problem of separation from the Church of England. Although professed separatists were always in the minority, Tolmie pointed out that there was a considerable tendency towards separation, shared by the godly puritans, both radical and moderate, and even by the laity who were dissatisfied with their parish communion. "This diversity of *de facto* separation served to blur the issue of separation."⁵³ Various issues surrounding the sectaries were explained in this context. The practice of lay preaching was one of the points on which sects were fiercely attacked by conservatives. Samuel How, for example, preached in a tavern in 1639 and

⁵¹ Tolmie, *Triumph of the Saints*, p. ix.

⁵² *ibid.*, p. x.

⁵³ "Exile and emigration were also forms of separation, of withdrawal from the parish churches and episcopal jurisdiction of the Church of England, even if those who thus left England loudly professed their rejection of separatism in principle." *ibid.*, p. 43. Patrick Collinson in his comment on the 'non-separating Congregationalists' suggests "strong inbuilt tendency towards Independency in puritan circles." Collinson, 'Towards a Broader Understanding of the Early Dissenting Tradition,' in C. R. Cole and M. E. Moody (eds.), *The Dissenting Tradition* (Athens, 1975), pp. 3-38.

became a notorious 'tub-preacher'. But Tolmie explained this as an expression of lay religious impulse against the "monopoly of university-educated preachers."⁵⁴ Perhaps no other historian examined more closely than Tolmie, the dilemma those separatists faced when they risked the notorious label of 'Anabaptists' by rejecting the infant baptism and accepting the doctrine of believers' baptism. Sectaries were fully aware of what this implied: it meant the rejection of the very idea of the compulsory state church. Sectaries were coherent in stance, well-organized and determined in their objectives. By what Tolmie called the 'anti-episcopal alliance', separatists united together with the Independents to abolish the state church system.⁵⁵ They were no longer the 'lunatic fringe' of the English revolution, but playing a central role in it.

While Tolmie established the origin and history of the 'separate churches' in revolutionary London, it has to be noted that he excluded other groups of religious sects in the same period who did not necessarily form such 'separate churches' yet whose existence and ideas equally troubled Thomas Edwards, the author of *Gangræna*, whom Tolmie heavily relied upon as a source of information. Tolmie did stress that his study was not meant to account for "the Antinomians, the Seekers, and the Ranters."⁵⁶ But as he extracted the genealogy of the spirit of 'pure' nonconformity from contemporary writings that were written as accounts of 'heretics', it is difficult to get a general view from his book of the controversies that surrounded these sectaries.

The limitation of such genealogical approach is also apparent in Tolmie's use of the terms 'church' (and 'churches') instead of 'sect'. Is the term 'churches' appropriate when talking about religious sects in the 1630s and 40s? Tolmie claimed this to be a "denominationally neutral" term, substitution for late seventeenth-century denominational categories like Congregationalist, Particular Baptists and General Baptist, noting that "it is the church that makes the denomination, not the denomination the church."⁵⁷ But in addition to the problem of omitting other non-churchly groups and individuals, it is also questionable whether the sectarian problem of the mid-seventeenth century was understood by contemporaries in terms of a proliferation of various 'churches' in the way Tolmie described. The true *catholic church* — meaning the universal Christian communion which the Church of England was supposed to represent — was always at the centre of debates whenever conservative theologians wrote against the separatists, from the Jacobean minister John Paget to the Civil War

⁵⁴ Tolmie, op. cit., p. 36.

⁵⁵ *ibid.*, p. 46.

⁵⁶ *ibid.*, p. 5

heresiographer Ephraim Pagitt.⁵⁸ But what they problematized was the separatists' *separation from* the Church, and not their *creation of* a church. Moreover, the conceptual transformation of the idea of 'church' needs explanation. It is debatable whether such a large conceptual change, from the unitary and catholic 'Church' to the 'churches' of free and conscientious believers, can be explained within the experiences of small numbers of underground congregations in the 1640s.

Social history: 'popular culture' or 'rural dissenters'?

As we have observed, Christopher Hill's political history and Murray Tolmie's congregational history interpret religious sectarianism during the English Revolution in quite contrasting ways; one finds in the sects the seeds of modern political philosophy, while the other sees them as marking the origin of nonconformity and modern religious conscience. Nigel Smith rightly pointed out that such a difference, which is not uncommon, is due to a "modern ideological conflict between commentators sympathetic to the emergence of secular society and others sympathetic to radical Christianity, sometimes because it constitutes a root of their own faith."⁵⁹ However, in that they both seek the origin of certain modern philosophies within the early modern 'daring thinkers', these conflicting interpretations still show an interesting similarity. "A series of primary, secondary, and tertiary processes from Protestantism through Puritanism to Separatism/Sectarianism" is "more or less true to what in fact happened," Patrick Collinson admitted. But Collinson reminds us how such teleological historiography of English Protestantism has served various denominational or ideological identities to justify their genealogy, which may be "an entirely legitimate, but restricted motive." What is wanted is, in Collinson's words, "the horizontal and lateral" approach to the sectarian problem, instead of "vertical, or linear treatment."⁶⁰

As historians became more aware of the limitation of progressive historiography, a new approach to the history of seventeenth-century religion came from social historians. From the 1970s to the 1980s, many scholars' interest shifted towards what may be called the study of popular culture or history from below. Influenced by scholars like Natalie Zemon Davis and Peter

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁸ John Paget, *An Arrow against the separation of the Brownist* (Amsterdam, 1618).

⁵⁹ Nigel Smith, 'The Charge of Atheism', p. 133.

⁶⁰ Collinson, 'Sects and the Evolution of Puritanism', pp. 147-8; *idem*, 'Towards a Broader Understanding', pp. 3, 6-7.

Burke, historians of early modern Europe started to apply anthropological approaches to religion and society, without having to give priority to political necessities and ideological concerns.⁶¹ Among them, Keith Thomas' *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (1971) had unparalleled influence on the study of early modern England. Thomas defined 'religion' in the pre-industrial world as a system of understanding and of order, a system which maintained both the spiritual and the social.⁶² To this system, Thomas argued, the Church had reserved a considerable power ("magical power"), until the new 'religion' of Protestantism began to impose a new scheme, deliberately attempting to eliminate the 'magical' elements from Christianity. This is how the sixteenth and seventeenth century English Reformers found themselves being confronted with various rival systems of belief: popular magic, astrology and witchcraft. Thomas revealed that the majority of early modern people remained largely ignorant about, or uninterested in, the Reformed religion of letters. Instead what they maintained was a die-hard world of 'popular religion' which, in many cases, could hardly be called Christian.

Thomas' thesis had an immense impact. Scholars, frequently quoting Thomas' work, stressed that the traditional customs, beliefs and ritualistic modes of religious life of 'common people' were in conflict with the official Christian doctrine advanced by ecclesiastical authority and Reformers. With a 'wider' scope towards non-Christian beliefs and 'folk religions,' 'popular religion' was seen to have enjoyed plebeian autonomy. "If popular religion is any guide," wrote Barry Reay, "there never was (in Marxist terms) incorporation of the subordinate classes."⁶³ On the other hand, the status of Protestantism was revised, and was seen as being considerably unpopular. The statistical study of absence from church was conducted with great interest, while university-educated Protestant clergymen were described as being alien to their illiterate flock who dwelled in, in Peter Clark's words, the "Third

⁶¹ Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, California, 1975); Peter Burke, *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe* (London, 1978); B. Reay (ed.), *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England* (London & Sydney, 1985); Tim Harris (ed.), *Popular Culture in England, c.1500-1850* (London, 1995).

⁶² Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic: Studies in Popular Beliefs in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1971). Religion as a social system is also discussed by John Bossy, in 'The Mass as a Social Institution, 1200-1700', *Past and Present*, 100, (1983), 29-61. See also Bossy, *Christianity in the West 1400-1700* (Oxford, 1985).

⁶³ Barry Reay, 'Popular Religion', in Reay (ed.), *Popular Culture in Seventeenth-Century England*, p. 94.

World.”⁶⁴ Whereas Christopher Hill stressed the democratic nature of Protestant translations of the Bible, many others argued that the Protestant culture of godliness was elitist and suppressive.⁶⁵ This trend was further developed into another theory of the relation between Puritanism and ‘social control’. Just as Peter Burke emphasized the growing divide between elite and popular culture, and just as economic and social historians stressed the growing divide between rich and poor, so ‘religion’ was treated in the same dichotomous manner, as dividing into elite and popular religion. Keith Wrightson extended Thomas’ thesis into a socio-economic study of English rural society, and presented the rise of Puritanism as a powerful manifestation of the move towards the suppression of traditional popular culture. Wrightson, together with David Levine, argued that Puritanism promoted a philosophical foundation on which the rich ‘middling sort’ of the community disciplined ‘the poor’ to maintain the social and moral order.⁶⁶ This view fashioned Wrightson’s *English Society 1580-1680* (1982) in which ‘the godly and the multitude’ were separated in politics, economy and culture.⁶⁷

Whether the English Reformation really ‘failed’ has been, and still is, much debated by historians.⁶⁸ But from the late 1980s to the 1990s, the limitations of this bi-polar model of ‘elite-Puritan’ and ‘popular culture’ division started to be highlighted by scholars, who stressed the complex structure of English society. C. J. Sommerville warned that church attendance did not necessarily indicate the decline of people’s religious interest, while Martin Ingram concluded that the neglect of the ‘consensus’ shared by a wide variety of social groups of

⁶⁴ J. J. Scarisbrick, *The Reformation and the English People* (Oxford, 1984); P. Clark, *English Provincial Society from the Reformation to the Revolution: Religion, Politics and Society in Kent, 1500-1640* (Hassocks, 1977); A. Macfarlane, *Reconstructing Historical Communities* (Cambridge, 1977); R. A. Marchant, *The Church Under the Law* (Cambridge, 1969); David Clark, *Between Pulpit and Pew* (Cambridge, 1982); I. Green, ‘Career Prospects and Clerical Conformity in the Early Stuart Church’, *Past and Present*, 90 (1981), pp. 71-115; R. O’Day, *The English Clergy* (Leicester, 1979), pp. 210-1, 230-6. Quotation is from Clark, pp. 155-157.

⁶⁵ Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London, 1993); Christopher Haigh (ed.), *The English Reformation Revised* (Cambridge, 1987); idem, *English Reformations: Religion, Politics, and Society under the Tudors* (Oxford, 1993).

⁶⁶ Keith Wrightson and David Levine, *Poverty and Piety in an English Village: Terling 1525-1700* (New York, etc., 1979).

⁶⁷ Keith Wrightson, *English Society 1580-1680* (London, 1982), ch. 7.

⁶⁸ Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England c.1400-c.1580* (New Haven and London, 1992); Nicholas Tyacke (eds.), *England’s Long Reformation 1500-1800* (London, 1998); Christopher Durston and Jacqueline Eales (eds.), *The Culture of English Puritanism, 1560-1700* (London, 1996); Patrick Collinson, ‘The English Reformation, 1445-1995’, in M. Bentley (ed.), *Companion to Historiography* (London, 1997), pp. 336-360.

people was misleading, especially when speaking of 'religion'.⁶⁹ But for our purpose, it is equally important to note that the outbreak of religious sectarianism in the seventeenth century does not fit into the binary history of two cultures: 'middling sort' and the 'multitude'. In this framework religious sects are sometimes given awkward positions. Keith Thomas, though with some ambiguity, made reference to sects in the context of traditional miracle-working and popular prophecy.⁷⁰ But when Keith Wrightson emphasized the religious apathy of the lower classes, he more or less counted the sects in the 'elite' wing.⁷¹ The impression given is that the sectarianization of the 'godly' and the detaching of 'common people' from English Protestantism were two separate but parallel processes. Obviously more radical, and hardly 'godly', sects like the Antinomians and the Ranters are neglected in this model. Nor does Wrightson consider how many "denominations and sects" faced large-scale condemnation by the 'godly' as well as by the public for their 'heresy'. Such a description of sects as one part of a range of sophisticated and 'unpopular' elite movements curiously coincides with the conventional historiography of nonconformity, which has constantly and consciously tried to disassociate English separatism from continental Anabaptists.⁷² So J. F. McGregor stated that the English sects who were tarred with the notorious label of Anabaptists were in fact "essentially a product of native English Puritanism."⁷³ But those who read Thomas Edwards *Gangræna* would soon notice how sects were often associated with 'rudeness', 'drunkenness' and 'superstition' — all those qualities which, according to social historians, were marked features of the so-called popular ungodliness.

That religious sectarianism in early modern England indicated not popular irreligion, but popular piety, has been advanced by another group of historians.

⁶⁹ Sommerville, *Secularization of Early Modern England*, p. 5; Martin Ingram, 'From Reformation to Toleration: Popular Religious Cultures in England, 1540-1690', in Tim Harris (ed.), *Popular Culture in England*, pp. 95-96. See also Bob Scribner, 'Is a History of Popular Culture Possible?', *History of European Ideas*, x (1989), pp. 175-91.

⁷⁰ Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, pp. 173, 178, 200.

⁷¹ In his description of a tragic failure of the puritan campaign against the popular culture, he wrote: "...What the Interregnum saw was not the transformation of England into a 'land of saints and a pattern of holiness to all the world' as Richard Baxter had hoped, but the disintegration of English puritanism into a multiplicity of denominations and sects. *Side by side with that process* went the alienation from what remained of the national church of those common people who found themselves both the object of the cultural aggression of the godly and at the same time excluded from the communion of the faithful." Wrightson, *English Society*, p. 217. *My Italics*.

⁷² Burrage, *Early English Dissenters*, vol. i, p. 68; White, *English Separatist Tradition*, pp. xii, 162.

⁷³ John F. McGregor, 'The Baptists: Fount of All Heresy', in McGregor and Reay (eds.), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, p. 26.

Among them, Margaret Spufford has most openly and consistently opposed the theory of Puritanism and 'social control'.⁷⁴ According to Spufford, 'godliness' in seventeenth-century England was not necessarily the prerogative of the wealthy members of communities; instead "even the humblest members, the very poor, and the women, and those living in physical isolation, thought deeply on religious matters and were often profoundly influenced by them."⁷⁵ Their interest in 'religious matters' was, Spufford argued, most profoundly expressed in 'godly' print culture, and in popular nonconformity. Responding to Tessa Watt's study of cheap print and religious ballads, Spufford emphasized that religion was indeed a 'favourite' subject among people.⁷⁶ This 'religion' of the common people was different from clerical Puritanism; the 'godly' ballads showed little sense of Calvinist idea of predestination.⁷⁷ Instead, at an inn men and women might "talk freely of the things of God," and "the alehouse formed a meeting-place at which anti-puritan songs could be sung, and anti-puritan feelings expressed or, alternatively, conventicles could be held."⁷⁸ English nonconformity started from *here*, Spufford claims, and not necessarily and exclusively from the elitist puritans.

Essays collected in *The World of Rural Dissenters* (1995) concentrated on proving this point. Research on social and economic status of various sectarian groups in local communities showed a picture in which both rich and poor members of community were involved in the same dissenting congregation. Studies on later Lollards, Quakers, Baptists, the Family of Love and Muggletonians, conducted by Derek Plumb, Christopher Marsh, Bill Stevenson and others, suggest that the membership of such dissenting sects was never

⁷⁴ Margaret Spufford, *Contrasting Communities* (Cambridge, 1974); idem, 'Can We Count the "Godly" [...]?', pp. 428-438; idem, 'Puritanism and Social Control?', in A. Fletcher and J. Stevenson (eds.), *Order & Disorder in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 41-57.

⁷⁵ Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, p. 343.

⁷⁶ M. Spufford, 'The importance of religion in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries', in Spufford (ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters*, esp. pp. 64-85; Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991). There has been much debate about literacy in early modern England at popular level. See David Cressy, *Literacy and Social Order: Reading and Writing in Tudor and Stuart England* (Cambridge, 1980); R. O'Day, *Education and Society 1500-1800* (London, 1982); Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and Its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1981); L. Stone, 'The Educational Revolution in England, 1560-1640', *Past and Present*, 28 (1964), pp. 41-80; L. Stone, 'Literacy and Education in England, 1640-1900', *Past and Present*, 42 (1969), pp. 69-139.

⁷⁷ Spufford, 'The importance of religion', p. 84; Watt, 'Piety in the Pedlar's Pack: Continuity and Change, 1578-1630', in Spufford (ed.), *World of Rural Dissenters*, pp. 242, 247-8.

⁷⁸ M. Spufford, *Contrasting Communities*, p. 231; Spufford, 'Puritanism and Social Control?', p. 45.

restricted to the prosperous. Sixteenth-century Lollards were not 'weavers and threshers' as has been assumed by historians but included both very wealthy villagers and wage earners, while there were Baptists and Independents who were exempt from the Hearth Taxes for their poverty in the 1670s. The 'Familists' were much more 'integrated' into local society than historians had previously considered, and a Baptist preacher could co-operate with the parish rector to witness wills of the parochial community. These dissenters served as parish constables, frequented alehouses and football matches.⁷⁹ It is "much too simple," Spufford wrote, to believe "the sectarian battles after the Civil War necessarily lead to a breakdown of harmony in human relations at a parish level, and in the transaction of essential community business."⁸⁰

These studies have demonstrated how the contrast between the 'two cultures' was not, at least in matters of 'religion', as clear-cut as social historians claimed. However, Spufford's argument is based on local research on either pre-Revolutionary or post-Restoration dissenters. The London religious sects in the 1640s and 1650s, who posed the issue of sectarianism most sensationally and dramatically, are left untouched. Spufford's works neither refer to the heated debates about 'heresy' in the mid-seventeenth century nor ask whether this controversy affected the nature and process of what she and her historians call the 'integration' of dissenters into communities. If sectaries rather enjoyed their ordinariness in society, the gap between this situation and the anxiety expressed about the growth of 'heresy' we find in print and in pulpit surely requires an explanation. Certainly Spufford's theory of local integration does not apply to revolutionary London. When we are talking about 'dissent', it ought to imply a degree of conflict, not total harmony. The impression given, as Patrick Collinson comments, is that "almost anyone could be a dissenter."⁸¹ Another problem in Spufford's argument is in her definition of 'religion', which is largely an adaptation of modern Protestant individualism, an idea that regards 'religion' as, primarily, a personally and internally held *thought* about God.⁸² Although Spufford has rightly drawn attention to the importance of religious

⁷⁹ Derek Plumb, 'The social and economic status of the later Lollards', in Spufford (ed.), *World of Rural Dissenters.*, pp.103-131; Christopher Marsh, 'The gravestone of Thomas Lawrence revisited (or the Family of Love and the local community in Balsham, 1560-1630)', in *ibid.*, pp.208-234; Bill Stevenson, 'The social and economic status of post-Restoration dissenters, 1660-1725', in *ibid.*, pp. 332-359; Stevenson, 'The social integration of post-Restoration dissenters, 1660-1725', in *ibid.*, pp.360-387.

⁸⁰ Spufford, 'The importance of religion', p. 21.

⁸¹ Patrick Collinson, 'Critical Conclusion', in Spufford (ed.), *World of Rural Dissenters.*, p. 391.

⁸² Spufford, 'Puritanism and Social Control?', p. 57.

sects in early modern religious culture, and despite their small number, she has not questioned the cultural meaning of *being* a dissenter.

‘Puritanism’ as identity, and ‘Ranters’ as representation

We have reviewed how neo-Marxist historians and congregational historians, despite their different emphases, have fallen into a similar trap of teleology, and have neglected the context in which religious sectarianism was debated with intense anxiety. Social historians, for all their interest in socio-economic classification, have also failed to firmly locate religious sects in either ‘elite’ or ‘popular’ cultures. Historians of rural dissent who criticized these social historians have also ignored the ways in which sects were stigmatized as ‘heretics’ during the Revolution. It seems that the gap between ‘religion’, as a general and pervasive issue, and religious sectarianism, as a specific and peculiar topic, has produced a hole in our historiography. If one focuses on some peculiar ‘heretics’, one’s focus inevitably becomes isolated from early modern ‘religion’ as a whole, while sociological approaches to seventeenth-century England fail to explain the eccentric and disturbing existence of sects. How can religious culture and religious sectarianism be explored together? How can we comprehend the meaning of the ‘heresy’ controversy without committing ourselves to teleology, and without ignoring the general cultural context?

Recent work by Patrick Collinson, without doubt one of the most important historians of English Protestantism, provides us useful insights into this problem of ‘religion’ as culture on the one hand, and sectarianism as a particular phenomena on the other. His interest in (1) how English Protestantism constituted a culture of early modern England, and (2) how within this process particular religious identities were forged, is clearly very relevant to the main theme of this thesis. Firstly, Collinson dismisses the understanding of ‘Puritanism’ as a particular set of beliefs that mattered only to prosperous members of English society.⁸³ Though he acknowledges the tensions surrounding the ‘godly people’, he is doubtful whether they were initiated by social and economic factors. Instead, Collinson sees the culture of godliness as a *style*, part of a wider context of social trends shifting from traditional and communal living to a more ‘private’ ‘voluntary’ and

⁸³ Collinson, *Religion of Protestants* (Oxford, 1982), ch. 5. Note his terminology in describing religion as culture, such as “collective religious consciousness and

‘fragmented’ society. Godliness was not inherent in a certain social class; rather it was an aspect of this cultural change that was influencing the mode of life of early modern people. Reformers may have condemned the world of ‘popular’ customs and the traditional beliefs (which social historians have celebrated), but they too were also confronted by other rival “private gatherings and private pastimes” such as dances, sports and theatres, which were just “as modern and progressive as protestant sermon-going itself.”⁸⁴ Therefore, “the meaning of puritanism is not only doctrine, applied and internalized, but a social situation: the partly self-inflicted isolation of the godly, which contributed to a significant change in the pattern of cultural and social relations.”⁸⁵

Therefore Collinson explains English separatism as part of or a reflection of what he calls ‘religious voluntarism’. This had been, he argues, a marked feature of English Protestantism from the late sixteenth century, as can be seen in parish conventicles and ‘quasi-separatist’ gatherings.⁸⁶ The desire to make ‘a church within the Church’ was very much an idea in context of the Puritan movement. Collinson emphasizes the necessity of understanding the debate between separatists and conformists as a series of consistent arguments based on their shared recognition of problems in the established Church. Although the two sides opposed each other upon whether or not to abandon the state church, they were both concerned about the Church of England being “composed of good and bad parts.”⁸⁷ Indeed, Presbyterian ministers like Thomas Edwards detested the ‘prelacy’ of the Laudian church no less than religious sects. In this way the conflict between conformists and separatists can be read as a dialogue in process, ultimately producing a wider change of consensus. As Murray Tolmie puts, “Puritan radicalism which was not in itself separatist in intent contributed the separatist churches to grow.”⁸⁸ Collinson also wrote in a different essay that “Puritanism was not inherent in the godly community. It consisted in the tension between that community, the church in a gathered sense, and the church as the entire Christian nation.”⁸⁹

behaviour” or “spontaneous consensus of private men, the religious public themselves.” p. 247.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 222.

⁸⁵ *ibid.*, p. 230.

⁸⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 273-5.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p.276; Collinson, ‘Towards a Broader Understanding’, p. 8.

⁸⁸ Murray Tolmie, *Triumph of the Saints*, pp. 28-9; Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, p. 276.

⁸⁹ Patrick Collinson, *The Puritan Character: Polemics and Polarities in Early Seventeenth-Century English Culture: A Paper Presented at a Clark Library Seminar 25 April 1987* (Los Angeles, 1989), p. 27.

But then why did not all serious godly people jump into open separatism? What made them halt? Here we have to consider the problem of cultural boundaries. Collinson emphasizes the practical and cultural difficulties of separatism in the seventeenth century.

To assume that the ultimate legacy of the protestant Reformation could only be a kind of religious anarchy is to underestimate the inhibitions and practical difficulties which stood in the way of separation, and the strength of the conventional bonds retaining many and indeed most 'forward' puritans within the formal communion and community of their parish churches.⁹⁰

Although puritans were deeply frustrated by the slowness of Reformation in England, they were strongly attached to the idea of a unified established church. Also, even the modest practice of private godly gatherings (what Tolmie called 'quasi-separatism') could immediately lead to persecution by the church authorities. Thus, for example, Roger Quatermayne, a puritan layman who had genuine affection for the state church, was called by William Laud "a Separatist, an Anabaptist, a Brownist, a Familist."⁹¹ The ambiguous attachment of puritans to the state church system and the danger of being labelled as heterodox by religious establishment constructed emotional and political boundaries against practical separation, amid the changing early modern culture shifting slowly towards 'fragmented sociability'. This crucially seems to be the point Margaret Spufford dismissed. Welcoming rural dissenters as evidence of 'small piety' of the humbler sort, she oversimplified how deeply the idea of the 'orthodox' religious life was entwined with the daily life of early modern people, and how far people who withdrew from it were in danger of stigmatization. It was a cause of great annoyance for nonconformist sects long after 1660, that their members often practised 'occasional conformity', returning to their old parish churches when it came to marriage, funerals, and the baptism of their children. On the other hand, John Morrill has pointed how the "passive strength of Anglican survivalism" of common people troubled puritan reformers even more than radical sects did.⁹²

Historians have recently studied the ways such cultural boundaries were constructed in early modern society. Peter Lake examined how in the 1630s murder pamphlets were used by the anti-puritan polemicists. Horrifying stories of axe-murder would "conjure up a lurid picture of a puritan threat to all

⁹⁰ Collinson, *Religion of Protestants*, p. 275.

⁹¹ Tolmie, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-31; Collinson, 'The English conventicle' in W. J. Sheils (ed.), *Studies in Church History*, XXIII (Oxford, 1986), pp. 223-225.

order and authority,” appealing to “popular anti-puritan feeling.”⁹³ Collinson too inquires to what extent the commonly accepted image of the ‘Puritan’ as the ‘hotter sort of Protestant’ was (and is) a historically crafted one. Although the Elizabethan conformists had already established a genre of satiric literature attacking the godly by the 1590s, the term ‘Puritan’ itself hardly appeared in such polemics; it may have been, Collinson suggests, playwrights like Ben Jonson that fashioned ‘stage-Puritanism’ and shaped a stereotype into an identifiable general category.⁹⁴ Drawing on the sociologist Edwin Schur’s *Labeling Deviant Behavior* (1971), Collinson maintained that the “Puritans” were a category constructed in the struggle for religious identities. Just as the world of the ‘ungodly’ lay in the eyes of the beholder, so was the world of the ‘Puritans’. But the labelling of the ‘Puritans’ concerned not only terminology but also identities. This name-calling and social isolation made the godly community work out their sense of ‘us’ and ‘them’, which soon became part of reality. ‘Puritans’ existed “by virtue of being perceived to exist, most of all by their enemies, but eventually to themselves and to each other. Puritanism was more of a process and relationship than it was state or entity.”⁹⁵ The conflict between religious sects and conformist polemicists can be seen as a reflection of these complex process of making religious identities and boundaries.

The cultural construction of identities by means of negative marginalization of the ‘other’ has been much discussed by a number of scholars, most notably by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978). But among the studies of seventeenth-century religious sects, J. C. Davis’s controversial work, *Fear, Myth and History* (1986), seems to have come closest to this approach. Davis’ conclusion that the

⁹² Morrill, ‘The Church in England’, p. 90; Reay, ‘Popular Religion’, p. 119.

⁹³ Peter Lake, ‘Puritanism, Arminianism and a Shropshire Axe-murder’, *Midland History*, (1990), pp. 37-64. Quotation from pp. 41, 55.

⁹⁴ Patrick Collinson, ‘Ben Jonson’s *Bartholomew Fair*: The Theatre Constructs Puritanism’, in D. L. Smith, R. Strier and D. Bevington (eds.), *The Theatrical City* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 157-169; idem, ‘A Comment: Concerning the Name Puritan’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31 (1980), pp. 483-88. Collinson warns against the way historians uncritically rely upon ‘typical’ puritans such as Ralph Josselin and Richard Baxter. “If we were supplied with thousands of narrations resembling Josselin’s, all equally idiosyncratic in their personal detail, how should we begin to construct out of them a general category called Puritan? Would it be sensible to try? The coherence of our concept of Puritanism depends upon knowing as little about particular Puritans as possible. It might disintegrate altogether if we knew everything. Historians of Puritanism sit in Plato’s cave, describing not reality but those shadows of reality which are “characters” and stereotypes.” *Puritan Character*, p. 8.

⁹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 158. Collinson further wrote: “Paradigms such as Puritanism, which were deployed to construct and manipulate a semblance of reality, soon became part of the reality on which they imposed themselves.” p. 169. One is tempted to compare these statements with E. P. Thompson’s concept of ‘class’, as a relationship. See Thompson, *Making of the English Working Class*, preface.

Ranters, the most extreme of the antinomian sects of the English Revolution, did not exist at all, received a very mixed reception; many historians of this subject denounced Davis' suggestion.⁹⁶ But the importance of his argument goes beyond the immediate questions which it raised, for it brought a new perspective to the study of religious sectarianism in seventeenth-century England.

According to Davis, there were no decisive figures or organizations that would prove the existence of such a distinct group called 'Ranters', consistent in ideology and practice. Rather, the sect was (and is) a product of imagination and propaganda, overlapping with other pre-existing heretical beliefs such as Antinomianism, free-will perfectionism or what Davis called 'anti-formalism'. 'Ranters' was a label, created and used for deliberate purposes; it was a "witness to some sort of social struggle rather than functioning as precise cognitive signifiers or markers."⁹⁷ Therefore he drew attention to the large amount of sensational Ranter literature not as sources of information but as a set of discourse with a particular function.

"If there were no Ranters," started Davis, "why did so many Englishmen apparently believe that there were?" By examining the stereotypical images and characteristics (mystical prophesying and sexual promiscuity, for example) provided by the contemporary literature, he concluded that 'Ranterism' was a representation of the anxiety about a society infected with immorality and religious extremism, and an attempt to set society back in order. For example, in popular tracts like *The Ranters Recantation* (1650) or *Bloody Newse from the North* (1650), Davis observed a "struggle to control, exploit and interlock a series of powerful images: antinomian or atheistic collapse of moral and religious order with royalist excess or puritan disintegration."⁹⁸ In other words, what was projected onto the imaginary 'Ranters' was the image of *deviance*. As Davis argued, "the labelling and categorising of what appeared as a seething, promiscuous heterodoxy was itself a desperate bid for some sort of control,"⁹⁹

⁹⁶ J. C. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the Historians* (Cambridge, 1986). For reviews, see G. E. Aylmer, 'Review Article: Did the Ranters Exist?', *Past and Present*, 117 (1987), pp. 208-19; E. P. Thompson, 'On the Rant', *London Review of Books*, x (9 July 1987), pp. 9-10; Christopher Hill, 'The Lost Ranters? A Critique of J. C. Davis', *History Workshop Journal*, 24 (1987), pp. 134-40, etc. Davis replied in 'Fear, Myth and Furore: Reappraising the "Ranters"', *Past and Present*, 129 (1990), pp. 77-103, which was then replied by J. F. McGregor, Barnard Capp, Nigel Smith, and B. J. Gibbons in 'Debate: Fear, Myth and Furore: Reappraising the "Ranters"', *Past and Present*, 140 (1993), pp. 155-210 with Davis' comment.

⁹⁷ Davis, *Fear, Myth and History*, p. 17.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 81.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 104.

these representations were part of the process of defining a normative, orthodox religion.

This construction of an image of deviance served not only the orthodoxy of religious conservatism, but also that of other religious sects, who themselves once deviated from the Church of England but were now in need of consolidating their own boundaries which were not to be crossed by their members. During the 1650s, the Baptists and Quakers were greatly concerned about possible disintegration 'from within' through moral collapse, as well as being destroyed by persecution. For them too, the Ranterism embodied the "fears of religious individualism run to anarchy."¹⁰⁰ J. F. McGregor also argued that for George Fox and other early Quakers, 'Ranterism' provided a useful image with which to discipline its followers, to teach them ways not to go, and to cut off "the unwelcome by-products of their missionary activity."¹⁰¹ Thus the term 'Ranters' was kept alive as a powerful weapon by both the anti-sectarian conservatives and the sectarian leadership. "The greater the search for conformity, the greater the search for deviance," argued Davis, "for without deviance there is no self-consciousness of conformity and vice versa."¹⁰²

The discourse of religious heterodoxy functioned not only by maintaining this conformist, or 'orthodox' framework, but also by transforming it. We should consider how conflicts between differing religious identities could also subvert and transform the entire cultural framework in which those contests took place. If Davis is right, the construction of the 'Ranters' helped consolidate the Baptists and the Quakers. This, in turn, marked the *de facto* establishment of religious pluralism in England. Such conservative writers condemning the proliferation of sects and creating the 'Ranter sensation' paradoxically helped create religious diversity.¹⁰³ Historians influenced by social anthropology have stressed that the cultural function of symbols is not only to maintain *status quo*, but also to challenge and re-create the norm. Lynn Hunt in her study of the French Revolution, demonstrated how various forms of revolutionary symbolism were employed not only to represent and embody political concepts but also to re-define the political atmosphere.¹⁰⁴ Suzan Desan studied lay

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, p. 87.

¹⁰¹ *ibid.*, p. 90; J. F. McGregor, 'Ranterism and the development of early Quakerism', *Journal of Religious History*, 9 (1977), pp. 353-9.

¹⁰² Davis, *op. cit.*, pp.95-96.

¹⁰³ "The furious debates about ordinances, which raged amongst sectaries and their enemies in the late 1640s and the 1650s, in themselves created a sense of unease about organised religion's capacity to control not only society at large but even the withdrawn elect, the saving remnant." Davis, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

¹⁰⁴ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, & Class in the French Revolution* (London, 1984).

religious movements during the French Revolution and showed how the struggle in the 1790s between the Jacobin 'dechristianization' policy and many French villagers who attached themselves to traditional Catholicism was in itself a "multiple recastings" of religion as well as of politics in France. According to Desan, the experience of lay cults rendered post-Revolution French Catholicism more anti-clerical in character, while the initiative taken by women in religious activism affected their position in local community, and in a longer term contributed to the 'feminization' of French Catholicism during the nineteenth century. After the battle over the sacred, French Catholicism was a different religion.¹⁰⁵ Likewise, this thesis will ask how the intense disputation about heresies during the Civil War and the Interregnum affected the way English men and women conceptualized 'religion'. The most obvious change was of course, religious pluralism, an understanding that there could exist several different 'religions' (and not only 'churches') at the same time. It was a new paradigm from which there was no return.¹⁰⁶

How far J. C. Davis' theory of the 'invention of the Ranters' persuades us that the alleged sect had no real existence is still open to question. But interestingly Davis' argument and Patrick Collinson's recent work on the construction of the 'Puritan' identity, have clear parallels with recent discussions in the new cultural history of the power of language, to constitute difference and to make change. In his conclusion Davis summarized the mechanism in which the idea of the 'Ranters' worked. It deserves full quotation.

Running through the anxieties of both sectarians and conservatives was a common fear. The Ranters were an image of this horror; Ranterism a frontier which should never be crossed. Anyone who raised the difficult question of ordinances — a Quaker, a Shaker, a Christ impersonator, a Baptist — or simply someone who preached the inner spirit or the end of ordinances was likely to be confronted by a twofold problem. On the one hand, they would be pushed across that frontier. On the other hand, they would, in all probability need to re-establish that frontier as a brake on their own followers or an antidote against

¹⁰⁵ Suzanne Desan, *Reclaiming the Sacred: Lay Religion and Popular Politics in Revolutionary France* (London, 1990).

¹⁰⁶ How the plural term '*religions*' instead of 'Religion' became conceptually possible has been discussed by several scholars. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion: A new approach to the religious traditions of mankind* (New York, 1963); John Bossy, 'Some elementary forms of Durkheim', *Past and Present*, 95 (1982), pp. 3-18; Peter Biller, 'Words and the Medieval Notion of 'Religion'', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36 (1985), pp. 351-369; Peter Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1990).

rival groups. In both cases, the Ranter provided a useful image; Ranterism a necessary frontier. So it is that those whose sectarian identity was most abusively linked with Ranterism most frequently found Ranters elsewhere. It was a struggle over social, as much as moral, boundaries.¹⁰⁷

Davis' work demonstrated how the very act of objectifying — that is, writing, studying, disputing or simply talking about — religious heterodoxy itself had importance in early modern society. Michael Hunter's study on the seventeenth-century concept of 'atheism' and the way it functioned in the changing climate of theology and philosophy, or Stuart Clark's analysis of the way demonology helped the early modern understandings of the world, are very much in this direction, and have provided rich insights into our understanding of religion, culture and society.¹⁰⁸ In this sense the discourse about 'heresies', however fictional or exaggerated they might have been, could be seen as an important reflection of the period of the English Revolution. And this is the point this thesis hopes to exploit. Through studying contemporary heresiographies, it focuses on how the discourse about 'heresy' functioned to create boundaries and to fix religious identities when there was an increasing number of religious ideas and sectarian organizations. It also aims to discuss how these heresiographies related to the transformation of the very understanding of 'religion' in seventeenth-century England.

Chapter 2 will examine the process by which 'heresy' was introduced into political debates in the 1640s, and see how the concept was applied to describe the emergence of diverse religious sects especially in London. It studies the Presbyterian campaign against what they termed "errours, heresies and blasphemies" in the mid-1640s and shows what difficulties it faced. Chapter 3 attempts a critical reading of Thomas Edwards' famous anti-heresy work, *Gangræna* (1646), in order to see how the particular images attributed to 'heresy' helped to construct religious identities of orthodoxy. By examining the languages of disease and monstrosity, the chapter demonstrates how the texts of anti-heresy writings like *Gangræna* embodied a seventeenth-century cultural framework in which ideas of 'religion' and 'heresy' were defined. Chapter 4 will focus on the method of cataloguing, an important yet largely neglected

¹⁰⁷ Davis, op. cit., p. 93.

¹⁰⁸ Michael Hunter, 'The Problem of 'Atheism' in Early Modern England', *TRHS*, Fifth Series, vol. 35 (1985), pp. 135-157; *idem*, 'Science and heterodoxy: an early modern problem reconsidered', in D. C. Lindberg and R. S. Westman (eds.), *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 437-460; Stuart Clark, 'Inversion, misrule and the meaning of witchcraft', *Past and Present*, 87 (1980), pp. 98-127; *idem*, *Thinking with Demons: the idea of witchcraft in early modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997).

aspect of early modern religious polemics. By examining Ephraim Pagitt's two works, *Christianographie* (1635) and *Heresiography* (1645), the chapter demonstrates the influence of Renaissance encyclopedism upon early modern theology. The 'catalogue of heresies' became a literary genre of its own, and developed a new way of writing about religious errors. Chapter 5 develops the argument in the chapter 4 and further examines the implication of the rise of encyclopedic studies of heresies. It examines Alexander Ross's *Pansebeia* (1653), an extraordinary history of "all religions in the world," and inquires how seventeenth-century heresiographies helped the development of the new comparative studies of different religions, including non-Christian faiths. The conclusion briefly discuss the change of the idea of 'heresy' after the Restoration, and how it reflected the new understanding of 'religion' based on 'reason', which then was to be succeeded by the enlightenment.

Chapter 2

The ‘Heresy’ Controversy of the 1640s

To the *People*: Dearly beloved brethren, [...] I beseech you, take notice of what a spreading, what a destroying nature heresies are, and keep your soules with all diligence, lest *by any man, by any means* you be deceived. You are fallen into dangerous times, into times of great temptation.

James Cranford, *Hæreseo-machia*.¹

There are some irrational bigots who, by a perversion of justice, condemn anything they consider inconsistent with conventional beliefs and give it an invidious title — “heretic” or “heresy” — without consulting the evidence of the Bible upon the point. To their way of thinking, by branding anyone out of hand with this hateful name, they silence him with one word and need take no further trouble. They imagine that they have struck their opponent to the ground, as with a single blow, by the impact of the name heretic alone.

John Milton, *De Doctrina Christiana*²

1. Introduction

One Saturday morning in January 1648 in Oxford, Henry Hammond, eventually a ‘father of the Restoration Church,’³ saw “a book,” that had newly arrived from London. In it he found *A Practical Catechisme*, the title he authored, listed among other “errours, heresies and blasphemies of these times.”⁴ The book that insulted this divine, once a chaplain to Charles I, was *A Testimony to the Trueth of Jesus Christ*, drawn up and signed the previous December by 58 ministers resident in London, including thirteen members of the Westminster Assembly of Divines.⁵ It was a catalogue of religious errors collected out of some thirty books which were in circulation at that time. Among the books

¹ James Cranford, *Hæreseo-machia: or, the mischiefe which heresies doe, and the means to prevent it* (London, 1646), pp. 35-36.

² D. M. Wolfe (ed.), *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, vol. 6 (New Haven), translated by John Carey, p. 123.

³ Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England 1640-1660* (New Haven and London, 1994), p. 42. See also Daniel Neal, *The History of the Puritans*, vol. 3, (London, 1822), p. 392.

⁴ Henry Hammond, *A Brief Vindication of Three Passages in the Practical Catechisme, from the Censures affixt on them by the Ministers of London, in a Book entitled, A Testimony to the Truth of Jesus Christ etc.* (London, 1648), pp. 1.

⁵ *A Testimony to the Trueth of Jesus Christ, and to the Solemn League and Covenant; as also against the errours, heresies and blasphemies of these times, and the Toleration of them*

condemned were works of the London Independent minister, John Goodwin, the radical Army chaplain, John Saltmarsh, the Baptist Thomas Webb, and John Milton, together with numerous anonymous tracts alleged to contain equally dangerous religious views. Warning against “the spreading *Heresies*; the cursed *Blasphemies*; the generall *loosenesse and prophanenesse* of our times,”⁶ *A Testimony* addressed puritan ministers throughout England calling for solidarity and a continual fight for the further reformation of the Church of England. Hammond’s *Practical Catechisme* was included because of three theological errors — on universal redemption, the justification of believers and on swearing of oaths. But Hammond had not intended his question-and-answer style catechism as a polemical or controversial work. The *Practical Catechism* was, he maintained, a straightforward work of piety, introducing readers to basic theological points and to moral teaching. It was indeed to become a successful book, with twelve editions by 1683.⁷ At no point did he expect that his writing would “come under the title of an *infamous pernicious error, a spawn of the old accursed heresies, &c.*”⁸ Even more annoyingly, among the subscribers of *A Testimony* Hammond found John Downam, who had licensed the publication of *Practical Catechisme*.⁹ Soon Hammond published a defence of his work, *A Brief Vindication of Three Passages in the Practical Catechisme*, inviting a “fair Discourse, or any other Christian way, to debate the truth of our pretensions,” though none of the subscribers of *A Testimony* accepted the challenge. “I beseech God,” Hammond concluded, “to forgive them which have brought this unnecessary trouble upon the Reader.”¹⁰

This kind of trouble was not uncommon in England in the mid seventeenth century. By the later 1640s, ‘heresy’ had become an object of intense attention. Anyone who wrote on religion could potentially be dragged into a controversy over suspected heresy. The question was not merely academic. Paul Best, whose *Mysteries Discovered* was listed along with Hammond’s book in *Testimony*, had been imprisoned for his Unitarianism, and in March 1646

(London, 1647); William Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution* (New York, 1963), p. 343.

⁶ *Testimony*, p. 2.

⁷ See Ian Green, *The Christian’s ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c.1530-1740* (Oxford, 1996), chs. 6-12, *passim*.

⁸ Hammond, *Brief Vindication*, p. 8.

⁹ *ibid.*, p. 10.

¹⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 10, 9.

parliament voted that he be hanged.¹¹ A vast number of books and pamphlets condemned heretical opinions circulating in London and elsewhere, while ministers delivered sermons in front of the members of parliament interpreting biblical warnings against heretical thieves and false prophets. “England within this four yeers is become the sinke and lake of *Hydra* for all errors and sects,” wrote Presbyterian divines in the county of Cheshire in 1647 in reply to *A Testimony*. Ministers in Lancaster echoed this fear, writing that they “cannot but tremble and be amazed” about the “blasphemies, execrable and horrid doctrines” roaming everywhere.¹² The controversy that the fear of heresies brought uniquely marked the character of the English Revolution. But how did the term and the concept ‘heresy’ come to matter this much?

“England had a tradition of heresy and nonconformity,” wrote B. Reay in his Introduction to *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*.¹³ The Separatists, the Brownists, and the Anabaptists — those religious sects which troubled heresiographers like Ephraim Pagitt and Thomas Edwards in the 1640s were by no means the first ones to trouble the English Church. Christopher Hill suggested that links could be established between the fifteenth-, sixteenth- and seventeenth-century religious sects, both in their ideas and their geographical distribution. Doctrines such as anti-Trinitarianism, popular Arminianism, biblical scepticism, as well as unorthodox practices like the refusal to pay tithes and lay preaching were familiar features of English heretics throughout these three centuries. There was continuity, claimed Hill, between the Lollards and the Elizabethan Familists, the Anabaptists, the Quakers and the Muggletonians. Some of Milton’s radical ideas could be seen foretold by Wycliffe, while Elizabethan Familist thoughts would be heard being repeated in Ranter writings.¹⁴ To call seventeenth-century sectaries, and the problems they posed to the church and society ‘novel’ may therefore be an exaggeration.

¹¹ Richard L. Greaves and Robert Zaller (eds.), *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century* (1982-84); *DNB*, s.n. Best was released before the Blasphemy Act providing capital punishment for heresy was passed in May 1648.

¹² *An Attestation to the Testimony of Our Reverend Brethren of the Province of London, to the Trueth of Jesus Christ, and to our Solemn League and Covenant: As also, Against the Errours, Heresies, and Blasphemies of these Times, and the Toleration of them* (London, 1647), p. 19; *The Harmonious Consent of the Ministers of the Province within the County Palatine of Lancaster, with their Reverend Brethren the Ministers of the Province of London* (London, 1648), p. 7.

¹³ B. Reay, ‘Radicalism and Religion in the English Revolution: an Introduction’, in J. F. McGregor and B. Reay (eds.), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984), p. 11.

¹⁴ Christopher Hill, ‘From Lollards to Levellers’, in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill, Volume Two: Religion and Politics in 17th Century England* (Brighton, 1986, first published in 1978), pp. 89-116.

But the recurrence of heretical ideas does not necessarily indicate a continuity in the way in which these potentially dangerous opinions were scrutinized and problematised. We may be able to trace the precursors of seventeenth-century religious radicals in the previous centuries, but the controversy over heresies in which men like Henry Hammond became entangled was characteristic to the mid-seventeenth century. The problem of 'heresies' in Protestant England was never before openly and intensely discussed as it was in the 1640s. This chapter starts from investigating continuities and discontinuities in the concern about 'heresy' (and 'heretics') in England from the late sixteenth century to the time of the English Civil War. It inquires what strands of religious literature affected seventeenth-century heresiographies and shows how the Civil War debates on heresies were a unique phenomenon.

2. 'Heresy' concern in England before the Civil War

For sixteenth-century English men of religion, the term 'heresy' was primarily placed in the context of Protestant-Catholic conflict. It was therefore not usually a synonym of the word 'sect', as it was more generally later in the seventeenth-century. The Reformation and the Counter-Reformation on the continent brought forth intricate wars of opinions between Catholic and the Reformed, and among different groups of Reformed confessions. Historians have noted that the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries saw the greatest anxiety about heresy in both Catholic and Protestant nations.¹⁵ And the term 'heresy' was a polemical weapon from the earliest days of the European Reformation. Luther was rapidly labelled an heretic, and in the early 1520s 'Lutheran' was a synonym for heretic.¹⁶ In England, Henry VIII penned a treatise in 1521 against "Martin Luther the heresiarch."¹⁷ John Fisher, bishop of Rochester, showed the same enthusiasm in attacking Lutheran heresy, but was later by King Henry executed in the Tower, two weeks before Thomas More in 1535. Fisher's work had a revival during the reign of Queen Mary, under whom Protestants once

¹⁵ Jean Delumeau, *La peur en Occident, XIVe-XVIIIe siècles : une cité assiégée* (Paris, 1978), ch. 7.

¹⁶ Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Oxford & Malden, Mass., 1996), pp. 78, 175.

¹⁷ Henry VIII, *Libello huic regio haec insunt* (1521); *Assertio septem sacramentorum adversus Martinum Lutherum* (1521); *A proclamation concerninge heresie* (London, 1535).

again officially became heretics.¹⁸ Under Elizabeth, by contrast, John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (1563) constructed an image of Reformers as true Christians who were 'falsely' branded heretics. But Foxe's sympathetic, indeed hagiographical portrayal of the Marian victims did not indicate sympathy with 'heresy' itself, and the religious polemics of theologians, both Romanists and conformists, continued to denounce what they saw as heretical.

For example, the publication of the first Roman Catholic version of the English Bible (the Douai-Rheims Bible), translated by theologians in the English Roman Catholic college in France in 1581, fuelled a long controversy that continued into the early seventeenth century. English Protestants tried to demonstrate how 'heresy' could creep into the business of Bible translation, by reprinting the texts of the Rheims and the Bishops' Bibles in parallel columns with annotations. On the other hand, Gregory Martin, the chief translator of the Douai-Rheims Bible, replied that it was the "Heretikes of our daies, specially the English Sectaries" who corrupted Scripture. From the Protestant side Thomas Cartwright entered the debate in 1618 to show the "manifest impieties, heresies, idolatries, superstitions, prophanesse, treasons, slanders, absurdities, falsehoods and other evils" of the Rheims version.¹⁹

Through the sixteenth and the seventeenth century, it was a common idea that modern heretical ideas and opinions were recurrences of ancient heresies. Both Protestant and Roman Catholic polemicists claimed that their opponents' tenets marked the rebirth of old heresies, and thus were nothing to be surprised by, let alone impressed with. This paralleled the late sixteenth-century controversy about the succession of the true Christian (Catholic) church. Just as both Romanists and English conformists insisted that their own church was the legitimate inheritor of the orthodox apostolic church of Christ, they saw the true succession of 'authentic' heresies in their enemies. Therefore it was no contradiction to the Somerset controversialist Oliver Ormerod when he wrote in

¹⁸ John Fisher, *A sermon had at Paulis A sermon had at Paulis* (1525), which reappeared as *A sermon very notable, fructeful, and godlie, made at Paules Crosse* (1554, 1556).

¹⁹ Gregory Martin, *A discoverie of the manifold corruptions of the Holy Scriptures by the Heretikes of our daies* (Rheims, 1582); William Rainolds, *A refutation of sundry reprehensions, cauils, and false sleightes* (1583); William Whitaker, *Ad Nicolai Sanderi demonstrationes quadraginta* (1583); *An answer to a certeine booke* (1585 and 1590); *The text of the New Testament of Iesus Christ, translated out of the vulgar Latine by the papists of the traiterous seminarie at Rhemes* (1589, 1601 and 1617); Thomas Cartwright, *A confutation of the Rhemists translation* (1618).

1606 that there was “scarse any heresie which the auncient Church knew, and ... which the Romish Church hath not raked vp againe.”²⁰

Right up to the dawn of the English Civil War, anti-Catholic polemic was the major arena in which the idea of ‘heresy’ was employed. When English writers sought to highlight the legitimacy of the Church of England, the term, ‘heresy’, like other words such as ‘idolatry’, ‘superstition’, ‘profaneness’, ‘pride’ or ‘hypocrisy’, was applied almost exclusively to denounce the Church of Rome.²¹ In 1624 *The Birth of Heresies* still discussed the heresies and idolatries of the papists.²² On the other hand, it should also be noted that Catholic writings about heresy, not only the classic works of Augustine and other church fathers, but also contemporary Jesuit writings, greatly influenced English thought on this subject. While the early Stuart epigrammatist and a staunch Protestant, John Owen, might have regarded it as his honour to warrant an entry in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, the Italian Cardinal Robert Bellarmine’s *Disputationes de controversiis Christianae fidei adversus huius temporis haereticos* (3 vols, 1586-93) was widely and seriously read by English Protestant scholars, even by the Independent, Thomas Goodwin.²³

Were sectaries ‘heretics’?

So what about Protestant religious ‘sects’ in England before the 1640s? If popery was ‘heresy’, was being sectarian not heretical? When John Meredith, the sub-dean of Chichester, wrote *The Judge of Heresies* in the 1620s, to complain that the “Truth of Christian Faith... [was] so depraved ... by sundry sorts of *Hæreticks*, so dissembled by *Newters*, so derided by Atheists, so disturbed by *Schismaticks*,” his tone anticipated the despair shared by later puritan writers in the mid seventeenth century.²⁴ According to Meredith, England was in exactly the same state as that described by St. Hilary of Poitiers in the fourth century, which he quoted:

²⁰ Oliver Ormerod, *The picture of a papist: or, A relation of the damnable heresies* (1606). See also Calvinist John Barthlet’s *The pedegrewe of heretiques* (London, 1566), and Catholic Oliver Almond’s *The vncasing of heresie, or, The anatomie of protestancie* (1623).

²¹ J. W. Martin, *Religious Radicals in Tudor England* (London & Ronceverte, 1989), p. 217.

²² *The originall of idolatries: or the birth of heresies* (1624, reprinted in 1630).

²³ See for example, a treatise by Presbyterian ministers in Cheshire, *An Attestation to the Testimony of Our Reverend Brethren of the Province of London* (London, 1648), pp. 2, 3; John C. Miller (ed.), *The works of Thomas Goodwin*, vol. X (Edinburgh, etc., 1865), p. 252.

²⁴ John Meredith, *Judge of Heresies* (London, 1624). Meredith left another work, *The Sinne of Blasphemie against the Holy Ghost, Scholastically examined* (London, 1622).

In these dayes, there are as many Religions, as wils of men, as many Doctrines as there be maners in sundry people, as many causes of blasphemy sprout up, as there by Vices; when religions are so written to be, or are so understood; and seeing there is one God, one Lord, one Baptisme, so there should be one Faith only, we are departed fro[m] that faith, which is the only Faith, & while more faiths are made, we are come to this passe, that there is no Faith.²⁵

Nowadays, Meredith wrote, such misery was caused by the “Cunning Polititians of this Age” and the “vaine, unconstant, light, Professors of the Christian Faith,” who brought division and confusion to religion. It was completely misguided to think that in a Christian society each man could take whatever position he would think pleasing to God, “so that every such man shall be ... saved in his own Law, or Sect.”²⁶ It was negligence in *Sicut dicit Scriptura* (‘just as the scripture tells’), and was a sure path leading only to atheism. Meredith’s allegations, like his reliance upon the works of early church fathers such as Augustine and Ambrose, would look familiar to historians accustomed to the mid-seventeenth-century anti-sectarian literature. However, there was one definite and important contrast between pre-Civil War writings on ‘heresy’ like Meredith’s and the heresiographies of the 1640s. This difference lay in their use of the term ‘heresy’ in association with a variety of religious sects. Meredith’s list condemned “Atheysts, Hypocrites, Epicures, Heretickes, Pagans, Idolatrers, Libertines,” as well as “Turkes, Jews, [and] Pagans.” This is *not* the taxonomy of religious sects used during the Civil War. In fact, Meredith did not mention the categories of religious sect that were repeatedly attacked for ‘heresy’ during the Revolution, such as ‘Anabaptists’, ‘Separatists’, ‘Familists’, ‘Adamites’ or ‘Antinomians’, despite the fact these sects were already notorious in his time. For Meredith and other sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century theologians, debating about ‘heresy’ did not mean discussing particular species of religious sect, or trying to see how many different heresies they could count. ‘Heresy’ was, like ‘idolatry’ or ‘profaneness’, a *state*, not a *kind*.

This change in the nature of the idea of ‘heresy’ before and after the outbreak of the Civil War can be seen clearly in the changing use of the word, ‘heresiarch’. Descriptions of the Pope as the heresiarch continued for nearly a century from the beginning of the Reformation, but it seems to have suddenly halted upon the outbreak of the Civil War. This was because ‘heresy’ no longer

²⁵ Meredith, *Judge of Heresies*, Sig. B[1]r. The quote may be from St. Hilary’s *De Trinitate* (On the Trinity), Book XI, though I was not able to spot the exact phrase.

²⁶ *ibid.*, Sigs. B[1]r-v.

represented ‘popery’, although the pope remained *an* heretic. The idea of the ‘heresiarch’, a single figure taking control of a hierarchical *state* called ‘heresy’, ceased to work. Although the word ‘heresiarch’ continued to be used to emphasize how damnable certain sectarian persons were, in a discursive field where different religious tenets were individually *heresies* — whether they were Anabaptism (refusing to baptise infants), Millenarianism (expecting the end of the world), Anti-Sabbatarianism (playing sports on Sundays) or Adamism (supposed nudism) — there was no point in trying to determine the heresiarch. And in this respect it is very interesting that it was only in the second edition of his *Heresiography* (1645) that Ephraim Pagitt thought fit to *add* the ‘papists’ to his catalogue of sects and heresies. As we will examine in detail in the chapter 4, for Pagitt in the 1630s the Roman Catholic Church still meant the ‘false orthodoxy’, the heretical church that disguised itself as, and yet had strayed from, the true Christian church. But Pagitt and his *Heresiography* transformed what it meant to be ‘heretical’, from being *false* to being *numerous* and *countable*. In Protestant England, it was only from the 1640s that ‘heresy’ became something one could make a catalogue of.

Still, it would be misleading to state that before 1641 Roman Catholicism was seen as the only Christian ‘heresy’. It was rather that the term, ‘heresy’, was understood and used within the binary context of orthodox-heterodox relations; ‘heresy’ as an idea functioned as way of talking about the relation between the true Christian church and the false one. The diversity of religious sects did not fit this way of categorizing religion in England until they became crucially problematic during the Civil War. In fact since the sixteenth-century there had always been various different kinds of religious sects in England that received harsh attacks from conservative writers. These were the Anabaptists, and the Family of Love, the Brownists, and even (in the eyes of some commentators) the ‘Puritans’. Sometimes they were portrayed as heretics, or as conveying or spreading heresy. But, as we shall see, to write about them under the name of ‘heresy’ was rather exceptional before the 1640s.

Aside from anti-Catholic writings, the form of religious polemic that most influenced seventeenth-century heresiographies was the anti-Anabaptist literature of the continental Reformation. Luther and Melancton wrote against the ‘Anabaptists’, though they were mostly concerned about Thomas Müntzer and the peasants revolt, and did not necessarily have a good understanding of Anabaptism as a religious sect. Indeed modern historians do not see Müntzer as an Anabaptist at all. Zwingli, whose pupils later became the leaders of the Swiss Anabaptists, wrote copiously against them in the 1520s. But the most

influential works upon English puritans came from the Calvinist camp, after the disastrous fall of the Anabaptist commune of Münster in Germany in 1535. Calvin, outraged by the influence of the 'radical Reformation', wrote against what he termed 'psychopannychists' in 1542. He did not, however, have a clear idea of the identity of Anabaptism and somehow mixed them with conventional mystics.²⁷ It was Henry Bullinger who provided the authoritative view of the Anabaptists in the Reformed circle. His Latin work *Adversus Anabaptistus* was widely read and translated in Europe. As one of the most respected authors for the Edwardian and Elizabethan Reformers in England, Bullinger had several of his anti-Anabaptist works translated into English.²⁸ He also divided Anabaptists into eleven sub-categories, a categorization which would, some 80 years later, inform Pagitt's *Heresiography* (see chapter 4). Despite these continental influences, it was in the 1640s that the anti-Anabaptist literature truly flourished in England.

An exceptional case in which the term 'heresy' was eagerly and effectively used in sixteenth-century religious controversy was the campaign against the Elizabethan underground sect, the Family of Love. This campaign was led by zealous puritans and lasted from the late 1570s to the early 1580s. One of them, John Knewstubs, was, according to Christopher Marsh, a "hero of the 'militant tendency'" of Elizabethan puritanism.²⁹ His hatred of the Familists and their founder Henry Niclaes (commonly known as "H. N." by the contemporaries), and perhaps his need to appeal more widely for authority for the puritan initiative in church politics, led Knewstubs to publish his *Confutation of monstrous and horrible heresies* in 1579.³⁰ The "Ca[n]ker of Poperie" was not the

²⁷ George Huntston Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia, 1962), pp. 580-592; Franklin Hamlin Littell, *The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism, a study of the Anabaptist view of the Church* (New York, London, 1964), p. 147.

²⁸ *An holosome antidotus or counter-poysen, agaynst the pestylent heresye and secte of the Anabaptistes* (London, 1548), *A moste sure and strong defence of the baptisme of children, against ye Anabaptystes* (Worcester, 1551); *A most necessary and frutefull dialogue between ye Seditious Libertin or Rebel Anabaptist, and the True Obedient Christian* (Worcester, 1551). The University of Cambridge received subscription of 3 copies of *Adversus* in 1580s. E. S. Leedham-Green (ed.), *Books in Cambridge Inventories*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, 1986). p. 160.

²⁹ Christopher Marsh, *The Family of Love in English Society, 1550-1630* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 127; Marsh, 'Piety and persuasion in Elizabethan England: the Church of England meets the Family of Love', in Nicholas Tyacke (ed), *England's Long Reformation 1500-1800* (London, 1998), p. 148. Open condemnation of the Familists as heretics in print appeared earlier in John Rogers' work, *The displaying of an horrible secte of grosse and wicked heretiques, naming themselues the Familie of Loue* (London, 1578).

³⁰ Puritan need of attacking and taking distance from the Familists could also be explained in terms of potential accusation which puritans too might receive from anti-Calvinists, such like Richard Bancroft. See Bancroft's comparison of 'H. N.' and the 'Precisians', in Bancroft, *Certain slaunderous speeches against the present Estate of the*

only enemy of the English Church, Knewstubs argued. The godly must fight against the “unlovely companie of [...] the Familie of Love,” the “pestilentest heresie that ever was in that land, [...] a masse or packe of Poperie, Arianisme, Anabaptisme, and Libertisme.”³¹ The book was a 190 page word-by-word confutation of H. N.’s writings. In the same year, another anti-Familist work *A confutation of certaine articles delivered unto the Familie of Love* was written by William Wilkinson, a friend of Knewstubs. Wilkinson’s perspective on the subject was more historical than that of Knewstubs; he compared Familist doctrines with other known heresies, both old and new. Similarities were found with some 30 kinds of heresies. The Familists, for instance, were reported to believe that few should understand the mystery of true Christian faith, just as old ‘Basilidians’ did, while their understanding of paradise as an allegory was what the ancient heresies of ‘Origianistes’ and ‘Hierarchitæ’ were about.³² Wilkinson also showed familiarity with Zwingli’s, Calvin’s and Bullinger’s works on the Anabaptists.³³

Despite these works the anti-Familist campaign of the late 1570s never become a dominant concern in English political and religious culture, and Knewstubs and his colleagues never formed a dominant voice. A parliamentary bill “for Punishment of the Hereticks called the Family of Love” was proposed and discussed between January and March of 1581, lobbied for by a group of zealous puritans including Knewstubs. Knewstubs himself strongly supported capital punishment for Familist heretics, and argued that the hands of a godly “shall be first upon them, to put them to death” notwithstanding they were his “friend, husband, or brother.”³⁴ The campaign which once involved the privy council, however, seemed to cease by 1581, and the bill was never carried to legislation.³⁵ Eventually, the ‘Familists’ survived as one of stock varieties of religious sects which enlivened seventeenth-century heresiographies.³⁶ By the time Thomas Middleton’s comedy *The Family of Love* appeared in 1603-4, the

Church of Englande published to the people by the Precisians, in Albert Peel (ed.), *Tracts ascribed to Richard Bancroft* (Cambridge, 1953), p. 101.

³¹ John Knewstubs, *A confutation of monstrous and horrible heresies, taught by H.N. and embraced of a number, who call themseves the Familie of Love* (London, 1579), ‘To the Reader’, Sigs. **[1]r-v, **3v.

³² William Wilkinson, *A confutation of certaine articles delivered unto the Familie of Love, with the exposition of Theophilus, a supposed Elder in the sayd Familie upon the same Articles* (London, 1579), pp. 341-351.

³³ Wilkinson, *confutation of certaine articles*, pp. 74-79.

³⁴ Knewstubs, *Confutation*, ‘to the Reader’, Sigs. *[7]v-*[8]r.

³⁵ Marsh, *Family of Love*, pp. 130-133.

³⁶ Ephraim Pagitt, *Heresiography: or a description of the Hereticks and Sectaries of these latter times* (1645), p. 82.

existence of this sect was already questionable, and the stories of licentious Familists had become a popular cliché and the sect was no longer the target of serious theological confutation.³⁷

'Heresy' was used as a term with which to stigmatize any opposing religious groups not only by puritans arguing against the Romanists and the Familists, but also by anti-Calvinists who tried to suppress the early English puritan movement. Particularly problematic were the 'Brownists', sometimes called 'Separatists'. While sharing a common background with other Reformists, those 'hasty Puritans', in B. R. White's words, argued that conscientious believers should not yield to the corrupt state church, and claimed the right to form their own free congregations, on the grounds that parochial boundaries were void.³⁸ The leaders of these early separatists came from the puritan tradition, and were viewed by the English Calvinists more as a source of embarrassment and disgrace than as dangerous heretics.³⁹ Yet this gave the anti-puritan wing a great opportunity, and Richard Bancroft, Bishop of London (1597-1604) then Archbishop of Canterbury (1604-10), did not hesitate to lump the 'Precisians' with the 'Brownists', calling them altogether "hereticks". Bancroft, whom the Scottish Presbyterian Andrew Melville called "the capital enemy of all the Reformed Churches in Europe,"⁴⁰ claimed that the Brownist errors were Calvinism taken into extremes, and in substance were repetitions of ancient heresies which the orthodox Church had long known. For Bancroft, anyone who grumbled at the prayer book came "out of the asses of these false prophets" in the apostles' time.⁴¹

The Brownists/Separatists caused a considerable headache to the puritans who still clung to the vision of a thorough reformation of the Church of England. But except in the writings of men like Bancroft, the separatist issue

³⁷ Marsh, *Family of Love*, pp. 205-213. See also Patrick Collinson, 'Ben Jonson's *Bartholomew Fair*: The Theatre Constructs Puritanism', in David L. Smith, Richard Strier and David Bevington (eds.), *The Theatrical City* (Cambridge, 1995), pp. 157-169. For Familist writings published during the Interregnum, see Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion 1640-1660* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 144-184.

³⁸ B. R. White, *The English Separatist Tradition: From the Marian Martyrs to the Pilgrim Fathers* (Oxford, 1971), p. xii; Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters I*, vol.1 (Oxford, 1978), pp. 26-40; Murray Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 2-3.

³⁹ See Alexandra Walsham, 'Frantick Hacket': prophecy, sorcery, insanity, and the Elizabethan Puritan movement', *Historical Journal*, 41 (1998), pp. 27-66.

⁴⁰ Quoted from Albert Peel (ed.), *Tracts ascribed to Richard Bancroft* (Cambridge, 1953), p. x.

⁴¹ Richard Bancroft, *The most principall and chiefe heresies in R. Brownes booke*, in Albert Peel (ed.), *Tracts ascribed to Richard Bancroft* (Cambridge, 1953), pp. 2-7; Bancroft, *A Sermon Preached at Paules Crosse* (London, 1588), pp. 2-3.

was never dealt with in the style of heresy-hunting. As in the case of the 'Familists', it was only in the seventeenth century that the Brownists began to be represented as one variety of 'heresies' in England. Thus in 1645 Ephraim Pagitt used the name of each of the sixteenth century separatist leaders Henry Barrow (?-1593), Francis Johnson (1562-1618?) and Henry Ainsworth (1571-1622) to designate separate groups — namely, Barrowists, Johnsonians and Ainsworthians.⁴² When historians like A. C. Carter described the early English separatists as 'heretics', their view was largely and anachronistically shaped by seventeenth-century heresiographers who discussed the religious sects in the context of the general subject 'heresies'.⁴³

Before the 1640s therefore, 'heresy' was a relatively minor concern. The confutation of 'heresy' alone was not a fertile subject for zealous writers. Firstly, for most English religious polemicists the primary concern was always the threat of the Roman Catholicism. 'Heresy' was much more a word used to describe this threat, than a subject to be examined on its own. Secondly Protestant sects were, however strongly opposed and occasionally labelled as 'heretics', always on the margins of debate. Controversial literature against the Anabaptists, the Familists or the Brownists, was intermittent, lacked coherence and did not represent 'heresy' as a general issue. Calvinists were generally far more occupied with political negotiations within the established Church for the settlement of the reformed religion, and keeping close connections with reformed churches abroad, than with studying 'heresies'. Indeed Patrick Collinson has suggested that heresy-hunting was not a primary concern for Elizabethan puritans. In 1570 Nicolas Des Gallars, an ambassador of Calvin and Beza in London, was dedicating his edition of Irenaeus, the famous second-century heresiography to Edmand Grindal, bishop of London at that time. Des Gallars told that Grindal was to be the one comparable to Irenaeus, who would keep out the Anabaptists from England.⁴⁴ However, that English Reformers were more or less content to import copies of ancient heresiographies signifies that they felt no imminent danger of 'heresies'.

⁴² Pagitt, *Heresiography*, pp. 62-63.

⁴³ Alice Clare Carter, *The English Reformed Church in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century* (Amsterdam, 1964).

⁴⁴ Patrick Collinson, 'England and International Calvinism, 1558-1640', in Menna Prestwich (ed.), *International Calvinism 1541-1715* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 201-202.

3. The 'heresy' controversy in the mid-1640s

It was the Civil War that rendered the term and the concept of 'heresy' a particular object of concern. For those who supported the parliamentary cause, the prospect of religion in England looked highly unstable. Puritans and the Royalists alike saw that putting their church back into order was urgently required, but reaching any agreement about how this was to be done was extremely difficult. Hope for a further and complete Reformation of the Church of England was the most important reason that many puritans supported the parliament, but the endless discussion on the new church government at the newly convened Westminster Assembly of Divines was painfully frustrating.

But the primary cause of the rise of 'heresy' concern was religious leaders' increasing fear of losing control over a situation which was being filled with so many different religious opinions. Underground meetings and exiled congregations of Separatists were now returning to the surface of London society. The practise of adult baptism as well as refusal of child baptism had become common in some of those groups, suggesting a full-scale invasion of the notorious continental sect of Anabaptists. The lay impulse for religious discussion — which was admittedly inspired by the culture of the godly — led to the unprecedented increase of mechanic preachers, inspiring more laymen, and lay women, to put their spiritual gifts into practice. By 1646 religious opinions in the parliamentary Army had become scandalously radicalised. Some soldiers and sectarians questioned the authority of ordained ministers, the legitimacy of tithes, the power of sacraments and the authenticity of the scriptures. Such voices never made up a single unified body of dissent, as they came from various backgrounds, ranging from educated clerics to illiterate soldiers. But they all threatened the notion of the Church of England as a single and compulsory state church. In this situation a number of other serious issues were raised, such as the liberty of conscience and toleration of different religious tenets. All of these developments alarmed those who stood in charge of the settlement of the Church and the state during the Revolution. It was this churchly instability and the rise of religious sectarianism that generated the lively discussion about 'heresy' in mid-seventeenth century England.

'Heresy' in early English book titles

In order to see how 'heresy' became an object of anxiety, and how the process interrelated with the issue of religious sectarianism, we shall examine the number of printed publications about this subject. The yearly sum of titles

containing the term 'heresy' can be quickly obtained from the computer catalogues of the British Library (BL) and the English Short Title Catalogue (ESTC) CD-ROM. Clearly this is too crude a measure to give a complete picture of the 'heresy' controversy. The search is based only on the appearance of words in the titles of the entries; therefore publications that may be *about* 'heresy' but not use the term in their titles are not counted here. Also it must be pointed out that the publication of a large numbers of books on certain subjects is not necessarily equivalent to 'public interest,' and can by no means be equated with 'public opinion.' The BL catalogue does not include all published items, and the dates recorded in the catalogues do not always correspond with the year in which the books were actually written or published. Nevertheless, despite these difficulties, an combined analysis of the BL catalogue and the new ESTC provides us with a convenient initial overview of the degree of concern about the sectarian problem.⁴⁵

If one searches the BL catalogue by entering variants of the title keywords 'heresy' and 'heretic', and study the yearly number of publications with those words, an interesting pattern emerges. As the preceding sections would lead us to expect, there were in fact few books on 'heresy' published until 1645. In 1646 there was a dramatic increase in number with 39 titles, followed by 9 titles in 1647 and 14 in 1648 [see figure 1]. This rise is particularly significant because the total number of books entering the catalogue in 1646 was less than the early years of the Civil War, indeed half of the number in 1642.⁴⁶ According to the BL catalogue, heresy/heretic titles constituted 2.13% of the all titles published in 1646. The same figure can be obtained by an even more careful searching of the ESTC, covering more spelling variations and Latin synonyms while strictly eliminating duplications and 'associated titles'. Title keyword search in ESTC reveals that years between 1646 and 1648 saw an extraordinary number of publications with 'heresy' or 'heretic' in their titles [see figure 2]. While the number of titles with these words in years before 1645 remained less than 6

⁴⁵ The British Library catalogue search was conducted between September and October 1996, using the online catalogue (not the internet version OPAC97). For ESTC, *English Short Title Catalogue 1473-1800 on CD-ROM*, version 1.08 (London, 1998) was used, between October and November 1999. In BL catalogue search, Latin and other non-English works are excluded from the figure presented here. ESTC search result however, does include Latin titles. In both searches, maximum attention was paid to eliminate duplication of the same title in the result. However the different versions of the same title that are given unique entry numbers or shelfmarks in the catalogue are all represented. Titles that do not actually contain the keywords entered but that are replies to, or associated with certain other titles with those keywords, can appear in the result. However this is much less frequent with ESTC than BL catalogue.

⁴⁶ The number of entries in the catalogue was obtained by entering the 'publication date' by year.

every year, suddenly in 1646 we see 20 such publications, followed by 17 titles in 1647, and 20 titles again in 1648.

Does this concentration of publications on 'heresies' between 1646 and 1648 necessarily represent an actual increase of 'heretics'? Not necessarily. Religious sects had been a target of attacks right from the beginning of the Civil War. As early as in 1641, an anonymous pamphleteer discussed a *Curb for Sectaries and bold Prophecies*, while another warned that there were "no lesse then 29 sects" creeping in London. In 1642 another tract *Religions Lotterie* listed 16 names of sects.⁴⁷

Moreover, there were a few other terms used to represent the religious sects in the early year of the Civil War, before the term 'heresy' became common in the mid-1640s. For example, the 'Brownists' were often condemned at the beginning of the conflict. According to the BL catalogue, of 49 publications with title word 'Brownists' which appeared between 1640 and 1659, 36 titles were concentrated in 1641 and 1642.⁴⁸ Since the sixteenth century, 'Brownists' had been one of the general terms used to describe unlawful private congregations of any kind. As the practices of dissenting congregations became more public in the early 1640s, 'Brownist' was among the first terms upon which conservative churchmen, both Royalist and puritan, chose to hang their attack. *The Brownist Synagogue*, for instance, was one of the first catalogues of lay preachers practising in London.⁴⁹ For this reason 'Brownists' and 'Separatists' were often treated as the same, though some writers claimed to detect distinctions between the two.⁵⁰ The BL catalogue shows the same kind of increase in publications on 'Separatist(s)' as well as 'Separatism' in 1641 and 1642.⁵¹

After the peak of 'Brownist' literature, 'Anabaptists' became a target. The BL catalogue shows publications with 'Anabaptist(s)' were most concentrated in 1643. Among 117 entries that contained the term in their titles published between 1640 and 1659, most of them appeared between 1641 and 1647, with their peak in 1643 when 35 titles appeared. This lagged slightly behind the peak of 'Brownist' literature, corresponding to the London conservative puritans' campaign against the Anabaptists.⁵² The historic document of the Baptist

⁴⁷ *A Curb for Sectaries and bold Prophecies* (London, 1641); *A Discovery of 29 Sects Here in London* (London, 1641); *Religions Lotterie, or The Churches Amazement* (London, 1642).

⁴⁸ Pamphlets such as *The Brownists faith and beliefe opened* (1641); *The Brownist hæresies confuted* (1641).

⁴⁹ *The Brownist Synagogue or a late Discovery of their Conventicles* (London, 1641).

⁵⁰ John Taylor, *The Anatomy of the Separatists, alias, Brownists, the fractious Bretheren in these Time* (London, 1642).

⁵¹ 13 such titles appeared.

⁵² Tolmie, *Triumph of the Saints*, p. 61.

church, *The Confession of Faith of those Churches which are commonly (though falsely) called Anabaptist* (1644) was issued in the midst of this.⁵³ Other key terms in the historiography of dissenting sects also have their own chronology. The BL catalogue shows 8 titles on the 'Familists' appearing between 1644 and 1645, but this genre virtually disappeared after 1650. Satires on the 'Adamites', as well as the 'Familists', seemed particularly popular for their alleged sexual promiscuity, but these publications were often disorganized and not to constitute any consistent genre of texts.⁵⁴ The catalogue also shows a sudden spurt of pamphlets on the 'Ranters' in 1650 and 1651, which eventually ceases by 1656. Even more striking is the dramatic increase of the publications about the Quakers from 1653, which continued to stand out until after the Restoration. More than a thousand titles appeared in the later half of the seventeenth century. 59 titles were published in 1655 and again in 1656, then the second peak came in 1660 with 72 titles.

Simple catalogue surveys of the number of publications on various individual categories of religious sects provide a complex outlook, with each sect having a different heyday of publication. Here we should be reminded that these names of religious sects were ambiguous, and should not be taken as reflecting reality. Trying to impose rigid categories upon the complex whole of religious radicalism in the years of the Revolution would not only prove unprofitable but also run a risk of falling prey to the often arbitrary classification of the contemporary writers.⁵⁵ What is more interesting and important for us, however, is the way that the popularity of terms and categories shifted through time, and how this can be related to the peak of publications on 'heresy' and 'heretics' in the years between 1646 and 1648. While books and pamphlets with 'heresy' in their titles were numerous between 1646 and 1648, there were few publications in the same period centred on particular names of religious sects such as 'Anabaptists', 'Separatists' or 'Brownists'. Each of these individual categories was intensively scrutinized in print at some other time — 1641 for the Brownists, 1643 for the Anabaptists, 1645 for the Familists, 1650 for the Ranters. What brought about this flood of publications about 'heresies', which is evidently distinct from the anti-

⁵³ Daniel Featley, *The Dippers Dipt* (London, 1645), *The Confession of Faith of those Churches which are commonly called Anabaptists* (London, 1644); Toile, op. cit., pp. 55-65.

⁵⁴ See David Cressy, 'The Adamites Exposed: naked radicals in the English Revolution', in Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 251-280.

⁵⁵ See Hill, Christopher, 'History and Denominational History', in Hill, *The Collected Essays*, vol. 2, pp. 3-10.

Anabaptist campaign and the Ranter sensation? What does the difference in patterns of writings about 'Brownists' and about 'heresies' tell us?

The confusing picture becomes clearer by asking *who* wrote about and against those sects. One notable feature of the anti-sectarian literature in the early 1640s was that their authors included a large proportion of Royalist or Episcopalian writers. *A Discovery of 29 Sects* (1641), was compiled by a Royalist who was to be identified with the only righteous group, those called 'Protestant'. It blamed the sect named 'Puritans' and other sects of seemingly Calvinist origin, such as 'Calvinist', 'Brownist', 'Separatist', 'Electrians' (meaning the self-elect), as well as the 'Lutheran', 'Anabaptists', 'Adamites', 'Familists', 'Antinomians' and several other ancient heretics. One the most energetic satirists of the sects before 1645 was the Royalist John Taylor the Water Poet.⁵⁶ Daniel Featley, the author of the influential anti-Anabaptist book *The Dippers Dipt*, was also a Royalist divine, who was once a renowned disputant for the Church of England and a chaplain of King James I. But as the war continued, this group gradually declined, due to the fact that they too became a target of attacks by parliamentarians. 1642 and 1643 saw the climax of the systematic purge of what Parliamentarians called 'Scandalous and malignant' ministers.⁵⁷ Daniel Featley faced the same crisis; in 1643, as he hesitated to take the Solemn League and Covenant, he was charged and branded as a 'Papist', and sequestered from his church living in Acton.⁵⁸ Those who became the dominant voice in anti-sectarian discourse were the Calvinist propagandists.

The Presbyterian anti-sectarian campaign, and the *Gangræna* sensation

The Calvinists in England, linked with the Reformed churches on the continent had showed their eagerness to fight against religious sects since the late sixteenth century. In London, the Dutch Reformed Church in Austin Friars had always been a place where godly ministers, whether English or Dutch, preached against Anabaptists, Brownists or Familists. It was a fortress for John Knewstubs in his campaign against the Family of Love. In his book he quoted

⁵⁶ See Bernard Capp, *The World of John Taylor the Water-Poet 1578-1653* (Oxford, 1994).

⁵⁷ See I. M. Green, 'The persecution of 'scandalous' and 'malignant' parish clergy during the English Civil War', *English Historical Review*, xliv (1979), p. 515- 517. The parishioners of St. Michael Cornhill, one of the neighbouring parishes of Pagitt's, had accused their minister William Brough for Arminianism, ceremonialism and 'malignancy'. A. G. Matthew (ed.), *Walker Revised* (Oxford, 1948), p. 43; Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 267-8.

⁵⁸ Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, p. 77.

passages of confutation of the Familists by Martyn Micronius and M. Nicholas Charinæus, both the ministers of the Dutch Church in London.⁵⁹ By doing so Knewstubs hoped to show that “I am not alone, neither in my opinio[n] of the[m], neither in this necessarie co[n]tention by writing with the[m].”⁶⁰ One of the greatest concerns for the English divine John Paget who was a member of the Amsterdam Classis and the minister of the Reformed English Church in Amsterdam between 1607 and 1637, was to maintain his church’s partnership with the Dutch Reformed Church while not being taken over by the English ‘Brownists’.⁶¹ Later Ephraim Pagitt repeatedly expressed his frustration with the ‘Brownists’ who broke with not only the English Reformed church in Amsterdam but also separated from other Reformed ‘stranger-churches’ in London.⁶² In the second edition of *Heresiography* Pagitt added an extract from the acts of the National Synod of the reformed Churches of France.⁶³

Therefore it is not entirely surprising that heresy-sensitive polemic was dramatically activated when the Kirk of Scotland started to intervene in the parliamentary debates on the new form of the English church. While English parliamentarians included some members sympathetic to the Congregational way, the Scots were unimpressed with the existing English separatists.⁶⁴ From the autumn of 1643, the Scottish commissioners who arrived in London to supervise the process of reformation, tried their best to equate religious sects with what they termed in the Solemn League and Covenant as “popery, prelacy [...], superstition, heresy, schism, profaneness, and whatsoever shall be found to be contrary to sound doctrine and the power of godliness.”⁶⁵ When the Scottish commissioner George Gillespie, a hard-line Presbyterian and the youngest member of the Westminster Assembly, wrote of ‘*the present condition of the Church of England*’ in 1644, the toleration of “all sects and heresies” was among the serious topics.⁶⁶ In the summer of 1646 the message from the Scotland was

⁵⁹ Knewstubs, *A confutation of monstrous and horrible heresies*, pp. 88-89, 90-93. Micronius was the founder of the first London ‘stranger-church’. M. Nicholas Charinæus died in 1563. See Patrick Collinson, ‘England and International Calvinism, 1558-1640’, p. 198.

⁶⁰ Knewstubs, *Confutation*, Sig. *[7]v.

⁶¹ Carter, *English Reformed Church in Amsterdam*, chs. 4 & 5; Watts, *Dissenters*, I, p. 91.

⁶² Pagitt, *Heresiography*, pp. 40, 46, 50.

⁶³ Pagitt, *Heresiography*, 2nd edn. (London, 1645), p. 195.

⁶⁴ Among the six English parliamentary commissioners who went to Scotland to negotiated the alliance, Sir Henry Vane had been in Massachusetts, and Philip Nye was a pastor in Arnhem. Watts, *Dissenters*, I, p. 92.

⁶⁵ *The Solemn League and Covenant*, from David Cressy and Lori Anne Ferrell (eds.), *Religion and Society in Early Modern England: a sourcebook* (London, 1996), pp. 181-2.

⁶⁶ George Gillespie, *A late dialogue betwixt a civilian and a divine, concerning the present condition of the Church of England* (London, 1644).

clearly stated in their manifesto *The Kirk of Scotlands conclusion*, that extermination of heresies and schisms was the primary agenda.⁶⁷

As the Presbyterians gained more power and influence in both parliament and the Westminster Assembly, Royalist attacks on puritan sects, such as the works of John Taylor, faded away. Instead what emerged was a continuing conflict within parliament and the Westminster Assembly between those who supported the Presbyterian church government desired by the Scots and those who resisted it. These latter voices for a more flexible church policy were, though, never monolithic, beginning to constitute a group called the Independents. The division became significant in the end of 1643 with the publication of *The Apologeticall Narration* written by Thomas Goodwin, Philip Nye, Jeremiah Burroughes, William Bridge and Sidrach Simpson, all of whom were members of the Assembly.⁶⁸ These apologists proclaimed their distance from “the odious name of Brownism” and proposed their position as “a middle way betwixt that which is falsely charged on us, Brownism, and that which is the contention of the times, the authoritative Presbyterial government,” but they were hopelessly unconvincing.⁶⁹ Presbyterian critics dismissed the Apologists’ claim as no different from separatism, and a “certaine way to lose Religion in a crowd of Sects.”⁷⁰ In August 1644 Parliament voted to publicly burn *The Bloudy Tenent of Persecution* written by the Massachusetts Congregationalist, Roger Williams, and ridiculing the English parliament’s inability to step forward according to the Apologists’ suggestion.⁷¹ Tension was rising. Thomas Fuller recollected that the controversy over the claims of the Apologists that involved “many *Pamphlets* written *pro* and *con* thereof.” “The worst is, some of them speak so loud, we can scarce understanding [sic] what they say, so hard is it to collect their judgements, such the violence of their passions.”⁷² These confrontations were responsible for a sequence of heated debates about the nature of ‘heresy’ between 1646 and 1648. Century-old problems of religious

⁶⁷ *The Kirk of Scotlands conclusion in defence of the Presbyteriall government, and discipline: with their intentions towards the King, the Queene, and the royall progeny: as also against heresies and schismes* (London, 1646).

⁶⁸ Tolmie, op. cit., pp.94-96. William A. Shaw, *A History of the English Church during the Civil War and Under the Commonwealth 1640-1660*, vol. 2 (London, 1900), p. 2.

⁶⁹ Watts, *Dissenters*, I, p. 101.

⁷⁰ Alexander Forbes, *An Anatomy of Independency, or, A Brief Commentary, and Moderate Discourse upon The Apologeticall Narration of Mr Thomas Goodwin, and Mr Philip Nye, &c* (London, 1644), p. 52.

⁷¹ Roger Williams, *The Bloudy Tenent, of Persecution, for cause of Conscience, discussed, in A Conference betweene Truth and Peace* (London, 1644); Watts, op. cit., pp. 103-105.

⁷² Thomas Fuller, *The Church-History of Britain; From the Birth of Jesus Christ, untill the year M.DC.XLVIII* (London, 1655), XI, Cent. XVII, section 51 (pp. 212-3).

sects, from the Family of Love to the continental Anabaptism, here culminated in the idea of 'heresy'.

The central figure in this heresy-busting campaign was Robert Baillie, one of the chief commissioners from Scotland. From 1643 to 1646 he repeatedly requested William Spang, his cousin in Edinburgh, to ask Dutch, French and Swiss Calvinists to write in order to encourage English puritans and their parliament. "It were not ill, that in all their letters, they congratulate the abolition of Episcopacie and Popish ceremonies, and exhorted to sett up quickly the government of Christ; that so long an annarchie as has been here, is the mother of Heresies and Schismes, and many more evils."⁷³ They must write, Baillie claimed, against whatever would hinder the establishment of Calvinist church government in England: Erastianism, Anabaptism, 'Millenaries' ("ane error so famous in antiquitie, and so troublesome among us"), and "that democrattick anarchy and independence of particular congregations."⁷⁴ Works concerning such matters were all welcome to be sent to England. "I pray you continue to give me so ample information of matters abroad."⁷⁵ He even allocated each writer to the subject that best suited his purpose: John Forbes would write against Anabaptists, Apollonius would write against Erastus.⁷⁶ He also sent them copies of the treatise he penned in London, *A Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time* (1645).⁷⁷

But above all, it was Thomas Edwards and his monumental three-part book, *Gangræna*, that highlighted the controversy about 'heresy' in the mid-1640s. The appearance of the first part of *Gangræna* in February 1646 marked a significant change in anti-sectarian polemics of the religious Presbyterians.⁷⁸ Right from the beginning of the Civil War, Edwards had been a rigorous critic of the separatists. As early as 1641, he published *Reasons against Independent government of particular congregations*, which provoked one of the earliest vindications from the separatist side: *Justification of the Independent Churches of*

⁷³ Robert Baillie, *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie*, D. Laing (ed.) (Edinburgh, 1841-2), ii, p. 180. Baillie's campaign has been discussed in Valerie Pearl, 'London Puritans and Scotch Fifth Columnists: a Mid-Seventeenth-century Phenomenon', in A. E. J. Hollaender and William Kellaway (eds.), *Studies in London History* (London, 1969), pp. 324-325.

⁷⁴ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, ii, pp. 313, 115.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, ii, p. 115.

⁷⁶ "We are longing for Apollonius against Erastus. It were good to put Spanheim on the Anabaptists..." "Will you not put Forbes to write against the Anabaptists; Spanheim, and Vossius, and Voetius also." *ibid.*, ii, pp. 365, 378.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, ii, p. 327.

⁷⁸ Thomason recorded his acquisition as 16 February. See ch. 3 for Edwards' biography.

Christ by Katherine Chidley, mother of the Leveller Samuel Smith.⁷⁹ After the appearance of the controversial *Apologeticall Narration*, Edwards published *Antapologia* in June 1644, which confirmed his position as one of the most militant Presbyterians in London. This book of over three hundred pages built up a word-by-word confutation of the thirty-one page original. It was received enthusiastically by the Presbyterian ministers in London, but the most pleased was Robert Baillie, who thought the book was “a splendid confutation of all Independent Apologie.” As a result, Edwards was elected by “(a)ll the ministers of London, at least more than a hundred of them” as a weekly lecturer at the Christ Church in Newgate Street. Christ Church, which formerly belonged to the Grey-friars, was a meeting place for MPs, the Lord Mayor, aldermen and common council, and had as its minister William Jenkyn, one of the Presbyterian leaders in London.⁸⁰ There Edwards would “handle these questions, and nothing else”⁸¹ before the all-comers. As Valerie Pearl put, “It was here that Edwards over next two years rehearsed the substance of *Gangraena*, that most virulent, un-restrained, irrational attack on the Independents.”⁸²

However, *Gangraena* did not simply repeat Edwards’ criticism of the Apologists; it marked a new stage in the Presbyterian attack on the Independents. This was a result of the failure of an ‘accommodation policy’ to overcome the dilemma of Presbyterian-Independent conflict. In September 1644 the House of Commons voted to establish a committee to settle the difference in opinions among the divines in the Westminster Assembly.⁸³ The purpose of the committee was to incorporate the Independents within the proposed form of the church government the Presbyterians had aimed at. It also hoped to separate the Independent Apologists from more radical London ‘mechanic preachers’ and the Army radicals, and thus to create a more effective policy against religious sectarianism. As Tolmie points out, the committee underestimated the strength of the alliance between the Independent ministers and unordained

⁷⁹ Tolmie, *Triumph of the Saints*, p. 21; Ivan Roots, ‘Introduction’ for Edwards, *Gangraena*, Roots (ed.) (1977), p.1. Edwards recalled Chidley and Smith in the third part of *Gangraena* as “an old Brownist, and her sonne a young Brownist.” p. 170. See also Hilary Hinds, *God’s Englishwomen: Seventeenth Century Radical Sectarian Writing and Feminist Criticism* (Manchester, 1996).

⁸⁰ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, ii, pp. 190, 202, 215; DNB, s.n.; Tai Liu, *Puritan London: Study of Religion and Society in the City Parishes* (London, etc., 1986). p. 66; Haller, *Liberty and Reformation*, p. 226.

⁸¹ Baillie, *Letters*, ii, p. 215.

⁸² Pearl, ‘London Puritans and Scotch Fifth Columnists’, p. 327.

⁸³ Tolmie, *Triumph of the Saints*, pp. 124-130; Shaw, *History of the English Church*, vol. 2, p. 37.

sectarian preachers in London. The attempt at accommodation never succeeded. Generally the Assembly of Divines was so reluctant to allow it that they persuaded the House of Commons to dissolve the committee in November when they heard the Scots had captured Newcastle, demanding the rapid implementation of the new church government and the suppression of sects.⁸⁴ Parliament convened a new accommodation committee in November 1645, but again the Independents directly demanded toleration of the sects.⁸⁵ By 1646 it became clear that accommodation of the Independents, which could, as Presbyterians hoped, enable the suppression of the 'sects' without disrupting the unity of 'puritan' movement, was impossible.

Furthermore, the period between 1646 and 1647 was crucial for the survival of London Presbyterians both in politics and in pulpits. The victories of the New Model Army over the Royalists had by 1646 reduced Parliamentary dependence on the Scots, and thus diminished immediate necessity of establishing a Presbyterian church government as the Scots had urged. The much delayed establishment of the first Classis took place in London in July 1646, but it was a month after the First Civil War had ended with the surrender of Oxford.⁸⁶ Meanwhile, radical opinions and sectarian enthusiasm in the New Model Army had started to seriously threaten the conservative puritans.⁸⁷ Strong connections between London Independents and army preachers like John Saltmarsh and Hugh Peter made Presbyterian ministers increasingly worried about their opponents. In order to secure their reformation of the church, the religious Presbyterians needed to severely damage the Independents.

The year 1646 therefore saw the opening of fierce attacks on the Independents by Presbyterian polemicists. The new line of attack was to show that the Independents were as schismatic and factional as all the other sectaries.⁸⁸ In *Gangræna* Thomas Edwards exploited this point to its maximum, which was one of the reasons the book became so controversial. In its first part published in February, Edwards wrote:

⁸⁴ Tolmie, *op. cit.*, p. 126; Shaw, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44;

⁸⁵ Tolmie, *op. cit.*, p. 128. Tolmie also suggests that some informal meetings were possibly arranged between moderate Presbyterians and the Independents to discuss the issue by early 1646.

⁸⁶ Watts, *Dissenters*, I, p. 115.

⁸⁷ David Underdown, *Pride's Purge: Politics in the Puritan Revolution* (Oxford, 1971), p. 14; See also Mark A. Kishlansky, *The Rise of the New Model Army* (Cambridge, 1979).

⁸⁸ Tolmie, *op. cit.*, p. 130.

Independency is all Sectarisme, and all Sectarisme is Independency; Independents turn Anabaptists, Seekers, &c. and Sectaries turn Independents: We have now few Independents (strictly so called) but Independent Antinomians, Independent Anabaptists, Seekers, &c. or rather men made up of all these, Independency, Antinomianism, Brownism, Anabaptism, Libertinism, so that Independency is become a compound of many Errors.⁸⁹

The identification of the Independents as a mere subspecies of heretics was designed to degrade the Apologists' reputation, and affected the defensive rhetoric of religious Independents seeking to clear their name until the Savoy Declaration in 1657. *Gangræna* therefore initiated a new Presbyterian strategy of blaming the Independents as 'heretics'. Entitled as a 'Catalogue and Discovery of many of the Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies and pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of this time,' *Gangræna* listed 180 heresies and errors together with illustrative narratives of sectarian activities and doctrines. In his earlier *Antapologia*, Edwards concentrated on detailed theological confutation of the *Apologeticall Narration*, and scarcely charged the Apologists with the term 'heresy'. Yet in *Gangræna* Edwards departed from theological debates; instead he emphasised that the demands of the Independents were so dangerous that they would undermine religion and English society. The campaign was to invite Londoners to join in the battle against 'heretics', rather than to evangelize for the Presbyterian way. As Tolmie rightly pointed out, "*Gangræna* substituted for a dogmatic [conservatism,] a social conservatism."⁹⁰

This made a great impact upon the religious polemics of the time. Highly delighted, Robert Baillie commended *Gangræna*, "which must either waken the Parliament and all others to lay to heart the spreading of the evil errors, or I know not what can do it." He even attempted to distribute the book in Edinburgh.⁹¹ Edwards received enormous numbers of enthusiastic letters of support as well as indignant protests from his victims. He eagerly continued to revise his catalogue of heresies, adding anti-sectarian tales contributed by his readers. Edwards declared in his preface, "I am, ... and shall endeavour to be like that tree spoken of in the *Revelation*, to yeeld fruit every moneth."⁹² All through 1646 Edwards kept his word. *Gangræna* became one of the most controversial books of the time, not only because of its aggressive style of argument but also because of its up-to-date-ness. Francis Roberts, an influential

⁸⁹ *Gang. I*, p. 125.

⁹⁰ Tolmie, *op. cit.*, p. 133.

⁹¹ Robert Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, p. 352; Kishlansky, *Rise of the New Model Army*, p. 96.

Presbyterian divine at St. Augustine Watling Street, London, wrote in March 1646 to Robert Baillie who was worrying about the delay in Edwards' second edition, "Mr. Edwards told me, his book could not come out til the next week, by reason of many unexpected enlargements."⁹³ The much awaited second part of *Gangræna* was published on 28 May, and the third followed on 28 December. Each part provoked numbers of tracts from both Edwards' victims and his adherents. In 1646 *Gangræna* alone inspired almost thirty publications, causing an unprecedented pamphlet war among ministers, theologians and dissenting leaders. Murray Tolmie describes *Gangræna* as "an underestimated minor classic of the English revolution, a new form of popular journalism of great power, deliberately conceived and executed to influence public opinion beyond the range of the formal sermons, the learned treatises of the divines, and the conventional pamphlet literature of the day."⁹⁴

But the significance of *Gangræna* was not only that it effectively damaged the reputation of the Independents or that it stirred Londoners into a civil war of pamphlets. The influence of the book is symbolized in the phrase used in its title, later frequently repeated by Presbyterian writings: "Errours, Heresies and Blasphemies." A large number of publications on 'heresy' were inspired by this new way of recognising and representing the problem of the time. The descent of the Independents (at least in the eyes of the Presbyterians) onto the plane of various old and new infamous sects, suddenly brought the concept of 'heresy' into the spotlight, and made it the most appropriate word to describe the situation. It was a convenient term. Branding the Independents as 'heretics' on one hand gave the Presbyterians an opportunity to 'explain away' the errors (theological problems) of the Apologists, but moreover, it provided a position from which to overview various religious sects, and to discuss them *collectively* and *generally*. In the conservative puritans' effort to stigmatize the Independents and the sectaries, 'heresy' became an integrative concept that helped them to understand and present the situation in which they found themselves.

Robert Baillie was correct when he thought *Gangræna* would create a sensation. By the time the first part of *Gangræna* had shaken London, Presbyterian propaganda had attracted a considerable proportion of the clergy and the respectable, or 'second rank' citizens of London, many of whom were concerned about social and religious radicalism in and outside the City. A

⁹² *Gang. I*, Sig. B[1]v.

⁹³ Baillie, op. cit., p. 359.

⁹⁴ Tolmie, op. cit., pp. 131-132.

series of London citizens' petitions for the swift settlement of the new church government, such as the influential London Remonstrance of May 1646, and the subsequent petition in December handed to Parliament by the Lord Mayor himself, clearly stated their aversion to "the growth of heresy and schism."⁹⁵ Meanwhile, Presbyterian propagandists encouraged by Baillie continued to write against the Independents under the catchphrase, "errours, heresies and blasphemies." James Cranford, minister of St. Christopher le Stocks and a devoted agent of Robert Baillie, was busy giving his *imprimatur* to a number of Presbyterian tracts, clearly taking advantage of his status as an official licenser of the press. Edwards' *Gangræna* was also licensed by Cranford with his enthusiastic words of commendation. Cranford also contributed to the genre by publishing his own sermon *Haereseo-machia: or the mischief which heresies doe* which he preached before the Lord Mayor and the Aldermen of the City in February.⁹⁶ Captain John Johnes, another trusted London citizen of Baillie, cultivated Cranford's friendship and set out to write a tract to inform the public of "those truths published in the Books of Mr. Thomas Edwards, Mr. Bayly and divers godly Divines, and other honest men."⁹⁷ The term 'heresy' thus enabled the Presbyterian campaigners to make their voice heard loudly inside the parliament and the Assembly, while provoking a strong feeling among London citizens against the sects and the increasingly powerful Army. They took full advantage of attacking the claims of the religious Independents under the name of 'heresy'.

However, not everyone amidst this flood of 'heresy' discourse was as consciously motivated and clearly aware of the political goal of this campaign as Edwards, Cranford, and Baillie. Ephraim Pagitt who heartily disliked the 'mechanic preachers' stated that he was not aware of the new label 'Independents' and that it did not motivate him to write *Heresiography*, which was first published in 1645.⁹⁸ For some others, the application of the term 'heresy' to their situation only obscured the points of arguments. Debates on particular theological issues and the confutation of certain sectarian doctrines

⁹⁵ *To the Honourable the House of Commons .. The Humble Remonstrance and Petition of the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Commons of the City of London* (London, 1646); *To the Right Honourable the Lords ... The Humble Remonstrance and Petition ...* (London, 1646); *To the Honourable The House of Commons ... The Humble Petition of the Lord Mayor, Aldermen and commons of the City of London ... Together with an humble Representation ... of the well-affected Freemen, and Covenant-engaged Citizens of the City of London* (London, 1646); Neal, *History of the Puritans*, vol. 3, p. 308; Tolmie, op. cit., pp. 134-136.

⁹⁶ Pearl, 'London Puritans', pp. 320, 327; Cranford, *Haereseo-machia* (London, 1646).

⁹⁷ *Plain English: Or, the Sectaries Anatomized* (1646), p. 17. Attribution of this pamphlet to Jones was by Thomason. See Pearl, 'London Puritans', pp. 323-24.

⁹⁸ Pagitt, *Heresiography*, pp. 69-71.

were replaced by a general moaning about religious disorder which was characterized by a set of vague and broad words 'errours, heresies and blasphemies'. Names of individual sects such as 'Anabaptist', 'Brownist' or even 'Independent' seemed to melt away into the background. These sects were now mentioned as models and illustration of the major subject 'heresy'; therefore how heretical the Anabaptists were, was no longer a central question. Outspoken anti-sectarian propagandists like Edwards kept firing at 'heretics', but scarcely stopped to ponder about the definition of the term 'heresy' itself. On the other hand those theologians who seriously tried to examine the nature of 'heresy', rarely did so within Baillie's political framework, avoiding the blunt equation of 'heretics' with the Independents. As more men intensely discussed 'heresy' in print and in pulpit, it began to appear as something else than just a brand name of the Independents. 'Heresy' needed definition.

Parliamentary debates and the public fast

The controversy fuelled by *Gangræna* led parliament to try to legally define what 'heresy' was, and to legislate a punishment for it. The proposal for an ordinance to prevent "growing, and spreading of Heresies" was drawn up in September 1646 by two M.P.s, Nathaniel Bacon and Zouch Tate. Bacon was a celebrated parliamentarian theorist, whose anti-Catholic and anti-Royalist works enjoyed popularity throughout the 1640s and 1650s. Tate was also an active parliamentarian who chaired the committee designing of the New Model Army, but also strongly opposed the Independents as well as the Army radicals, and was hence greatly trusted by Baillie.⁹⁹ The proposed ordinance defined and classified those religious errors that would qualify for different levels of punishment. If anyone would "willingly preach, teach, print, or write, publish and maintaine" doctrines denying God, Christ or the divine authorship of the Scripture, he would be indicted for felony and put to death unless he would abjure his error. Blaspheming the name of God and the Trinity was also to be made a felony, and would deserve branding his left cheek with the letter 'B'. All the other errors, which men like Edwards would easily list, were to be punished by imprisonment. These included many opinions expressed by religious sects which the Calvinists had long despised under the names of Antinomianism, Arminianism or Anabaptism, such as denying infant baptism, predestination, the immortality of soul, or the power of the civil magistrate over

church matters. And of course, the error of maintaining “that the Church Government by Presbytery is Antichristian or unlawfull” led also to prison. These recommendations, as R. W. Dale wrote, “would have imprisoned half or a third of both the officers and the private soldiers in the army.”¹⁰⁰

As the proposal circulated in print, it created a sequence of heated debates throughout the *Gangræna* controversy. The Presbyterians gave open support to the plan. A pro-Presbyterian catalogue of 20 different sects (from the Jesuits to the ‘Divorcers’) in praise of “Master Edwards and Master Paget,” attached a copy of the proposed ordinance as an appendix.¹⁰¹ But there was also some doubt as to whether civil government could rightly judge an offence in religious faith. One anonymous pamphleteer who was responsible for the circulation of the original text by Bacon and Tate, seemed to embarrass the Presbyterians as his postscript outlined his own mistrust of the ordinance, writing: “it is Impossible that any finite creature can comprehend an Infinite incomprehensible God.” Recalling the time when the godly suffered pains and punishment “for pretended Heresies and errorrs” under both “Idoll of poperie” and “Episcopacy,” he urged that now Parliament should be very cautious in the matter. If not, the author continued, the English were “like to be reduced through the instigation of the Clergie of our times, whose end is their interest and domination over us, the free people of *England*.”¹⁰² John Goodwin, one of the most active sectarian ministers who disputed with Presbyterian polemicists did not miss the opportunity of attacking both the proposed ordinance and the “un-clerk-like expressions” of this tract.¹⁰³ Joined by the future Leveller

⁹⁹ DNB, s.n. for Nathaniel Bacon (1593-1660); *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals*, s.n. for Bacon and Tate; Pearl, ‘London Puritans and Scotch Fifth Columnists’, p. 323. In the printed ordinance, Tate’s name was presented as ‘Mr. Taet’.

¹⁰⁰ R. W. Dale, *History of English Congregationalism* (London, 1907), pp. 310-11, quoted in Watts, *Dissenters*, I, p. 117.

¹⁰¹ *A Relation of several Heresies ... Unto which is added some particulars of an Ordinance in debate for the preventing of the growing and spreading of heresie* (London, 1646). Thomason dated his acquisition as 17 October.

¹⁰² *An Ordinance presented to the Honourable house of Commons, by Mr. Bacon ... and Mr. Taet, both of them members of the same House ... Pretended for preventing, growing, and spreading of Heresies* (London, 1646), pp. 4-6. Thomason’s acquisition was 21 September. There was another one-sheet tract showing the proposed ordinance, which seems to be the original copy that was ordered by Parliament for circulation. Thomason dated 10 September.

¹⁰³ John Goodwin, *Some modest and humble quires concerning a printed paper, intituled, An ordinance presented to the honourable House of Commons, &c. for the preventing of the growing and spreading of Heresies, &c* (London, 1646). Goodwin, who was vicar of St. Stephen’s Coleman Street, had been displaced from his church living by the Committee for Plundered Minister, and had started his own congregational church in a rented house in the same street. Watts, op. cit., p. 120. For the unusual remark in *An*

William Walwyn and by members of his separatist congregation in Coleman Street, Goodwin criticized the self-styled orthodoxy of the Presbyterians and denounced the idea of sentencing conscientious believers to death as unchristian.¹⁰⁴

The proposal was repeatedly debated in the autumn of 1646, but then became bogged down. It was only finalised on 2 May 1648 by the House of Lords as what is now called the 'Blasphemy Act'.¹⁰⁵ But it was too late; the Second Civil War began that month, and the alliance between Charles I and the Scots greatly damaged the reputation of the Presbyterians. In June 1648 Presbyterian ministers in Cheshire expressed their irritation at this slack process, caused "by the Magistrates as well as by the Ministers," who were half-hearted in "doing their parts ... to cry down errors, &c. by preaching and writing against them."¹⁰⁶ The act was never enforced.

While the ordinance for legal punishment of heretics was still pending, in February 1647 Parliament ordered a special public fast day for the suppression of heresies. It was another outcome of the systematic campaign against sects and heresies organized by the Presbyterians and supported by the covenanting citizens of the City. Such national fasts, often with special sermons, were a common practice under the Long Parliament whenever repentance was felt necessary and the nation faced a crisis due to divine wrath.¹⁰⁷ The previous month Obadiah Sedgwick, one of the original members of the Assembly, had already preached on the monthly fast day of the House of Commons on *The Nature and Danger of Heresies*, which he admitted "a Theam (if I doe understand the present posture of these times) both seasonable and necessary."¹⁰⁸ Party affiliations in Parliament had already become fairly entangled, but it managed to agree to set apart 10 March as "a day of Publique humiliation for the growth

Ordinance presented to the Honourable [...], Goodwin detected "some other spirit that breathed in it, not theirs [i.e. Bacon and Tate]." Sig. A[1]v.

¹⁰⁴ Attributed to Walwyn, *A demurre to the bill for preventing the growth and spreading of heresie* (London, 1646); *An Apologeticall Account, of some Brethren of the Church, Whereof Mr. John Goodwin is Pastor* (London, 1647).

¹⁰⁵ C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (eds.), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum* (London, 1911), pp. 1133-6. The act was published as *An ordinance of the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament, for the punishing of blasphemies and heresies: with the severall penalties therein expressed* (London, 1648).

¹⁰⁶ *An Attestation to the Testimony of Our Reverend Brethren of the Province of London* (London, 1648), pp. 10, 21-22.

¹⁰⁷ Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The fast sermons of the Long Parliament', in Trevor-Roper, *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change* (London, 1984), pp. 297-344; Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (London, 1993), ch. 3.

and spreading of Errours, Heresies and Blasphemies, to be observed in all places within the Kingdome of England and Dominion of Wales, ... and to seek God for his direction and assistance for the suppression and preventing the same.”¹⁰⁹ The anonymous tract *Hell Broke Loose*, which historians have consulted as one of the sources for ‘Ranter’ doctrines, was published the day before this fast day in praise of this parliamentary decision.¹¹⁰ The idea was unreservedly welcomed by the Presbyterians. Thomas Edwards had already suggested that the “Magistrates from the consideration of all these errors, heresies, blasphemies, should appoint and command a solemn general Fast, to be kept throughout the Kingdom, for this very end, that the Land might be humbled and mourn for these heresies, blasphemies, &c.”¹¹¹ Later in 1648 Presbyterian ministers in Chester looked back and remarked that the occasion was “worthy of perpetuall remembrance.”¹¹²

The ordinance instructed that a special sermon on the ‘suppression of heresy’ be preached in every parish church on that day. It would be interesting to know how clergymen throughout the country reacted to this request from the parliament, but only a couple of sermons delivered in front of the House of Commons on the day were published.¹¹³ One of the published sermons, *The authours, nature, and danger of hæresie* by Richard Vines [see Figure 3], in William Haller’s words, “harped upon what was now becoming the constant theme of their [Presbyterian] party.”¹¹⁴ However, in this long and tedious sermon on ‘heresy’, Vines was not as clear about the subject as he was in his concern about the authority of ordained ministers being “very much undervalued, and laid

¹⁰⁸ Obadiah Sedgwick, *The Nature and Danger of Heresies, opened in a sermon before the honourable House of Commons* (London, 1647), sig. A2r. For Sedgwick, see *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals*.

¹⁰⁹ *An ordinance of the Lords and Commons ... Concerning the growth and spreading of errors, heresies, and blasphemies. Setting a part a day of publike humiliation ... Die Jovis 4. Febr. 1646* (London, 1646); *Acts and Ordinances*, pp. 913-4.

¹¹⁰ *Hell Broke Loose: or, a Catalogue of many of the spreading errors, heresies and blasphemies of these times* (London, 1647).

¹¹¹ *Gang. I*, p. 168.

¹¹² *An Attestation to the Testimony*, p. 20.

¹¹³ Thomas Hodges, *The Growth And Spreading of Hæresie* (London, 1647); Richard Vines, *The Authours, Nature, and Danger of Hæresie* (London, 1647); According to an anonymous tract *Bloody News from Dover* (1646), Hodges took over the task from Edmund Calamy who was initially appointed to preach. p. 6.

¹¹⁴ Haller, *Liberty and Reformation*, p. 342. Vines also preached a fast day sermon in January of 1646 about the ‘false teachers’, published as Vines, *The purifying of unclean hearts and hands: opened in a sermon preached before the Honourable House of Commons, at their solemn fast, January 28, 1645 in Margarets Westminster* (London, 1645).

very low by many, [...] as in a common interest.”¹¹⁵ Although he resorted to the commonly used biblical metaphors of heretics as the ‘false prophets’ and ‘wolves in sheep clothing’, Vines confessed that the nature of ‘heresy’ “lies under much obscurity and inevidence.”¹¹⁶ He also warned that “the *vulgar*, and indeed *abusive* acception of the word, is an infamy or reproach which usually men flinge [flange] in the face of others at random, that are not of their opinion.”¹¹⁷ Vines remembered the time when the ‘Papists’ used to brand the Lollards and other innocent Protestants as heretics, and argued such abuse would only bring a “swift destruction.”¹¹⁸ In his long sermon “to search out what *Hæresie* is,”¹¹⁹ he struggled to remove the ambiguity of this term. According to Vines, there were two kinds of ‘heresy’: ‘simple’ and ‘complicate’.

Simple hæresie is an opinion or assertion holden and maintained contrary to, and subversive of the faith by one that professes the Christian Religion: *Complicate hæresie* is that which is attended with *Schisme*, *sedition*, *blasphemy*, where one opinion lyes with another, and begets a new bastard: a new monster growing up into a multiformity more & more, until it break forth into such dangerous symptons as the fore-named.¹²⁰

A ‘simple heresy’ was an error which could easily occur in everyday exchanges of opinion. What was responsible for the disorder of religion in England was the ‘complicate’ heresy. To demonstrate this, Vines moved on to describe each of the ‘schismaticall’ heretics, ‘blasphemous’ heretics, ‘seditious’ and ‘seducing’ heretics (who “panders his bed all he can”) and suggested how to punish them accordingly.¹²¹ “There must,” he stressed, “be differences made between errour and *hæresie*, *erroneous* and *Hereticks*, *Seducers* and *Seduced*.” Vine hastily concluded the sermon, but never touched on *who* the real ‘complicacte’ heretics were, nor explained how to distinguish them from ‘simple’ ones.¹²² Only at the very end of his oration did Vines display his disapproval of “those that are called pure *Independents*” within the parliament and the Assembly. Though the Independents might try to dissociate themselves from the errors and heresies

¹¹⁵ Vines, *Authours, Nature, and Danger of Hæresie*. Upon this point, he expressed “Apology for speaking so much of it in this place, had not the Text led me to say something, and the necessity of the times, together with the present occasion constrained me to this prolixity.” p. 23.

¹¹⁶ *ibid.*, Sig. A2r.

¹¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 49.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 50.

¹¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 35.

¹²⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 62-63.

¹²¹ *ibid.*, pp. 63-66.

they claimed to despise, he warned, “such pernicious opinions may not shelter themselves under their name or wing.” If the Independents were to be tolerated “all [other errors] may come in at the same breach or port, for that would bee but a selling of the Church into a *liberty* of being in *captivity* to *destructive confusions and errours*.”¹²³ Later, apparently, Vaines was criticized for lenience, that he spoke of the “enlighting of the minds of the auditory” and not of the “*burning of Hæreticks bodies*.”¹²⁴

London *Testimony*, godly responses, and critics

The imprecision of the term ‘heresy’ was increasingly felt to be problematic by conservative puritans. All agreed upon the need of suppressing it, but the blunt equation of the Independents with ‘heretics’, in the style of Baillie and Edwards, barely worked after the arrival of the Army in London in the summer of 1647, upon which Thomas Edwards fled to Amsterdam, never to return. Ephraim Pagitt’s *Heresiography* stood out from the rest, enjoying regular updating and new editions but the author was already dead. The last organized attempt of the London Presbyterians to make ‘errours, heresies and blasphemies’ the target of a political campaign occurred in December 1647 with the publication of another comprehensive list of errors: *A Testimony to the trueth of Jesus Christ and to our Solemn League and Covenant; as also against the Errours, Heresies, and Blasphemies of these times, and the Toleration of them*. The chief author of the text is not known, but the 58 subscribers included James Cranford and Christopher Love. The list of subscribers reveals the strength of Presbyterian antipathy towards ‘heresy’; 17 ministers, including Thomas Gataker, Edmand Calamy and two preachers of the French Reformed church in London, declined to sign that part of the pamphlet commending the Assembly’s then pending proposal for a new Confession of Faith (later the Westminster Confession) and the Directory for Church-Government. Yet they agreed to “subscribe the rest, against *Errours, heresies, Blasphemies, and Toleration of them*, and touching the *Solemn League and Covenant*.”¹²⁵ The 35-page tract was distributed and read throughout England and attracted a considerable number of replies from the covenanted clergy in 1648.

¹²² *ibid.*, p. 70.

¹²³ *ibid.*, p. 70.

¹²⁴ *ibid.*, Sig. A2v.

¹²⁵ *A Testimony to the Trueth of Jesus Christ*, p. 37.

The text of *A Testimony* revealed the desperation of the Presbyterians in 1648, horrified by the prospect of “intolerable *Toleration*,”¹²⁶ and yet still refusing to come to term with the “*Englands* generall backwardnesse to embrace, yea forwardnesse to oppose this [Presbyterian] Government.”¹²⁷

Instead of an establishment of Faith and Truth, we swarm with noisome Errours, Heresies and Blasphemies: Instead of unity and uniformity in matters of Religion, we are torn in pieces with destructive schismes, Separations, Divisions and subdivisions: Instead of true piety and power of Godlinesse, we have opened the very floodgates to all impiety and prophanenesse: Instead of submitting to the government of Christ, we walk in a Christlesse loosenesse and licentiousnesse: Instead of a *Reformation*, we may say with sighs, what our enemies heretofore said of us with scorn, we have a *Deformation* in Religion: and in a word instead of *Extirpation of Heresie, Schisme, Prophanenesse, &c.* we have such an impudent and generall inundation of all these evils, that multitudes are not ashamed to presse and plead for a publike, formall and universall *Toleration*.¹²⁸

The task was to expose “all the errours, heresies, and blasphemies whatsoever minced, masked and palliated, and by whomsoever embraced and co[u]ntenanced,”¹²⁹ and for the London ministers, cataloguing of individual errors in the manner of Edwards and Pagitt seemed the best way to spot and clarify them. *Testimony* categorized errors by topic according to the doctrines against which they offended. For example, ‘Errours against the Sacrament of Baptisme’ constituted one heading, under which appeared extracts from works by various Anabaptists such as Thomas Webbs. John Milton’s *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* was introduced in, of course, the section titled ‘Errours touching Marriage and Divorce.’ Most of these extracts were reproduced with the precise page numbers of the original books in which these errors could be found. This method of classification was different from both Edwards’ random juxtaposition and Pagitt’s encyclopedia of different ‘-ists’. And this was the list of errors into which Henry Hammond’s *Practical Catechisme* fell.

A remarkable number of replies were published and signed by pro-Presbyterian ministers throughout England, though this campaign has been little noticed by historians. At least twelve replies appeared in 1648 from covenanted ministers in Cheshire, Devon, Essex, Gloucestershire, Lancashire,

¹²⁶ *ibid.*, p. 29.

¹²⁷ *ibid.*, p. 25.

¹²⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

Northamptonshire, Shropshire, Somerset, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Wiltshire and Yorkshire. London citizens too offered their support in a one-sheet leaflet. These were no doubt systematically arranged by the London Presbyterians to once again raise their voice within Revolutionary politics.¹³⁰

Although all the subscribers were unanimous in their cry for the further church reformation, they were not as sure about what their London brethren termed 'erours, heresies and blasphemies' as they were about the Solemn League and Covenant. Yorkshire ministers celebrated the painful effort of cataloguing errors and heresies undertaken by London ministers "and multitudes of others," but pointed out that "yet (which most of all saddens our spirits) we do not find any effectual means used by Authority to restrain and suppress them."¹³¹ Devon ministers requested that differences in the levels of "malignity and danger" in the errors listed should be made clear, for some errors concerned only "external administrations, as that against Pædobaptism, &c." which were not as serious as truly blasphemous doctrines. The godly should "wait, and strive with them by the word of God, to bring them into unitie and uniformitie with us ... as there is agreement (at least hoped) in the spirit and life of Christ."¹³² They also suggested a new entry for the existing list of errors, namely "spritual wickednesse", while admitting that certain forms of "wickedness and malignancie," however erroneous, could not be represented by quotations and extracts, such as those collected in *A Testimony*, because "wee hear no Sermons preached, nor see books printed, that professedly plead for drunkenness."¹³³

A similar hesitation about using the term 'heresy' was found in the reply from Cheshire ministers titled *An Attestation to the Testimony*, subscribed in June 1648. They commended *A Testimony*'s caution in listing 'erroures' in their book, rather than 'heresies' or 'heretics'; "for there is great doubt, much dispute and difficultie, to determine *what heresie is*, and what opinion is hereticall." *An Attestation* supported the Blasphemy Act of May 1648, and had no doubts about the increase of radical religious opinions in England. But not all errors were

¹²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 5.

¹³⁰ *The hearty concurrence of divers citizens and inhabitants of the city of London* (London, 1648). All replies were published in London, although by different printers. Four out of the twelve replies were distributed by Thomas Underhill, the publisher of the original *London Testimony*.

¹³¹ *Vindiciæ Veritatis, or an unanimous attestation to Gods blessed Truth revealed in his Word* (London, 1648), p. 7.

¹³² *The joint-testimonie of the ministers of Devon* (London, 1648), pp. 24-25.

automatically 'heresies', it claimed, although the reverse might be true. "[T]hough it may be questioned of many opinions, whether they be *heresies* or no, it may bee manifest enough that they be *errours*."¹³⁴ Therefore the term 'heresy' was best avoided within their catalogue, Cheshire divines argued. Moreover, *An Attestation* was unusually careful in their distinction between 'heresy' and 'heretic'.

... We approve, that you passe your censure upon heresies in *abstracto*, ... not upon Hereticks in *conereto*, as *Bellarmino* doth, who entitles his disputations not against the Heresies but *the Hereticks of these times*. For that is farre more difficult to determine then the other. *What makes an Hereticke cannot as I conceive at all, or very hardly be comprehended in a regular definition*, said *Augustine* many a hundred yeers agoe. The modern *Arminians* say as much or more, viz. *that it cannot be knowne in these times who is an Heretick*: [...] [There is] great difficultie, and [...] there may bee much deciet and errour, in an inconsiderate application of the word, *Hereticke*, though to a man of erroneous opinion, yea though grossely erroneous.¹³⁵

An Attestation cited several cases in the past in which those who wrote against heretics were later mistaken as heretics themselves, and pointed that an obsession with collecting other people's errors could not only be dangerous but also fruitless, "because *Humanum est errare*."¹³⁶ "[F]or humane writings we are not obliged to be so well acquainted with them, nor to have so much respect unto them."¹³⁷ Religious opinions were literally too diverse, and far too complicated to be summarized under a single word 'heresy'.

The indefiniteness of the term 'heresy' was often visible in many conservative writings. Discourse about 'heresy' easily slipped into discussions of other obscure and inconsistent concepts such as 'antichrist', 'lust', or the 'Devil.' Thus, for example, the London Presbyterian divines in *Testimony* sounded rather desperate when they used phrases like "all the Errours, Heresies, Sects, Schismes, Divisions, Loosenesse, Prophanenesse, and breach of

¹³³ *ibid.*, p. 25. This point should not be taken lightly. What the London subscribers lamented in *A Testimony* were "the spreading *Heresies*; the cursed *Blasphemies*" and "the generall loosenesse and prophanenesse of our times." *A Testimony*, p. 2.

¹³⁴ *An Attestation to the Testimony of Our Reverend Brethren of the Province of London* (London, 1648), p. 2.

¹³⁵ *An Attestation*, pp. 2-3.

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 7.

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 6.

Covenant amongst us.”¹³⁸ But similar jumbling of terms can also be found throughout *Gangræna* and other Presbyterian polemic of the 1640s.

Meanwhile, apologists for the Independent congregations kept criticizing the Presbyterian preoccupation with self-justification and heresy-collecting. Henry Hammond was not the only victim of the London *Testimony* who challenged the Presbyterians. John Goodwin fiercely attacked *A Testimony* in his *Sion-Colledg visited* (1648), with a Thomas-Edwards-like vigour. “To scrapple together a few saying, or passages out of severall mens books here and there, without taking any notice, or giving any account of their true sense and meaning in them,” was not only ineffective but pathetic, Goodwin wrote. “[T]o insult and stamp with the foot, and cry out, *Error, Heresie, Blasphemy, Anti-scripturisme, Arminianisme, and I know not what*, will any man call this a way, method, or means, for the *extirpation of Error and Heresie*?”¹³⁹ Goodwin triumphantly called this art of speaking “nothing but non-sense and inconsistencies” as “the *Suprema lex* in the Republique of Presbyterie.”¹⁴⁰

The 1647 *Hereticks, Sectaries, and Schismaticks, discovered to be the Antichrist yet remaining, and the great Enemies of the Peace of this Kingdome*, attributed to a certain John Ellyson, was an interesting mock-Presbyterian pamphlet issued in the middle of the ‘heresy’ controversy.¹⁴¹ Advertising itself “as a preparations to the great day of humiliation on *March 10* next ensuing; with a hint about ordination and the covenant,” the tract appeared to be just like any other anti-sectarian heresiography by a pro-Presbyterian writers. In fact it was a bitter criticism of the Presbyterian campaigners. The 26-page tract started off with dark hints of the “Beast, [...] the Antichristian and Malignant power” and the “darknesse of Hell itself” ruling England. Gradually the Q-and-A formatted treatise revealed that the Antichristian spirit of persecution and destruction, once thought to have been cast away upon the abolition of episcopacy, still survived among the men covenanted for the reformation of the church. “Now fellow Covenanters, I think it is time for us to lay our hands upon our hearts, and consider where we are, what we are doing and whether we are going, if

¹³⁸ *A Testimony to the Trueth of Jesus Christ*, pp. 28-29.

¹³⁹ John Goodwin, *Sion Colledg visited; or, some briefe animadversions upon a pamphlet lately published, under the title of A Testimonie to the truth of Jesus Christ and to our solemn league and covenant*, etc (London, 1648), pp. 7-8.

¹⁴⁰ Goodwin, *Sion Colldg visited*, p. 12.

¹⁴¹ *Hereticks, Sectaries, and Schismaticks, discovered to be the Antichrist yet remaining, and the great enemies of the peace of this kingdome*, etc. (London, 1647). Attribution of this work to John Ellyson [or Elligson] is in William Thomas Whitley (ed.), *A Baptist Bibliography*, 2 vols. (London, 1916), vol. 1, p. 32. See S. Halkett and J. Laing, *Dictionary of Anonymous and Pseudonymous English Literature*, 2nd edn., 9 vols. (Edinburgh, 1926-1962), vol. 3, p. 31. No other publications under Ellyson’s name are known.

instead of having our faces Sion ward, we be not posting back again to *Rome*, though not in the old road ... It's not crying, the Temple of the Lord, the Temple of the Lord, Reformation, Government, suppressing Sects and Heresies, these vaine words will not save us."¹⁴² The Antichristian spirit, convinced of its own infallibility, and imposing its own sense of doctrines upon others, was the very reason that made Protestants separate from the Church of Rome, "without *Heresie or Schisme*."¹⁴³ Thus those sectaries who separated from the dogmatism and persecution of the Presbyterians did not really deserve to be called heretics or schismatics. "I shall hold place as Bul-warks, to defend these poor harmlesse sectaries, from all the force the *Presbyterian enemy* can rise against them."¹⁴⁴ The tract ended with a defence of religious toleration, demanding equal liberty for "all parties, Independents, Brownists, Anabaptists." But even more, the author condemned the Presbyterians as the real originator of the divisions in religion. "I am confident," the author wrote; "*they* [Presbyterians] *will desire no Toleration*; and if they do, then you must necessarily conclude with me, *it is most equall*, & that the *Presbyterians* are the *greatest hereticks* (as being in the choice of their opinions further off from the truth of Scripture then the rest) & the *greatest Schismaticks* (as practising according to those opinions) that are at this day in this Nation."¹⁴⁵

4. Conclusion

The sudden explosion of books, treatises, pamphlets, petitions, sermons and parliamentary proceedings about 'heresies' in the mid-1640s shows how the problem of religious sects provoked intense anxiety during the Civil War. We have also observed that much of this anti-heresy literature was systematically organized and promoted by the Presbyterians who strongly opposed the tenets of the Independents, deniers of the Calvinist national church and advocates of religious tolerance. In this respect, the 'heresy' controversy in the 1640s was a highly political phenomenon. Here it is important for us to separate the idea of 'heresy' from that of 'sect'. Unlike debates about particular religious sects (such as anti-Anabaptist literature discussing infant baptism, or anti-Separatist work defending the state church system), discourse about 'heresy' was always riddled with ambiguity. Throughout this controversy the debates on 'heresy'

¹⁴² Ellyson, *Hereticks, Sectaries, and Schismaticks*, p. 12.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, pp. 12-17.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 17.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 25.

seemed to circle around the definition of the term. Discussions that centred the sudden increase of religious sects were not about what to do with heretics, but what it meant to have 'heretics' within society. 'Heresy' was an idea, rather than an identity; it concerned issues of definition and understanding, rather than description.

Men like Milton and Hobbes, who showed their dislike of conservative persecutors, dismissed the matter and claimed that the word 'heresy' meant nothing more than a private opinion and was therefore irrelevant to religious offences. Such a lexicographic approach was not popular at all among the authors of heresiographies. Without resorting to a plain definition of the term, they tried to work out a way of capturing the situation. One thing heresiographers were certain about was that religion in England was in a considerable degree of confusion and disorder. The idea of 'heresy' was employed almost as an all-purpose keyword with which to unpack the situation.

The mass of 'heresy' literature was not therefore a mere reflection of the statistical increase in religious sects. Nor did it merely serve the purpose of Presbyterian party politics. Indeed a number of writers, like Alexander Ross who wrote many volumes on 'heresies', did not necessarily write for the Presbyterian cause. *Gangræna* was certainly produced as a weapon against religious Independents, but even in *Gangræna* the extreme desire to catalogue and classify 'heresies' reveals the difficulty of defining its subject. 'Heresy' was a highly unstable idea and field of discussion, and its delineation fell into no established genre. Heresiography needed construction. It was not just a convenient instrument with which to stigmatize the 'other', it was an attempt to reconstruct a world-view.

Where there was ambiguity there was anxiety, and there were always voices warning about the need for a careful handling of the matter. There was a line of argument which maintained that condemning the 'heresies' of other men would undermine Christian unity and destroy brotherly love. There was also a concern that errors and heresies were better concealed and should not necessarily be discussed in print, lest the spiritually poorer and weaker should be informed of evils that must be kept away from them. But such medievalist attitudes towards the 'sin of knowledge' was conquered in various ways by more daring minds who thought they were ready to tackle the problem. The seventeenth-century writers who obsessively studied, collected and catalogued erroneous and heretical opinions were not simply producing their own version of the Roman Catholic *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (Index of forbidden books).

Their project was not to *forbid* 'heresies'. Quite contrarily, they brought 'heresies' into debate. 'Heresy' needed to be discussed. The controversy in the mid-seventeenth century brought 'heresy' into life again.

Eliminating the ambiguity surrounding the category was the primary concern for those who debated on 'heresies'. The parliamentary attempts at their legislative definition and punishment outlined in this chapter were part of this endeavour. Likewise, people's anxiety about uncertainty of the subject led to particular attempts to fix and eliminate this ambiguity, and to give clearer pictures of the problem. The first of these ways was to attribute specific bodily images to 'heretics', making them symbolically understandable. We will examine this process in the next chapter concentrating on Thomas Edwards' *Gangræna*. The second way was to classify and catalogue 'heresies'. By doing this religious problem was made susceptible of encyclopedic understanding. This will be examined in chapter 4 on Ephraim Pagitt's *Heresiography*. The third was to make 'heresies' the subject of academic and scientific study, sacrificing some (if not all) degree of moral judgement. This attitude will be analysed in chapter 5, devoted to Alexander Ross's *Pansebeia*.

Chapter 3

Imaging and Embodying ‘Heretics’: Disease, monstrosity and bodily ‘practices’ in Thomas Edwards’ *Gangræna*

I searched for the *Cause*, and quickly found
 There was *Malignant-matter* in the *Wound*,
 Which would into a *Cancer*, be corrupted:
 And, peradventure (if not interrupted,
 By timely care) into a *Gangrieve* grow,
 Which will effect the *Bodies* overthrow.
 Or, els (besides much trouble, grief, and cost)
 Occasion many *Members* to be lost.

George Wither, *English Balme* (1646).¹

1. The immedicable tumour of faction. 2. The strange diffusion of Brownianisme.
 3. The stupendeous inundaton of heresie. 4. The desperate swelling of obstinacy.
 5. The dangerous disease of feminine divinity. 6. The aspiring ambition of
 presumption. 7. The audacious height of disobedience. 8. The painted
 deceitfulnesse of hypocrisie.

John Taylor, *The diseases of the times or,
 the distempers of the Common-wealth* (1642).²

If beautifull, perchance the more attractive of feminine followers:
 If deformed, so that his body is as odde as his opinions.

Thomas Fuller, *The Profane State* (1642).³

1. Introduction

On 18 February 1646 in a parish in Colchester a married couple allegedly had two babies. One was perfect but the other was a monster. The deformed child lacked a head and had its face in its breast with features like nose and eyes. It had only one stump-like arm, with two fingers at its end and a thumb on its side. One of the feet lacked a heel, with two toes pointing forward and another growing out at the side. The two children were both born dead. Apparently there was a reason for this calamity — the couple were Separatists. The husband had frequented extra-parochial congregations and was an “enemy to the baptizing of his own children.” The wife had also resolved not to baptize

¹ George Wither, *English Balme* (1646), pp. 1-2.

² John Taylor, *The diseases of the times or, the distempers of the Common-wealth* (London, 1642), title page.

³ Thomas Fuller, *The Holy State [and] The Profane State* (Cambridge, 1642), pp. 393-4.

their next children. The monstrous birth seemed to indicate the fearful consequence of the parents' religious offence. Hearing the news, a local minister, who had already read the First Part of *Gangræna*, thought it worth reporting to Thomas Edwards in London. The story made it into *The Second Part of Gangræna* that came out in May that year, and even featured as a headline on the book's front page, namely "A relation of a Monster lately born at Colchester, of Parents who are Sectaries."⁴

Stories like this no longer surprise historians familiar with printed material produced during the English Civil War. London print culture included not only political tracts and religious treatises, but also 'strange' news and ballads that appealed right across the social strata both in and outside the capital.⁵ It is also common knowledge that during the seventeenth century religious sects like the Quakers were depicted and attacked through gross imagery and extreme stereotypes as well as through theological confutation.⁶ Such pamphlet literature has recently been much discussed by a number of scholars, who see these 'vulgar' texts as a proper subject of historical inquiry. Without reading these materials as evidence for certain events, — that is, without necessarily accepting the actuality of their content, — historians have used 'cheap print' to discuss the world-views of 'ordinary people'⁷ This approach has additionally enabled the construction of alternatives to the orthodox revisionist historiography of the English Revolution that explained the period in terms of 'high' politics and ecclesiastical movements, and to older traditions which saw the Revolution as produced by socio-economic forces.⁸

⁴ *Gang. II*, pp. 4-5. For the 'interactive' nature of the composition of *Gangræna*, see Ann Hughes, "'Popular' Presbyterianism in the 1640s and 1650s: the cases of Thomas Edwards and Thomas Hall", in Nicholas Tyacke (ed.), *England's Long Reformation 1500-1800* (London, 1998), pp. 235-259.

⁵ General studies of this print culture include Joad Raymond (ed.), *Making the News: An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Revolutionary England 1641-1660* (Gloucestershire, 1993); Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution in England 1640-1660* (New Haven and London, 1994); James Holstun (ed.), *Pamphlet Wars: Prose in the English Revolution* (London, 1992).

⁶ John Miller, *Religion in the Popular Prints 1600-1832* (Cambridge, 1986); Kristen Poole, *Radical Religion from Shakespeare to Milton: Figures of Nonconformity in Early Modern England* (Cambridge, 2000).

⁷ Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety, 1550-1640* (Cambridge, 1991); Margaret Spufford, *Small Books and Pleasant Histories: Popular Fiction and Its Readership in Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge, 1981); Natalie Zemon Davis, *Fiction in the Archives: Pardon Tales and Their Tellers in Sixteenth-Century France* (Cambridge, 1987); Hyder Edward Rollins (ed.), *The Pack of Autolycus: or Strange and Terrible News of Ghosts, Apparitions, Monstrous Births, Showers of Wheat, Judgments of God, and other Prodigious and Fearful Happenings as told in Broadside Ballads of the Years 1624-1693* (Washington & London, 1969).

⁸ For example, D. Underdown, *Revel, Riot and Rebellion* (Oxford, 1985).

In this 'popular' history of the English Revolution, radical religious sects emerge from the pamphlet literature, including *Gangræna*, as fearful and strange phenomena. They are presented as a component of the social and religious upheaval that seventeenth-century people saw and felt.⁹ Jerome Friedman, stressing the historical importance of what he calls the 'pulp press', maintains that "accounts of apparitions, prodigies, criminals, monsters, whores, drugs, bizarre religious sects, ancient prophecies, and a host of other vulgar subjects should not be rejected as a source of information about a society simply because the ideas are gauche and of low quality."¹⁰ However apparently peculiar they are, these accounts, Friedman claims, illustrate how seventeenth-century non-elite men and women experienced the terrible time of their nation.

There is not room here to discuss whether examining these 'vulgar subjects' really sheds light on the 'ordinary Englishmen' hitherto neglected in mainstream political history. But as far as religious sects are concerned, there are certainly problems in this approach. First, there is a danger in using terms such as "bizarre religious sects," for such language neglects the fact that religious sectarianism was no eccentricity but a central and serious issue for many puritan divines, some of whom penned the pamphlets that historians of 'popular culture' draw upon. Moreover, taking the 'bizarre' images of sects at face value perpetuates the deliberate and politically motivated marginalization of sects by the authors of these pamphlets. Secondly, by seeing these 'pulp' texts as simple expressions of the people's imagination and perception, studies of 'popular literature' do not examine the complex mechanisms by which pamphlets' languages and styles work, and thus end up producing the same uncritical equation of text and evidence which they seem to criticize. Thirdly, to suggest that early modern English people experienced the time of the Revolution simply as a frenzy of fear and apocalyptic confusion oversimplifies the rational and emotional mechanisms by which monster tales like the one above transmitted their messages in contemporary culture. We should not regard seventeenth-century heresiographies like *Gangræna* as indicators of the hysteria brought on by the appearance of anomalous 'heretics'. Religious sects

⁹ Jerome Friedman, *Miracles and the Pulp Press During the English Revolution: The Battle of the Frogs and Fairford's Flies* (London, 1993); J. C. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the Historians* (Cambridge, 1986); J. Friedman, *Blasphemy, Immorality, and Anarchy: The Ranters and the English Revolution* (Athens, Ohio and London, 1987).

¹⁰ Friedman, *Miracles and the Pulp Press*, p. xiii.

certainly constituted a source of fear for some of the English public, but it was not just because they were religious sects.¹¹

What is needed is more careful and detailed analysis of the way sects and ‘heretics’ were depicted during the Civil War, without either ignoring or patronising the large amount of admittedly unsophisticated pamphlet literature. Only thus can one fully understand the impact and the success of Thomas Edwards’ *Gangræna*. Ann Hughes, in particular, has shown the rich potential of textual studies of the Civil War literature. In her brilliant analyses of *Gangræna* and the writings of Thomas Hall, Hughes stresses the limitation of using these works as sources of information about the internal workings of sects or their beliefs. She rather focuses on the meanings and implications of the writing — and reading — of these polemical treatises in the 1640s and 1650s.¹² The loud and rude, incoherent and often unreasonable collection of texts which makes up *Gangræna* — confutations of religious errors, accounts of sectaries and other hearsay, extracts from letters and pamphlets — shows how the Presbyterians in the mid-1640s sought to communicate with a wider public, calling and inviting readers to participate in polemics. Edwards’ *Gangræna* was not a work of a despairing elite puritan unconnected from the popular culture. It was “offering accessible entertainment as well as instruction to a broad readership.”¹³

The monster tale at the beginning of this chapter can be read in this context. *Gangræna* is full of languages and imagery that reached beyond the range of conventional sermons and treatises. The use of sensational gossip and stories that were meant to be shocking, was one reason for the book’s commercial success, and was part of popularizing strategy of the ‘high’ Calvinists. A similarly close link between Presbyterian ‘popular’ politics and sensationalist pamphlet literature can be detected in the 1646 tract *Bloody News from Dover*. This account of an infanticide committed by an Anabaptist mother seems to follow the same pattern as the Colchester episode. This time, John Champion, the father of the baby, and “an honest Tradesman,” wished to have his newborn

¹¹ For discussions on early modern fear, see William G. Naphy and Penny Roberts (eds.), *Fear in Early Modern Society* (Manchester, 1997).

¹² “[W]e cannot use the printed works of men such as Hall and Edwards as direct sources of information on religious developments in the 1640s and 1650s.” Hughes, “‘Popular’ Presbyterianism”, p. 244. See also Hughes, ‘The Meanings of Religious Polemic’, in F. J. Bremer (ed.), *Puritanism: Transatlantic perspectives on a seventeenth-century Anglo-American faith* (Boston, 1993), pp. 201-229; idem, ‘Gender and Politics in Leveller Literature’, in S. D. Amussen and M. A. Kishlansky (eds.), *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England* (Manchester and New York, 1995), pp. 162-188; idem, ‘Public disputations, pamphlets and polemic,’ *History Today*, 41 (1991), pp. 27-33.

¹³ Hughes, “‘Popular’ Presbyterianism”, p. 249.

child baptized “according the ancient Custome of the Kingdome.” But his wife refused, and when Champion was away from home, “took a great knife and cut off the Childs head.”

And when her husband came in, she called him into a little Parlour, where the poore Infant lay bleeding, uttering these words. Behold husband, thy sweet Babe without a head. Now go and baptize it; if you will, you must christen the head without a body: for here they lye separated.¹⁴

The pamphleteer believed that such a horrid story “might be a great means to move the honourable houses of Parliament, to proceed on in a Parliamentary way, for the putting down of all Sectaries whatsoever,” and applauded the public fast for the suppression of heresies on 10 March 1646.¹⁵ The apparent ‘bizarreness’ of such murder stories and monster tales were not just a result of social confusion but were part of a conscious political rhetoric.¹⁶

In this chapter, however, I will focus on the metaphors and imagery used in *Gangræna* and other seventeenth-century heresiographies, rather than on their social function or their role in shaping popular politics. Of course one cannot, and should not, separate images from political motivations and power relations. But I would like to focus on the bodily images and physiological metaphors in order to examine the role they play in constituting the very concept of ‘heresy’ and ‘heretic’ in these works. I will try to probe why Anabaptists and Quakers should have born monstrous babies and why Edwards entitled his anti-sectarian treatise *Gangræna*. Edwards certainly successfully produced populist propaganda and made the maximum use of sensationalist languages, but one needs also to investigate how and why the metaphors of disease and deformity appeared credible to contemporary readers. In this chapter I will argue that the bodily imagery of seventeenth-century heresiographies was more than just a form of hysterical heresy-bashing. Edwards’ vocabulary and rhetoric tells us something about the terms and the contexts in which early modern people perceived ‘religion’.

Thomas Edwards was born in 1599, and educated at Queens’ College, Cambridge, where he was licensed as a university preacher. At that time

¹⁴ *Bloody News From Dover* (1646), p. 3.

¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁶ Peter Lake, ‘Puritanism, Arminianism and a Shropshire Axe-murder,’ *Midland History*, (1990), pp. 37-64; *idem*, ‘Deeds against Nature: Cheap Print, Protestantism and Murder in Early Seventeenth Century England’, in K. Sharpe and P. Lake (eds.), *Culture and Politics in Early Stuart England* (London, 1994), pp. 257-283.

Edwards' anti-Arminian puritan attitude earned him the nickname 'Young Luther'. Benjamin Brook records that he was forced to withdraw his attack against 'carnal' authority at St. Andrew's in Cambridge in 1628.¹⁷ In 1629, he moved to London where he became a licensed preacher at St. Botolph's, Aldgate, in the east of the City. He repeatedly preached against 'popish innovations and Arminian tenets' and soon found himself among those puritan ministers at odds with archbishop Laud. Edwards recalled that in July 1640 he preached a sermon in the Mercers' chapel "against the Bishops and their faction" for which an attachment was issued against him, and he was prosecuted in the High Commission. In 1646 he recalled his intransigence in these years:

I (...) never had a Canonick coat, never gave a peny to the building of *Pauls*, took not the Canonick oath, declined Subscription for many years before the Parliament (though I practised the old conformity), would not give *ne obulum quidem* to the contributions against the *Scots*, but dissuaded other Ministers; much lesse did I yeeld to bow to the Altar, and at the name of Jesus, or administer the Lord's Supper at a Table turned Altarwise, or bring the people up to Rails, or read the book of sports, or highly flatter the Archbishop in an Epistle Dedicatory to him, or put Articles into the Highcommission Court against any (...).¹⁸

When the Civil War broke out, Edwards soon became a zealous supporter of the Presbyterian party, and established himself as one of the most militant polemicists against the Independents. The pulpit and the printing press were the two cannons with which Edwards restlessly attacked religious Independents and whoever else appeared to threaten the Presbyterian vision of a national church reformation in England. The contents of his books were well rehearsed in his preaching. Early leaders of London Congregationalists, many of whom shared a common background with other puritans, were appalled by Edwards' fierce tongue. William Kiffin, the Baptist, was so enraged that he printed a letter of protest against Edwards in November 1644 demanding leave

¹⁷ Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans*, vol. 3 (London, 1813), p. 87, quoted in Alice Clare Carter, *The English Reformed Church in Amsterdam in the Seventeenth Century* (Amsterdam, 1964), p. 203. Cf. William Haller, *Liberty and Reformation in the Puritan Revolution* (New York, 1955), p. 255.

¹⁸ Edwards, *Gangraena I*, pp.75-76; DNB, s.n.; Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (Aldershot, 1997), p. 9.

publicly to object to his speech after the sermon had ended at Christ Church, Newgate, where Edwards had been elected as a regular lecturer.¹⁹

1646 was the year of Thomas Edwards. The first part of *Gangræna* was published in February (26th), and was followed by the second in May (28th), and the third in December (28th). He did promise to go on to a fourth part of *Gangræna*, at the end of the third part. However, he produced only one more volume, the 280-page *The casting down of the last and strongest hold of Satan, or, A Treatise against Toleration And pretended Liberty of Conscience* (June 1647) before his death. As the New Model Army approached the City in the summer of 1647, and the City desperately tried to put together a militia that could be a counter force, Edwards called for violent resistance to the New Model in a sermon on the fast day of 28th July.²⁰ The resentment and sensation which Edwards caused was so great that he felt himself a marked man. He fled to Amsterdam shortly after the New Model Army's entry into London on 6th August. Edwards probably died in Amsterdam the same year, although there is some evidence that he may have survived till February 1648.²¹ There is a document recording 'Mr. Edwards' Confession in his sickness' dated December 1647 and witnessed by the pastors of the English Reformed church in Amsterdam. It is a solemn declaration that he had in no way changed his views about the matters he had "preached or written, against the late sects and errors which have risen and sprung up in England," and that he refused to recant a single word.²²

Ironically, this declaration testified to the degree of animosity Edwards attracted from those he attacked. His sickbed confession was clearly drawn up against William Walwyn's 1646 pamphlet, *A Prediction of Mr. Edwards his Conversion, and Recantation*, in which Walwyn imagined an elderly Edwards regretting his heyday.

I have wrought very much trouble [...] in all parts throughout this Nation; and have caused great disaffection in Families, Cities and Counties, for difference in judgement, (which I ought not to have done) Irritating and provoking one against an other, to the dissolving of all civill and naturall relations, and [...] inciting and animating to the extirpation and utter ruine one of another, in so much as the whole Land (by my unhappy meanes, more then any others) is

¹⁹ William Kiffin, *To Mr Thomas Edwards* (London, 1644).

²⁰ Valerie Pearl, 'London's Counter-Revolution', in G. E. Aylmer (ed.), *The Interregnum: The Quest for Settlement 1646-1660* (London, 1972), p. 51; Hughes, "'Popular' Presbyterianism', p. 237.

²¹ Roots, op. cit., p. 15; *DNB*, s.n.

become a Nation of quarrels, distractions, and divisions, our Cities, Cities of strife, slander, and backbiting.²³

Milton, whose doctrine of divorce was listed as the 154th error in the first part of *Gangraena*, wrote of Edwards in his sonnet:

Men whose life, learning, faith, and pure intent,
Would have been held in high esteem with *Paul*,
Must now be named and printed heretics
By shallow *Edwards* and Scotch what-d'ye-call!²⁴

Jeremiah Burroughes wrote of him:

I doubt whether there ever was any in the Christian world who was looked upon as a man professing godlinesse in that height that he hath beene, that ever manifested so much boldnesse and malice against such as himselfe acknowledges to be godly, as he hath done; [...] that fiery rage, that implacable irrationall violence of his, makes me stand and wonder at him. [...] I beleieve this [...] can hardly be paralleld in any age.²⁵

2. Pathology of religion: 'heresy' as gangrene

Thomas Edwards' harsh language in *Gangraena* was no doubt intended to damage the reputation of the Independents and advocates of religious toleration. He sought to stigmatise and marginalize the sects. As historians have commented, the seemingly unsophisticated succession of accounts detailing the scandalous misconduct of sectaries in *Gangraena* was very different in style from conventional theological treatises. For example, Daniel Featley in his anti-Anabaptist work, *Dippers Dipt* (1645), concentrated on proving the legitimacy of infant baptism, while Richard Allen, in his *An Antidote against Heresy* (1648), discussed some 30 points of the Christian doctrine which he

²² Carter, *English Reformed Church in Amsterdam*, pp. 201-202.

²³ William Walwin, *A Prediction of Mr. Edwards his Conversion, and Recantation* (London, 1646), p. 8, reproduced in William Haller, *Tracts on Liberty in the Puritan Revolution, 1638-1647*, vol. 3 (New York, 1965), pp. 337-48. Thomason dated his acquisition as August 11.

²⁴ *On the New Forcers of Conscience under the Long Parliament*, in Gordon Campbell (ed.), *John Milton: Complete English Poems, of Education, Areopagitica*, 4th edn. (London, 1990), pp. 109-110. "Scotch what-d'ye-call" was, most probably, Robert Baillie.

²⁵ Jeremiah Burroughes, *A Vindication of Mr Burroughes* (London, 1646), p. 2.

thought were susceptible to error, from Predestination to Purgatory.²⁶ However, the primary strength of Edwards' *Gangræna* was its extreme language and images. And nothing manifested the stigma he raised against the sects more dramatically than the book's title. "In this following Book as in a cleare and true Glasse," Edwards proudly wrote in his preface to the Third Part of *Gangræna*, "every impartiall and ingenuous Reader may plainly behold the many Deformities and great Spots of the Sectaries of these times, Spots of all kinds, Plague spots, feaver spots, Purpule spots, Leprosie spots, Scurvey spots, Spots upon great corruption and infection, of whom may be said as in Moses Song, Deut. 32. 5. They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are perverse and crooked generation."²⁷

Thus in *Gangræna* sectaries were represented as an embodiment of disease, and as a way by which disease was conveyed. In the second part Edwards crowed that his enemies "wil wish a hundred times they had been asleep in their beds when they mudled with *Gangræna*; yea *Gangræna*, and this defence of it will prove so incurable a Gangren to them, that they shall never be cured of it by al[l] the Mountebanck quacksalving drugs and tricks of all the Sectaries of this time."²⁸ They have "so polluted themselves with corruption in worship, and the inventions of men."²⁹ Their errors were "gross" and their practices "pernicious."³⁰ 'heresy', moreover, was an infectious disease. As Kishlansky rightly pointed out, the danger of gangrene was "to the unaffected parts of the body."³¹ It was a great annoyance to Edwards that sectaries "spread their errours the more in some great Town," "get a new house every day, the more to infect and possesse the people with their waies and tenets."³² Like Arianism started by "a few Sectaries" but "grown now to many thousands", "small errors at first, and but in a few, grow to be great and infect many."³³ Sectaries with

²⁶ Daniel Featley, *The Dippers Dipt: or, the Anabaptists duck'd and plung'd over head and eares at a Disputation at Southwark* (London, 1645); Richard Allen, *An antidote against heresy: or A preservative for Protestants against the poyson of Papists, Anabaptists, Arrians, Arminians, &c. and their pestilent errours* (London, 1648).

²⁷ *Gang.* III, Sig. (*)r.

²⁸ *Gang.* II, Sig. A[4]r.

²⁹ *Gang.* I, p. 75.

³⁰ *Gang.* I, the title page, p. 77.

³¹ Mark A. Kishlansky, *The Rise of the New Model Army* (Cambridge, 1979), p. 73.

³² *Gang.* I, p. 66.

³³ *Gang.* I, p. 113.

“their horrible uncleannesses”³⁴ were “poisoning many in the City”³⁵ by their “ill speech of the Ministry.”³⁶

Why gangrene? Why was it effective and credible to use images of gangrene in order to brand opinions as heretical? Susan Sontag’s famous essay of 1978 explored how metaphors of illness have been used to describe the socially unfavourable (negative) in the western literary tradition.³⁷ Reacting against the demonization of patients suffering from illness, Sontag analysed the accusatory and punitive nature of languages describing diseases such as tuberculosis and cancer.

Nothing is more punitive than to give disease a meaning — that meaning being invariably a moralistic one. Any important disease whose causality is murky, and for which treatment is ineffectual, tends to be awash in significance. First, the subjects of deepest dread (corruption, decay, pollution, anomie, weakness) are identified with the disease. The disease itself becomes a metaphor. Then, in the name of the disease (that is, using it as a metaphor), that horror is imposed on other things. The disease becomes adjectival. Something is said to be disease-like, meaning that it is disgusting or ugly.³⁸

In its consideration of, for example, the rhetorical use of tuberculosis in the anti-Jewish campaign of the Nazi movement, Sontag’s discussion never appears simply rhetorical.³⁹ But apart from noting the political incorrectness of the language and imagination of early modern people, what can we make of Thomas Edwards and other heresiographers’ metaphors of disease? While it is true that illness and moral value have been strongly connected, it is not clear whether it is morality that stigmatizes illness, or whether it is disease that formulates our understanding of wrong (and right). This chapter argues that religion and physiology were intertwined in seventeenth-century heresiography, and that it is not only difficult but also pointless to try to judge which had priority. We need rather to investigate the wider intellectual and cultural environment in which Edwards’ religious polemics and their medical metaphors appeared reasonable. As David Gentilcore writes, disease “is not simply a set of symptoms. Revolving around it are the complex and elaborate

³⁴ *Gang.* II, p. 176.

³⁵ *Gang.* I, p. 65.

³⁶ *Gang.* III, table for pp. 239-240.

³⁷ Susan Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor (and AIDS and its Metaphors)* (London, 1991; first published in 1978). Cf. Sander L. Gilman, *Disease and representation: images of illness from madness to AIDS* (Ithaca, etc., 1988).

³⁸ Sontag, *Illness as Metaphor*, pp. 59-60.

ways in which illness itself is perceived and responded to.”⁴⁰ The language and imagery of disease in *Gangræna* were not casual tools for negative stigmatization. Rather, they represented a key epistemological context in which the idea of ‘heresy’ was formulated.

During the last two decades, an increasing number of historians have studied what may be termed the cultural history of the body.⁴¹ In early modern history, scholars have focused upon how issues of sexuality, dress, hygiene and health were interrelated with the notion of politics and the social order as well as the general world-views of men and women, whether literate or illiterate.⁴² Such studies have shown that the early modern understanding of the body was strongly connected to religious ideas. The health of the body was viewed as God’s gift, and religious faith was considered to have an immense importance for the maintenance of one’s body. Illness was seen as the result of divine providence, with which God warned men of the need for repentance. The Elizabethan prayer book commended, “whatsoever your sickness is, know you certainly, that it is God’s visitation.” A sinner was frequently compared with a sick man, and seeking Gods’ assistance was thought of as an essential part of the cure of illness. In fact the English words, ‘health’ and ‘salvation’, originated from the same Latin word *salus*.⁴³ Consequently one of the focuses of the

³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 83.

⁴⁰ David Gentilcore, ‘The fear of disease and the disease of fear’, in W. G. Naphy and P. Roberts (eds.), *Fear in Early Modern Society* (Manchester, 1997), p. 186.

⁴¹ T. W. Laqueur, ‘Bodies, Details and the Human Narrative’, in L. Hunt (ed.), *The New Cultural History* (Berkeley, etc., 1994), pp. 176-204; Dorinda Outram, *The Body and the French Revolution: Sex, Class and Political Culture* (New Haven and London, 1989); L. Hunt, *Eroticism and the Body Politic* (Baltimore, 1991); Richard Sennett, *Flesh and Stone: The Body and the City in Western Civilization* (London, 1994); Lyndal Roper, *Oedipus and the Devil: Witchcraft, sexuality and religion in early modern Europe* (London and New York, 1994); The increasing interest in the body is most obvious in the field of literary criticism, though fully covering its academic development is impossible here. For a general discussion of the current historiography of bodies, see Mark S. R. Jenner, ‘Review essay: body, image, text in early modern Europe,’ *Social History of Medicine*, 12, no. 1 (1999), pp. 143-154.

⁴² Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (eds.), *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540-1660* (London, 1990); Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (London, etc., 1971); Keith Thomas, ‘Cleanliness and Godliness in early Modern England’, in A. Fletcher and P. Roberts (eds.), *Religion, Culture and Society in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 56-83.

⁴³ R. A. Anselment, *The Realms of Apollo: Literature and Healing in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1995); A. Wear, ‘Puritan perceptions of illness in seventeenth-century England’, in R. Porter (ed.), *Patients and Practitioners: Lay Perceptions of Medicine in Pre-industrial Society* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 67-68, 70-72; Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, ch. 4; Alan Macfarlane, *The Family Life of Ralph Josselin* (Cambridge, 1970); Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in early modern England* (Oxford, 1999); J. E. Booty (ed.), *The Elizabethan Prayer Book* (Charlottesville, 1976), p. 301, quoted in Anselment, *Realms of Apollo*, p. 25.

history of medicine in the seventeenth century has been to examine the complex relations and tensions between religion and medicine.⁴⁴ However, influence should not be understood as flowing in a single direction. Historians have been keen to describe how medicine evolved over time from a form that was largely influenced by religious thoughts to a modern, secularized and scientific discipline. The idea that illness was part of divine providence, for example, is therefore seen as part of medicine in the time before the 'disenchantment', the time when ideas were 'still' captivated by religion. This view, however, does not question its central category 'religion', treating it as if it was unchanging. Andrew Wear in his study of the puritan idea of illness examined the degree of "spiritualisation of illness" but failed to inquire how much the understanding of the spiritual was assisted by that of the somatic.⁴⁵

Just as early modern knowledge of medicine was circumscribed by theology, the understanding of some religious concepts was assisted by physiological languages. It was within the intertwined relation between physical and spiritual health that the impact of 'heresy' on the soul was presented as that of gangrene to the body. Obadiah Sedgwick's sermon on the *Nature and Danger of Heresies* explained that gangrene ('canker') was "an invading ulcer, creeping from joynt to joynt, corrupting one part after another, till at length it eats out the very heart and life," so that "by them you may judge whether heresies are dangerous yea or no."⁴⁶ If physical indisposition signified disorder in one's religion, 'heresy' was a more malignant form of religious illness, for which the medical counterpart was the incurable condition of gangrene.⁴⁷

The term 'gangrene' should not be understood in the narrow sense it has today. It derived from the Latin word *cancrum* (crab) and was a Latin synonym for 'canker', or 'cancer'. 'Cancer' before the seventeenth century did not refer to an internal disease, rather it was one of the general terms that described skin

⁴⁴ See articles in Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (eds.), *Religio Medici: Medicine and Religion in Seventeenth-Century England* (Aldershot, 1996); C. Webster, *The Great Instauration: Science, medicine and reform, 1626-1660* (London, 1975).

⁴⁵ Wear, 'Puritan perceptions of illness', p. 57.

⁴⁶ Obadiah Sedgwick, *The Nature and Danger of Heresies* (London, 1647), p. 16.

⁴⁷ David N. Harley, 'Medical Metaphors in English Moral Theology, 1560-1660,' *Journal of the history of medicine and allied sciences*, 48, no. 4 (1993), pp. 407-8, 419-20. However, saying that 'heresy' was disease of the soul, does not mean it was considered as a 'mental' illness. 'Madness' is, as has been pointed by many scholars, a concept which modern medicine constructed in the process of its establishment. Indeed it is noteworthy that religious sects were rarely stated as madmen, as in *Mathematicall Divine* (1642) which blamed "the Nicholaites, the Canthuri, the Arrians, the Adamites, [...] and other frantick people of that kinde, whorthy to be put in Bethelam-hospitall neere the suburbs of London." p. 4.

diseases such as ulcers, scabs, tumours, and skin cancer, those for which there was no cure except amputation.⁴⁸ James Cranford compared the condition of the Church of England in 1646 with that of Job in the Old Testament who was struck with sores all over the body: “*Jobs* case, over which his friends for seven dayes wept, was not so bad as ours: his sores were *boyles*, ours *gangrenes*; his would endure *scraping*, ours will not endure *touching*; his *body* was affected, our *souls*.”⁴⁹ (Likewise, ‘heresy’ was sometimes described as leprosy. “We are like to have Sectarism like a universal Leprosie over-spread this whole Kingdom,” exclaimed Edwards.⁵⁰)

In religious writings the metaphor of cancer had a long history; like various other metaphors, such as false prophets, foxes in the vineyard or wolves in sheep’s clothing, it originated from the Bible.⁵¹ St Paul wrote that a Christian should “shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. And their word will eat as doth a canker.” In various English translations ‘gangrene’ was often suggested as an alternative to ‘canker’.⁵² The quotation given by Presbyterian ministers in Cheshire in 1648 was made more applicable to their situation: “For the word of hereticall seducers fretteth or eateth into the soul as a canker, or [...] a Gangrene.”⁵³ In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries canker/gangrene was often invoked in religious polemics against radical sects or Roman Catholicism. For the Elizabethan puritan, John Knewstubs, the best way to emphasize the danger of the Family of Love was to compare it with the “ca[n]ker of Poperie” that was “able to eat up the whole church.”⁵⁴ In 1602 English recusant William Watson attacked the Jesuits who “have bespattered with a most dangerous Gangrene, the whole bodie misticall

⁴⁸ Pierre Darmon, *Les Cellules Folles* (1993); R. I. Moore, ‘Heresy as disease’, in W. Lourdaux, and D. Verhelst (eds.), *The Concept of heresy in the Middle Ages (11th-13th c.) : Proceedings of the international conference Louvain, May 13-16, 1973* (Leuven, 1976), p. 3; OED, s.n.

⁴⁹ Cranford, *Hæreseo-machia: or, the mischiefe which heresies doe* (London, 1646), p. 35.

⁵⁰ *Gang. I*, p. 92.

⁵¹ Song of Solomon 2:15, Matthew 7:15, 24:24, II Peter 2:1.

⁵² King James, II Timothy 2:16-17a, followed by “... of whom is Hymenæus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some.” (2:17b-18.) In Geneva Bible: “Stay prophane, and vaine babblings: for they shal encrease unto more ungodlines. / And their worde shal fret as a cancre: of which sorte is Hymeneus and Philetus, / Which as concerning the trueth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and do destroye the faith of certeine.” *The Geneva Bible: A facsimile of the 1560 edition* (Madison, 1969).

⁵³ *An Attestation to the Testimony of Our Reverend Brethren of the Province of London* (London, 1648), p. 18.

⁵⁴ John Knewstubs, *A confutation of monstrous and horrible heresies* (London, 1579), Sig. **[1]r.

of Christ,” and was echoed by Thomas James, Sub-Dean of Wells in 1612: “Jesuitisme [...] is become a Gangraena, it must therefore be cut of.”⁵⁵ The arrival of Arianism into Britain in the fourth century was described by Thomas Fuller in his *Church-History* (1655) as “*Gangrene* of that Heresy [which] began to spread it self into this *Island*.”⁵⁶

The labelling of radical religious sects as gangrene also occurred in anti-Anabaptist polemics on the continent. Johannes Cloppenburg (1592-1652), a friend of Voetius, and one of the most vehement Calvinists in Leiden, attacked the Mennonites in Amsterdam in *Canker van de leere der Wederdooperen* (“Cancer of the teachings of the Anabaptists”, 1625). Its later Latin title was *Gangraena Theologiae Anabapticae*.⁵⁷ There is a strong possibility that Thomas Edwards obtained or knew of Cloppenburg’s *Gangraena* through the Scottish commissioner, Robert Baillie, who actively promoted the publishing and translation of continental anti-sectarian works. In 1645, the year before Edwards’ *Gangræna* hit the press, Cloppenburg’s *Gangraena* was reprinted in Franeker, in the northern Netherlands, bound together with an anti-Anabaptist treatise by the German Calvinist Friedrich Spanheim.⁵⁸ On November 29th Baillie wrote to his cousin in Edinburgh, William Spang: “I thank you for Cloppenburge. I wish Spanheim made this his [principal] work.”⁵⁹ Spanheim’s work was then translated into English and published in 1646 by a dedicated Presbyterian printer John Bellamy.⁶⁰ Baillie used and advertised Cloppenburg’s *Gangraena* in his own *Anabaptisme, the true Fountaine of Independency, Brownisme ... and most of the other errorrs* (London, 1647).

The language of disease was particularly effective because it denoted the nature of ‘heresy’, not the character of a particular doctrine. One of the important points which the heresiographers stressed was the infectious nature of ‘heresy’. James Cranford, for instance, repeated in his sermon in front of the Lord Mayor and the Aldermen of the City in February 1646: “Erroneous and

⁵⁵ Watson, *A decacordon of ten quodlibeticall questions concerning religion and state* (London, 1602; facsimile edition, London, 1974), p. 41; Thomas James, *The Jesuits downefall, threatned against them by the secular priests* (Oxford, 1612), p. 47.

⁵⁶ Thomas Fuller, *The Church-History of Britain; From the Birth of Jesus Christ, untill the year M.DC.XLVIII* (London, 1655), I, Cent. IV, section 21, p. 25. The use of medical metaphor is often seen in the works of Fuller, who wrote, for example, that irreligion “abates the reverence of religion, and ulcers mens hearts with profanenesse.” *The Holy State and the Profane State* (Cambridge, 1642), p. 379.

⁵⁷ *Nieuw Nederlandsch Biografisch Woordenboek* (Leiden, 1911), p. 613.

⁵⁸ Friedrich Spanheim, *Diatribè historica de origine, progressu, sectis et nominibus Anabaptistarum* (Franeker, 1645).

⁵⁹ *Letters and Journals of Robert Baillie* (Edinburgh, 1841-2), ii, p. 327.

unsound doctrine is of a devouring (i.e. spreading and destroying) nature [...] I pray you observe it; Heresies, erroneous doctrines, are damnable [...] They are of a destroying nature. They are of a spreading nature.”⁶¹ Thomas Edwards warned of the negative effect of the Army’s victories throughout England, because “every taking of a Town or City, is a further spreading over this Kingdom the gangrene of Heresie and Errour, where these Errours were never known nor heard of before.”⁶²

Consequently the metaphor of canker/gangrene sometimes overlapped with that of plague. Medieval historians have noted that during the twelfth century the terms ‘pestis’ or ‘pestilentia’ were repeatedly used in European ‘orthodox’ religious writings whenever there was an outbreak of heresies.⁶³ Though there were certain differences in the nuance of the term — cancer ‘eats’ the body from within, while plague would ‘strike’ (Latin: *plaga*) from outside — both cancer and plague manifested a clear picture that ‘heresy’ was an infectious disease. For John Knewstubs the Family of Love was “the pestilentest heresie that ever was in that land.”⁶⁴ During the 1640s conservative ministers used the same language to condemn the laxness in the control of printing press for the circulation of diverse religious views. “Nor is it the *Pulpit* which can keep off the infection,” Richard Vines warned, “whiles the poison is carried up and downe in books, and ... many strange doctrines ... goe vailed, and dropt into the Reader by insinuation.”⁶⁵

There was a general belief that this plague was carried by ‘poison’. One anti-Catholic writer in 1630 remarked, “it seemes, that the most dangerous Poyson that Satan useth to entoxicate men ... derives chiefly from the *Masse*.” Alexander Ross wrote that the two greatest “Engines that Satan used to overthrow Religion” were “Open persecution and Heresie, with the one he destroyed the bodies, with the other he poysoned the soules of Christians.”⁶⁶ Thomas Edwards called his third part of *Gangræna* “a Sovereigne Antidote both to expell the poyson already received and to prevent the taking infection.” Indeed, early modern authors often used the term ‘antidote’ to introduce their

⁶⁰ *Englands Warning by Germanies Woe* (London, 1646). For Bellamy, see Valerie Pearl, ‘London’s Counter-Revolution’, p. 33.

⁶¹ Cranford, *Hæreseo-machia*, p. 2.

⁶² *Gang. I*, p. 149.

⁶³ Moore, ‘Heresy as disease’, pp. 1-2.

⁶⁴ Knewstubs, *Confutation*, Sig. **3v.

⁶⁵ Richard Vines, *The Authours, Nature, and Danger of Hæresie* (London, 1647), pp. 66-67.

⁶⁶ *The Originall of Popish Idolatrie, or the Birth of Heresies* (1630), ‘The authors epistle to the reader’, Sig. (5)r; Alexander Ross, *Pansebeia: or, A View of all Religions in the World* (London, 1653), p. 167.

anti-heresy writings.⁶⁷ The contamination of religious error would occur in the way plague was passed via the polluted humours or the noxious breath of the infected person. Ephraim Pagitt, for instance, wrote that "...for those errors that *Browne* recanted and vomited up, many male contented simple men supped up and swallowed downe, poysoning their selves and others."⁶⁸

Poyson is very dangerous, but no poyson so dangerous to the body, as false Doctrine to the soule. Beware of false Prophets, more dangerous than men infected with the plague. The plague is of all diseases most infectious to the body; heresie is as infectious to the soule.⁶⁹

For Pagitt, the plague of 'heresy' was worse than the fatality of epidemics.

The City is much more to be pittied at this time swarming with false Prophets, then when there dyed in it 5000 a week of the Plague. Then we lamented the dead bodies of our friends departed, whose souls God had taken to himselfe; But now we may lament the soules of our people who are departed from God.⁷⁰

Applying another biblical story, Edwards described the sudden increase of sects "the plague of *Egypt* upon us," that was brought by "Frogs out of the bottomlesse pit covering our Land, coming into our Houses, Bed-chambers, Beds, Churches."⁷¹

Healing the body spiritual: treatment and alienation

The images of cancer and plague not only explained the epidemical nature of 'heresy', they also implied what necessary measures were to be taken. There was some ambiguity about what attitude to take towards those infected with the plague of 'heresy', just as there was towards lepers and plague-infected patients. Clerical writers repeatedly excused themselves, saying that they did not possess any personal hatred towards those who fell into error, whose 'poor souls' were to be pitied. They were essentially victims of disease. "The end of my writing is not to hurt any man," explained Pagitt, "but to give warning to

⁶⁷ *Gang.* III, Sig. (*)r. Other examples are: Richard Allen, *An antidote against heresy: or A preservative for Protestants against the poyson of Papists, Anabaptists, Arrians, Arminians, &c. and their pestilent errors* (London, 1648); *An Antidote against the contagious air of Independency* (London, 1644).

⁶⁸ Ephraim Pagitt, *Heresiography: or a description of the Hereticks and Sectaries of these latter times* (London, 1645), p. 45.

⁶⁹ Ephraim Pagitt, *The Mystical Wolfe, set forth in a sermon* (London, 1645), p. 29.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*, p. 29.

⁷¹ *Gang.* I, p. 121; Exodus, 8:1-14, 9:8-11.

well-minded soules, and especially to them that are entangled with errors, to pray to God to give them grace to see and renounce their errors, and to acknowledg [sic] the truth, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the Devill.”⁷² Even Thomas Edwards trumpeted the “love, kindnesse and tendernes” of the Presbyterians towards Independents and sectaries.⁷³ But at the same time, the contagion of ‘heresy’ was not to be excused. James Cranford said that blame was partly on those infected, for “diseases prove infectious by reason of the *dyscrasy* of our inward temprature.”⁷⁴ ‘Heretics’ could not be let loose and allowed to infect further; they had to be suppressed.

Pagitt insisted that sectaries were not worth befriending because they were “not onely in danger of infection, but grievously infected.” Sectaries were selfish and would not recognize the need of help. “One poore soule cryeth out, no set prayers; another no Sabbath; another no Lords Prayer; another, no Law for a rule of life.”⁷⁵ Such arguments paralleled the positions adopted in the debates on the definition of ‘heresy’ in the 1640s examined in the previous chapter. In order to become a ‘heresy’ an error had to be “obstinately” maintained “with a pertinacious spirit.”⁷⁶ Ministers trying to persuade and convert one who was utterly convinced with errors might risk their own lives, for “they are in as much danger as they that goe to visit men sick of the pestilence.” “Would any man entertaine into his family,” asked Pagitt, “a man infected with the plague?”⁷⁷

Nevertheless, the idea that ‘heresy’ was as an infectious disease urged action. If diseased parts were diagnosed as incurable, they could and should be amputated. Despite the predictable fact that patients would do their best to avoid their limbs being cut off, failure to accept the operation would mean certain death. Thus George Wither, the poet and pamphleteer, wrote in 1646, in the middle of heated contestation between the Presbyterian and the Independent parties, of the challenge parliament faced in terms of a wounded body.

As when a Surgeon, who hath undergone
A Cure, and, therein, his endeavour done
According to the Art by him professed:

⁷² *Heresiography*, Sig. B[2]v.

⁷³ *Gang. I*, p. 58.

⁷⁴ Cranford, *Hæreseo-machia*, p. 30.

⁷⁵ *Mysticall Wolfe*, p. 29.

⁷⁶ Sedgwick, *Nature and Danger of Heresies*, pp. 8, 14.

⁷⁷ Pagitt, *Mysticall Wolfe*, pp. 29, 35.

When, he, the sore hath searched, clens'd, and dressed,
With Tenets and Plaisters proper thereunto,
(And, all things els, besitting him to do)
If, on the Wound, his Medicine worketh nought
Of that effect, which, thereby, hath been sought,
But, keeps it at a stand, or, makes it worse:
He, presently begins another course;
And, if that, also, failes him, growes assured,
It is a Cancer hardly to be cured.
And, may become a Gangrieve, which will slay
His Patient, if it be not cut away.⁷⁸

The metaphor of infectious disease articulated these two contradictory desires: treatment and alienation.

The language of surgery also highlighted the issue of *who* was to fight against the disease of 'heresy'. Ephraim Pagitt appealed to the initiative of the governors of the City, reminding them of their role in time of epidemics. "I have lived among you almost a Jubilee, and seene your great care and provision to keep the City from infection," Pagitt wrote to the Aldermen of London, "in the shutting up the sicke, and in carrying them to your Pest-houses, in setting Warders to keep the whole from the sicke, in making fires and perfuming the streets, in resorting to your Churches, in powring out your prayers to Almighty God with fasting and almes to be propitious to you." Though Pagitt believed that the plague of 'heresy' was far more serious, he thought that the basic strategy to be followed should be the same. "You have power to keep these Hereticks and Sectaries from Conventickling and scholing together to infect one another."⁷⁹ The idea was repeated in a 1662 edition of *Heresiography*, in a newly inserted dedication to John Frederick, the Lord Mayor of the City. According to the writer, "Heresie being like the Plague or Pestilence which usually seizeth first upon the Metropolis, and great Cities of Kingdomes, doth more particularly oblige and require its chief Magistrates care and diligence to keep it from spreading, that by any means it might be remedied."⁸⁰ Thomas Edwards similarly called the members of the Lords and Commons "our great

⁷⁸ Wither, *English Balme*, p. 1.

⁷⁹ Pagitt, *Heresiography*, Sig. A[6]r. For the responsibilities of magistrates in time of plague in early modern England, see Paul Slack, *The Impact of Plague in Tudor and Stuart England* (London, etc., 1985), ch. 10, esp. pp. 256-266.

⁸⁰ Pagitt, *Heresiography*, revised 6th edn. (1662). This new dedication to the Lord Mayor, John Frederick, was signed by 'J. Heath', probably James Heath (1629-1664), the royalist historian. Not paginated.

Physicians,” who “have been wont to cure the worst maladies and diseases of our Church and State.”⁸¹

But generally clerical writers saw themselves as fitter for the task. Robert Baillie wrote that the remedy of the body spiritual was a matter graver than that of the body politic.

The Crimes of persons are grievous, but those of a State are more: the corruption of a member is not so grievous as of the whole Body; and the deformity of the Body Politicall, is not so unpleasant to the eye of God as of the Church: this is the Body, this is the Bride of Christ; nothing so much provokes the passion of a loving husband as the polluting of his Spouse. Church-grievances were the first and maine causes of our present Troubles, the righting of these, will open the door of our first hope of deliverance.⁸²

The cure of the disease of ‘heresy’ should, ministers claimed, appertain to the experts in religion. The dual understanding of body and soul, of physical and religious health, rendered ministers professional medical practitioners against spiritual maladies. While magistrates and members of Parliament were frequently called physicians of the state, Calvinist ministers were eager to identify themselves as ‘physicians of the soul’.⁸³ Writing of “schismatics and heretics” of his time, Robert Burton in his *The Anatomy of Melancholy* asked: “What shall we wish them, but *sanam mentem* [a sound mind] and a good physician?”⁸⁴

Indeed, in both Catholic and Reformed parts of early modern Europe, physicians and ministers constituted their authority with reference to each other.⁸⁵ In England, medical metaphors were especially favoured by Calvinists, who needed to establish their importance in society, and who had a clear sense of calling. The social position of ministers was more or less the same as

⁸¹ *Gang.*, I, Sigs. A2r-v.

⁸² Robert Baillie, *A Dissuasive from the Errours of the Time* (2nd impression, London, 1646), p. 2.

⁸³ Harley, ‘Medical Metaphors’, p. 406. This phrase became the title of the first chapter of William Haller’s *The Rise of Puritanism* (1938).

⁸⁴ Burton, Robert, *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, Part 3, Section 4, Member 1, Subsection 2, in *Everyman’s Library* edition (London and New York, 1961), p. 324.

⁸⁵ In sixteenth-century Italy, plague was a popular metaphor for ‘heresy’, which meant Protestantism. Those books banned in the Index included not only theological works from the Protestant Europe but also medical works, reflecting the Church’s concern about the close relation between medical and theological knowledge. In Venice, physicians, who were receptive to northern intellectual circles, were often accused of carrying ‘infected’ books. See Richard Palmer, ‘Physicians and the Inquisition in sixteenth-century Venice’, in O. P. Grell and A. Cunningham (eds.), *Medicine and the Reformation* (London and New York, 1993), pp. 118-133.

physicians, “at the lower end of the class of gentleman.”⁸⁶ Ministers saw themselves as the counterparts of medical practitioners with specialised knowledge and trained skills. The English protestant clergy’s alliance with professional physicians and surgeons was also understandable, for Calvinists wanted to disassociate from both Catholic sacramentalism of ‘automatic’ healing *and* from radical sectarian impulse of prophesy and miracles without learning. David Harley notes that “clerical metaphors drawn from society are usually prescriptive as well as descriptive.”⁸⁷ Some English Calvinists also had extensive knowledge in medicine. There were some minister-physicians who exercised both practices, like Richard Baxter.⁸⁸ The Presbyterian ministers of Cheshire, in their commentary upon the gangrenous nature of ‘heresy’, proudly quoted the ancient Greek physician, Galen.

*“And of Gangrene he saith, it kills where it infects, making the flesh dead that is infected by it, so that whether prickt or cut or burned, it is unsensible of any paine. Yet proceeding with so much perill from one part to another, that unlesse the part corrupted be cut off, it will goe on to bring the whole into the like desperate and deadly condition.”*⁸⁹

The body, with which physicians of the soul were concerned was not only that of the individual affected by the disease of ‘heresy’. What ministers had to save from the cancer of error and plague of heresies was the sacred body of the Church as a whole, or even ‘Religion’ itself. The Gangrene of ‘heresy’ “is not onely thus spreading over a person,” said James Cranford, “the Church is a body [...] erroneous doctrine no sooner gets into a Church, but it overspreads it, runs thorow all, and corrupts, and sowres all, as saith the Apostle, [...] *A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.*” Heresies would “intermingle themselves with the healthfull body of the Church, [...] diffuse their poyson into the soules of those that are unlearned, or well meaning.”⁹⁰ Presbyterian apologists in the 1640s were thus so frustrated by general slackness of the public in recognizing the benefit of their proposed Calvinist church government, that they repeatedly wrote of how critical “the disease of the Church” was. For Robert Baillie, the

⁸⁶ Wear, ‘Puritan perceptions of illness’, p. 69.

⁸⁷ Harley, ‘Medical Metaphors’, pp. 399-405, 433.

⁸⁸ Wear, ‘Puritan perceptions of illness’, p. 69.

⁸⁹ *An Attestation to the Testimony*, p. 18. For the seventeenth-century readership of Galen, see Anthony Grafton, ‘The availability of ancient works’, in Charles B. Schmitt and others (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 782-3; also Owsei Temkin, *Galenism: Rise and Decline of a Medieval Philosophy* (Ithaca and London, 1973).

⁹⁰ Cranford, *Hareseo-machia*, p. 3.

rise of radical sects in England, and, even worse, of the Independent puritans who seemed to support these movements, was the cause of great annoyance. These men threatened to destroy all the fruits of the long endured Reformation of the church in England. Now that the “Papists, Prelates and Courtiers” were removed, “by word or deed they have not hindred us in the least measure to heal the diseases of our Church at our pleasure.” But “that her wounds to this day should be multiplied, and all be kept open to drop out her best blood, alone through the obstinacy of our Brethren.”⁹¹ One reader of *Gangræna* wrote to Edwards commending “that unwearied pains you take to cure (if possible) the malady of a distracted Church.”⁹² After the triumph of the New Model Army and rise of the party of Cromwell, Presbyterian ministers in London lamented “the unsuccessfulness of our former endeavours for *Englands* healing.” Seeing the nation’s “generall backwardnesse to embrace, yea forwardnesse to oppose” true Presbyterian church government, they wondered if men would ever understand “at last how precious and prevalent his Government is, in healing and recovering this dying Church thereby out of her innumerable, inveterate, and desperate maladies?”⁹³ For puritan ministers, the Reformation literally meant the reformation of the body spiritual.

It is tempting to interpret speculatively early modern heresiographies as medical books. The fourth-century heresiography of Epiphanius (310?-402/3), a catalogue of 80 heresies, was entitled *Panarion*, ‘the medicine chest’ in Greek. Ephraim Pagitt clearly had *Panarion* in mind, when he presented his *Heresiography* as a new and revised “medicinable box, containing saving medicaments against lying doctrine.”⁹⁴ Although anti-sectarian writings, composed by theologians and practising ministers, were by no means homogeneous in character and literary strategies, they were all presented as reference works of religious pathology, with explanations of symptoms and instructions on commended remedies. Whatever their targets heresiographies were composed of detailed explanations of the opinions that were erroneous, guides on how to diagnose them, followed by author’s confutation, with scriptural proof and recommendation of further reference readings. They were medicine boxes for those who set out for the healing of England.

⁹¹ Robert Baillie, *Anabaptisme, the true Fountaine of Independency, Brownisme, Antinomy, Familisme, and most of the other errors* (London, 1647), p. 106; Baillie, *A Dissuasive*, p. 92.

⁹² *Gang. l*, p. 54b.

⁹³ *A Testimony to the Trueth of Jesus Christ, and to the Solemn League and Covenant; as also against the errors, heresies and blasphemies of these times* (London, 1647), pp. 3, 25-26.

As we have seen, in the seventeenth-century religious polemics, 'heresy' was discussed and explained within the closely associated understandings of body and soul, the somatic and the spiritual. The metaphors of gangrene and plague, as well as medical languages and concepts, were not used casually, but played an important part in formulating and representing the idea of 'heresy'. The bodily terms by which early modern society understood the proper and healthy form of religion, constructed the concept of 'heresy' as disease. *Gangræna* was a vivid voice of warning against the decaying body of the English Church with the wound caused by the epidemic of sectarianism. However, disease was not the only somatic metaphor that Edwards and his fellow heresiographers deployed. We shall next investigate another bodily term that was frequently employed to explain the concept of 'heresy': the monster.

3. Monstrous 'heresy'

Monstrosity was a concept that was frequently used to describe 'heresies' and 'heretics'. Just as cancer and plague explained the danger of 'heresy' for the body spiritual, the monster signified the malformation of the body spiritual which would happen as a result of religious errors. 'Heresy' caused not only illness, but also deformity. John Knewstubs in 1579 entitled his treatise against the Family of Love, "*a confutation of monstrous and horrible heresies*," and branded their opinions "such misshapen & deformed things." The Familists were a "monstrous birth," and "enormities, or blemishes, which either hurt the health, or hinder the beautie of the Church."⁹⁵ Anti-Catholic polemicists likewise attacked the "foule Monster Heresie" of "Popish Idolatrie."⁹⁶ Developing this literary tradition, the opinions and doctrines of radical religious sects were frequently described as monsters in the 1640s. Robert Baillie, for instance, contrasted the "the beauty, order, strength" of Presbyterianism and "the deformity, disorder and weakness" of Independency.⁹⁷

It would be incorrect to assume that monstrosity was considered as a part, or a consequence, of illness. From the time of early Christianity, monstrosity was a subject of its own, separate from medicine. In the *Etymologiae* of Saint Isidore of Seville, one of the most influential encyclopedias during the Middle

⁹⁴ See Frank Williams, Introduction to Williams (ed.), *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis*, Book I (Leiden, 1987); Pagitt, *Heresiography*, 'To the Reader', Sig. A(4)r.

⁹⁵ Knewstubs, *Confutation*, Sigs. **2r, **[8]r.

⁹⁶ Abraham Darcie, 'The translator to the courteous reader' (not paginated) in *The originall of popish idolatrie, or The birth of heresies* (1630).

⁹⁷ Baillie, *Letters and Journals*, ii. p. 215.

Ages, monsters belonged to the section explaining the nature of man, which was separate from the part on medicine.⁹⁸ The term 'monster' usually referred to foetal abnormality, which resulted in various forms of deformity such as unseparated twins or hermaphrodites. But the idea of monstrosity also covered other phenomena like the transformation of human bodies or rare species of animals. Added to them were imaginary beasts from the classic mythology and other races that were believed to dwell outside Europe, such as single-eyed men in India, the Scythian tribe with huge ears covering their whole bodies, or a race in Ethiopia who had only one leg, and "lie on the ground on their backs and are shaded by the greatness of their feet."⁹⁹ All of these 'monstrous' occurrences were works and reminders of divine providence. The first Christian writers about monsters such as Isidore of Seville and Augustine stressed that monstrosity was not contrary to nature and did not prove the limitation of God's power, or his neglect. Instead monstrosity was one of the works by which the creator showed man his power and existence.¹⁰⁰

Renaissance Europe increasingly scrutinized monstrosity. After the introduction of the printing press, stories and woodcut pictures of monsters and strange creatures widened the market for newsbooks and ballads. In England monsters started to appear in the half-picture, half-text, woodcut broadsides which survive from the early 1560s.¹⁰¹ Monsters were also popular shows; an Italian couple of inseparable brothers, for example, proved enormously popular on their tour of Britain from London to Aberdeen between 1639 and 1642. Pamphleteers amused readers with similar relations, ranging from a man-fish to a pig-faced woman.¹⁰² Monsters were never confined to popular print culture. In early modern England and France, natural philosophers and professional physicians studied monsters as a serious subject matter. The French royal surgeon, Ambroise Paré, discussed monsters from the medical point of view

⁹⁸ *Etymologiae*, book xi, chs. 3-4, in Ernest Brehaut, *An Encyclopedist of the Dark Ages: Isidore of Seville* (New York, 1964), pp. 215-221.

⁹⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 219-221; Katharine Park and Lorraine J. Daston, 'Unnatural Conceptions: The Study of Monsters in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century France and England', *Past & Present*, 92 (1981), pp. 20-54.

¹⁰⁰ Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, book xvi. ch. 8, trans. D. B. Zema and G. G. Walsh, 3 vols. (Washington D. C., 1950). Hence the term 'prodigy' initially meant omen.

¹⁰¹ Tessa Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, p. 165 and *passim*. For a list of monster pamphlets in the mid-sixteenth to the mid-seventeenth century, see David Cressy, 'Monstrous Births and Credible Reports: portents, texts, and testimonies', in Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions in Tudor and Stuart England: Tales of Discord and Dissension* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 31-32.

¹⁰² Park and Daston, 'Unnatural Conceptions', pp. 20-22; Friedman, *Miracles and the Pulp Press*, ch. 3; Dudley Wilson, *Signs and Portents: Monstrous Births from the Middle Ages to the Enlightenment* (London and New York, 1993), esp. ch. 3.

and wrote his influential *Des Monstres et prodiges* in 1573. Paré, who started as a barber-surgeon, was fiercely attacked by university-educated physicians; one anonymous critic commented that Paré's monsters were "completely off the subject" and "fit for amusing little children."¹⁰³ However, *Des Monstres* was very successful, and was translated into Latin, and partly into English by the mid-1630s [see Figure 4].¹⁰⁴ Paré's work facilitated what could be called a 'scientific' attitude towards monsters, which otherwise only fed scandals.¹⁰⁵ In England, Francis Bacon, for instance, urged that natural history of "all monstres and prodigious births of nature" must be completed.¹⁰⁶

The contrast between the sensationalism of popular literature and the gravity of scholarly enquiries was, however, not clear in the mid-seventeenth century. Moreover, religion played a great part in the contemporary understanding of monstrosity. Pamphlets reporting monstrous births presented the events as signs from God, and on this point physicians and philosophers did not disagree much.¹⁰⁷ Paré discussed possible 'natural' causes of monstrous births, but declared that first two principal ends of monstrosity were to clarify the glory of God, and to demonstrate his wrath.¹⁰⁸ Historians agree that throughout the seventeenth century there was a "principal line of development, from monsters as prodigies to monsters as examples of medical pathology,"¹⁰⁹ but ministers were keen to retain the classic framework of providentialism. In 1635 a London minister, Thomas Bedford, in his own account of a monstrous birth in Plymouth, expressed his concern about 'natural' explanations of monstrosity by secular "Philosophers", "physitians" ("who build upon the ground of Philosophy") and the "Astrologer" on one hand, and "the common

¹⁰³ Janis L. Pallister, Introduction to Ambroise Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, trans. Pallister (Chicago, 1982), p. xxv.

¹⁰⁴ Thomas Johnson, *The Works of That Famous Chirurgion Ambrose Parey, Translated out of Latine and Compared with the French* (London, 1634).

¹⁰⁵ Paré categorized monsters into four kinds: (1) physical and moral monstrosities of humans and animals, (2) flying monsters, (3) terrestrial monsters and (4) celestial monsters.

¹⁰⁶ Bacon, *Novum organon* (London, 1620), book ii, 29, quoted in Park and Daston, 'Unnatural Conceptions', p. 20.

¹⁰⁷ Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in early modern England*, ch. 4. See also Walsham, 'The Fatall Vesper: Providentialism and Anti-Popery in Late Jacobean London', *Past & Present*, 144 (1994), pp. 36-87; idem, 'Vox Piscis, or the Book-Fish: Providence and the uses of the Reformation past in Caroline Cambridge', *English Historical Review*, 114, no. 457 (1999), pp. 574-606.

¹⁰⁸ Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, chs. 2 and 3 in Pallister, pp. 3-6.

¹⁰⁹ Park and Daston, op. cit., p. 23.

sort” who “make no further use of these Prodigies and Strange-births, than as a matter of wonder and table-talk” on the other.¹¹⁰

Monstrosity in the seventeenth century again exemplified the intertwined relation between body and soul. As monsters were placed as the opposite of the perfect and well-maintained body, they represented the curse of God on the one hand, while religious offences took the shape of prodigious bodies on the other. Just as plague and gangrene explained the danger and nature of ‘heresy’, monstrosity provided a logical and persuasive depiction of the body spiritual that had gone wrong. When Edwards wrote that the errors of sectaries were like monsters, he was working in a familiar literary framework.

For anti-sectarian writers in the 1640s, the idea that monstrous births were caused by religious errors and blasphemies was a well developed topos. Since the mid-sixteenth-century, monstrous births were explained to the English pamphlet-reading public as works of divine providence, signs of God’s wrath. They were often related to blasphemy committed by the child’s parents. This explanation was not utterly ‘unscientific’. It was an ‘empirical’ view held by medical practitioners that the mother’s ‘ardent and obstinate imagination’ during the conception and/or pregnancy was one possible cause of monstrous births.¹¹¹

The story of the separatist couple’s monstrous child which Edwards included in *Gangræna* had many parallels in other news books and ballads of the time, regardless of their religious standpoint. In a Royalist tract published in 1642, a woman called Mary Wilmore was convinced by a zealous puritan minister to reject the Church of England. She said, “I had rather my child should be born without a head than to have a head to be signed with the sign of the cross.” The result was just as we would expect. The reporter was convinced that many monstrous births were God’s punishment for “prodigious and heretical tenets, to the allurements of many faithfull and constant believers.”¹¹² Puritan versions of monster-child tales followed the same structure. A *Declaration of a Strange and Wonderful Monster, Born in Kirkham Parish in Lancashire* (1645) reported how a “popish” family had a monster born without a

¹¹⁰ Thomas Bedford, *A True and Certain Relation of a Strange Birth* (London, 1635), Sigs. B[4]v, C[1]r, C3v.

¹¹¹ Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, ch. 9, in Pallister, pp. 38-42. See also Dennis Todd, *Imagining Monsters: Miscreations of the self in eighteenth-century England* (Chicago, 1995), ch.4; P. K. Wilson, ““Out of Sight, Out of Mind”: the Daniel Turner-James Blondel Dispute over the power of the maternal imagination’, *Annals of Science*, 49 (1992), pp. 63-85.

head but a face upon its breast. It was the result of the mother's wish "rather to bear a Childe without a head then a Roundhead." In *A Strange News from Scotland* (1647), the new-born monster of 'Anabaptist' parents was born with two heads (one male and the other female) with one eye in each face, arms protruding from various places of its "tree-trunklike body," with talons in their hands. Unlike the other monsters, this one was able to speak: "I am deformed for the sins of my parents," declared s/he.¹¹³ In *The Ranter's Monster* (1652), Mary Adams, the Ranting mother, gave birth to a monster, before she too was consumed by gangrene. "She rotted and was consumed as she lay, being from head to foot as full of botches, blains, boils and stinking scabs."¹¹⁴ The images of both disease and monstrosity were powerfully employed to construct the horror of the Ranter 'heresy'.

David Cressy notes that the 1640s was one of the three periods during the sixteenth and the seventeenth century when monstrous births were a particularly popular subject; the other two periods were the 1560s and the Jacobean era.¹¹⁵ Other scholars have similarly noticed a flood of pamphlets describing the similar stories of women giving birth to monsters.¹¹⁶ These appeared as 'warning pieces' against the society torn apart by its own Civil War. According to a pamphlet issued in 1645: "[i]n these sad days when the voyce of Gods wrath are poured forth on the face of the whole Earth wonders were never more frequent. Every day almost bringeth forth some new Miracle. [...] sad and monsterous times must labour still with sad and monsterous births."¹¹⁷

Deformation of the body spiritual

However, the representation of sects in *Gangræna* was not a mere application of popular cause-and-effect testimonies. Monstrosity was not only a tragic aftermath of religious offence; it was also an important rhetorical tool with which to enable the understanding of 'heresy'. When not troubling

¹¹² *A Strange and Lamentable Accident That Happened Lately at Mears Ashby in Northamptonshire* (1642), Sig. A3b, quoted in Friedman, *Miracles and the Pulp Press During the English Revolution*, p. 51.

¹¹³ Friedman, op. cit., pp. 51-53.

¹¹⁴ *The Ranter's Monster* (1652), P. 4, quoted in Friedman, op. cit., p. 54.

¹¹⁵ Cressy, 'Monstrous Births and Credible Reports', pp. 35-36.

¹¹⁶ Park and Daston, op. cit., pp. 32-35; Friedman, op. cit., ch. 3; Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, p. 81. See also Rollins (ed.), *Pack of Autolycus*.

unfortunate Anabaptist mothers, the figure of the monster embodied the image of 'heretics' propagating diverse opinions, opinions that were continually changing from one thing to another. One of the repeated complaints about religious sects made by ministers and conservative writers was that the sectaries never ceased to invent new and strange doctrines. Presbyterian writers derided the 'New Lights' or 'New Truths', the propaganda of the sectaries, and called them 'Newters' that were filled with wild 'fancies' and obsessed with their own 'novelty'.¹¹⁸

The 'novelty' of sectaries was compared with strange monsters in remote or unknown territories (often Africa), where they reproduced themselves and increased their diversity and eccentricity. Ambroise Paré's *Des Monstres et prodiges* had an extended section dedicated for monsters in Africa [see Figure 5].¹¹⁹ Edwards, for instance, wrote: "Error, if [toleration] may be given to it, knows no bounds, it is bottomlesse, no man could say how far *England* would go, but like *Africa* it would be bringing forth Monsters every day."¹²⁰ In 1643, a newsbook written in a mock Welsh accent, commented on the proliferation of sectarian opinions. "Her have read that in *Affrick*, wilde beasts of severall kinds doe meet at certain watering places, where they couple together, and doe beget monsters, and her have lately observed, that many writers, with their confederate intelligencers, doe concur at the Wine-spring of Taverns, to invent mis-begotten Pamphlets, or indeed, monstrous Lies."¹²¹ A continental anti-Anabaptist treatise, translated into English and appended to the second edition of Alexander Ross's *Pansebeia*, claimed that it was not true that only "*Affrick* alwayes furnishes us with Novelties," because 'heretics' like Thomas Muntzer "with his desperate disciples, hath sacrilegiously attempted to advance some altogether new and unheard-of opinions."¹²² The otherness of 'heretics' was illustrated by the physical and the geographical distance of the African monster.

¹¹⁷ *The most Strange and Wounderfuell apperation of blood in a poole at Garraton in Leicestershire* (1645), reproduced in *Anomalous Phenomena of the Interregnum* (London, 1991), pp. 18-19.

¹¹⁸ *Gang. I*, p. 51; John Meredyth, *The Judge of Heresies* (London, 1624), ch. 6, p. 71; William Prynne, *A fresh discovery of some prodigious new wandring-blazing-stars* (London, 1645); *A Testimony to the Trueth of Jesus Christ*, p. 4; James Cranford, foreword to *Gang. I*.

¹¹⁹ Paré, *On Monsters and Marvels*, ch. 37, in Pallister, pp. 141-150; Augustine, *De civitate Dei*, Book xvi, ch. 8; Park and Daston, op. cit., pp. 23, 41-42.

¹²⁰ *Gang. I*, p. 121.

¹²¹ *The Welch Mercury, Communicating remarkable Intelligence and true News to awle the whole Kingdome*, reproduced in Joad Raymond (ed.), *Making the News: An Anthology of the Newsbooks of revolutionary England 1641-1660* (Gloucestershire, 1993), p. 102.

¹²² *Apocalypsis: or, the revelation of certain notorious Advancers of Heresie*, trans. J. D. (John Davies), (London, 1655), Sig. Aaa[7]v.

Like the monster, the 'heretic' lacked a uniform and coherent body. Instead he was composed of various strange and different parts without harmony. For critics, it was a useful point of attack that sectaries lacked rigid consistency in their opinions. Edwards wondered: "where can a man finde a Church of simple Anabaptisme, or simple Antinomians, or simple pure independents, each of them keeping to their own principles, as Anabaptists to Anabaptisme, Independents to Independencie, and holding no other?"

I do not thinke there are 50 pure Independents, but higher flown, more Seraphicall [...] made up and compounded of Anabaptisme, Antinomie, Enthusiasme, Arminianisme, Familisme, all these errours and more too sometimes meeting in the same persons, strange monsters, having their heads of Enthusiasme, their bodies of Antinomianisme, their thighs of Familisme, their leggs and feet of Anabaptisme, their hands of Arminianisme, and Libertinisme, as the great vein going thorow the whole;¹²³

Here the monstrous nature of the religious sects was manifested in the heretical body of the strange monster. Such 'composite' and fictitious monsters were regularly seen in religious polemic in Reformation Europe. Luther and Melanchthon published a pamphlet depicting the 'papal ass', a monstrous creature composed of various bestial parts each of which represented different vices and errors of the church of "Romish Antichrist."¹²⁴ Prodigious errors were manifested in limbs of the multitudinous monster.

The diverse yet inconsistent proliferation of heresies found a body in the image of the ancient Greek monster with multiple heads: the Hydra. "(T)hat many headed monstrous *Hydra* of sectarisme sprung up in these times in *England*," Edwards declared as he began *Gangræna*; "a worke and undertaking, which I well know and expect, will cause me all the hatred, envy and danger, which the cunning, malice, power or blinde zeal of all the sectaries in *England* can procure."¹²⁵

¹²³ *Gang. I*, pp. 16-17.

¹²⁴ Park and Daston, 'Unnatural Conceptions', pp. 26-29; Robert W. Scribner, *For the Sake of Simple Folk: Popular propaganda for the German Reformation* (Oxford, 1994), 127-136; Watt, *Cheap Print and Popular Piety*, pp. 152-154. See also the picture of "The Pope as Antichrist" by Melchior Lorch, represented in Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (London, 1957), illustration no. 2, p. 48 of 1962 edition. It may not be too absurd to speculate that such an image of composite monster originates from the "great image" Nebuchadnezzar dreamed in the Old Testament. The Book of Daniel, 2:31-35.

¹²⁵ *Gang. I*, Sig. B[1]v.

... Yet considering not only the three bodied Monster *Geryon*, and the three headed *Cerberus*, which for present I have to grapple and conflict with all, but that *Hydra* also, ready to rise up in their place, therefore that I may both mortally wound the heads of these Dragons, and cut off others as they are springing, and strike once for all in defence of *Gangræna*.¹²⁶

Here heretical Monsters were not unfortunate babes born to sinful parents, but hateful and dangerous beasts against which to combat. The sectaries in *Gangræna* were rendered as hydra-like men. “[T]hey have been and are Polupragmaticall, indefatigably active, stirring, restlesse night and day,” and “their eyes are intent upon every thing..., and they have a hand in every thing, they are men of a hundred eyes and hands.”¹²⁷

Edwards was clearly working within the literary framework of the time. The “scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns” in the book of Revelation had been revived by Dante in *Purgatorio*, and at the close of the sixteenth century by Spenser in *The Faerie Queene*.¹²⁸ Christopher Hill has noted how the image of the many-headed monster was commonly used in early modern England embodying the fear of moral, social or political disorder among the conservative authorities.¹²⁹ Ephraim Pagitt in his *Heresiography* commented how the heresies held by one Brownist, Thomas Lemar, was “The Monster of Lemarisme,” which had seven heads, namely Mahometanism, Judaism, Papism, Lutheranism, Anabaptism, Libertinism and Brownism.¹³⁰

Battling against such monsters was therefore a common metaphor for the confutation of errors and heresies. This is most evident in Alexander Ross’s criticism of Hobbes, *Leviathan Drawn Out with a Hook* (1653). An eighteenth-century reader of the book praised “the most learned tamer of the marine monster, Al. Rosse” and scribbled into a margin of the page:

Hercles his club did Lernæa’s Hydra kill,
But thow, Ross, quell’st sea monsters with thy quill.

¹²⁶ *Gang. II*, Sig. A[4]r.

¹²⁷ *Gang. I*, p. 69.

¹²⁸ Revelation 17:3, King James Version; Dante Alighieri, *Purgatorio*, Canto 32; E. Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, Book I, Canto iv. I thank Nozomi Irei for drawing my attention to these texts. See also John Vinycomb, *Fictitious & Symbolic Creatures in Art* (London, 1905).

¹²⁹ Christopher Hill, ‘Many-Headed Monster’, in Hill, *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1974), pp. 181-204.

¹³⁰ Pagitt, *Heresiography*, p. 65.

How much Leviathan exceeded Hydra,
As much, Rosse, thow beat'st Hercules Amphytrionida.¹³¹

However dreadful (monstrous births), strange (African monsters) or hateful (hydra-like beasts) they were, it is clear that the monsters of 'heresy' were presented as contrary to the desirable and healthy (that is, *un-deformed*) body. In a way, monstrosity was a process and/or a result of bodily transformation from the perfect to the defective, and the consequence of losing physical dignity. In other words, the monster embodied the falling away from truth. In *The Faerie Queene* (first appeared in 1590) Edmund Spenser drew the monster as the human body degraded.

Of all Gods workes, which do this world adorne,
There is no one more faire and excellent,
Then is mans body both for powre and forme,
Whiles it is kept in sober gouernment;
But none then it, more fowle and indecent,
Distempred through misrule and passions bace:
It growes a Monster, and incontinent
Doth loose his dignitie and natiue grace.¹³²

This point was hinted at elsewhere in *Gangræna*. "I could tell true and certain stories of many Sectaries," wrote Edwards, "who were exceeding precise and strict before they fell into those wayes, but are abominable loose now; and let but a man turne Sectary nowadayes, and within one halfe year he is so metamorphosed in apparell, hair, etc. as a man hardly knows him."¹³³ In this way monsters constructed the understanding of what orthodoxy was, what 'heresy' was, and of the relation between the two. 'Heresy' was to the orthodox religion what a monster was to a natural and perfect body.

Again, monstrosity of the body spiritual encompassed not only individual sectaries but also religion of the country as a whole. Obadiah Sedgwick in his sermon in January 1647 on the 'nature and danger of heresies' invited the Commons to review the current state of "how much the more of truth" English religion contained.

¹³¹ John Bowle, *Hobbes and His Critics: A study in seventeenth century constitutionalism* (London, 1969), p 62. According to Bowle, the copy, now in the Codrington Library at All Souls College, Oxford, was owned probably by Christopher Codrington himself, the benefactor of the college.

¹³² Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, Book II, cant. ix: 1.

¹³³ *Gang. I*, p. 73.

[W]hen once it is adulterated, when once it is tainted and leavened with damnable errors, now the silver is become dross, the glory is departed from it: when a Religion is like the feet of *Nebuchadnezzar's* image, which were part of clay, and part of iron, now it becomes low and contemptible: If the mixture of humane inventions abates of its glory, what an impairing is the mixture of corrupt, and poisonous, & faith-subverting doctrines?"¹³⁴

John Davies, the translator of an anonymous Latin heresiography appended to Alexander Ross's *Pansebeia*, agreed that when Religion is "defiled and adulterated with humane ceremonie and inventions, she is deformed, and loses all her grace and beauty." He continued: "And among these hath she met with two most importunate pretenders, *Atheisme* and *Superstition*; the one strips her stark naked, the other meretriciously prostitutes her in the disguises of humane Inventions."¹³⁵ Separatists giving birth to monsters were no laughing matter for those who saw themselves as in charge of the Reformation; it indicated the state of English religion in danger of malformation.

3. Religious identity: the problem of religious practice

As we have seen, the languages and images of disease and of monstrosity were effective in constructing the idea of 'heresy'. The use of these images was firmly grounded upon the early modern understanding of the inseparable relation between body and soul, between physiology and religion. The remarkable contribution of Thomas Edwards' *Gangræna* to seventeenth-century religious culture was that it advanced an understanding of 'heresy' in terms of such bodily images so that Edwards had to neither 'prove' the sects' theological errors nor to explain on what ground they were 'heretics'. Without having to debate theological issues and thus having to admit his opponents to a kind of public sphere, he made them a public spectacle. By calling the sectaries infectious plagues and horrible monsters, Edwards distanced himself not only from conventional styles of religious confutation but also to the task of the strict definition of 'heresy' itself. This was the key to *Gangræna's* success.

From these observations we may draw two conclusions. The first is that these somatic languages and imageries of disease and monstrosity were important because they literally gave body to the *idea* of 'heresy'. Gangrene and the Hydra were neither shallow metaphors intended simply to discredit and embarrass the sectaries nor vocabularies of popular sensationalism meant to

¹³⁴ Sedgwick, *Nature and Danger of Heresies*, p. 22.

shock and amuse a curious public. Nor do these texts simply tell us about the early modern 'spiritualization of illness' due to a pre-industrial mentality ignorant of 'scientific' explanations. Rather through this imagery the problematic, abstract, idea of 'heresy' (which we have noted in the previous chapter) obtained concrete and visible flesh. The analogy of plague-stricken patients made clear the danger of 'heresy', while the body of the monstrous baby provided a theatre in which the relation between orthodoxy and 'heresy' was played out. An ill and deformed body was understood as an heretical body, as 'heresy' was understood as ill and deformed religion. Within this symbolic reciprocity, disease and monstrosity embodied 'heresy', and gave birth to a living, visible and condemnable *heretic*.

The second point is that the manifestation of 'heresy' in the bodies of 'heretics' concerned issues of religious identity. It is noteworthy that the 'heretics' drawn by Edwards and other heresiographers were by no means equivalent to the Turks, the Jews or any other 'pagans'. Sectaries were never the alien, the irrelevant. These bodily languages indicated that 'heresy' was, essentially, Christian religion gone wrong. By describing 'heretics' as the body spiritual corrupted and deformed, the authors and readers of heresiographies reminded themselves of the status of their own religion. "But with the Reformation have we not a Deformation?" asked Thomas Edwards. This concern was echoed two years later by London Presbyterian ministers who admitted: "Instead of a *Reformation*, we may say with sighs, [...] we have a *Deformation* in Religion."¹³⁶ For those who identified themselves as orthodox, asking questions about 'heresy' was an acute questioning of the self.

Consequently, what 'heretics' were alleged to *do* with their bodies was as important as the external appearance which they were said to have. One may hold erroneous opinions in the *mind* but one requires a body in order to exercise erroneous *actions*.¹³⁷ If we are to study the bodies of sectaries, we should focus on their *practices*, not just their doctrines. Indeed it is for this reason that historians have been able to turn to *Gangræna* as a source of information about Civil War sects — even if stories are such insignificant ones as that sectaries would not return borrowed papers or that they "generally walke loosely."¹³⁸ For Edwards, the practices of sectaries, or in James Cranford's words, "the

¹³⁵ *Apocalypsis: or the Revelation of certain notorious Advancers of Heresie*, Sig. Aaa(5)v.

¹³⁶ *Gang. I*, Sig. A[4]r; *A Testimony to the Trueth of Jesus Christ*, p. 31.

¹³⁷ This was also the case for the idea of 'atheism'. The problem of dealing with 'philosophical atheism' and 'practical atheism' was discussed by Thomas Fuller and Jeremy Corderoy. See Michael Hunter, 'The Problem of 'Atheism' in Early Modern England', *TRHS*, Fifth Series, vol. 35 (1985), pp. 143-44.

mischiefe which heresies doe,"¹³⁹ were as important for the construction of the idea of 'heresy' as their sectarian opinions and doctrines. Significantly Edwards entitled the first part of *Gangræna* "Catalogue and Discovery of many of the Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies and pernicious *Practices* of the Sectaries of this time." He clearly classified his material into 'errors' and 'practices'.¹⁴⁰ His book was about "all the confusion and disorder in Church-matters both of opinions and practises, and particulars of all sorts."¹⁴¹ In the first part of *Gangræna*, after an extensive list of 176 'Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies' (pp. 18-37), followed by more blasphemies (pp. 37-39) and discussions (pp. 39-61), Edwards felt it necessary to remind his readers on the vastness of this subject.

Now for the particular practices of the Sectaries they are many, and it would require a Tractate by it self to set them down. [...] I had drawn up many, to the number of seventy, and provided for every practice instances for proof, and upon some of them I could write a large discourse, even a book upon severall of them.¹⁴²

Though Edwards refrained from listing more than 28 of the nominated practices of the sectaries (pp. 62-76), readers were rewarded with even more 'relations' of the same, drawn from letters from Edwards' informants inside and outside London.

The way in which the bodies and the practices of radical religious sects were depicted have not been investigated by many historians. David Cressy argues that the scandalous, immoral and well-undressed Adamites "served to discredit the rest of the sectarian swarm."¹⁴³ J. C. Davis has highlighted the fictional nature of the Ranters with reference to the contemporary need to create the image of religious 'deviance'.¹⁴⁴ However, the physical images of 'heretics', both in their bodily nature and in practices, should not be explained solely in terms of some political or psychological necessity. Rather we should

¹³⁸ *Gang. I*, pp. 72, 74.

¹³⁹ Cranford, *Hæreseio-machia*, title page.

¹⁴⁰ My *Italics*. However, the title of the second part was made "A fresh and further Discovery of the Errors, Heresies, Blasphemies, and dangerous *Proceedings* of the Sectaries of this time" (my *Italic*) although the page heads read "...the Errours and Practises of the Sectaries." In the third part, both the title and the page heads feature "insolent Proceedings of the Sectaries." "*Dangerous positions and proceedings*," was the title of Richard Bancroft's notorious anti-puritan treatise of 1593.

¹⁴¹ *Gang. I*, p. 84.

¹⁴² *Gang. I*, pp. 61-62.

¹⁴³ David Cressy, 'The Adamites Exposed: naked radicals in the English Revolution', in Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions*, pp. 251-280.

¹⁴⁴ Davis, *Fear, Myth and History*. See ch. 1.

reconstruct the conditions and the cultural norms within which sectaries could be recognized as 'heretical', just as Stuart Clark has demonstrated the "intelligibility" of witchcraft, as an inversion of the world of order and normality.¹⁴⁵ In this respect, Tamsyn Williams' study of the picturing of radical sects during the English Revolution has accurately pointed out the importance of the images of 'heretics'. "News of these so-called strange sects rested on a consensus about what was and was not normal: thus, in print, if not in the mind of the reader, ideas about socially acceptable behaviour were reinforced. The situation was paradoxical: owing to their representation in print, radical sects became a means of affirming traditional values and hence a force for the order of authority."¹⁴⁶

Fearful practice: Anabaptism

"They who write the story of the *Anabaptists*," Obadiah Sedgwick remarked, "begin it with error in their judgements, but end it with wickednesse in their practises."¹⁴⁷ I shall to end this chapter examining the way practices mattered in *Gangræna*, and will show how they helped to formulate the idea of 'heresy'. I will extend my previous argument about the significance of disease and monstrosity, and argue that the wrong doings of sectaries, just like gangrene-eaten bodies and misshapen babies, represented inverted images of the orthodox body spiritual. Being uneducated, or a wrong gender, preaching follies, baptizing cats (or horses) and performing various other erroneous activities, sectaries (now 'heretics' in flesh) presented an image of religion up-side-down, sharply questioning the state and identity of religion in England.

One practice of the sectaries that was frequently reported was their ritual of baptizing adult members. What the sectaries would do, Edwards wrote, was "to Preach their corrupt Doctrines, and to Dip."¹⁴⁸ 'Dipping' was a pejorative term for immersion baptism used to ridicule 'Anabaptist' sects, who rejected

¹⁴⁵ Stuart Clark, 'Inversion, Misrule and the Meaning of Witchcraft', *Past & Present*, 87 (1980), pp. 98-127; Clark, *Thinking with Demons: the idea of witchcraft in early modern Europe* (Oxford, 1997), esp. part 1. See also Jean Delumeau, *Sin and fear: the emergence of a Western guilt culture, 13th-18th centuries*, trans. Eric Nicholson (New York, 1990), pp. 128-36.

¹⁴⁶ Tamsyn Williams, "Magnetic Figures': Polemical Prints of the English Revolution', in Lucy Gent and Nigel Llewellyn (eds.), *Renaissance Bodies: The Human Figure in English Culture c. 1540-1660* (London, 1990), p. 105.

¹⁴⁷ Sedgwick, *Nature and Danger of Heresies*, p. 20.

¹⁴⁸ *Gang. I*, p. 92.

infant baptism. According to historians of the English Baptist tradition the problem of infant baptism had started to trouble the English separatist minds by the end of the sixteenth-century.¹⁴⁹ Those who regarded the Church of England as a false church thought they must also abandon its 'corrupted' sacraments and replace them with 'reformed' rites. Some early separatists even worried about the sinfulness of baptism they had received in infancy. Henry Barrow, the separatist, expressed with regret in 1590 that "good in substance, but bad in form will not salve this sore."¹⁵⁰ For the Church authorities and conservative theologians, however, the issue was not merely about the proper interpretation of sacraments. Rejection of infant baptism meant the denial of not only the authority of the Church of England but also the entire idea of the compulsory state church. The idea that individual congregations could restrict and redefine the membership of the 'true church' logically denied the need of a single established religious authority. Labelling these sects as the 'Anabaptists', who brought terror to sixteenth-century Germany, was a popular way of attacking the sects, but conservative theologians and ministers were more worried about the separatists' denial of the state church system, and tried to justify the legitimacy of infant-baptism. The Royalist theologian Daniel Featley's famous *Dippers Dipt* was written for such a purpose. Arguing for infant baptism by the analogy with circumcision as the "seal" of God's covenant with Abraham and his people, Featley was defending the idea of the unitary church.¹⁵¹

But for Edwards, it was equally important to concretize, to render in bodily terms, the dangers of Anabaptism so that readers would readily understand. The practice of adult baptism, for Edwards, was a 'heretical' infection in process, a physical experience of error spread by the medium of water.

¹⁴⁹ Despite the history of Baptist churches in the seventeenth-century as well as of continental Anabaptists in the sixteenth-century has been for a long time studied by many church historians, the origin and the nature of the practice of immersion at adult baptism in England has not been much discussed. M. Tolmie suggests the idea that the baptism "ought to be by dipping the body into the water, resembling burial and rising again" came out among the early separatist sects around 1640s, influenced by Anabaptist Collegiants in Leyden that was practising immersion by that time. Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 26.

¹⁵⁰ M. Tolmie, *Triumph of the Saints*, pp. 22-24, 69-70. Barrow quoted in p. 69. Note that Tolmie draws a distinction between 'believer's baptism' and 'rebaptism as the solution to the problem of complete separation from a false church.' The later could result in an 'ultra-separatist rebaptism' in which "the children of the separated faithful could thereafter receive a true baptism in a true church in the normal manner of infant baptism." p. 23.

¹⁵¹ "The children of such parents ... [who] professe Christian religion, and are members of the visible church, ... are comprised within Gods covenant made to the faithfull children of Abraham and their seed, may, and ought to receive the seal of that

Gangræna thus emphasized firstly the fear of drowning, or the state of being drenched, secondly, the harmful coldness of the rivers in which sectaries were baptized, and lastly the shame of being made publicly naked in baptism.

Edwards represented immersion baptism as an exhausting and dangerous experience, rather than as a short-lived rite of passage. Now early modern men and women do not seem to have spent a great deal of time swimming or voluntarily immersing themselves in water. Certainly, groups of young men might go swimming on summer days, but few swam far. Virtually no one bathed. *Gangræna* consequently exaggerated, and played up the trauma of rebaptism. "In *September* last I was told from some honest men who had been in Kent," wrote Edwards in a narrative of an episode of adult baptism in the summer of 1645 which he ascribed to a young Baptist preacher, Thomas Web. Among the nine people of men and women who were baptized in a river, one was "Dipped three times" because he was so afraid of the water that he could not allow his whole body to go under the surface. When the rite finished he was "almost drawnd and strangled by the water." Another old man seemed not to like being plunged, and "as soon as he came above the water, swore, *Gods-foot* you had almost strangled me."¹⁵²

Edwards also emphasized the danger of immersion in cold water, especially for old people, women and inhabitants of northern counties. Catching cold was an especial fear among early modern medical men. In infant baptism, the health of the child was a subject of great concern among the church leaders before and after the Interregnum. The service book from the sixteenth-century ordered the parents to certify that the child was not too 'weak' to be dipped in the water. Daniel Featley argued that it would be "danger to their health" to have children "Dipt and plunged over head and ears in the Font, or Rivers, especially if they be infirm children, and the season very cold, and the air sharp and piercing." He admitted that the first Christians, who had no fonts nearby, did get baptized and "without any danger go into the Rivers," but claimed that was because "the climat[e] of *Judea* is far better then ours." Robert Baillie in his criticism of the Anabaptists wrote that "dipping over head and ears in baptisme, is naturally hurtfull both to the life and chastity," even "in the hottest climates at some times of the year." On the other hand, "pouring and sprinkling is as meet for purifying, as dipping can be; [...] sprinkling or pouring out of water is nothing lesse [than dipping], but oftentimes more effectuall for

covenant, which was Circumcision under the law; but now is Baptisme, which I prove." Featley, *Dippers Dipt*, pp. 9-10, 39; Tolmie, op. cit., pp. 50-54.

¹⁵² *Gang. I*, p. 75.

purging.”¹⁵³ Around the end of the seventeenth-century, when heated debates about the proper way of baptizing infants arose once more, the ‘health’ of infants was again a key issue.¹⁵⁴ Thus for the readers of *Gangræna*, baptizing old or weak people in the cold river water in the winter was certainly blameworthy, especially if it was the case at such a frontier “into the North as far as *Yorke*,” the river Ouse, although sectaries would claim that “the water was as hot as if it had been in the midst of summer.”¹⁵⁵

The death of women because of the cold water seems to have been one of Edwards’ favourite episodes, and he referred to this theme in all three parts of *Gangræna*. “(T)hey have baptized many weakly ancient women naked in rivers in winter, whereupon some have sicked and died,” he reported in Part I. According to Edwards, Samuel Oats, a General Baptist preacher, baptized “(i)n the cold weather” a young woman called Ann Martin “whom he held so long in the water, that she fell presently sick, and her belly sweld with the abundance of water she took in, and within a fortnight or three weeks died, and upon her death-bed expressed her dipping to be the cause of her death.”¹⁵⁶ To Edwards’ astonishment, when a trial for this incident was held and it was said “in prudence it [re-baptization] could not be well done, to doe that which in ordinary reason would destroy the creature; viz. in cold weather to dip weakly persons,” one ‘Anabaptist’ who accompanied Oats replied “that God had made a promise in the case, *When thou goest through the fire, and through the water, I will be with thee.*”¹⁵⁷

The fear of water was not limited to its coldness or the possibility of drowning. We should remember that in early modern Europe diseases were believed to be dispersed via water as well as *corrupto aere*. Water would expand the pores of the skin, letting pestilent poison permeate the fragile human body. Indeed this was one of the reasons that bathing was commonly avoided from

¹⁵³ Featley, *Dippers Dipt*, pp. 33-38; Baillie, *Anabaptisme*, pp. 163, 169-171. Of course, not all the debates on infant baptism involved such issues of child’s health. When Timotheus Batt, the physician, together with the Anabaptist Thomas Lambe disputed with three conservative ministers about the legitimacy of infant baptism, he clang to the issue of “Moses and his seeds” under the “grace”. *The Summe of a Conference at Terling in Essex* (London, 1644).

¹⁵⁴ See Mark Jenner, ‘Bathing and Baptism: Sir John Floyer and the Politics of Cold Bathing’, in K. Sharpe and S. N. Zwicker (eds.), *Refiguring Revolutions: Aesthetics and Politics from the English Revolution to the Romantic Revolution* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1998), pp. 197-216.

¹⁵⁵ *Gang. I*, pp. 65, 66.

¹⁵⁶ *Gang. II*, pp. 146-147. For Oats, see Tolmie, *Triumph of the Saints*, p. 157.

¹⁵⁷ *Gang. III.*, p. 106.

the fifteenth to the seventeenth century.¹⁵⁸ The scenes of believers' baptism rendered the image of 'heretical infection' — both physical and spiritual — in process. Daniel Featley remarked that the Anabaptists would "defile our Rivers with their impure washings," as well as "our Pulpits with their false prophecies and phanaticall enthusiasmes"¹⁵⁹

It is significant that Thomas Edwards stressed practical aspects of the danger of Anabaptism, appealing to the physical senses of his readers, rather than constructing the counter-arguments over his opponents' error. Unlike other anti-Anabaptist writers, Edwards did not pay much attention to the theoretical problems of adult baptism. Instead, the error of Anabaptism was made comprehensible by the wrong conduct of the body practised by the 'Dippers' and their followers. Such depictions were additionally persuasive because they portrayed sectaries as false religious leaders. The horror of the Dippers was made understandable with reference to the nature of a true minister, who should look after the souls *and* the bodies of his flock.

The false ministry of the Dippers was shown in an even more provocative form through the images of them rebaptizing women. One of the most controversial images of adult baptism was the scandalous scene of naked women being baptized by a sectary — a 'con minister' — in a river and in public. In early modern religious literature it was not unusual to associate 'heretics' with sexual license. Indeed it was, and is still, a cliché of heresiography to combine voyeuristic accounts of the lustful activities of religious sects and bitter condemnation of them from a moral standpoint. In *Gangræna*, nudity was highlighted as it embodied the 'heretical' nature of this ritual; the doctrine of 'believers' baptism' was thus converted into an erotic play.

Edwards described Dippers as finding lewd pleasure in baptizing many young women. Samuel Oats was referred to as "a young lusty fellow, and hath traded chiefly with young women and young maids." "[A]ll is fish that comes to his net," as "he hath baptized a great number of women, and that they were call'd out of their beds to go a dipping in rivers, dipping many of them in the night, so that their husbands and Masters could not keep them in their houses."¹⁶⁰ The sexual double entendres of Edwards' wording here is remarkable. Terms like 'trade', or 'fishing' in the 'river' meant having sexual relationship in early modern English, not to mention the image of calling

¹⁵⁸ Georges Vigarello, *Concepts of Cleanliness: Changing Attitudes in France since the Middle Ages*, trans. Jean Birrell (Cambridge, 1988), ch. 1.

¹⁵⁹ Daniel Featley, *Dippers Dipt*, Sig. B2v.

women out of their beds in the night. For Edwards the motive for rebaptism was quite straightforward. Thomas Web, informed upon by 'a Reverend Minister in the city of London, one of the Member of the Assembly of Divines',¹⁶¹ was said to have drawn "away a mans five Daughters, and in a short time Re-baptized them all, making choyce of which he best liked, and Married her without her Parents consent."¹⁶² Edwards implied that Anabaptists never baptized infants because they were only interested in sexually mature women. Another "godly Minister that came out of those parts" informed Edwards that Samuel Oats was a cheat. After he baptized a young woman, he made her open her mouth. "[A]nd she gaped, and he did blow three times into her mouth, saying words to this purpose, either *receive the holy Ghost*, or *now thou hast received the holy Ghost*."¹⁶³ The lewd preacher, his erroneous doctrine on the Holy Spirit, and the process of infection, this time through kissing, are here clearly drawn.

Another baptizee of Web could not bear the humiliation, though her relation must have entertained the readers the most.

Another woman having a desire to be Re-baptized, and having pulled off her cloaths to the naked skin, ready to go into the Water, but forbearing during the time the Dipper prayed, she covered her secret parts with both her hands, the which the Dipper espying, told the woman that it was an unseemly sight to see her hold her hands downward, it being an Ordinance of Jesus Christ, her hands with her heart should be lifted upward towards heaven (as he shew'd her how he did) but she refusing for modesties sake could not be Re-baptized.¹⁶⁴

Like other similar stories about the sectaries in *Gangræna*, this is comic on the one hand, but pornographic on the other. Dippers were turned into the object of both laughter and sexual curiosity. The visual image drawn here rendered the concept of rebaptism as one of an utterly pornographic nature.

Gangræna has no illustrations, yet Edwards' description is highly pictorial. It shares the same eroticized image of adult baptism with the unusually detailed frontispiece of Daniel Featley's *Dippers Dipt*.¹⁶⁵ Depicted is a scene at the river

¹⁶⁰ *Gang. II*, pp. 146-147.

¹⁶¹ *Gang. I*, p. 53(b).

¹⁶² *Gang. I*, p. 55(b).

¹⁶³ *Gang. II*, p. 147.

¹⁶⁴ *Gang. II*, p. 55(b).

¹⁶⁵ The engraved frontispiece is reproduced in John Miller, *Religion in the Popular Prints 1600-1832* (Cambridge, 1986), p. 88. *Dippers Dipt* enjoyed large sales after its first publication in February 1645, with a the third edition by the end of the same year. The

'Jordan', where two naked male 'Dippers' are about to baptize a group of men and women. One Dipper in the posture of offering up a prayer puts his hands on a woman with her breasts exposed. In the background, the proximity of the bending man's head to the Dipper's groin suggests the obscenity of the ritual. The immorality of adult baptism is emphasized by a quotation from St. Cyprian's *On the Dress of Virgins*, in which he condemned 'immodest' women frequenting 'promiscuous baths': "Sordidat ista Lavatio non abluit nec emundat membra Sed commaculat [Such a washing defiles; it does not purify nor cleanse the limbs, but stains them.]"¹⁶⁶ The women in the 'Jordan' were described as 'Virgins of Sion', taken from Isaiah 3 as also quoted by St. Cyprian. Above this assembly is a devil vomiting into the river (another image of poisonous infection) [see Figures 6, 7].¹⁶⁷

Yet one should not simply dismiss Edwards' story of Web the Dipper and the unfortunate woman as a piece of mere sensationalism, a low comedy of an Anabaptist and an embarrassed woman. *Gangræna* stressed the fact that she was *not* able to be rebaptized, "for modesties sake." In order to be rebaptized she had to lift her hands "upward towards heaven," as instructed by the sectary, forsaking her modesty, and, by implication, revealing her sex. Anabaptism was thus described as leading to the deprivation of female modesty, as endangering the soul *and* the body. Sexual *immodesty*, encapsulated in the nakedness of Dippers and their female followers at their practice of adult baptism, was a counter symbol of the clean and purified state of the body, which was to be acquired only through the true and orthodox baptism. By 'sexualizing' Anabaptism — just like 'monsterizing' separatism — *Gangræna* defended the body spiritual, and reinforced the definition of salvation.

fourth edition followed in 1646, fifth in 1647 and the sixth in 1651. See Tolmie, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

¹⁶⁶ English translation from *The Fathers of the Church* (<http://newadvent.org/fathers/>).

¹⁶⁷ It might be the case that the depiction of the devil was considered too scandalous, as in the 1646 (third) and later editions of *Dippers Dipt*, the devil was replaced with an divine eye overlooking the Anabaptists, casting a ray of light with words "VIDEO RIDEO" (I see, I laugh). This version is reproduced in David Cressy, 'The Adamites Exposed: naked radicals in the English Revolution', in Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions*, p. 270. The portrayal of naked Dippers with undressed women as in this frontispiece is rare among other pictorial satires in this period; typical Anabaptists were pictured as half-naked men (often wearing trousers), baptizing other men, and full nudity was often reserved for the 'Adamites'. See frontispieces of E. Pagitt, *Heresiography* (5th edn., 1654) [Figure 13] and the tract, *A Catalogue of the Severall Sects and Opinions in England and other Nations* (1647) [Figure 10]. For Adamite pictures, see *A Nest of Serpents Discovered, or, A knot of old Heretiques revived, Called the Adamites* (1641); *A New sect of Religion Descryed, called Adamites* (1641); *The Adamites Sermon* (1641). Tamsyn Williams, 'Magnetic Figures', pp. 87, 101-102.

Horror and identity: woman preaching and 'heretics' administering sacraments

There are many other instances in which the practices of sectaries served to represent inverted images of the orthodox religion. As in the scenes of believers' baptism by Anabaptists, *Gangræna*'s portrayal of sectarian meetings emphasized the bodies of sectaries as wrong-doers. For Edwards and other ministers, the fact that uneducated laymen were holding and conducting religious meetings itself was literally a world turned upside down. These were "Mechanicks taking upon them to preach and baptize, as Smiths, Taylors, Shoomakers, Pedlars, Weavers, &c." By naming these crafts as the executors of the ministry, familiar rites such as baptism and preaching were turned into a series of horrible practices. A broadsheet entitled *These Trades-men are Preachers in and about the City of London* (1647) showed pictures of twelve men engaging in twelve different occupations, from the 'confectioner' to 'Button-maker' [see Figure 8]. It was explained that by their "Erronious, Heriticall and Mechannick spirits ... the very foundation of Christian knowledge and practise is endeavoured to be overturned."¹⁶⁸ It was, however, not only lay-men from the tradesmen's class that violated the sacred office of the ministry; "there are also some women-preachers in our times, who keepe constant Lectures, preaching weekly to many men and women."¹⁶⁹

A meeting house at Bell-Alley, Coleman street, where Thomas Lambe the Anabaptist and "soap-boiler" hosted his congregation, gave *Gangræna* a stage on which 'heretics' were depicted in their unlawful practices of meeting, preaching, debating, praying or conducting various rituals. There was to be seen not only "very Erroneous, strange Doctrines being vented," but "strange things also done by them both in the time of their Church meetings, and out of them." One of the remarkable characteristics of the Bell-Alley meetinghouse was its confusion. For example, detailed and extended accounts of two women preachers, who preached in weekly Tuesday lectures at Bell Alley and Old-Baily, emphasized how they *failed* to keep their services in order, rather than how they were erroneous in doctrine and opinion. Accounts like these have given historians useful insights into the position of women during the English Civil War,¹⁷⁰ but for our purpose, it is equally important to know what aspects

¹⁶⁸ *These Trades-men are Preachers in and about the City of London, or a Discovery of the Most Dangerous and Damnable Tenets that have been spread within this few years* (London, 1647).

¹⁶⁹ *Gang.* I, p. 84.

¹⁷⁰ Hilary Hinds, *God's Englishwomen: Seventeenth Century Radical Sectarian Writing and Feminist Criticism* (Manchester, 1996); Stevie Davies, *Unbridled spirits: women of the*

of the practice Thomas Edwards used in order to construct the image of sectaries as 'heretics'. For Edwards, women preachers' heretical nature was to be understood with reference to their physical difference from the orthodox ministers; they were indecisive, physically weak, and lacked powerful voices. "In briefe," he concluded, the result of the preaching by the two women, a "Lace-woman, that sells Lace in Cheapside" and a "Gentlewoman" later identified as Mrs Attaway, was "such laughing, confusion, and disorder."

For, having appeared in front of the audience, the Gentlewoman lost her courage to speak, and "refused to begin, pleading her weaknesse." So the Lace-woman continued, excusing "that she was somewhat indisposed in body, and unfit for this worke." She started her prophecy, then prayed for half an hour, followed by an even longer speech. Then Mrs Attaway began her speech, but again "making some Apologie that she was not so fit at this time in regard of some bodily indispositions." Her topic was "whether we love Christ or no." But soon she was interrupted. While she was explaining to the crowd what love was, "one in the company cryed, *Speake out.*"

...whereupon she lifted up her voice; but some spake the second time, *Speake out*, so that upon this the Gentlewoman was disturbed and confounded in her discourse, and went off from that of love to speake upon I *Iohn* 4. of trying the spirits, but shee could make nothing of it, speaking non-sense all along; whereupon some of the company spake againe, and the Gentlewoman went on speaking, jumbling together some things against those who despised the ordinances of God, and the Ministry of the Word; and upon that some present spake yet once more, so that shee was so amazed and confounded, that she knew not what she said, and was forced to give over and sit down.

The meeting ended with the angry Lace-woman praying that "God would send some visible judgement from heaven" upon those who interrupted the preaching. If "the candles might have gone out," Edwards' informant reported, "they have fallen to kill or mischief one another."¹⁷¹

This emphasis on disorder and confusion in the description of sectarian meetings was partly based on Edwards' and other conservative ministers' detestation of the way sects let the members of the audience freely question or object against the matter delivered. "That was their custome to give liberty in

English Revolution, 1640-1660 (London, 1998). See also Keith Thomas, 'Women and the civil war sects', *Past and Present*, 13 (1958), pp. 42-62.

¹⁷¹ *Gang. I*, pp. 84-86. The 'weakness' of the female sex was often excused by even those women preachers and writers who most boldly claimed their spiritual gifts. See Thomas, 'Women and the civil war sects', pp. 49, 56.

that kinde,” Edwards grumbled.¹⁷² In the case of Thomas Lambe’s congregation, “in their Ch. meetings and Exercises there is such a confusion and noise, as if it were at a Play,” because “tis usual and lawful, not only for the company to stand up and object against the Doctrine delivered when the Exerciser of his gifts hath made an end, but in the midst of it, so that sometimes upon some standing up and objecting, there’s *pro* and *con* for almost an hour, and falling out among themselves before the man can have finished his Discourse.”¹⁷³

Another account of a meeting of eighty ‘Anabaptists’, hosted by Samuel Barber in Bishopsgate Street focused on the ‘false’ sacraments conducted by ‘heretics’. Having persuaded all the members both men and women to kneel down, Barber laid his hands on each head, saying “Receive the Holy Ghost.” This laying on of hands was a traditional ritual act primarily reserved for clerical ordination, but it must have appeared very suspicious for Presbyterian ministers, while Edwards’ informant, who was present at the meeting and received this blessing, did not seem to have known the meaning of it at all. He was “somewhat troubled at this new businesse of laying on of hands,” Edwards wrote scornfully. Then the sectaries sat and ate supper, “which was dressed for them by a Cook.” Then on the same table, the Lord’s Supper was conducted, even “before the cloth was taken away.” After that they discussed “Whether Christ died for all men or no?” “which they fell into dispute of.”¹⁷⁴

The doctrine of General redemption, the idea that Christ died for all, featured prominently among the opinions of the English General Baptist sects, and was the point on which they clashed with the Calvinist doctrine of predestination.¹⁷⁵ It is notable therefore that Edwards’ narrative stressed the debating of religious matters no less than the substance of the Anabaptists’ teachings. The picture of uneducated men and women discussing theology was persuasive enough to represent and understand them as ‘heretics’.

These ‘strange’ practices provoked horror in *Gangræna* because they were essentially *imitations* of what orthodox and properly ordained ministers were supposed to do. “Our Sectaries are great Innovatours,” Edwards wrote, “as changeable as the Moon, bringing into their Churches new opinions daily, new practices, taking away the old used in all Reformed Churches, and substituting new.” However, this does not mean the practices of sectaries were

¹⁷² *Gang. I*, p. 85.

¹⁷³ *Gang. I*, pp. 92-93.

¹⁷⁴ *Gang. I*, pp. 104-105.

¹⁷⁵ Tolmie, *op. cit.*, ch. 4.

incomprehensible to the readers of *Gangræna*. Rather sectaries' activities like "bringing in anointing with oyl, bringing in their laying on of hands to give the holy Ghost" were those most familiar to ministers.¹⁷⁶

Upon reading the accounts in *Gangræna* of episodes such as when sectaries dressed up a "Cat like a childe for to be baptized" or, even more radically, "took out a horse, and brought it into the church, and there baptized it," we learn of the variety of symbolic activities used by seventeenth-century men and women who may not have been able to write.¹⁷⁷ Yet at the same time we should also be aware how conservative puritan ministers articulated their horror of the rising religious sects through the inverted images of sectaries as the practitioners of baptism, preaching, theological discussion, and other holy rites, all of which had been reserved for educated and properly ordained divines. The fierce attack of the Calvinist ministers on the sectaries was backed not by their recognition of doctrinal errors but by their fear, as the physicians of the soul, of being mimicked by these 'false prophets' who were gaining access to the bodies of their flock. Depiction of dubious bodily conducts of the sectaries was itself the projection of the conservative ministers' identity. It was the horror of seeing themselves in reverse.

4. Conclusion

In the previous chapter we examined how the term 'heresy' was strategically employed by the religious Presbyterians in the mid-1640s in their struggle against the Independents and the London sects. Denouncing the "Independents, and Independish persons" as 'heretics' was a highly political act.¹⁷⁸ Yet the ambiguity of the very concept of 'heresy' was a great problem for many those who engaged in the debate. This chapter has argued that the contribution of *Gangræna* was that it succeeded to concretize the idea in plain and understandable bodily languages and images. 'Heresy' drawn by Edwards, as disease, monstrosity and the wrong bodily conduct, was not just negative stigmatization, but a rhetoric which made manifest. As R. I. Moore has argued in his discussion on medieval concept of heresy, these images of religious sects

¹⁷⁶ *Gang. I.* p. 51.

¹⁷⁷ *Gang. I.*, p. 67; *Gang. III.*, p. 17. See, for example, John Walter, *Understanding popular violence in the English Revolution: the Colchester plunderers* (Cambridge, 1999); David Cressy, 'Baptized beasts and other travesties: affronts to rites of passage', 'The battle of the altars: turning the tables and breaking the rails' and 'The downfall of Cheapside Cross: vandalism, ridicule, and iconoclasm', in Cressy, *Travesties and Transgressions*, pp. 171-185, 186-212, 234-250.

¹⁷⁸ *Gang. I.*, p. 105.

in seventeenth-century conservative religious writings provided “not simply a casual or convenient metaphor, but a comprehensive and systematic model.”¹⁷⁹ These images, of gangrene-eaten bodies, misshapen babies or uneducated men and women preaching and baptising, facilitated the understanding of ‘heresy’. They were representations of an idea, but at the same time they were models with which to formulate the idea itself. *Gangræna* used such images as deliberate political ploy to prevent debate. “Such discovereis,” Edwards wrote of his writings, “are more sensible practicall way of confutation of the Sectaries [...] then so many syllogismes and arguments.”¹⁸⁰ Moreover, the languages and imageries with which to construct ‘heresy’ also formulated the understanding of orthodoxy. Distorted and deformed, and doing wrong things, the bodies of ‘heretics’ functioned as the mirror images of the desirable form of Christian religion in England. In other words, by projecting the image of ‘heretics’ with these languages and imageries, Edwards introduced a model of the minister.

The pattern of the persecutory language that was exploited by Thomas Edwards would be recycled whenever there was need to condemn other ‘heretical’ religious movements, such as the Fifth Monarchy Men and the Quakers. Moreover, the colourful images of the Civil War ‘heretics’ which we have examined in this chapter rapidly turned into commonly accepted stereotypes. In 1653 Nicholas Hookes (1628-1712) in his sensual love poetry *Amanda*, praised passion in private life and proclaimed departure from the world of pamphlet war and religious politics, exclaiming:

Platonick love! ‘tis monstrous heresie,
Would scare an Adamite, in’s innocencie.¹⁸¹

As the frenzied controversy over the rise of ‘heresies’ in the mid-1640s began to settle into the more understandable issue of ‘nonconformity’, there was no longer urgent need of elaborating the language and imageries to project the concept of ‘heresy’ itself. Yet it is undeniable that the bodily languages and images were highly effective in making ‘heresy’ *knowable* during the 1640s. We shall now move on to examine another early modern literary technique to enable the understanding of ‘heresy’: the catalogue.

¹⁷⁹ Moore, ‘Heresy as Disease’, p. 9.

¹⁸⁰ *Gang.* II, Sig. A2r.

¹⁸¹ Nicholas Hookes, *Amanda, a sacrifice to an unknown goddesse, or, A free-will offering of a loving heart to a sweet-hearthby* (1653), p. 7. For *Amanda*, see Nigel Smith, *Literature and Revolution*, pp. 251-252.

Chapter 4

Cataloguing Heresies: Ephraim Pagitt and *Heresiography* as a Genre

The horrible Blasphemies and devillish opinions of these Heretickes I am loath to name, but that my desire is that Christians should take notice of them to beware of them.

Ephraim Pagitt, *Heresiography* (1645).¹

Briefly, I dare say, more sects by one and a halfe be risen there the last year, then in the whole christian world, from the times of the Apostles for 1600 years now past. Iræneus doth recite about twenty several sects of Hereticks. Tertullian, 27. Pheodmet, 76. Epiphanius, 80. Augustine, 88. Damascen. 100. Philastrius, 128. All which being many hundred yeares now past extinct and buried, seeme in this time to be raised up and called out of hell by triviall artificers and men of base condition, not without the great dammage of the chiefe in London, ceither as yet is the multiplying of Religions at an end.

Anon., *Mathematicall Divine* (1642).²

He sure is some high-minded Pharisee,
Or else infected with their heresie,
And must be set downe in their Catalogues,
They lov'd the highest seats in Synagogues.

John Taylor, *A very Merrie Wherrie-Ferry-Voyage*.

Or, Yorke for my Money (1622).³

1. Introduction

On 14 May 1995, the British Sunday newspaper *The Observer* had in its supplementary magazine *Life* a special article entitled 'A to Z of Cults'. The shocking news in March of the deadly nerve gas attack on the Tokyo subway, committed by a Japanese religious sect Aum Shinrikyo had not faded away. In April a federal office building in Oklahoma City had been blown up by another extremist religious militia. "Unrelated events, certainly," the writer admitted, "but perhaps there is a unifying theme in the background. ... They symbolise, in

¹ Ephraim Pagitt, *Heresiography: or a description of the Hereticks and Sectaries of these latter times* (London, 1645), p. 118.

² *Mathematicall Divine* (London, 1642), p. 4.

³ John Taylor, *A very Merrie Wherrie-Ferry-Voyage: Or, Yorke for my Money* (1622), Sig. B[6]r (lines 701-4).

the most dramatic fashion, an abiding hunger for extreme belief in an unbelieving world.”⁴ ‘A to Z’ was an alphabetical catalogue of select religious sects across the world, from Aum to the Zoroastrians. To illustrate the situation, the article made comparison of these sects’ brief histories, doctrines and their visual appearances, with sensational photographs. Each sect was rated according to its ‘Money making’, ‘Armageddon rating’ and ‘loony value’; unfortunately, Aum Shinrikyo received only 1 point for their looniness.

Such an ‘A to Z’ listing, by which different religious groups are collected and catalogued in one place, has been a common form in the West (and in Japan), where there are often debates as to whether such religious ‘cults’ in general undermine the security of society. Whether in tabloid newspapers, magazines or TV shows, the point of listing as many names of religious sects as possible (better if sorted and indexed) is to place the blame on those groups which are termed ‘cults’⁵ Obviously these are not catalogues of *all* religions. Those religious bodies that are supposed to be orthodox — such as the Roman Catholic Church or traditional Buddhist denominations — are usually excluded from such lists of ‘cults’. Also it is clear that these catalogues are not a kind of ‘A to Z *guide*’ meant to help those who are suffering this ‘abiding hunger’; contrarily, they are produced to warn those of us who desire to make sure that we are not one of such seekers. The catalogue of ‘cults’ seems to have a place in our understanding of the issues of religion in our modern world. How has it become like this? How did we come to talk about religions by using catalogues?

This chapter will investigate the ‘catalogue of heresies’ produced in England during the mid-seventeenth century as a genre and will see how the formation of this peculiar kind of literature interacted with the debates over the religious sectarianism which we have so far examined. It will argue that these texts formed a part of the historical development of the construction of knowledge about ‘religion’. There is, of course, a great danger in jumping too hastily from the twentieth-century to the seventeenth-century, equating the good old Diggers and Ranters with the modern high-tech cults. But if we compare the *form* by which these radical diversities of religious opinion and practice are presented, there does seem to be a connecting thread.

There have been few historical studies of seventeenth-century heresiographies which critically question the forms those writings took.

⁴ ‘A to Z of Cults’ by Robert Cornelius, *Life: The Observer Magazine*, 14 May 1995, p. 4.

⁵ ‘Shinko-Shukyo’ in Japanese, literally meaning ‘new religion(s)’. Note that the Japanese language does not have plural.

Christopher Hill called the authors of seventeenth-century anti-sectarian literature, Thomas Edwards, Robert Baillie, Samuel Rutherford, Ephraim Pagitt and Alexander Ross, as “professional heresy-hunters.” But he maintained that only Edwards’ *Gangræna* “is well documented and seems to stand up quite well to examination.”⁶ Although historians have long been familiar with the general terms ‘heresiography’ or ‘heresiographer’, they have rarely discussed the implication of the emergence of these categories. As Ann Hughes pointed out, these works have generally been assessed not for their mode of writing but according to the reliability of the evidence they can provide.⁷ Ephraim Pagitt’s *Heresiography* (1645), for example, has received much less attention from historians than more sensational and disturbing works of Thomas Edwards, because it has less ‘realistic’ incidental detail to incorporate into histories of the sects.

This chapter aims to show the limitation of approaches such as Hill’s to seventeenth-century heresiographies. Portraying all anti-heresy writings as one ignores the variety of their authors, and how they were writing from different backgrounds, while treating their writings merely as useful sources of information ignores the consistent themes and objectives which those texts shared. Ann Hughes has recently studied Edwards’ *Gangræna* by highlighting how the text interacted with the social and political dynamics of the Civil War, and has explored some of the meaning of religious polemics in the seventeenth-century print culture.⁸ Here I hope to take a different approach, and to examine the very act of *cataloguing* sects and heresies undertaken by those heresiographers. In this context, Pagitt’s *Heresiography*, which apparently invented this term, appears no less important than *Gangræna*; rather it played a central role in establishing a particular genre of religious polemic in seventeenth-century England.

The catalogue, was one of the most popular forms in which religious sects were written about by their opponents from the opening of the Civil War. Many of the cheap pamphlets on sects took this form. In 1641 *A Discovery of 29 Sects here in London* showed a crude example of this genre [see Figure 9]. In the

⁶ Christopher Hill, ‘Irreligion in the ‘Puritan’ Revolution’, in J. F. McGregor & B. Reay (eds.), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984), p. 206. J. C. Davis criticizes such a view of evaluating the historical sources primarily by their accuracy. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History* (Cambridge, 1986), ch. 6, esp. p. 129.

⁷ Ann Hughes, ‘The Meanings of Religious Polemic’, in Francis J. Bremer (ed.), *Puritanism: Transatlantic Perspectives on a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Faith* (Boston, 1994), p. 202.

next year, there followed *Religions Lotterie* with 16 entries to declare “how many sorts of Religions there is crept into the very bowels of this Kingdome.”⁹ After 1645, many more catalogues of sects and heresies appeared, mostly written by Presbyterian propagandists. *Hell Broke Lose* (1646) listed 42 errors to commemorate the national fast day of March that year. *A Catalogue of the Several Sects and Opinions* (1647) was a collection of verses dedicated to 22 sects from Jesuits to ‘Divorcer’, with multiple pictures of heretics demonstrating their manifest diversity [see Figure 10].¹⁰ Cataloguing was never confined to so-called cheap print culture. Divines also found the method useful for their polemical purposes. The subtitle of *Gangræna* was in fact a ‘Catalogue and discovery of many of the errors, heresies, blasphemies and ... practices of the sectaries’. Edwards came up with some 180 errors. The Presbyterian desire to collect and list all the conceivable errors climaxed with their fear of losing control of the painfully slow Reformation in England. After Thomas Edwards fled to Amsterdam, 60 London Presbyterian ministers in a somewhat desperate mood wrote and distributed their final version entitled *A Testimony to the Trueth of Jesus Christ* (1647).¹¹

Cataloguing can be seen as a literary form that bridged popular print culture and conservative religious polemic. Pagitt’s *Heresiography* emerged in the centre of this tradition and established itself as a model of such literature. The demand for such works was considerable. Thomas Edwards commended the book saying: “Mr Pagets [...] relates more than any late Authors.”¹² It may have been the first ‘reliable’ list of heretics widely available from London booksellers during the civil war. Authored by a learned clergyman, not a pamphlet writer, it was preeminent in its quality, length and respectability, giving historical accounts of each sect. *Heresiography* was a great success, reaching its sixth edition in 1662.¹³

⁸ Ann Hughes, ““Popular” Presbyterianism in the 1640s and 1650s: the cases of Thomas Edwards and Thomas Hall”, in Nicholas Tyacke (ed.), *England’s Long Reformation 1500-1800* (London, 1998), pp. 235-259.

⁹ *A Discovery of 29 Sects Here in London* (London, 1641); *Religions Lotterie, or The Churches Amazement* (London, 1642).

¹⁰ *Hell broke loose: or, a Catalogue of many of the spreading errors, heresies and blasphemies of these times, for which we are to be humbled* (London, 1646); *A Catalogue of the Several Sects and Opinions* (1647).

¹¹ See ch. 2.

¹² Edwards, *Gangræna*, p. 3.

¹³ A second edition was issued in 1645 within a year of the first edition. After Pagitt’s death third and fourth editions came out in 1647, a fifth edition in 1654, a sixth in 1661, and an even more expanded edition in 1662.

What differentiated *Heresiography* and similar catalogues from other conventional anti-heretical works, like those of Robert Baillie, Daniel Featley and Samuel Rutherford, was the manner in which they were organized. Chapter 3 showed how Thomas Edwards effectively exploited bodily language and images, but *Gangræna* was also fairly disorganized. As Ann Hughes suggests, it was an 'interactive' text, a mixture of theological refutation, correspondence and gross gossip. *Heresiography* on the other hand presented itself as a plain list of facts. An explanation of each sect, with its history, teachings and sometimes bibliographical references, was neatly placed under each name and section heading. This plainness is quite absent from *Gangræna* or other conservative writings. Many of the catalogue pamphlets similar to Pagitt's made next to no effort to engage readers with ornate argumentation or exhortation. Some even did not try to *refute* each error; they simply *listed* them. Such texts functioned simply by collecting, classifying and listing 'heresies'. This is a point which provides a consistent theme to our investigation in this chapter.

But then, why catalogue? Were there 16, 29, 42 or 45 sorts of sects found? Why did the number of categories matter? Did the 'Assirians' and 'Donatists' actually dwell among the 'Anabaptists' and 'Jesuits' in seventeenth-century London? How can listing the names of religious sects be a persuasive way of constructing religious discourse? One possible explanation is that the form interrelated with the political situation. Cataloguing 'heresies' can be seen as part of the process we have examined in the chapter 3, the process in which the very act of representation constructed and rendered religious identities, heterodoxy and orthodoxy. With bodily languages and symbolic imageries, Thomas Edwards pushed the sects beyond the boundaries of a 'healthy' religion. The catalogue of heresies, however plain and detached their text appeared, might have had the same function. Listing particular names in the catalogue of heresies could itself be an exercise of political power. It is, however, still difficult to fully explain the seventeenth-century writers' almost obsessive collecting and classifying of 'heresies' in terms of a binary framework of 'self' and 'other'. If 'heresy' was an embodiment of the false religion, why did it have to be studied in such an encyclopedical manner? Why did Alexander Ross, one of the "professional heresy hunters" according to Hill, have to spend pages writing about Japanese Christians in order to condemn London Quakers in the 1650s? We need to go further in order to explain the development of seventeenth-century heresiographies.

One of the distinctive aspects of the catalogue of heresies was its emphasis on the bewildering multiplicity and variety of sects and heresies. Instead of seeking similarity, the taxonomy of 'heresies' stressed that they were all *different*. If we return to the example of *Life's* 'A to Z of cults', it was important that next to the photograph of the Mormon Church female choir was one of a Cuban Voodoo shaman executing an animal sacrifice, and not just another North American white quasi-Christian establishment. But on the other hand, beside such an effort at differentiation, diverse groups are eventually grouped together under one single subject, 'religions'. The very act of cataloguing "unrelated events, certainly" suggests that these events can still all be brought under one heading, and indeed are able to be *related*, and can be thought to be representing one thing. Cataloguing is a process of differentiation, yet at the same time it is a process of unification, or, to borrow an Foucaudian term, 'subjectification'.¹⁴ The sheer variety of entries validates that the catalogue is dedicated to the subject, 'heresy'. The catalogue is most effective and powerful when it has the most diverse entries; the greater the variety, the more perfect the catalogue becomes.

Therefore, the key to understanding Pagitt's *Heresiography* and other works of catalogue literature seems to lie in the relationship between the *method* of the classification of 'heresies' and the knowledge or the whole conception of 'religion(s)'. That the plural "s" is in the parentheses is meaningful here, because whether there could be 'religions' instead of 'religion' can depend on this method itself. Here the method of cataloguing subjectifies 'religion' as something that can be plural, 'religions'. But at the same time, it is 'religions' that ratifies the cataloguing scheme, for one can not make a catalogue of something uncountable. The method of cataloguing serves to account for 'religion(s)', but in order for it to be a convincing enterprise of discourse, it has to rely on the idea that 'religion' is an object accountable by means of taxonomy.

If we see the catalogue as a technique of systematizing knowledge, we need to examine how such a technique developed historically, and what it meant to the subject to which the technique was to be applied. Social anthropologists consider the classification of objects as one of the principal human activities and the basis of a culture's world-view. Some kind of classification must take place for anyone to separate food from the inedible, to externalize social roles and obligations, or to give metaphysical meanings to his environment.¹⁵ But seventeenth-century catalogues of heresies have rather to be examined as a part

¹⁴ Paul Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader* (New York, 1984), p. 11.

¹⁵ Rodney Needham, *Symbolic Classification* (Santa Monica, California, 1979), esp. ch. 2.

of the early modern development of encyclopedism and 'scientific' classification. Historians of Renaissance humanism like Anthony Grafton and Ann Blair have examined the way in which early modern scholars developed practices of reading and organizing knowledge. Critical studies have focused on ways of directing and facilitating reading such as headings, footnotes and alphabetical indexes. Equally, the collecting and exhibiting of objects in early modern 'scientific' culture has increasingly received historians' attention.¹⁶ As early as in 1966, Michael Foucault raised important questions about the relationship between method of classifications and natural history as a discipline. He scrutinized the Renaissance encyclopedist Joannes Jonston's (1603-1675) *Natural History of Quadrupeds* (1650).¹⁷ Before Jonston, he claimed, 'things' — the objects to be studied, such as animals and plants — and their appearance were controlled by the "inextricable and completely unitary fabric of all what was visible(,) of things and of the signs that had been discovered or lodged in them."¹⁸ William B. Ashworth has called this an "emblematic world view," which associated objects with hidden meanings and symbols.¹⁹ Foucault and Ashworth argued that Jonston's *Natural History* ceased to present objects in such an emblematic manner. Things were now, in Foucault's words, 'limited' and 'filtered' by the words and techniques of taxonomy, marking a significant change of mode in natural history in the seventeenth century.²⁰ Things were viewed no more in the "show" but now in the "table," not in the "theatre" but the "catalogue." This development concerned not only natural history, Foucault argued, but the entire scheme of human knowledge; it brought forth "a new way of connecting things both to the eye and to discourse. A new way of making history."²¹

¹⁶ Ann Blair, 'Humanist methods in natural philosophy: The commonplace book', *Journal of the history of ideas*, 53 (1992), pp. 541-51; A. Grafton, 'The World of the Polyhistor: Humanism and Encyclopedism', *Central European History*, 18 (1985), pp. 31-47; Grafton, *The Footnote: A curious history* (London, 1997); Neil Kenny, *The Palace of Secrets: Béroalde de Verville and Renaissance Concepts of Knowledge* (Oxford, 1991); Paula Findlen, *Possessing Nature: Museums, Collecting, and Scientific Culture in Early Modern Italy* (Berkeley, etc., 1994).

¹⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London, 1970), pp. 128-131. First French edition published in 1966.

¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁹ William B. Ashworth, Jr., 'Natural History and the Emblematic World View', in D. C. Lindberg and R. S. Westman (eds.), *Reappraisals of the scientific Revolution* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 304-332; Ashworth, 'Emblematic natural history of the Renaissance', in N. Jardine, J. A. Secord and E. C. Spary (eds.), *Cultures of Natural History* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 17-37.

²⁰ Foucault, *Order of Things*, p. 135.

²¹ *ibid.*, p. 135.

If we place our heresiographies in this context, the matter may appear more dynamic. Historians tell that ‘religion’ in early modern society had once played a dominant role in structuring the cultural framework in which people understood the world, but then gradually lost ground in the light of findings from the New World and as other systems of reference, such as secular political philosophies and natural sciences developed. But few have discussed how this change in world-views affected the understanding of ‘religion’ itself as an idea. If natural history started to provide a new way of seeing animals and plants in the seventeenth century, how then did catalogues of sects relate to new ways of conceptualizing ‘religion’? How did an encyclopaedic catalogue of ‘religions’ — now in the plural — become possible? This and the following chapter will try to answer these questions. What follows is an investigation focusing on how Ephraim Pagitt set up his catalogue of heresies as a literary genre.

2. Pagitt and *Christianographie*

Although Ephraim Pagitt’s authorship of *Heresiography* is well known by scholars of the seventeenth century, his career has been somewhat neglected by historians, and the complexity of his position within Civil War religious polemics has been rarely discussed. A few scholars have noted that Pagitt wrote a work entitled *Christianographie* as well as *Heresiography*, but virtually none have examined the connection between the two.²² Historians of the seventeenth-century religious sects have occasionally used *Heresiography* as a source of information, but they have generally used the work uncritically and have rarely contextualized it. In his *World Turned Upside Down*, Christopher Hill, for instance, used the 1654 edition of *Heresiography* in his chapters on Quakers and Ranters, but did not note that Pagitt, who died in 1647, probably did not know, let alone write about these sects.²³ The sections on the ‘Quakers or Shakers’ and the ‘Ranters’ appeared only in the 5th (1654) edition of *Heresiography*, and William Lee, the publisher of the work since the 4th edition, affirmed that the parts on the Quakers and the Ranters were additions he made

²² Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Philadelphia, 1964), pp. 219-221.

²³ Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1972), pp. 74, 205, 227. The same mistake has been made, for example, by Jerome Friedman in *Blasphemy, Immorality, and Anarchy: The Ranters and the English Revolution* (Athens, Ohio and London, 1987), p. 255. Later Hill amended this point, in *A Nation of Change and Novelty* (London, 1990), p. 166.

after Pagitt's death.²⁴ The common view of Pagitt as a Royalist must also be revised. His ideological position was much more complex and his career swayed between the court and the Covenant.

Ephraim Pagitt was born in 1575 or 76. His father, Eusebius Pagitt, was a puritan divine in Northamptonshire. Having studied at Christ Church, Oxford, Ephraim became known as a great linguist who, "being not above twenty five or twenty six years of age," was able to handle "fifteen or sixteen" languages.²⁵ In 1601, "thro' some petit Employments," he obtained the rectory of St. Edmund the King, Lombard Street, London where he continued his ministry for about 40 years until his retirement in 1646.²⁶ He married a wealthy woman, 'the lady Bord', former wife of Sir Stephen Bord of Sussex. Pagitt was brought up in a puritan household. His father Eusebius Pagitt was probably best known by his contemporaries for his popular book *The Historie of the Bible*, which initially came out of his private catechism at their family meal table. "When my children first began to speake," Eusebius recalled, "for the furtherance of them & my servants in the knowledge of the historie of the Bible, after a Chapter read at our meales, at dinner out of the old Testament, at supper out of the new."²⁷ However, while his father was several times charged by the authorities for nonconformity, Ephraim adhered strongly to the Church of England, to which he devoted his first book *Christianographie* in 1635.

Christianographie: or, a Description of the sundrie Sorts of Christians in the World was an extraordinary survey of the Christian Churches throughout the world. Alongside the works of Daniel Featley and Francis White it was written in defence of the Church of England against the Roman Catholic Church in the 1630s. Daniel Featley (or Fairclough), a rector of Lambeth and of Acton, and a

²⁴ William Lee, in his preface to the 6th edition of *Heresiography* (1661), Sig. (a)[3]v. Lee wrote Pagitt died in 1650, but Anthony Wood recorded his death as in probably April of 1647, and both John Walker and Benjamin Brook agreed. Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, 2nd edn. (London, 1721), p. 103; J. Walker, *An Attempt Towards Recovering an Account of the Numbers and Sufferings of the Clergy of the Church of England* (London, 1714), p. 174; B. Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans* (London, 1813), iii, p. 63.

²⁵ W. Lee, op. cit., Sig. (a)[1]v; DNB, s.n.

²⁶ Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, p. 102. Wood wrote that there was no evidence of Pagitt's graduation from Oxford. No parish records survive for his parish before 1660.

²⁷ Eusebius Pagitt, *The Historie of the Bible, Briefly Collected by way of Question and Answer* (London, 1613), 'To the Christian Reader'. After it's first publication in 1613, it continued to be printed throughout Ephraim Pagitt's time and even after his death. It was also translated into French and German. W. Lee wrote of *Historie of the Bible* in 1661: "a small book, but of great esteem then at the first coming forth, yea, even to this day, as may appear by the many thousands that have been, and still are vended thereof." Lee, op. cit., Sig. (a)[1]v. See also Ian Green, *The Christian's ABC: Catechisms and Catechizing in England c.1530-1740* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 210-11, 253 and passim. For

domestic chaplain of archbishop Abbott, was by that time known for his excellence in disputation against Roman Catholic controversialists. Having returned from Paris where he disputed with Jesuits while serving as a chaplain to the English ambassador Sir Thomas Edmondes, Featley and Francis White were employed to hold a debate with two Jesuits, John Fisher and John Sweet in 1634. After an account of the conference favourable to Rome was published, Abbot requested Featley to write his own version, which was entitled *The Romish Fisher caught and held in his owne Net*.²⁸ Pagitt wrote *Christianographie* as a supplement to Featley and White's work.

Christianographie was thus clearly linked with the debate over the 'visible succession' of the true 'catholic' Church. Historians like Peter Lake and Anthony Milton have observed a changing tone in English anti-Catholic polemics towards the end of the sixteenth century. There was an increasing interest in emphasizing the 'visible' succession of the 'true church' within the Church of England. Elizabethan writers sought the 'true church before Luther', from which the Church of England was allegedly succeeded, in a series of proto-Protestant medieval sects and heretics, such as Wyclifite Lollards, the Waldensians in France, or the Hussites in Bohemia. This was a line strongly influenced by John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* (or *Book of Martyrs*) which highlighted the 'saving remnant' of the 'invisible' true church in the underground believers and martyrs. However, this Foxeian tradition of the identification of the true church was gradually undermined and altered by a succession of conformist writers, starting with Richard Hooker in the 1580s and then followed by Peter Heylyn and Richard Montagu. They rejected both the idea of an 'invisible' tradition of English Protestantism and the Calvinist claim for the church based on divine election; instead they argued that the true Church was always above-ground, 'visible' and institutional, enjoying ceremonies and the rule of bishops. In this new paradigm the Church of England represented 'a reformed continuation' of the 'holy catholic' church, that, according to these theologians, no longer resided in Rome.²⁹

several other editions of Eusebius Pagitt's catechism books including one written in Latin, see Green, p. 694. Also *DNB*, s.n.

²⁸ Horton Davies, *Like Angels from a Cloud: The English Metaphysical Preachers 1588-1645* (San Marino, 1986), pp. 32-33, 168-170.

²⁹ Anthony Milton, 'The Church of England, Rome, and the True Church: The Demise of a Jacobean Consensus', in Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* (London, 1993), p. 187; Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans?* (London, 1988), p. 156; P. Lake and M. Dowling (eds.), *Protestantism and the National Church in Sixteenth-Century England* (London, etc., 1987).

Pagitt placed himself at the centre of these anti-Roman polemics. He asserted that “the *Romanists* cannot confirme their Faith, either by sacred Scripture, or ancient Traditions: Their manner is to crie up the Visibilitie of the Church, and Authoritie of the same: And there by they delude many of the ignorant and unlearned, bearing them in hand, that there was no such thing in the world as a Protestant, before *Luther*: And that before his time, all the world beleaved as they doe.” In the defence of the Church of England, Pagitt associated himself with Featley and White. They, he wrote, could “proove a visible succession in the Protestant Church, [...] from *Christ* to *Luther* by name, out of good Authors produce Doctors and Pastors professing the Religion, which the *Church of England*, and *Protestants* professe. This was promised, This is now required, without shifts, and idle delays.”³⁰ Pagitt knew that Roman Catholics would list the genealogy of their fathers and bishops to demonstrate that *their* church was the true visible Church. But the succession of the true Church could not be proved simply by a lengthy list of names, argued Pagitt. To say “that he is no member of Christs Church, except he can also set downe a catalogue of the names of his spirituall parents, since Christ, is all one, as to perswade such a one that he is no man, because he can not reckon up his naturall parents, and fetch his pedigree from *Noah* or *Adam*.” Consequently Pagitt announced that “in stead of a catalogue of Names, I would show them a Catalogue of Churches.”³¹ Instead of a history, *Christianographie* produced a geography.

Geographical it was indeed. It was a volume designed to demonstrate the diversity of Christian Churches throughout the world, and to show that Rome was merely one of them. Rome was not the centre of the Christendom, nor did it exclusively succeed the true church. “Christianity is not confined to one Countrey or Nation,” Pagitt explained, “but it is dispersed over the face of the whole Earth.”³² Pagitt described the diverse sorts of Christians throughout the ‘New world’ and the ‘Old’. He described the Christians in each country, ranging from the ‘Protestants in England, Scotland and Ireland’ to the ‘Papists in Italy’. The scope of the book stretched beyond Europe to Asia and Africa. ‘Christians in America’ were discussed along with those in China. The medium he used to demonstrate this geographical distribution of Christian churches is truly striking for the time. *Christianographie* contained a series of fold-out maps

³⁰ Pagitt, *Christianographie*, (1635), Sigs. A3r-v; Anthony Milton, *Catholic and Reformed: The Roman and Protestant Churches in English Protestant Thought, 1600-1640* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 309.

³¹ *Christianographie*, Sigs. A[6]r-A[7]r.

³² *ibid.*, p. 2.

of the world which showed the location of Protestant, or non-Roman religion [see Figure 11]. Areas were marked according to the Christian population, to show, for example, that in Tartaria, north-eastern Russia, there were “more Christians then in the latin Church.”³³ The purpose of the project was not only to compare the doctrines and liturgical practices of these Christian churches, but to emphasize how, despite their minor differences in practice, the ‘Protestant Churches’ in Europe, as well as non-Reformed but non-Roman churches (such as Eastern and African churches) could unite together in their difference from the Roman Catholic Church. In another, supplementary, map of Europe Pagitt explained that there were “4 sorts of Christians,” “Protestants, Papists, Muscovites and Greekes,” but that “the 2 last agree with the Protestants.”³⁴ Pagitt’s geography aimed to decentre and to marginalize Rome.

By emphasizing the authenticity of the Eastern Church Pagitt showed himself a conformist writer. When Pagitt wrote “I doe finde that these Churches are not hereticall, but Orthodox in the maine,”³⁵ he was showing his high estimation of the ‘orthodox’, institutional church. In his dedication of the 1640 edition of *Christianographie* to king Charles I Pagitt wrote “the Church of GOD Militant upon Earth, I doe finde that it is not limited to any one Countrey or Nation.”

Nor yet inclosed within one Bishops Diocesse or Jurisdiction, as the *Roman* Catholickes (who uncharitably exclude all Christian Heaven, putting them into the state of damnation, who are not subject to their Bishop) no lesse vainly pretend: But truely, Catholic or Universall, as we doe believe in our holy Creed. The Apostles preached not to one Country or Nation onely, but to the whole world, according to our Lords command: [...] Indeed I doe finde many famous Churches planted by the Holy Apostles, remaining at this day, of which some now are, or lately have beene, for extent larger than the Church of *Rome* in *Europe*, for time more ancient, for faith more sound, for succession as continuall, for profession more constant.³⁶

By stressing the ‘orthodoxy’ of the early Churches of the East, Pagitt placed the Church of England in the context of the history of the true ‘Catholic or Universall’ Church of the Apostles without having to refer to the Roman Church as the ‘mother’ church. His arguments thus resembled other Jacobean historians of the early church who, like Richard Field, author of *Of the Church*,

³³ See Hodgen, *Early Anthropology*, pp. 219-221.

³⁴ *Christianographie*, p. 9.

³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 129.

began to exploit the idea that Christianity was brought to Britain not by representatives of Rome but by the Greeks.³⁷

It is therefore not surprising that Pagitt was welcomed by the new archbishop William Laud, and was felt to be a useful advocate of the Church of England and the Prayer Book. In 1638 Pagitt apparently wrote a series of letters to the patriarch of Constantinople and the other patriarchs of the Greek church, commending to them his *Christianographie*, Elias Petley's Greek translation of the English *Book of Common Prayer*, and William Laud's conference with Fisher.³⁸ In the 1640, under the patronage of Laud, Pagitt published a revised edition of *Christianographie* and dedicated it to Charles I. Pagitt began not only to justify the Church of England against Rome, but also its episcopal system. As Anthony Milton has noted, this edition emphasized the Eastern churches' reservation of episcopacy and implied that the episcopal system of the Church of England was historically legitimate. Pagitt wrote to Charles that "all the *Christian Churches* in the World, have and do keep, the ancient Ecclesiasticke policy, order, and government of Bishops, instituted by our Lord himselfe, the great Bishop of our soules."³⁹ New chapters were inserted "of the honour and reverence given by the Christians in the world to their Bishops and Pastors," arguing that the order of Bishops, and ancient Ecclesiastical Policy were always esteemed among not only Christians but also 'heathen men' like "*Mahumetan* and *Pagan* Tyrants."⁴⁰ It may well be that, as Anthony Milton suggests, the emphasis on episcopacy in the 1640 edition was recommended by Laud himself.⁴¹

This 'Laudian' inclination and Pagitt's shift of emphasis can be observed in his account of the Protestant churches that abolished episcopacy. They, Pagitt now argued, destroyed the 'Church of GOD Militant upon Earth'. "[F]or this wrong done to Bishops, and seizing upon Church-livings, and all this under colour of reformation, the name of Almighty God is blasphemed, Religion scandalized."⁴² Interestingly, in the first edition (1635) of *Christianographie*

³⁶ *Christianographie*, 1640 edn. (London, 1640), Sig. A2.

³⁷ Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, p. 380.

³⁸ Surviving letters are addressed to Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, Jerusalem, Moscow, to the patriarchs of the Maronites, Prince Radziwil of Poland and John Tolnai of Transylvania. *DNB*, s.n. See also Hugh Trevor-Roper, 'The Church of England and the Greek Church in the Time of Charles I', in Trevor-Roper, *From Counter-Reformation to Glorious Revolution* (London, 1992), pp. 83-112.

³⁹ Pagitt, *Christianographie*, 1640 edn., dedication to Charles, Sig. A3r.

⁴⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 4, 177.

⁴¹ Milton, *Catholic and Reformed*, p. 309n187.

⁴² *Christianographie*, 1640 edn., pp. 206-7.

Pagitt wrote favourably of the Scottish Reformation and included them alongside the English against Rome.

Although, some private men led more by passion, and their owne selfe pleasing concept [...] have laboured to sow the tares of dissention, in the vineyard of the Lord, and have made Crooked some branches [...] as Anabaptists, Brownists, and others, yet the generall societies, of these Orthodox Churches, in the publique confessions of their faith, do so agree. [...] They differ rather in Phrases and formes of speech, concerning Christs presence in his holy Supper, & other things, then in substance of doctrine, and also in Ceremonies.⁴³

However, in the 1640 edition, Pagitt fiercely condemned “some of the Covenanters” of Scotland, who denied the supremacy of ministers and abolished tithes.

[W]hy do I terme this their doing a Reformation? is this a Reformation, in which the subjects are armed, against their most gracious and religious sovereigne [...] who sincerely professeth, and maintaineth the blessedly reformed Religion. [...] Is this a Reformation, to out your holy and learned Bishops, who have preached, written and professed themselves readie to suffer for the verity of Jesus Christ his Gospel. Is this a Reformation, to root out the sacred name of Bishops from among them, so commended by Saint *Paul* to *Timothy* and *Titus* in holy Scripture? [...] Is this Gods Kingdome, or a Reformation in which Gods Kingdome suffereth?⁴⁴

Pagitt concluded: “We read of many reformations, but of such one as is now in *Scotland*, we never heard of.”⁴⁵ Pagitt’s *Christianographie*, the catalogue of Christian churches, was easily accommodated within the ecclesiastical policy of the Laudian Church, as a work which usefully verified both its ‘Protestant’ identity and its episcopalianism, the two elements which English puritans increasingly called into question.

⁴³ *ibid.*, p. 128.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 186-7.

⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 188.

3. The 'Mysticall Wolf': Pagitt and the Civil War

Pagitt and the City Presbyterians

In the light of Pagitt's career, therefore, it would be easy to assume that he remained a Royalist writer during the Civil War, and to expect his second work, *Heresiography*, to be straightforward Royalist propaganda. This was not the case, however. Five years after the last edition of *Christianographie*, in the midst of the Civil War, Pagitt placed himself alongside Presbyterian propagandists. Pagitt's biographers in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth century often wrote of him as a 'great sufferer'. Anthony Wood wrote that when the "Great Rebellion" broke out Pagitt was "so molested and troubled that merely for quietness sake" he left his parish.⁴⁶ This account gives the impression that Pagitt, as W. K. Jordan wrote in 1965, "favouring neither party, voluntarily retired into the country."⁴⁷ But John Walker included Pagitt among those ministers silenced by the Long Parliament, and Benjamin Brook saw Pagitt's suffering as a consequence of his Royalism. According to Brook, "[h]e was decided in his attachment to his majesty's interest and the civil constitution, for which he was a sufferer in those evil time."⁴⁸ A similar story was told by William Lee, the printer, who published the fourth, fifth and sixth editions of *Heresiography*. If Pagitt, Lee remarked in 1661, "had rested here and proceeded no further, he might perhaps have injoyed this Worlds content, having wherewith all to live in a plentiful manner." But "he thought (it seems) himself born for the publick Good." And "hence sprung up his trouble."⁴⁹

Throughout the country clergymen who had been loyal to the Caroline Church found themselves in an extremely difficult position in the 1640s. 1642 and 1643 saw the climax of the systematic purge of what Parliamentarians called 'Scandalous and malignant' ministers.⁵⁰ Daniel Featley, for example, to whom Pagitt submitted his *Christianographie*, faced ferocious opposition. Once a renowned disputant for the Church of England, Featley came under attack from

⁴⁶ Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses* (2nd edn., 1721), p. 103.

⁴⁷ W. K. Jordan, *The Development of Religious Toleration in England: From the Convention of the Long Parliament to the Restoration, 1640-1660*, vol. 3 (Gloucester, Mass., 1965), p. 278.

⁴⁸ Walker, *Sufferings of the Clergy*, p. 174; Brook, *Lives of the Puritans*, iii, pp. 63.

⁴⁹ Lee, preface to the 6th edition (1661) of *Heresiography*, Sigs. (a)2r-v.

⁵⁰ See I. M. Green, 'The persecution of 'scandalous' and 'malignant' parish clergy during the English Civil War', *English Historical Review*, xliv (1979), p. 515-517. The parishioners of St. Michael Cornhill street, one of the neighbouring parishes of Pagitt's, accused their minister William Brough of Arminianism, ceremonialism and 'malignancy'. A. G. Matthew (ed.), *Walker Revised* (Oxford, 1948), p. 43; Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (Aldershot, 1997), pp. 267-8.

the new powers after 1642, and was branded a 'Papist'. His church in Acton was raided by soldiers, its altar rails were burnt and windows smashed. And in 1643, as he hesitated over whether to take the Solemn League and Covenant, the House of Commons charged him with spying. He was imprisoned, and his rectories were taken away.⁵¹

It is not certain, however, if Ephraim Pagitt left his parish of St. Edmund the King as a consequence of Parliamentary persecution. Only Lee suggests that Pagitt suffered because of publishing *Heresiography*. According to Lee, the publication of *Heresiography* in 1645 angered "Enemies of the Church", and thus Pagitt was "persecuted, reviled, slandered, and through false suggestion" suffered "even imprisonment it self."⁵² This, however, does not confirm that Pagitt was finally driven from his parish in this way. It seems Pagitt may well have survived the peak of the 'purge' in 1642-43. Moreover, we cannot assume that Pagitt suffered because he was treated as a 'Royalist' by the 'Puritans'. I. M. Green pointed out that it would be a mistake to assume that all the clergymen who were made to leave their parishes during the Long Parliament and the Interregnum were 'Royalists' or 'Laudian'. The cases of sequestration recorded in Walker's *Sufferings of the Clergy* cannot be reduced to a simple 'Puritan versus Royalist' confrontation; the causes and the pattern of accusations were much more complex.⁵³ We know that Pagitt's earlier career was deeply entwined with the politics of the Church of England in the 1630s and with Laud's scheme for reinforcing the Episcopalian church government. But this image of 'suffering Pagitt' as a victim of Puritanism is clearly a post-Restoration Cavalier-conservative view which appropriates Pagitt for Royalist ends. Such a view also does not explain why Pagitt wrote his second work *Heresiography* in 1645 right before his retirement.

By 1642 Pagitt found himself in an exposed situation which he had not experienced before, now that the King had fled and Laud was in prison. But it seems that he dealt with this sudden change of circumstances by shifting his position. Instead of embracing the 'suffering' of typical Royalist clergymen, Pagitt chose to remain among the Calvinists of the City. We do not know to what extent Pagitt's earlier career and his close connection with Laud put him at risk of persecution during his last years as a local clergyman. During his trial in March 1644 Laud was charged concerning "certain houses" given to St.

⁵¹ Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, p. 77.

⁵² Lee, revised preface to the 1662 version of the 6th edition of *Heresiography* (London, 1662). This account is repeated in Brook, *Lives of the Puritans*, iii, pp. 64.

⁵³ Green, 'The persecution of 'scandalous' and 'malignant' parish clergy', pp. 507-531; Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London*, pp. 265-269.

Edmund the King where Pagitt was the rector. The houses were said to have been “given to superstitious uses.” Laud desired that Pagitt might be heard in the trial. Pagitt never appeared in court, and this charge was not carried any further.⁵⁴ Laud was executed in January 1645; Pagitt took the Covenant. Clearly he now had retracted the obvious attack he had made on the Scottish ‘Covenanters’ in *Christianographie*. We do not know if Pagitt’s taking of the Covenant was a camouflage, or was forced by the parliamentary pressure; refusing to do so could have lead him to persecution or sequestration. But in November of the same year, along with 74 other London ministers including Thomas Edwards, James Cranford, and Christopher Love, he even signed a petition to parliament for the establishment of Presbyterian church government.⁵⁵

Pagitt’s affiliation with the Presbyterian movement can also be seen in his connection to leading City governors as well as his links with Presbyterian ministers in the City. He dedicated his *Heresiography*, published in May 1645, to the Lord Mayor Thomas Atkins, a known puritan, stressing “the Covenant we made in the presence of Almighty God.”⁵⁶ Furthermore, the publication was licensed by James Cranford, who gave his *imprimatur* to many Presbyterian publications.⁵⁷ Robert Baillie took no particular notice of Pagitt, but in 1646 Thomas Edwards commended Pagitt as one of the ‘learned men’ and implied that he had met him personally.⁵⁸ In his dedication Pagitt also commended other contemporary anti-sectarian authors most of whom wrote for the Presbyterian cause. He referred to the “speciall men” chosen to preach against the sects, probably meaning Edwards at Christ Church in Newgate.⁵⁹ He also commended the orthodoxy of the Reformed Dutch church in London, and stated that he was very ready to become “most gladly a member of the said Dutch Church.”⁶⁰

⁵⁴ William Laud, *The Works* (Oxford, 1864), vol. 4, pp. 125-6.

⁵⁵ Zachary Grey, *An Impartial Examination of the Third Volume of Mr. Daniel Neal’s History of the Puritans* (London, 1737), Appendix, pp. 87-89.

⁵⁶ Thomason dates his acquisition as May 8th. As well as Atkins, Pagitt named the Aldermen of the City, including Sir Nicholas Rainton and William Gibbs (to whom Pagitt also dedicated *Mysticall Wolfe*). *Heresiography*, Dedication, Sigs. A[1]r, A[5]v.

⁵⁷ Valerie Pearl, ‘London Puritans and Scotch Fifth Columnists’, pp. 320, 327. See ch. 2.

⁵⁸ Edwards, *Gangræna*, pp. 3, 10, 38.

⁵⁹ Pagitt, *Heresiography*, dedication, Sig. A[5]r. Other authors referred to included Edwards, Thomas Gataker, Thomas Bakewell, and Daniel Featley.

⁶⁰ “... I confesse, that the whole Doctrine established and published in the Church of England, and also that is received in the Dutch Church in London, is found, true, and according to Gods Word, whereunto in all things I submit my selfe, & will be most gladly a member of the said Dutch Church, from henceforth utterly abandoning and forsaking all and every Anabaptisticall errors.” *Heresiography*, p. 40. Pagitt repeatedly

What made him align with the Presbyterians? Almost certainly it was his concern about the rise of religious sectarianism in the City. In November 1644 Pagitt published a sermon entitled *Mysticall Wolfe*.⁶¹ Taking Matthew 7:15 (“Beware of false Prophets, which come to you in Sheepes cloathing, but inwardly they are ravening Wolves”) as its text, the sermon warned against the “divers pernicious sects.” Clearly it was an overture to *Heresiography*. The sermon was delivered in his own church of St. Edmund the King. There are no extant parish records of St. Edmunds, but from the survey of inhabitants in London made in 1638 we know that several influential citizens lived in Pagitt’s parish, including Alderman Sir Nicholas Rainton, Alderman Sir George Whitmore, Sir David Watkins and Tobias Dixon.⁶² Watkins eventually became one of the leading Independents in the City, but soon he was to leave the parish. Whitmore, the wealthiest man within the parish was a loyal supporter of Charles I, and was willing to raise money for the crown up till the last minute of the King’s flight from London in January 1642.⁶³ But the rest were all sympathetic to the City puritans, and were exactly the kind of men from whom the religious Presbyterians in the mid-1640s hoped to gain support. Pagitt dedicated *Mysticall Wolfe* to Alderman Sir Nicholas Rainton and Alderman William Gibbs, both of whom were, apparently, parishioners of St. Edmund the King.⁶⁴

Some time after the publication of the second edition of *Heresiography* in 1645, Pagitt retired from his parish and moved to Deptford. It was probably around the summer of 1646; on September 30th the house of Lords discussed the appointment of a new rector for St. Edmund the King to replace “Ephraim

denounced the ‘Brownists’ or ‘Separatists’ in that they separated not only from the Church of England “but also from all the Reformed Churches beyond the Seas.” p. 46.

⁶¹ Ephraim Pagitt, *The Mysticall Wolfe, set forth in a sermon Preached in the Church of Edmond the King, in Lombard-street* (London, 1645). Thomason’s copy is entered under November 24, 1644 in Thomason catalogue, but on the title page it is handwritten “Feb: 3d” (of 1644/5). It is not certain when Pagitt actually preached the sermon. The tract was sold by the bookseller Robert Trot, who owned his shop in Pagitt’s parish, St. Edmund the King.

⁶² T. C. Dale (ed.), *The Inhabitants of London in 1638* (London, 1931), pp. 53-54; Tai Liu, *Puritan London* (London, etc., 1986), p. 137; Valerie Pearl, *London and the Outbreak of the Puritan Revolution: City Government and National Politics, 1625-43* (Oxford, 1961), pp. 304-7, 320.

⁶³ Pearl, *London*, pp. 253-4; Liu, *Puritan London*, p. 137.

⁶⁴ In his dedication to “the Right Worshipfull Sir NICHOLAS RAYNTON, Knight, and Alderman of London : and to Mr. WILLIAM GIBBS, Alderman and Sheriffe of the said City, and to his loving friends who have been Church wardens assisting him...,” Pagitt wrote, “I publish this sermon of my own, preached among you, when the plague of heresie first began among us.” Dedication ended with Pagitt’s sign, “Your old Pastor, Ephraim Pagitt.”

Pagett, deceased.”⁶⁵ In Deptford, according to Wood, Pagitt spent “the short remainder of his days in great Devotion and Retiredness.” The remainder was very short it seems; Pagitt wrote his will, as a rector of St. Edmund, in August 6th 1646 and was buried probably between April and May the next year, in the churchyard in Deptford, according to his request.⁶⁶ In the light of his connection to the City’s political leaders and to other Presbyterian writers, it is unlikely that Pagitt was silenced as a Royalist preacher. Indeed he seems to have been willing to adapt himself to London Calvinists in order to keep some kind of state church. William Lee’s account of the “false suggestion” that led to his “imprisonment” should be considered, if there occurred such an event, as caused by the Independent — or the City radical — side, who took offence at Pagitt as a Presbyterian supporter. It is also too hasty, to assume that Pagitt confronted the total opposition of his parishioners, as in some other cases of sequestration. The shop of Robert Trot the bookseller for *Mysticall Wolfe* and the first three editions of *Heresiography* was in Pagitt’s own parish, while William Lee too was a parishioner.⁶⁷

False prophets and plague of heresy: the making of *Heresiography*

Mysticall Wolfe was filled with a sense of frustration at the disorder in religion invited by the Civil War. Pagitt complained of “Infants not brought to the sacrament of Baptisme, of multitudes refusing to receive the holy Communion, of the accounting of the Lords prayer abominable, and the Apostles Creed defective, and banishing the ten Commandements out of many of our Churches.”⁶⁸ In *Heresiography* the situation appeared even more serious: “our Congregations forsaking their pastors; our people becomming of the Tribe

⁶⁵ William A. Shaw, *A History of the English Church, during the Civil War and Under the Commonwealth 1640-1660* (London, 1900), vol. 2, Appendix IIc, p. 332. Nominated was William Launce, who had been sequestered by parliament from St. Michael le Querne, and the Westminster Assembly of Divines denied the proposal saying Launce was ‘not fit,’ until finally in June 1648 the Assembly admitted his appointment having provided that he confessed his ‘former miscarriages.’ See Shaw, p. 353; *Walker Revised*, p. 53; Liu, *Puritan London*, p. 135. Presbyterian church government was adapted in St Edmunds the King in 1646 along with the establishment of the Third London Classis, but according to Liu, like in many other London parishes it did not function properly.

⁶⁶ The will was proved on 29 May 1647. Public Record Office, PROB 11/200/92. Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, p. 103; *Walker Revised*, p. 55. Pagitt left one son Ephraim and two daughters.

⁶⁷ Dale, *Inhabitants of London*, p. 54. A. Argent argues that Pagitt’s age might have been a reason for his retirement. Argent, PhD thesis, ‘Aspects of the Ecclesiastical History of the Parishes of the City of London 1640-49 (With Special Reference to the Parish Clergy)’, University of London (1981).

⁶⁸ Pagitt, *Mysticall Wolfe*, p. 2.

of god, running after seducers as if they were mad.” All these miseries were rooted in, Pagitt argued, the “suspension of our Church-government”.⁶⁹

Alas, our Church is oppressed by false Prophets, and we have no government to helpe. The City of God is on fire, and who goeth about to quench it? The plague of Heresie is among us, and we have no power to keep the sick from the whole: The Wolves that were wont to lye in the woods, dare come into our Sheep-folds, and roar in our holy Congregations.⁷⁰

Pagitt was now 70 years old. Five years after the last edition of *Christianographie*, in the midst of the Civil War, Pagitt placed himself alongside the Presbyterian attack against the religious sectarianism. The times were different; praising the beauty and the ‘visibility’ of the Church of England was no longer sufficient. “Not knowing how soon I shall put off this Tabernacle,” he decided to publish his warning.⁷¹

Considering with my selfe the former happinesse of this Kingdome, and the sudden change that is betide it, it being fallen from the height of prosperitie to the lowest ebbe of meisery, [...] these sad considerations made me leave my *Christianography*, and write an *Heresiography* to describe the hereticks and Schismaticks of this time.⁷²

His deep disappointment at the collapse of the Church of England, and his equally deep hatred for the sects, clearly made Pagitt shift towards the Presbyterian campaign.

However, unlike Thomas Edwards or Robert Baillie, Pagitt was never a self-conscious zealot in the war of ideologies. He was clearly bothered by the ‘mechanic preachers’, but Pagitt did not seem to have fully recognized the politics of Independent-Presbyterian confrontation. As we have examined in the chapter 2, it was not until the beginning of 1646 that the Presbyterians started their open attack against the Independents as ‘heretics’ along with Anabaptists and Familists. In fact, in the section describing the Independents, Pagitt wrote that “these appellations I heard not of when I began to write the treatise.”⁷³ What he knew about the Independents was almost entirely what he had read in works such like Thomas Edwards’ *Antapologia* (June 1644). But it is

⁶⁹ Pagitt, *Heresiography*, Sigs. A3v, A4r.

⁷⁰ *Mysticall Wolfe*, pp. 2, 3, 8.

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷² *Heresiography*, dedication, Sigs. A[4]r-v.

⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 69. Pagitt was, however, referring to the ‘Independents’ also in *Mysticall Wolfe*, preached sometime before November 1644.

noteworthy that Pagitt kept his section on the 'Independents' separate from other categories like 'Brownists' and 'Anabaptists'. Whereas *Gangræna* attributed all 'heresies' to the Independents, Pagitt's *Heresiography* maintained the categorical differences between sects more clearly.

Pagitt even showed some sympathy towards the 'congregational way' of the Independent ministers. Although he heartily disliked the idea of deserting the Church of England, he was also deeply concerned about the poor condition of the London parish clergy and felt that some effective action should be taken. He admitted that there was some reason in the 'Independent' idea that each congregation should support their own minister. "When I first heard of the name of *Independency*, I confesse I could not wel mislike it," Pagitt wrote, "knowing the poverty of many Livings within the walls of London, and the dependency of the Ministers being not able to subsist without the charities of the people." Pagitt compared his living in St. Edmund the King with that of his predecessor, who had rectorships in two other parishes: All Hallows the Great and the Temple. Pluralism had now been prohibited, and additional incomes from conducting burials and christenings had become "a manner ceast, which were a great helpe too."⁷⁴ "Surely it is a disgrace of Religion," Pagitt lamented, "to pill and pole the Ministry, and bring it to beggery."⁷⁵ So, when Pagitt commented on the 'congregational way', it was with a mixture of sympathy and envy. "Should I blame the poor Ministers to devise some means to have a being: but wher[e]as they gather congregations among us who are as poore as themselves, getting our fattest sheep from us, [...] I like it not."⁷⁶

If Pagitt was not fully aware of the party politics of the Independent-Presbyterian confrontation, however, his concern about the religious sectarianism was no less practical. Unlike Thomas Edwards, who enjoyed his popularity as the weekly lecturer for his devoted supporters at Christ Church Newgate, Pagitt confronted the religious upheaval in the City life as a parish minister. His 'sectaries' were never imaginary fanatics from Germany as in many of the contemporary anti-Anabaptist pamphlets, they were some of his own parishioners. For example, he explained how his 'Brownists' managed without any set form of prayer; to Pagitt's horror, they would improvise. One would cry "O Lord, thou knowest, good Lord, that wee never had the truth preached among us untill now," while the other uttered "Good Lord, good Lord, deliver this Congregation from this man, who is unlearned, unpowerfull,

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 69-71.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, p. 159.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 71.

unprofitable[...].” ‘This man’ turned out to be Pagitt himself. He barely suppressed his anger at this prayer “made for my selfe, in my owne Church, in my own Pulpit, in my own hearing.”⁷⁷ During the services Pagitt would find some who would “heare our Sermons, but not our Common-prayers.” They would kill time while Pagitt was reading the prayer, “every Sunday in our streets, sitting and standing about our doores,” and then “when the prayers are done, rush into our Churches to heare our Sermons.” Pagitt described those men as “a sort of Semi-separatists.”⁷⁸ The publication of *Heresiography* and its observations about the noncooperative members of the parish apparently provoked confrontation with the old pastor. Since then, “I have been abused above measure,” wrote the distressed Pagitt in the second edition, “not onely with reviling language in the streets, as I goe; but also in my estate.” “Some Sectaries of my Parish” abandoned their parochial fellowship and started to engage in “their owne Congregation,” “denying now to pay me any thing at all.” In the postscript of the second edition of *Heresiography* Pagitt appended a lengthy defence of tithes.⁷⁹

Such practical concerns about sectarian separatism were combined with Pagitt’s dislike of the ‘multitudes’, and his belief in the inviolable authority of the ministry. He abhorred the way Separatists let the congregation make all decisions on churchly matters, including the ordination of their ministers. “Where or when did our Lord take the keyes from the Church and give them to the multitude? how dare any Lay-men presume to ordaine Ministers to bind and loose?” He was determined on this point: nowhere in the world, in no Reformed churches “have the Inferiours presumed to lay their hands upon their Superiors.”⁸⁰ These inferior laymen conformed to the stereotypical images of ‘mechanic preachers’ already familiar in London by the time. “[W]hence come they now, from the Schools of the prophets? no, many of them from mechannicke Trades: as one from a stable from currying his horses, another from his stal frome cobling his shooes.”⁸¹

Yea, since the suspention of our Church-government, every one that listeth turneth Preacher, as Shoo-makers, Coblers, Button-makers, Hostlers and such

⁷⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 45, 60.

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 69.

⁷⁹ Pagitt, *Heresiography*, 2nd edn. (1645), pp. 154-159.

⁸⁰ *Heresiography*, 1st edn., pp. 50-55.

⁸¹ *ibid.*, ‘To the Reader’, Sig. C[4]r. Pagitt here implies one of the first daring ‘tub-preachers’ Samuel How who was a cobbler. There is almost the same line in *Mysticall Wolfe*, p. 11.

like, take upon them to expound the holy Scriptures, intrude into our Pulpits, and vent strange doctrine, tending to faction, sedition, and blasphemie.⁸²

We can clearly see Pagitt's strong attachment to the idea of a single and universal church. This was the main reason that he so detested the Brownists, Separatists, Semi-separatists, Anabaptists, Familists and the like. He repeatedly called the Church of England "Mother Church," in which men were to be "baptized, and brought up, and fed with the pure milke of Godds word." The enemy of the Church of England was the enemy of the true Church; so were the sects, just as the Roman Catholic Church was when Pagitt first wrote *Christianographie*. The crime of the sects was their separation not merely from the English Church but "also from all the Reformed Churches beyond the Seas." Pagitt asked: did they not know "that the Church of God is Catholique"?⁸³ The 'Independents' — which he somehow differentiated from other heretics — were also warned. "In setting up a Church against a Church [...] doe they not with the *Brownists* make a rent in Christs mysticall body?"⁸⁴

Heresiography, therefore, on one hand shows Ephraim Pagitt's political turn from being a supporter of William Laud to acting as one of the London brethren united in the Presbyterian cause. On the other hand, however, *Heresiography* was a continuation of *Christianographie*'s former project of defending the Church of England against her enemies — the Roman Catholic Church as well as the sects. The purpose of Pagitt's writings' was to define the identity of his church. *Christianographie* was a catalogue of churches to which the Church of England belonged, and *Heresiography* was the catalogue of churches (sects) from which the Church of England was to be disassociated. Both works aimed to place the English Church within the context, or geography, of true churches and false churches, orthodox and heretical. Yet it was the latter work that made Ephraim Pagitt one of the best known 'heresiographers' of the seventeenth century.

Perhaps Pagitt died before he really recognized what impact this second part of *Christianographie* would have on the 'heresy' controversy of 1646-7. *Heresiography* came out a little before the height of the religious conflicts in the City between the Presbyterians and the Independents. Yet after its first publication, it was reprinted, edited and enlarged, and continued to be read after Pagitt's death. It may well have prompted Thomas Edwards to entitle *Gangræna* as "a catalogue and discovery" of 'heresies'. *Heresiography* soon became a handy reference work for the pamphlet writers on sects and heresies.

⁸² *Heresiography*, Sig. A3v.

⁸³ *ibid.*, pp. 46-47.

⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 70.

William Lee in 1646 found a sales opportunity and produced a pamphlet *A Brief Collection out of Master Pagitts Book Called Heresiography*, a 'shorter Pagitt' for those who preferred a cheaper option with a quicker overview of sixteen select 'heresies'. Now "Master Edwards and Master Pagitt" was the duo that was to go.⁸⁵ Pagitt's *Heresiography* provided an alternative way in which to shape and structure discussions of 'heresy'. Why and how was it so successful? To answer this question, we must examine the structure of the work — the catalogue.

4. Heresiography a genre

Encyclopedic systems of classification

If we compare *Heresiography* with *Christianographie*, we find that there are both familiar and new aspects. Like *Christianographie*, *Heresiography* is a text which is centrally concerned with Christian unity: "this worke [*Heresiography*] I purposing to perfect and consummate to the glory of God, the great profit of the Church, & establishing of mens consciences, they seeing the unity and agreement of the holy Churches in the world with us."⁸⁶ Pagitt thus exploited his knowledge of the diverse Christian churches in the world to attack the sectaries. For instance, Pagitt defended the legitimacy of child baptism in his section on the Anabaptists by using historical and geographical knowledge, rather than by citing scripture. Anabaptists would "deny Baptisme to Infants, because they cannot make confession of their faith, affirming that the Baptisme of Children came from the Pope and the Devill: they call Baptisme of Infants the marke of the Beast."⁸⁷ To this Pagitt answered that "the ground of this Errour is ignorance," as "they not knowing what Baptisme is." Like Daniel Featley, Pagitt argued that the point was not about the faith of individuals but about being included in God's covenant.⁸⁸ But he proved this with the history of the other 'orthodox' churches in the world. By providing ample examples of child

⁸⁵ See, for example, *A Relation of several Heresies* (1646), the content of which is almost the same as William Lee's *Brief Collection*, although published apparently by a different printer.

⁸⁶ *Heresiography*, Sig. A2r.

⁸⁷ *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁸⁸ Pagitt argues that infant baptism manifests not necessarily the self-conscious "faith and repentance" of the baptized but "Gods favour and grace for his owne mercies sake" to the chosen tribe. *Heresiography*, p. 15; The analogy of circumcision is seen in Featley, *Dippers Dipt* (London, 1645), p. 2. See Murray Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints* (Cambridge, 1977), p. 51.

baptism practised by non-Roman churches, Pagitt disproved the Anabaptists' claim that the baptism of children was Antichristian and popish. It had been "always observed in Christs Church." The Greek church used it, the Russians too, so did the Indians, the Copts ("native Christians of Ægypt"), Melchites, Nestorians and the Maronites; all practised child baptism, and none of them were subject to Rome, the Antichrist. It was thus historically legitimate that "the *Britains* [...] have alwayes baptized their children, and have honourably esteemed of that Sacrament administred to their children, untill some of these heretickes fled hither out of Germany."⁸⁹

Such use of the 'international' consensus, and of world history, were Pagitt's greatest strengths. Pagitt knew the London separatists as his contemporaries; in *Heresiography*, he quoted and confuted the *Confession of Faith* published by the early Baptist leaders in 1644.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, Pagitt argued against these 'Anabaptists' by appealing more to his knowledge of continental historiography than scripture, rather as Featley would do. For instance, Pagitt emphasized the *historical* 'fact' about the Anabaptists' lack of learning: "they have none at all, all books they burnt in *Munster* but the Bible" which, they could "scarcely read" anyhow.⁹¹ Here his knowledge of the history and genealogy of the continental Anabaptists triumphed over the London sectaries. In his text they were now neatly confined within the familiar narrative of German fanatics. This was made possible because Pagitt, with his historical and geographical knowledge, was *able* imaginatively and conceptually to confront the sectaries within the particularly categorized subject, 'Anabaptism' which he *knew* well, while Anabaptists themselves remained *ignorant*. This is the polemical strategy which made Pagitt's *Christianographie* a great success.

However, *Heresiography* also differed greatly from *Christianographie* in its textual format. It put much greater emphasis on its systematic cataloguing method. This cataloguing system presented a new style of religious polemics in English print culture. The taxonomy and juxtaposition of categories of religious sects and errors meant not only that they were susceptible to encyclopedic scrutiny and analytical study, but also that they were nothing more than single entries among all the other names. The enterprise of collecting, sorting and giving explanation to diverse and different sorts of 'sects' was, for Pagitt, a way

⁸⁹ *Heresiography*, pp. 17-18.

⁹⁰ *ibid.*, p.42. *The Confession of Faith of those Church which are commonly called Anabaptists* (London, 1644). He is also mentioning Featley's conference with the Anabaptists in Southwark in 1642. *Heresiography*, p. 41

⁹¹ *Heresiography*, p. 37.

to explain 'heresies' without obscurity. Pagitt thus used the catalogue as a means to eliminate the ambiguity of the idea of 'heresy' itself.

The full-page list of 'the names of sects' immediately following the title page manifested the idea of a catalogue literature [see Figure 12]. It itemized 46 kinds of sects with reference to the page numbers in which each sect was to be examined individually. In the first edition, the names of the sects were sorted neither alphabetically nor strictly according to the order of their appearance in the book. But the list enabled direct access to the explanation of each item in the main part of the book, and thus worked as a simple table of contents. From the fourth edition (1647) onwards an alphabetical table was added. To modern eyes, this might appear as nothing unusual, but this plainness of text navigation was indeed novel. In *Christianographie*, historical accounts of various churches, quotation from other works and Pagitt's own discussion were all admixed, and making the appearance of the book essentially narrative. In *Heresiography*, Pagitt refrained from discussing issues of infant baptism or legitimacy of tithes in the table of contents. Only the *names* of the sects appeared as a single way of making entry to the main contents of the book, as though those names would speak for themselves once they had been juxtaposed. By organizing the religious sects and presenting them as a collection of entries, Pagitt constructed his book in a more encyclopedical nature. This was the most important feature which made his book so influential and unique among the other anti-sectarian works of the time. By means of cataloguing *Heresiography* very strategically, but with plainness, Pagitt demonstrated that 'heresy' was something speakable.

The triumph of Pagitt's cataloguing technique can be also seen in his use of subcategories. For example, he contributed twenty subcategories to the 'Anabaptists' entry of his list, including 'Hutites', 'Memonites', 'Muncerians', 'Catharists', 'Enthusiasts', 'Bencheldians', 'Melchiorites', 'Denkians', 'Monasterienses', 'Deo relictis' and so on. These names were borrowed from German anti-Anabaptist writings and were quite unlikely to be found on English soil. Nevertheless, the more the entries, the better the catalogue worked. What is unfolded here is a paradigm of spectacular diversity. In *Heresiography* the 'Apostrikes' are "a kind of Anabaptists," and called so "because they would like to be like the Apostles," while the 'Silentes' are so named for they "answer all questions of RELIGION with silence." The 'Orantes' "would alwayes pray, and neglect all other duties," and the 'Augustinians' believe that none can open the entrance of heaven but Augustine who does so for himself and for the members of his sect.⁹² A single idea, the

⁹² *ibid.*, pp. 31-35.

‘Anabaptists’, and its evil effects were to be explained by dividing it into several sections.

Pagitt was engaging himself in the pedagogical context of what Walter J. Ong called ‘the great encyclopedic age.’⁹³ The sources from which Pagitt drew those Anabaptist subcategories are most revealing. Fourteen names were drawn out of the *Chronologicæ Indice Theologiæ Polemicæ* by Johan Heinrich Alsted, and six more from Johannes Heinrich Bullinger’s *Adversus Anabaptistus*.⁹⁴ Bullinger was the Swiss reformation leader who succeeded Zwingli. His writings had considerable influence on the Tudor Reformation. He wrote to Henry VIII and Edward VI, and Elizabeth I sought his advice in her policies against both extreme puritans and Pius V in Rome. As for continental Anabaptists, he is regarded as the sect’s first historian.⁹⁵ But it is even more significant to find Alsted’s name appearing in this first comprehensive English heresiography, as it suggests that Pagitt’s work was involved in wider traditions of continental ‘encyclopedia’ writing, and of Ramist dialectic. The tradition goes back to the rise of Ramism in the mid sixteenth century. Petrus Ramus, a French humanist and dialectician, committed himself to the development of a topic-logical curriculum in philosophical teaching. Although it is known that his academic achievements owed much to preceding and contemporary thinkers like Rudolph Agricola and Bartholomew Latomus, modern scholars agree on the great influence of his dialectical philosophy on Reformed-European scholarship in the later sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries.⁹⁶

What is important for us is that seventeenth-century English heresiographies — catalogues of sects — owed much to the topical logic and the method of systematic organization of knowledge which Ramus developed. The idea that a subject could be explained by dividing it into several classes — each of which also included further classes — not only brought an idea of ‘structure’ to the arts, but also transformed the entire manner of discourse, of reaching the

⁹³ Walter J. Ong, *Rhetoric, Romance, and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (Ithaca and London, 1971), p. 263.

⁹⁴ *Heresiography*, pp. 31, 35.

⁹⁵ Bernard M. G. Reardon, *Religious Thought in the Reformation* (New York, 1981), pp. 113-4, 235.

⁹⁶ See Walter J. Ong, *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue: from the Art of Discourse to the Art of Reason* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1983, first published in 1958); Lisa Jardine, ‘Humanistic Logic’, in C. B. Schmitt and others (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Renaissance Philosophy* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 184-186; Howard Hotson, ‘Philosophical pedagogy in reformed central Europe between Ramus and Comenius: a survey of the continental background of the ‘Three Foreigners’’, in M. Greengrass, M. Leslie and T.

truth. Walter J. Ong explains such 'dialectical' discourse as follows: "Rhetorical speech is speech which attracts attention to itself as speech — the showy, the unusual. (Thus poetry is only one kind of rhetoric.) Dialectical or logical speech is speech which attracts no attention to itself as speech, the normal, the plain, the undistinguished, the reporter of 'things.'"⁹⁷ It was exactly through such cultivated plainness that the whole scheme of 'cataloguing' was able to work as a form of persuasive discourse. In dialectical discourse, 'things' have to be represented by, in Latomus' words, "clear and distinct" ideas,⁹⁸ and not to be mingled up with others. Only the itemized 'things' explain the subject, and vice versa. The catalogue manifested Ramism put into practice. Thus Howard Hoston has written that the "logical culmination of this development was a single, comprehensive, systematically integrated and uniformly organized presentation of the entire encyclopaedia."⁹⁹ Indeed, Ramist dialectics and early modern encyclopedia writings were continuous. The orderly, systematic logic of Ramism was inherited by Bartholomäus Keckermann, who applied Ramus' systematic method of exposition to various categories of arts such as grammar, rhetoric, metaphysics, physics, ethics, politics, economics, mathematics, astronomy and geography. After Keckermann's premature death in 1609, Alsted published Keckermann's pedagogic philosophy in a two-volume collection, *Systema Systematum* ('system of systems') in 1613, and in 1630 completed his *Encyclopaedia*, the first publication so called.¹⁰⁰ Clearly, therefore, the way in which Pagitt exposed his subject, 'heresies', grew out of a tradition embodying a particular mode of logic and a particular technique for organizing data into knowledge.

Diversity punished: the catalogue as a disciplinary tool

This use of an encyclopedic cataloguing system marked the major difference between Thomas Edwards' *Gangræna* and Pagitt's *Heresiography*. Pagitt's book was plain and straightforward in structure, and his research never went beyond his bookish knowledge, what he had read. He did not engage in disputation on religious doctrines or issues in church politics. Confutation was not required. Without involving himself with elaborate debates or feverish

Raylor (eds.), *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation: Studies in intellectual communication* (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 29-50.

⁹⁷ Ong, *Ramus, Method and the Decay of Dialogue*, p. 129.

⁹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 128.

⁹⁹ Hoston, 'Philosophical pedagogy', p. 39.

¹⁰⁰ *ibid.*, pp. 42-46.

reproaches, Pagitt constructed his catalogue of sects and heresies as a means of persuasive discourse.

This does not mean, of course, that *Heresiography* was an ideologically neutral text written for purely academic interest. Pagitt employed his religious knowledge and intellectual techniques to make his catalogue of heresies a strong and effective weapon against the sectaries. Pagitt lamented, complained, and condemned the abominable diversity of 'heresies'. Yet this diversity could only be revealed and shaped by means of cataloguing. The method and purpose were knitted together. "It is impossible [...] to set downe all the differences and contrary opinions of the *Anabaptists*, with all their pernicious sects and Factions," wrote Pagitt; "almost every one of them hath some peculiar toy or figment in their heads, upon which they are divided, and oft excommunicate one another."¹⁰¹

In such a listing of the almost absurdly *different* characters of the sects, it seemed as if this diversity of sects itself demonstrated that they were false religions. Robert Burton, the anatomist of melancholy, wrote that "prodigious paradoxes, new doctrines, vain phantasms, which are many and diverse" were "peculiar symptoms" of "heretics, schismatics, false prophets, impostors, and their ministers."¹⁰² Peter Harrison has demonstrated how in the seventeenth century human diversity was seen as the outcome of human sinfulness. The Fall of Adam destroyed the uniformity and perfection of human beings, not only in their relation with God, but with one another. One writer argued that Cain, son of Adam, the first murderer and the wanderer of the wilderness, was the father of all heretics.¹⁰³ Pagitt agreed this view: "There are divers sorts of these Sectaries; for every day begets a new fancy or opinion, it faring with them usually as with all other Heretikes, who having once forsaken the Truth wander from one error to another."¹⁰⁴ The numerous strange names of sects and heresies were a manifestation of human frailty. In other words, sectaries were automatically condemned for making their entry into Pagitt's catalogue. It was a disciplinary tool with which diversity was punished.

And this was exactly the point that Pagitt expanded and strengthened in all his revisions of *Heresiography* until his death in 1646. As Pagitt revised his work, the form of cataloguing became more sophisticated and systematized. These

¹⁰¹ *Heresiography*, p. 34.

¹⁰² Burton, Robert, *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621), Part 3, Section 4, Member 1, Subsection 3, in *Everyman's Library* edition (London and New York, 1961), pp. 364-365.

¹⁰³ Peter Harrison, 'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 100-105.

¹⁰⁴ *Heresiography*, p. 62.

developments meant adding more entries to the catalogue, and making the entire book more systematic and accessible as an encyclopedic reference work. In the second edition of *Heresiography* which followed within the same year of the first, several more names of 'heresies' were added. The updated list included: the medieval heretics 'Pelagians' that were now "reviving among us," 'Soule-sleepers', the name created for adherents of Richard Overton's pamphlet *Mans Mortalitie* (1643), 'Denyers of the Scriptures', which Pagitt described as "one wicked sect" and which needed no further confutation, 'Expecters or Seekers', the enemies of church-goers, and 'Divorsers', a category which resulted from Milton's notorious treatise on the right of divorce. Even the 'Papists' made an entry from the second edition onwards. "There is a great difference between the ancient Papists, and the moderne," Pagitt explained: "therefore I rank them with the former Sectaries; their doctrines being many of them new."¹⁰⁵ Rome was now equated with other numerous errors of the time, no longer was it treated as the 'false orthodoxy' as it had been in *Christianographie*.

Pagitt's *Heresiography* seemed to have established its generic status by the time of its author's death. But *Heresiography* as an enterprise and as a text did not die with its author; it was reprinted throughout the Interregnum and the catalogue of heresies kept growing. William Lee, the publisher of the fourth and subsequent editions, added the sections on the Quakers and Ranters to the fifth edition in 1654 and the Fifth Monarchy Men to the 6th edition of 1661. It is not known if Lee himself wrote those additional sections. But the nine pages on 'the Shaker or Quaker' certainly has a different style from Pagitt's. Instead of conveying a sense of bitter condemnation, the chapter is rather calm, detached and informative; the author seems even interested in the sudden outbreak of this "thickest set in the North parts."¹⁰⁶ Rage is directed against the Ranters, but only 2 pages are spared. More could be told about them, the author writes, only if "the *Ranter* is more open, and lesse sowre, professes what he is."¹⁰⁷

Heresiography functioned not only by *naming* 'heresies' but also by *depicting* them. From the third edition, the frontispiece of *Heresiography* was illustrated with engravings of various sectaries and heretics [see Figure 13]. The top row of the page is an emblematic scene which symbolizes three different ideas: 'Church', 'Repentance' and 'Destruction'.¹⁰⁸ The 'Church' is allegorically

¹⁰⁵ Pagitt, *Heresiography*, 2nd edn. (1645), p. 143.

¹⁰⁶ Pagitt, *Heresiography*, 5th edn. (1654), p. 136.

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*, p. 145.

¹⁰⁸ See Margery Corbett and Ronald Lightbown, *The Comely Frontispiece: The emblematic title-page in England 1550-1660* (London, etc., 1979), esp. introduction. See also Ian

personified as a woman with the Bible in her left hand sitting upon a rock. The divine eye watches over her from above. The scripture quoted is Matthew 16:8, the words delivered to Peter the apostle ("Upon this rock I will build my church & the gates of hell shall not prevaile against it"). Alongside the 'Church', 'Repentance' is represented by a man praying (the scripture beneath is Jeremiah 4:8), and 'Destruction' represented by a scene of the battle above which "a great sword" of devastation in the Revelation 6:4 appears from the cloud. Two columns set in both sides of the title of the book contain six figures of different heretics: 'Anabaptist', 'Famelist', 'Divorser', 'Jesuit', 'Antinomian' and 'Seeker'. The naked 'Anabaptist' is conducting an immersion baptism, while the 'Divorser' is going to expel his wife, and the 'Seeker' travels with a stick and a lantern. Such a multiple iconography of heretic bodies serves the purpose of the project well; sects are not only false but also multiple, and therefore *arrangeable*. The catalogue of sects does not explain what a Divorcer has to do with the Jesuits. Their amazing *differences* are what the catalogue is all about. Given distinct icons and nameplates, and confined in the same-sized cells, the sectaries have become equally formatted items in the museum of heretics. What *Heresiography* tells its readers is that they are simply all subcategories of what can be summed up as the 'heretics and sectaries of these later times.'

Visual catalogues of this kind had indeed become a popular form of representation of sects in the 1640s. The frontispiece of Daniel Featley's *Dippers Dipt* (1645), which we have examined also in the chapter 3, depicted 15 kinds of Anabaptists in columns surrounding the figures of Dippers in the centre [see Figures 6 and 7]. These pictures are quite self-explanatory, as each figure makes his point with gesture. The 'Separatist' crouches in a box, the 'Silents' puts his forefinger to his mouth and the 'Enthusiast' clenches his fist. Similarly, a Presbyterian pamphlet *A Catalogue of the severall Sects and Opinions in England and other Nations* catches one's eyes with a plate of 12 multiple pictures, including the naked 'Adamite' and the 'Anti Scripturian' about to smash the Bible against the floor [see Figure10].¹⁰⁹

Pictorial encyclopedia of heretics were certainly in demand. The sixth edition of Pagitt's *Heresiography* (1661 and 1662) appeared with plates of individual heretics, both old and new, added amongst the main text [see Figures 14-16]. This was again the printer William Lee's addition. Portrayed were

Gentles, 'The iconography of revolution: England 1642-1649', in I. Gentles, J. Morrill and B. Worden (eds.), *Soldiers, writers and statesmen of the English Revolution* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 91-113.

ancient heretics such as Arius, Nestorius, Pelagius, as well as modern men like Socinus, 'John of Leyden', James Nayler, and an 'Adamite'.¹¹⁰ 'Adamite' was not even a person's name: this naked man was merely representing the *idea* of 'Adamism'. Still, the fear of the Quakers in the early 1660s is dramatically highlighted by such juxtaposition of images. Also William Lee did not miss the chance to add Thomas Venner to his picture catalogue, and in the 1662 edition the readers were able to enjoy the parallels between Venner and 'John of Leyden'.¹¹¹

5. Conclusion

In both text and in visual representations, the catalogue of heresies was an ambitious enterprise to 'map' and display sects in a clearer manner than as in conventional polemical writings. Exploiting the expanding early modern print culture, it informed society of a maximum range of categories and subcategories of religious sects, and satisfied the curiosity of the readers. But more important is that the heresiographers' ability to name and classify diverse figures and ideas displayed the power and identity of the orthodoxy. The power exercised within this kind of enterprise is similar to what Edward Said has highlighted in the French Orientalist Barthélemy d'Herbelot's *Bibliothèque Orientale* (1695). If the danger of the Islamic religion was removed, as Said argued, by placing Mohammed in a plain, explicit system of organized knowledge, "a rational Oriental panorama, from A to Z," *Heresiography* did exactly the same to the Anabaptists, Seekers and Divorcers. The process of making those religious sects and heresies "systematically, even alphabetically, knowable,"¹¹² was where *Heresiography* was most powerful. The catalogue of heresies gave shapes and

¹⁰⁹ See also *A Discovery of the Most Dangerous and Damnable Tenets* (London, 1647), with 12 pictures of various tradesmen who were the suspected 'mechanic preachers' [Figure 8].

¹¹⁰ Pagitt, *Heresiography*, 6th edn. (1661), pp. 2, 22, 117, 152, 155, 229, 244. A hand-drawn sketch in pen of James Nayler added to a 6th edition of *Heresiography*, replacing the original engraved portrait, is shown by Leo Damrosch in 'Harvard's Libraries and the Quaker Jesus', *Harvard Library Bulletin*, vol. 6, no. 3.

¹¹¹ Pagitt, *Heresiography*, revised 6th edn. (1662), p. 280.

¹¹² "[I]t is the placing of Mohammed that counts in the *Bibliothèque*. The dangers of free-wheeling heresy are removed when it is transformed into ideologically explicit matter for an alphabetical item. Mohammed no longer roams the Eastern world as a threatening, immoral debauchee; he sits quietly on his (admittedly prominent) portion of the Orientalist stage. He is given a genealogy, an explanation, even a development, all of which are subsumed under the simple statements that prevent him from straying elsewhere." Edward W. Said, *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient* (London, etc., 1978), p. 65.

positions to the ambiguous concept of 'heresies' and mapped them into explicitly defined categories, for the inspection of the orthodox.

Another important contribution of *Heresiography* and other forms of catalogue literature in this period was that they created the world of 'heresies' as a particular subject. What they proposed was a secure field of study, in which diverse sorts of 'heresies' were named and classified, instead of confuted. Such a way the catalogue of heresies presented 'heresies' had a further implication; that is a redefinition of 'religions'. By presenting the issues of church and religious sectarianism as a kind of problem that could be treated by means of classification, these heresiographers took part in the construction of a new idea of 'religion' in a pluralistic paradigm. We will continue to examine this problem in the next chapter, by focusing on another seventeenth-century encyclopedia of heresies, Alexander Ross's *Pansebeia* (1653).

Chapter 5

Alexander Ross's *Pansebeia* and the language of religious pluralism

Q [...] Which of all the Religions we have viewed, seems to be most consonant to naturall Reason? A [...] the religion of those Gentiles who worshipped the Sun, seemed to be most consonant to their naturall reason.

Alexander Ross, *Pansebeia* (1653).¹

1. Introduction

As we have outlined in the previous chapter, the establishment of the catalogue of heresies as a genre of its own by the mid-seventeenth century, did not just provide an alternative way of attacking radical sectaries; it also opened up a new perspective on the diversity of religious opinions. Heresiographies provided English writers with alternative form and language with which to study and discuss issues of religion, and thus inevitably challenged the conventional understanding of what ‘religion’ was. They could in fact undermine the idea of religious uniformity in England, because the problem they underlined was religious pluralism. Certainly the diversity of sects was what Pagitt, and many conservative puritans, feared and detested most. But in their attack on the ‘many-headed hydra’ of sectarianism, the weapon they adopted, the method of cataloguing, was making this diversity concrete, enabling a situation in which religion was discussed in a pluralistic language.

Anxiety was expressed about precisely this point. Edwards was aware when he published *Gangræna* that there were objections from his fellow ministers and readers to this attempt to publish a catalogue of errors. This would, Edwards’ readers wrote to him, only “discover our nakednesse and weaknesse.” Thus these should be “better concealed” otherwise “the enemy will make an advantage of it.”² Edwards confidently replied that errors and heresies of the sectaries had been known already to many. Secrecy and discretion were not options at a time when heresies increased and established themselves daily. Publishing the list of errors was thus not just acceptable but necessary.

¹ Alexander Ross, *Πανσεβεια* [Pansebeia]: or, A View of all Religions in the World: with the severall Church-Governments, from the Creation to these times, Together with a Discovery of all known Heresies, in all Ages and places, throughout Asia, Africa, America, and Europe. (London, 1653), p. 539.

² Edwards, *Gangræna* (London, 1646), p. 10.

[A]ll that I do is but to draw them into one, that we may see them as it were at once. [...] I by writing in this kinde of the errours of the time, cannot be guilty of discovering our nakednesse, the enemy having known so much long before. [...] Seeing then there are so many errours and monsters of opinions spoken of in all places, I cannot be taxed for the discovery of that which was before concealed, but in this work am only a gatherer together of those errours that were scattered, which by Gods blessing may be a means keep many from falling into schisme seeing such monsters in that way...³

Yet concerns about such open disclosure of diverse religious opinions still continued among puritans. At the end of the 1646 pamphlet, *A Brief Collection out of Master Pagitt's Book*, a cheaper and digested version of Pagitt's *Heresiography* published by Pagitt's printer William Lee, the author cautiously concluded. "This is not the way to decrease Errours by a violent furious repetition of them..."

A discovery of fewer Errors solidly confuted, will, if done in the spirit of Love, prove a better imployment, then to discover hundreds and spend nothing but wrath and fleshly carnall censures upon them; certainly it would be far more acceptable to God and Jesus Christ to turn one that is going on in an Errour, then to discover one hundred for him to fall into.⁴

There was clearly some hesitation about exposing the diversity of religious opinions. As the writer confessed, it was sinful to know all the errors a human was able to commit.

The same response was seen among the recipients of *A Testimony to the Trueth of Jesus Christ*, drawn up by Presbyterian ministers in London and sent to their fellows in the counties. A reply from Cheshire expressed ambiguous feelings. "Wee could ... make remarkable additions to your Catalogue of errours, ... but that bundle of weeds is sufficient for the present ... to shew how negligently the garden of the Lord hath been kept, and how subtilly and successefully Satan hath proceeded in his seducements of simple and sinfull people."⁵ Drawing up a list of various religious opinions could, Cheshire ministers warned, end up leading ignorant men into such errors, instead of

³ *ibid.*, pp. 10, 11, 12.

⁴ *A Brief Collection Out of Master Pagitts Book Called Heresiography* (London, 1646), p. 20. Exactly the same passage is found, though from a different publisher, in another tract *A Relation of several Heresies: discovering the originall Ring-leaders and the time when they began to spread, as also their dangerous opinions and tenets* (London, 1646), p. 20.

preventing them. One concern of the Cheshire ministers was that all the errors listed in the catalogue should be confuted adequately, but not too overtly. Especially “problematicall errorrs which are presented with some appearance of truth and reason, should not be published without disproofe.”⁶ Yet on the other hand, such a list-and-refutation of *all* possible human errors in one place, would not be a good idea either. It is “not requistie that every time they are reported they should be refuted,” they warned. If their ancient church fathers had done this task there should be no trouble repeating their labour; and if they had missed some, these “may be done after in time convenient.” “So that what is not done in your Catalogue,” Cheshire ministers assured their London correspondents, “may if it bee needfull be performed at another time; if not performed already by some other.”⁷ The worry was that religious pluralism, which seventeenth-century heresiographies denounced, seemed to be becoming more and more realistic. The almost obsessive updating of the list of errors by Pagitt and others appeared to run in parallel with the ongoing establishment of various sectarian congregations in English society. As the emphasis on the diversity was a fundamental feature of the catalogue literature, they unavoidably highlighted religious pluralism, something which was turning from being the worst imagination of the godly into something close to reality.

How did the exposure of different religious opinions become legitimate in such time of religious and political changes? This chapter will focus on seventeenth-century heresiography, less as a polemical tool to attack religious sectarianism, but rather as a device for studying and understanding ‘religion’ in a new way. It will argue that mid-seventeenth-century disputations on sects and heresies developed alongside a new interest in scrutinising different religious beliefs, and helped bring forth a new stage in which the problem of religion was presented as the problem of diverse ‘*religions*’. I will examine this change through the works of another seventeenth-century writer, Alexander Ross, a man whose enthusiasm for producing heresiography equalled Edwards and Pagitt, but who pushed the project even further. Attention is paid to his most famous book, *Pansebeia: or, A View of all Religions in the World* published in 1653. This was a history of human religion from Moses to the Quakers, cataloguing all the known sects and heresies both Christian and pagan in a volume of almost 600 pages [see Figure 17].

⁵ *An Attestation to the Testimony of Our Reverend Brethren of the Province of London, to the Trueth of Jesus Christ, and to our Solemn League and Covenant: As also, Against the Errorrs, Heresies, and Blasphemies of these Times, and the Toleration of them* (London, 1648), p. 6.

⁶ *Attestation to the Testimony*, p. 35.

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 36.

Christopher Hill has described this Scottish-born minister as one of the “professional heresy-hunters” of Civil War England.⁸ Indeed in *Pansebeia* Ross fully absorbed the works of previous heresiographers like Knewstubs, Baillie, Edwards and Pagitt, while being watchful enough quickly to add the Muggletonians to his catalogue of sects. The success of *Pansebeia* was aided by the demand for heresiographies during the Interregnum. In 1653, the year *Pansebeia* was published, Pagitt’s *Heresiography* was probably still on the market, and its fifth edition was published in the following year. Unlike Edwards and Pagitt, however, *Pansebeia* remained successful throughout the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries, and was even translated into German, Dutch and French. Arguably Ross played the greatest part in establishing heresiography as a long-lasting genre within seventeenth-century English religious literature.

However, Ross was not simply another conservative persecutor of new and dangerous religious opinions. Quite contrarily, his intellectual attitude to religious knowledge could alarm Interregnum society. In fact in 1649 one of Ross’s books was nearly banned by parliament, its bookseller was imprisoned, and its publication was described as ‘treason’. This was Ross’s translation of the Koran, the first to appear in the English language. Study of different religions was where Ross was eminently ambitious, and this marked him out from other conservative writers in the 1640s who mainly wrote their heresiographies in order to attack English religious radicals. In this aspect, *Pansebeia*, in fact, might itself be described as radical.

Ross’s venturesome exploration of the sea of ‘religions in the world’ does not therefore fit the conventional image of him as an old-fashioned and conservative intellectual who would reject anything new. The *Dictionary of National Biography*’s characterisation of Ross, “miscellaneous writer”, may be the most commonly accepted portrait of this Scottish clergyman.⁹ Ross was indeed an extremely voluminous writer, ranging from ancient Greek mythology to the circulation of the blood, from atomism to Predestination. He also produced a considerable amount of English and Latin verse. Ross’s willingness to write and to take part in any intellectual debate was indeed remarkable. But despite his enthusiasm, his arguments almost invariably proved to be on the wrong side. “Unfortunately for himself,” wrote George A. Aitken, “he was wont to pit

⁸ Christopher Hill, ‘Irreligion in the ‘Puritan’ Revolution’, in J. F. McGregor and B. Reay (eds.), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984), p. 206. Other names mentioned were: Thomas Edwards, Robert Baillie, Samuel Rutherford and Ephraim Pagitt. See also J. C. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 94, 124.

⁹ DNB, s.n.

himself against greater writers.”¹⁰ Ross’s targets make up an impressive list, including John Wilkins, Sir Thomas Browne, William Harvey, Kenelm Digby, Francis Bacon, Sir Walter Raleigh and Thomas Hobbes. “Old-fashioned, Aristotelian, scholastic philosopher” is, therefore, the normal description of Ross.¹¹ However, this emphasis on Ross’s apparent ‘conservativeness’ has made historians overlook Ross’s and his works’ position in the changing intellectual atmosphere of seventeenth-century England.¹²

For historians of geography and anthropology *Pansebeia* has provided an example of the seventeenth-century development of Western knowledge of the non-European parts of ‘the world’.¹³ But few have inquired into the connection between this and the problem of sectarianism and ‘heresies’. The intellectual historian Peter Harrison has noted that *Pansebeia* was one of the earliest examples of a *conscious* use of the plural term ‘religions’ in English writings,¹⁴ but he places Ross’s work in a non-controversial, intellectual historiographical context. He overlooks how *Pansebeia* was written and published in the aftermath of the Civil War and was part of the continuing polemics about and against the sects.

The problem of religious disintegration and sectarianism in Civil War England which Ross faced was no different from that of other heresiographers. In *Pansebeia* Ross addressed exactly the same questions, about the possible danger of disclosing the religious diversity by means of cataloguing, that Edwards had pondered. Some of the readers of *Pansebeia* would argue, Ross wrote, that “... seeing the world is pestered with too many Religions; it were better their names and Tenets were obliterated then published.” But Ross argued that “their assertion is frivolous, and the reason thereof Ridiculous.”

[F]or the end wherefore these different opinions in Religion are brought into the light, is, not that wee should embrace them, but that we may see their deformity and avoid them. [...] Because the world is pestered with too many Sects and

¹⁰ *ibid.*

¹¹ Barbara J. Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England: A study of the relationships between natural science, religion, history, law, and literature* (Princeton, 1983), p. 236.

¹² Two major exceptions to this are: Adrian Johns, ‘Prudence and pedantry in early modern cosmology: the trade of Al Ross’, *History of Science*, 36, part 1 (1997), pp. 23-59; John R. Glenn’s ‘Introduction’ to Glenn (ed.), *A critical edition of Alexander Ross’s 1647 ‘Mystagogus Poeticus, or the Muses Interpreter’* (New York & London, 1987), pp. 1-59.

¹³ Margaret T. Hodgen, *Early Anthropology* (Philadelphia, 1964), p. 171; J. S. Slotkin, *Readings in Early Anthropology* (London, 1965), pp. 144, 482n445; John J. Honigmann, *The Development of Anthropological Ideas* (Homewood, Illinois, 1976), p. 70.

¹⁴ Peter Harrison, *‘Religion’ and the Religions in the English Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 39, 191n86.

Heresies, therefore we must not mention them, is as much as if they would say, the way to heaven is beset with too many thieves, therefore we must not take notice of them. But how shall we avoid them if concealed; it's true the world is pestered with too many Religions, and the more is the pitty; yet this Book made them not, but they made this Book. He that detects errors makes them not. They that informed the *Israelites* there were Gyants in the Land, did not place these Gyants there.¹⁵

Ross tried to tackle the religious problem of England in his own way. This chapter examines the 'Book they made' and discusses how the work related to the development of a new manner of scrutinising and positioning 'religion' in later seventeenth-century England.

2. *Pansebeia*: a chronology of religions

Ross's *Πανσεβεια* ("*Pansebeia*"): or, *A View of all Religions in the World* was the last book he published during his lifetime, and was his best known and the most popular work. First published in 1653, it was reprinted in England at least seven times by the end of the seventeenth century. As the Greek title (Παν + σεβεια 'all worship') tells, it was meant to be an all-inclusive encyclopedia of human religions. In terms of size and scale, *Pansebeia* was not as large as, for example, Samuel Purchas' *Purchas his Pilgrimage* (1613) and *Purchas his Pilgrimes* (1625). But it was much more popular, while no less ambitious, than those large volumes that would normally have been available only in scholarly libraries. A complete history of all religions in 'all ages and places' in a compact but thick volume of some 580 pages arguably met the demand of the time, and was indeed quite a success.¹⁶

A question-and-answer format was used throughout to explain various religious sects, both orthodox and heretic, Christian and pagan. The book was divided into 15 sections. The modern distinction between geography and history is not evident in *Pansebeia*. The sections describing Jewish and Christian religion were chronologically arranged, whereas descriptions of religious practices in the remote worlds tend to be arranged according to their geographical location. Ross's organization of religions did not fall into the traditional typology used in the early seventeenth-century, which was the

¹⁵ Ross, *Pansebeia*, 'The Preface to the Reader concerning the use of this book', Sigs. A5r-A[6]r.

¹⁶ Only the first edition of *Pansebeia* was in duodecimo, but the following editions were all in octavo.

division of human religion into four categories — Christianity, Judaism, ‘Mahometanism’ and paganism.¹⁷ Although his treatment was heavily weighted toward the history of Christianity, Ross’s historiography was never solely dependent on the biblical accounts. Instead it was a compilation of ecclesiastical, classical and Orientalist learning, as well as showing Ross’s knowledge of contemporary religious polemics [see Table 1].

(Section)	(number of pages used)
1 Religions in Asia (Old Testament history of the Jews)	37
2 Religions in the rest of Asia and Egypt	29
3 Religions in Africa and America	28
4 Pagan religions in Europe before Christianity (Greeks, Romans)	32
5 Pagan religions in Europe before Christianity (rest of Europe)	17
6 Religion of “Mahometanism”	19
7 Christianity, early heresies	50
8 Christian sects and heresies from 7th-century to 17th-century	26
9 Christian Monastic orders (primitive)	52
10 Christian Monastic orders continued, Crusade knighthood	57
11 Christian Monastic orders from 1500 to the present, Jesuits	51
12 Contemporary sects in England (Anabaptists, Brownists, Familists, Independents, Presbyterians, etc.). Detailed account of Presbyterianism	54
13 Roman Catholic Church	35
14 Eastern Church and sects	29
15 Final discussion	62

Table 1: The contents of *Pansebeia*, first edition (1653).

The first 6 sections of the book were devoted to the history of non-Christian religions. Section 1 started with Moses and Old Testament accounts of Judaism, leading on to the “Jewish Church government at this day.” The second and the third sections were devoted to many ancient religions in the rest of Asia, Africa and America. If Ross was by no means the first early modern scholar to refer to religious practices outside Europe, he certainly used all the available sources left by his predecessors. For example, Ross documented the native religious practices in Japan recorded by the Jesuit missionaries, whose “industry and

¹⁷ Edward Brerewood listed “Idolatrie, Mahumetanisme, Judaisme, and Christianity,” in *Enquiries Touching the Diversity of Languages and Religions through the Chief Parts of the World* (1613), p. 79. See Harrison, ‘Religion’ and the Religions, pp. 39, 192n87.

painful labours,” Ross admitted, brought Christianity into the country.¹⁸ European pagan religions before the arrival of Christianity were studied in detail in the fourth and the fifth sections. This may have been an easy task for Ross, who had been already acknowledged as a mythologist of Greek and Roman sagas.¹⁹ But the scope was even wider, as pre-Christian religions such as Druidism of the “ancient Britains” were also explained. The sixth section moved on to the ‘Mahometanism’, about which again Ross could reasonably claim to be one of the few specialists in his time, through his translation of the Koran.²⁰

“What is the *other* great Religion professed in Europe?”, asked the opening question of section 7; the answer was “Christianity.”²¹ Ross adequately summarised the doctrines of Christian religion, and quickly moved on to explore its history. Ross argued that “open persecution and Heresie” were the “Engines that Satan used to overthrow Religion.”²² *Pansebeia* however neglected the martyrology side of the story. “Open persecution began about 66 years after Christs Ascention, but Heresie immediately after Christs departure, about the sixth yeere.”²³ Thereafter Ross concentrated on chronological accounts of diverse heterodox confessions. A striking difference between *Pansebeia* and conventional church history was that Ross was not at all interested in explaining the historical development of the orthodox church establishment. Ross’s chronology was entirely a collection of one-by-one descriptions of different sects with different names in various periods of history. Far from establishing a genealogy of the true Church, *Pansebeia* presented the maximum variety of Christian heresies.

Starting from Simon Magus, supposedly the first Christian heretic, Ross discussed almost all the heresies named by early church fathers. He imported the entire 80 sects Epiphanius catalogued in *Panarion* (AD 375-8), with even more names drawn from the works of Eusebius, Irenaeus, Augustine and others.²⁴ The section was indeed a convenient digest of all the ancient heresiographies for seventeenth-century readers. On the other hand this rich

¹⁸ *Pansebeia*, p. 58.

¹⁹ A. Ross, *Mystagogus Poeticus, or The Muses Interpreter* (London, 1647).

²⁰ A. Ross, *The Alcoran of Mahomet* (London, 1649).

²¹ *Pansebeia*, p. 164. My Italic.

²² *ibid.*, pp. 167-8.

²³ *ibid.*, p. 168.

²⁴ “See Austin, Irenæus, and Epiphanius, upon this subject, in their Books they wrote against Heresies.” *ibid.*, p. 169. Ross also refers to Epiphanius and Austin in his discussion on the difference between a bishop and a presbyter in the section 12. p. 434.

supply of patristic texts on early heresies resulted in a rather unbalanced treatment of Christian history. While in section 7 Ross spent 50 pages on listing the early heresies up to the end of the sixth century, in the following section he dealt with the next thousand years in only 26 pages. Unusually, however, section 8 of *Pansebeia* discussed medieval heresies such as Cathars and Waldenses which were not named in other seventeenth-century heresiographies.

Ross never mentioned John Foxe's *Acts and Monuments* which one might have assumed he would have found useful. John Wycliffe and John Huss were explained without drawing on Foxe's sympathetic view.²⁵ In fact Ross's relative distance from the political dimensions of the religious division between the Protestant and the Catholic churches makes *Pansebeia* appear a more detached reference book. Despite his preference of Protestantism (preferably Calvinistic, as he hinted later in the book), the strong anti-Catholicism which fuelled Ephraim Pagitt's similar gallery of world churches, *Christianographie*, is absent.

As the chronicle approaches the sixteenth and seventeenth century towards the end of section 8, the book becomes much more detailed. Ross explained Martin Luther and the German Reformation, commenting that "his [Luther's] adversaries" inevitably connected him with the subsequent emergence of divers Anabaptist sects.²⁶ Familiar stories of the notorious German Anabaptists Thomas Munzter and John of Leiden were repeated. Calvin and his doctrines were also lucidly explained, using Calvin's own and Beza's works. At the end of section 8 Ross listed more than 20 names of sects who were condemned for heresy during the sixteenth and seventeenth century, in both Catholic and Reformed parts of Europe.

Before entering into a discussion of contemporary sects and heresies in England, Ross inserted sections 9 to 11, treating Christian monastic orders. Starting with explaining why monks came to shave their heads and beards, Ross described each medieval religious order in detail. The various orders of knighthood at the time of the Crusade, such as the Templars, the Golden Fleece and the Knights Hospitaler, were also given full treatment. Section 11 concentrated mainly on the Jesuits. Again, Ross's tone was calm and non-controversial. To many English pamphleteers in the mid-seventeenth century, the Jesuits simply meant a variation among many other heretics which crept

²⁵ This may be, however, because of Ross's habit of referring to the original sources rather than second hand material.

²⁶ *Pansebeia*, pp. 228-9.

into the underworld of dangerous religions. But Ross separated monastic orders from the history of Christian heresies.

Section 12 of *Pansebeia* tackled the contemporary English sects. It was largely a compilation of popular anti-sectarian literature published in the 1640s. Names of sects listed here were almost identical to those collected in *Heresiography*. The Anabaptists, Brownists, Familists, Adamites, Antinomians, Socinians, Arminians and Millenaries, those familiar names during the Civil War, were placed within the large historiographical panorama of *Pansebeia*. The accounts of such sects were mainly borrowed from English heresiographers such as Thomas Edwards, Ephraim Pagitt, and John Knewstubs. The manner in which each sect was treated was also typical of mid-seventeenth-century catalogues of heresies. Usually one question would be asked for each sect. For example, the question “What are the Familists?” was followed by a plain answer with the sect’s history, primary teachings, and suggested further reading.

Though Ross had already referred to sixteenth-century German Anabaptists, Ross separated his discussion of the contemporary Anabaptists in England in the twelfth section, implying that what was discussed here was an ‘English’ type. Ross recycled Ephraim Pagitt’s chapter on the Anabaptists, entirely copying the 20 subcategories of the sect. These subcategories were themselves borrowed from the works of Bullinger and Alsted, and therefore essentially un-English. However, by placing Pagitt’s text in the centre of what he defined as the ‘present’, and by alienating and historicizing the continental figures of Münster and ‘John of Leyden’, Ross domesticated English ‘Anabaptism’.²⁷

‘The Independents’ were also explained as one of the ‘opinions of this time’. Considering that he published the book (1653) when the Independents were at their strongest, it may well be that Ross hid his particular dislike of this religious ‘sect’ in order to avoid criticism. But he still relied upon completely Presbyterian sources, written between 1644 and 46 by men like Baillie and Edwards.²⁸ The eighteen “opinions of the Independents” Ross compiled were typical points upon which the religious Independents were attacked by conservative puritan writers: that they were against set prayers, they denied

²⁷ This curious distinction between continental Anabaptists and sectaries condemned for ‘Anabaptism’ in England is still today visible in works by both historians of English dissenters and denominational historians. See for example, J. F. McGregor, ‘The Baptists: Fount of All Heresy’, in McGregor and Reay (eds.), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, pp. 23-63; Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters*, vol.1 (Oxford, 1978).

²⁸ *Pansebeia*, pp. 412-414.

tithes, they gave power over the congregation to laymen and laywomen who dared to preach and even to answer questions, that they would not entertain Christmas, and so forth. Yet these charges were virtually all exact copies from polemical writings during the Civil War, and Ross's own religious and political position was not explicitly expressed. Ross even agreed with the Independents upon at least one point, that they were against the use of sword, violence and physical punishment, "in which point I commend their Christian moderation," wrote Ross, "for in propagating their Gospel, neither Christ nor his Apostles, nor the Church for many hundred years, did use any other sword but the word to bring men to Christ."²⁹

But perhaps the most unusual thing about this twelfth section of *Pansebeia* compared with other mid-seventeenth-century heresiographies is that Ross placed the Presbyterians *within* his catalogue of sects, not because he saw them as heretical but because of his principle to include *all* religious opinions, heretical or orthodox.³⁰ Ross gave an unusually long, 37-page, explanation of the "Tenets of the Presbyterians" with 95 sets of questions and answers. This made up more than two thirds of the section. This exhaustive treatment of Presbyterianism was not a list of its errors but more or less its vindication. Questions dealt with minute details of its doctrines, particularly in matters of church government: how and why certain men were 'called' (and why not certain others) to the ministry, why having lay Presbyters and elders in the church was not a 'novelty' against Scripture, and how many kinds of excommunication there were in the Presbyterian church, and so forth. "Who would be more fully resolved of these Presbyterian Tenets," commended Ross to his readers; "let him read their own writings."³¹

Although Ross had been, as we shall examine later in this chapter, a supporter of William Laud in the 1630s, his treatment of the Presbyterians in *Pansebeia* appeared favourable. In 1646, Ross had published a catechism, *A Centurie of Divine Meditations upon Predestination*, to show "the Comfortable use

²⁹ *ibid.*, p. 414.

³⁰ Inclusion of an 'approvable' religion within the catalogue of sects was, however, not first seen in *Pansebeia*. See a typical Civil War heresiography in a pamphlet form, *Discovery of 29 Sects here in London* (1641), which put 'the Protestant' among other 28. "This Religion which you see here placed first, is not unknowne unto you in the true badge of a *Christian*, neither can the placing of it among these corrupted Sects, any whit diminish its luster: it is like to a Diamond, which, though it bee cast to the Dung-hill, loseth not a jot of its plendor, or like to a *Glow-worme* which shineth most brightly in the night: judge favourably of the *Author*, for his intentions are good towards the *Protestant Religion*, hee hath placed it here to this intent, *that the ignorant Professors of the rest may see the light, which seemes more glorious to those who have walked so long in darknesse.*" p. 2.

of this Doctrine.”³² Imprimatur was given by the Presbyterian licenser, John Downname. Its printer James Young also worked on several Presbyterian pamphlets including James Cranford’s sermon against heresy.³³ The first edition of *Pansebeia* was printed by Young, and was sold by the bookseller, John Saywell, who also sold several pro-Presbyterian tracts during the Civil War.³⁴ In *Pansebeia* Ross commended that “Presbytery, is Episcopacy dilated, and Episcopacy is Presbytery contracted; so the government is in effect the same.”³⁵

If Ross identified his position with the Presbyterians, there is something remarkable about the fact that they became a single entry in the list of ‘religions in the world’. Pagitt and Edwards never named the Presbyterians in their catalogues of sects, inclusion in which always meant condemnation. In other words, the catalogue of heresies had its function and meaning only when the condemner stood outside of the created list of the condemned. Ross’s favourable emphasis on Presbyterianism in *Pansebeia* was obvious, but he did not give it the traditional role of classifying others. The significance of this juxtaposition of orthodox and heterodox religious positions in one catalogue — Lutherans and Anabaptists, or Calvinists and Libertines for example — cannot be underestimated. In *Pansebeia*, the catalogue of religious sects was transforming its very function as a polemical weapon. As the meaning of the enterprise of collecting religious errors shifted from an instrument of denunciation to that of encyclopedism, the orthodox — however self-made — had to give up listing and labelling ‘heretics’ arbitrarily. The automatic condemnation of heretics by cataloguing them was therefore not operating in *Pansebeia*. Indeed Ross did something which Edwards and Pagitt never did; he put himself in the catalogue. And by doing so, he turned the whole subject which he dealt with, upside-down. He turned it from the world of heresies to

³¹ *Pansebeia*, pp. 414-452.

³² A. Ross, *A Centurie of Divine Meditations upon Predestination, and its Adjuncts: Wherein are shewed the Comfortable uses of this Doctrine, to which are annexed sixteen Meditations upon Gods justice and Mercy* (London, 1646).

³³ James Cranford, *Haereseo-Machia: or, the mischiefe which heresies doe* (London, 1646).

³⁴ Among the other publications of John Saywell, we can find several sermons of William Strong and tracts of William Hussey. Strong (d. 1654) was a puritan minister who frequently preached before Parliament in the 1640s, and eventually became an Independent minister after 1650. Hussey’s tract in 1646 replying to John Tombes (1603?-1676, a puritan divine who upset the Assembly of Divine with his doubt about infant baptism) was published along with Stephen Marshall who was appointed by Parliament to answer Tombes in *An Answer to Mr. Tombes* (London, 1646).

³⁵ “...The peace of the Church, the suppressing of schisme and heresie, the dignity of the Clergy are more consistent with Episcopacy than with Presbytery; but this again is less obnoxious to pride and tyranny, then Episcopacy, by which we see that no Government is perfectly exempted form corruption in this life...” *Pansebeia*, pp. 436-437.

the heresies of the world — or in Ross's terms, the religions of the world. No longer did the disorder and confusion of society under the Civil War explain the growth of heresies; rather the diversity of religious opinions simply told the nature of this world.

In the thirteenth section, Ross discussed the Roman Catholic church, to see in "how many poynts they differ from other Churches."³⁶ It is rather ironic that the section appeared at the end of the book, after Ross had spent a considerable number of pages on the history of diverse sects and heresies many of which had deeply troubled Rome. Here Ross presented comparative studies of Roman Catholic doctrines on predestination, purgatory, the saints and the different rules for conducting masses. The discussion of other established churches continued in section 14, which mainly dealt with the Eastern churches of Greece and Russia. Although Ross never mentioned the Church of England by name, the way in which he drew out the similarities and differences between these other Christian churches and what he called the 'Protestant Church' was similar to Ephraim Pagitt's *Christianographie*. But Ross had a different intention in his comparative ecclesiology; instead of defending the English Church, he proposed some kind of ecumenicalism. After the detailed listing of the doctrinal points on which they agreed and disagreed ("we", the Protestants, agree, for example, with the Nestorians in rejecting auricular confession, but disagree because "we" do not use unleavened bread for Communion, etc.³⁷), Ross wrote that such differences, even with the Roman Catholic Church, would be "fewer," if "men would be moderate on either side" and allow not "the spirit of contention and contradiction" hinder the peace of the Church. He anticipated an end to be brought to "all jarrs and discords" in religion so that there would be unity, which men "have lost [...] by our pride, sacrilege, envy, ambition, convetousness, profaneness, and vain-glory."³⁸

Contrary to the accepted image of him as a conservative and 'old-fashioned' scholar, Ross was never content with 'old' knowledge of the history of heresies. Instead he consciously kept himself informed about new religious opinions and kept *Pansebeia* up-to-date. His attitude to research, to collecting and placing any new religious opinions in his encyclopedic scheme was far from 'reactionary'. After the first publication of the book, Ross started to revise

³⁶ *Pansebeia*, p. 453.

³⁷ *ibid.*, p. 496.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 516.

and enlarge *Pansebeia*. It became his last work, as he fell ill and died in February 1654. The second edition was published posthumously in 1655.³⁹

It is not surprising that in the new edition Ross particularly expanded section 12 of the book, which dealt with the contemporary sects in England. Like the revised editions of Pagitt's *Heresiography*, Ross's revision of *Pansebeia* showed his great interest in the development of diverse religious sects around him. Albeit in failing health, Ross showed remarkable ability to collect accounts of the newest heretics of the day, and moreover, to process them into the wider historiographical — or heresiographical — panorama of *Pansebeia*. This clearly indicates not only that Ross saw the proliferation of religious sects in seventeenth-century England as a legitimate topic of study, but also that he believed these developments were a demonstration of a larger and universal subject called 'religion'. The Anabaptists and Seekers were not only examples of dangerous errors of the time, but also witnesses to, and part of humanity. This shift of role in heresiography cannot be overstressed.

The updated list of the second edition included the 'Millenarians', Independents in Arnhem and in New England, the Quakers, Ranters, and the Muggletonians.⁴⁰ Many radical religious opinions that appeared in the early 50s were added here. Ross expressed his disgust for Richard Coppin — the antinomian radical whose ideological identity has troubled historians — and opined that "for such Ranters, a pillory were more fit then a pulpit."⁴¹ Ross had also read substantially in the teachings of John Reeve, whose doctrines he described as "full of transcendent nonsen[s]e, and blasphemies"⁴² Ross was, however, much more absorbed in the study of the Quakers than other religious rebels. Relying upon the newest available accounts, Ross spent 8 pages questioning and answering the teachings of "these fanatical spirits."⁴³ The

³⁹ A. Ross, *Pansebeia: or, a View of all Religions in the World ... the second Edition, Enlarged and Perfected* (London, 1655).

⁴⁰ Arnhem was one of the places where the early English Independent movements were organized. See Murray Tolmie, *The Triumph of the Saints: The Separate Churches of London 1616-1649* (Cambridge, 1977), pp. 89-92, 104-6, and passim.

⁴¹ *Pansebeia*, 2nd edn. (London, 1655), p. 379. Coppin has been labelled a Seeker, universalist, or by Christopher Hill, a 'semi-Ranter'. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History*, pp. 36-40; Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, etc., 1972), p. 208.

⁴² *Pansebeia*, 2nd edn., p. 389. See C. Hill, B. Reay and W. M. Lamont, *The World of the Muggletonians* (London, 1983), p. 23.

⁴³ Ross gives references to the works of the Independent minister Samuel Eaton (possibly *The Quakers confuted*, 1654) and the catechist Richard Sherlock (possibly *The Quakers wilde questions objected against the ministers of the Gospel*, 1654). Ross's naming of "Robert Sherlock" is probably a mistake. *Pansebeia*, 2nd edn., p. 384. Note that the addition of the Quakers and the Ranters by the printer William Lee to the 5th edition

supposed reader then begged :“now you have satisfied me as to the Quakers; I pray do me the like favour concerning a sort of people they call Ranters.”⁴⁴ The accounts of the Independents were also enlarged. With a few exceptions, in *Pansebeia*, Ross did not employ the notorious and usually unconvincing ‘refutation’ mode which he generally used against his intellectual adversaries. Without trying to disprove each error, he would rather simply cite accounts of different sects from the works to which he referred. Critical comments were occasionally expressed but they were not usually Ross’s own.

It seems Ross thought that writing about ‘heresy’ by grouping and categorizing organized sects would not cover the range of errors diffused. At the end of the enlarged section 12, he added a last-minute list of errors in his day. “Since the fall of our Church government,” there had been numerous errors “endless to number.” Ross therefore listed just 106 errors that were “of the most ordinary and latest received.”⁴⁵ The list was laid out without any references, but it very much resembled the contents of *A Testimony to the Trueth of Jesus Christ* (1647), the catalogue of errors drawn by the London Presbyterian ministers. “But I will leave these Divels, though I could mention many more,” Ross concluded:

[...] that it delights not my selfe, nor can it the Reader, to be raking in such filthy mire and dirt. These are some of the poysonous weeds, which have (too much of late) infested our English Garden; I mean the Church, once admired (both at home and abroad) for the beauty of her Doctrine and Disciplin, and envied of none but ignorants, or men of perverse minds.⁴⁶

A notable feature of the 1655 and subsequent editions of *Pansebeia* is that it was bound and sold with another heresiography, entitled *Apocalypsis: or, the revelation of certain notorious advancers of heresie*. It is not by Ross, as sometimes has been asserted, but an English translation of an anonymous Latin heresiography.⁴⁷ It was the bookseller John Saywell’s addition. As Glenn

of *Heresiography* was in 1654, which was probably after Ross’s revision on his text but before publication of the second edition of *Pansebeia*.

⁴⁴ Davis failed to notice this addition to the second edition of *Pansebeia* and wrote that Ross dismissed the Ranters. *Fear, Myth and History*, p. 124.

⁴⁵ *Pansebeia*, 2nd edn., pp. 422-427.

⁴⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 426-427.

⁴⁷ *Apocalypsis: or, the revelation of certain notorious Advancers of Heresie: Wherein their Visions and private Revelations by Dreams, are discovered to be most incredible blasphemies, and enthusiastical dotages: Together with an account of their Lives, Actions, and Ends*, translation by John Davies (London, 1655). The original Latin book, *Apocalypsis insignium aliquot hæresiarcharum*, and sometimes believed to be written by Henrick van Haestens. A few copies of bound books of only *Apocalypsis* exist. ESTC CD, r216906.

noted, it may well be these additions that have led historians to number Ross among the professional heresy-hunters.⁴⁸ Yet this also suggests that heresiographies were seen and consumed as a genre of literature, additions to which were welcomed. And it is clear that *Apocalypsis* was seen as an appropriate supplement to *Pansebeia*. “And what could more properly have been annexed?” asked Saywell.⁴⁹ *Apocalypsis* listed 16 well-known sixteenth-century radicals. These included familiar Anabaptists like Thomas Muntzer, John of Leiden, John Hut and David George, and the Familist Henry Niclaes, as well as Arius and Mahomet. The manner in which they were treated was very much similar to the later editions of Pagitt’s *Heresiography*, as the individual heretics are described and explained along with engraving of their portraits.⁵⁰

Pansebeia was without doubt the most comprehensive catalogue of heresies produced during the Interregnum. Yet it went beyond the conventional anti-sectarian writings. It was a compilation of ecclesiastical history, anthropology and geography, as well as contemporary religious polemics. *Pansebeia* incorporated the seventeenth-century religious sects into a larger subject of comparative religious studies, and thus constructed a distinct literary genre. Here the nature of the practice of writing about heresies became less persecutory, and more relativistic and academic. In order to understand what made Ross so interested in the study of heresies in the first hand, and why his study of religions resulted in such an encyclopedic project, we will next examine Ross’s religious and political backgrounds. A discussion of several of Ross’s works will follow, before the chapter returns to reconsider *Pansebeia* in the wider context of late seventeenth-century English religious culture.

3. Ross before *Pansebeia*

Early conflicts with ‘upstart Sectaries’

Alexander Ross was born in Aberdeen in January 1591.⁵¹ He is sometime confused with Dr. Alexander Ross of the University of Aberdeen (1594-1639),

⁴⁸ Glenn, ‘Introduction’ to *Mystagogus Poeticus*, p. 55 n110.

⁴⁹ ‘The Booksellers Advertisement to the Reader’ in *Pansebeia*, 2nd edn., Sig. A3v.

⁵⁰ The author also felt the need of making an excuse for cataloguing heresies. “These few things we have brought to light, were not invented by us, but were extorted out of their own Disciples, with abundance of discourse, not without the presence of many men of godliness and excellent understanding, they admitting not the universal rule of the *Scriptures*.” *Apocalypsis*, p. 78.

⁵¹ For the best biography of Ross, see Glenn’s ‘Introduction’ to *Mystagogus Poeticus*, pp. 1-59.

one of the leading members of the Episcopalian party in the university who, in co-operation with William Laud, opposed taking of the Covenant which Edinburgh tried to introduce into Aberdeen in 1638.⁵² Alexander Ross, the author of *Pansebeia*, was educated at Marischal College, one of the two colleges of the University of Aberdeen, probably between 1605 and 1615. Marischal College was established according to James VI's will for "repressing of papists" and designed by a Calvinist Andrew Melville, a student of Theodore Beza.⁵³ However, by the time of Ross's matriculation, Episcopalian influence had already permeated the college, and the curriculum provided a confusing mixture of Calvinistic Ramism and neo-scholastic Aristotelianism. According to Johns, Ross's surviving university notebooks show that he studied logic in both neo-scholastic and Ramist styles.⁵⁴ Later in 1649, when arguing for scholars' need to know both good and evil — as physicians, for example, must to know both the means of cures and the nature of poisons — Ross wrote: "Logick speaks as well of sophisticall and fallacious syllogismes, as of demonstrative and topicall."⁵⁵ This ambiguous and contradictory educational background and his exposure to both episcopacy and Presbyterianism seems to have had a long effect on Ross's later career.

After leaving university, Ross moved to England. In April 1616, recommended by Edward Seymour, earl of Hertford, he was appointed schoolmaster of the free grammar school of Southampton. Apparently he was not too interested in school teaching. In May 1620 there was a complaint in a local court against the "verie greate neglecte in the Schole master in not geveing due attendance in teacheinge the Children, his attendaunce in his owne person is founde to be verie Seldome."⁵⁶ Thereafter he pursued a career in the church. No further action was taken against him and he stayed peacefully in Southampton for the next 22 years as a writer-clergyman. Ross was ordained and licensed to preach in 1619, and by 1620 he had resigned his post as a

⁵² *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, Addenda, 1625-1649* (London, 1897), pp. 583-585; *Fasti Aberdonenses* (Aberdeen, 1854), pp. 411-12; J. M. Bulloch, *A History of the University of Aberdeen 1495-1895* (London, 1895), ch. 11. It is considered, however, possible that Alexander Ross of the University of Aberdeen and Alexander Ross the author of *Pansebeia* are from the same family of the Roses of Inch. See J. R. Glenn's 'Introduction', p. 1.

⁵³ Johns, 'Prudence and Pedantry', p. 29; J. Kirk, 'The influence of Calvinism on the Scottish Reformation', *Records of the Scottish Church Historical Society*, xviii (1974), pp. 157-79; G. Donaldson, 'The polity of the Scottish Church 1560-1600', *ibid.*, xi (1955), pp. 212-216.

⁵⁴ Johns, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

⁵⁵ A. Ross, *A Needful Caveat or Admonition for them who desire to know ... if there be any danger in reading the Alcoran* (1649), not paginated.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Glenn, 'Introduction', p. 3.

schoolmaster. On the title page of *The First Booke of Questions and Answers upon Genesis*, one of his earliest works, published in 1620, Ross's is described as chaplain to James I, though it is not known whether Ross ever preached in the court. He also dedicated Book I of his first book on Jewish history to prince Charles.⁵⁷ He was a preacher at St. Mary's church in Southampton, until 1628 when he was installed as rector of the parish of All Saints in Southampton. He also received the vicarage of Carisbrooke parish on the Isle of Wight from King Charles in 1634, probably with help of William Laud who was by then an important patron of Ross. Ross visited Carisbrooke several times, and married there a daughter of William Bowerman of Brooke, the Isle of Wight, in 1640. But most of his time he stayed in Southampton, where, he said in 1642 upon his retirement, he "preached many hundred Sermons in this [...] peaceable and well governed Corporation."⁵⁸

Until the outbreak of the civil war, Ross was a loyal servant of the king. In 1634 he was assessed for 20 shillings ship money, on which he remarked later in 1652, writing how it upset the living of poor clergymen.⁵⁹ But Ross dedicated his *Virgilianis Evangelisans* (1634), a life of Christ in Vergilian styled Latin verses, to Charles I and dedicated an expanded version on the same theme, *Virgilii Evangelisantis Christiados* to Charles, the Prince of Wales, in 1638.⁶⁰ However, when the tension between the crown and the parliament grew, Ross's open support for the Laudian cause made him unpopular among his parishioners in Southampton. Though the mayor and the assembly supported the crown, anti-clerical voices were increasingly powerful.⁶¹ By the spring of 1642 Ross seems to have found himself in conflict with some of his parishioners. Ross published a sermon on Mathew 21:13 which he preached on 24th February, entitled *Gods House, or the House of Prayer, vindicated from prophanenesse and sacriledge*. The publication was "forced" wrote Ross, "partly by the sollicitation of my friends,

⁵⁷ *Rerum Iudaicarum Memorabiliorum* (1617).

⁵⁸ A. Ross, *Gods House, or the House of Prayer, vindicated from prophanenesse and sacriledge* (London, 1642), 'To the Orthodox Reader.' The Carisbrooke parish was taken care by a curate. Glenn, op. cit., p. 5.

⁵⁹ Glenn, op. cit., p. 44 n29; A. Ross, *The History of the World: The Second Part, in six books: Being a Continuation of the famous history of Sir Walter Raleigh ...* (London, 1652), p. 642. "But this Tax was so unequally laid by the Sheriffs and their Deputies, upon divers of the meaner sort, that it caused great discontent: (For I know a Minister, whose Benefice was scarce 100. l. *per annum*, forced to pay 15. l. for his Tax the first year.)"

⁶⁰ Glenn, pp. 10-11, 46 n42. In 1747 the latter, *Virgilii Evangelisantis Christiados*, was claimed by William Lauder as one of the sources which John Milton plagiarized in writing *Paradise Lost*. W. Lauder, 'An Essay on Milton's Imitation of the Moderns', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 17 (1747). See Glenn, op. cit., pp. 11, 46 n45.

⁶¹ G. N. Godwin, *The Civil War in Hampshire (1642-45) and the Story of Basing House* (Southampton, 1904), p. 5; Glenn, op. cit., pp. 12.

and partly by the slanderous speeches of some new upstart Sectaries in this Towne.”⁶²

His defence of the “splendour of Gods house” and his condemnation of puritan iconoclasm echoed Laudian high-church doctrines.⁶³ “Is Religion and the outward splendour, or prosperitie of the Church,” Ross wondered, “so inconsistent, that they cannot live and dwell together?”⁶⁴ In the midst of such confusion he saw ancient heresies revived. The twelfth-century heretics who demolished the church buildings⁶⁵ had now undergone “a pythagoricall transanimation,” and “entred unto the bodyes of some moderne zelots, who in some places thought that Religion could not bee sufficiently reformed, except Cathedrals had been defaced, and the Queeres pull’d downe.” Ross was adapting the Laudian view of the Scottish Reformation.⁶⁶ Defending the ceremonial elements of his Church, Ross also warned those of his parishioners who neglected the prayer book: “thinke not that your private prayers at home will suffice, you must joyne with the Congregation; for if the private prayers of *Israel* and *Judah* had beene sufficient to divert Gods judgements from them: *Samuel*, *Johosaphat*, and *Ezekiah* would never have troubled all the people to meet together at *Jerusalem*.”⁶⁷

Obviously his sermon was not welcomed by all the congregation. It seems that the voice of his opponents prevailed. “One calls it a pernicious Sermon, another sayes it was fit to be preached at *Rome*, a third, that it is false doctrine.”⁶⁸ Ross’s position in Southampton worsened. On 12th March, Ross was accused by John Elliot, a Southampton merchant, of being “an extortioner and an usurer.”⁶⁹ Five days after the accusation, Ross announced from his pulpit that he was leaving the town. Reading from the same scriptural text that he had used in the previous sermon, Ross made an even harsher attack on his

⁶² Ross, *Gods House, or the House of Prayer*, Sig. A2r.

⁶³ See Peter Lake, ‘The Laudian Style: Order, Uniformity and the Pursuit of the Beauty of Holiness in the 1630s’, in Kenneth Fincham (ed.), *The Early Stuart Church, 1603-1642* (London, etc., 1993), pp. 161-185.

⁶⁴ Ross, *Gods House, or the House of Prayer*, p. 12.

⁶⁵ Ross did not give the name of “a sort of hereticks about the yeare of Christ 1126,” but it may have been the Petrobrusians, named after a French clergy Peter de Bruis who was condemned in 1131 for declaring the uselessness of the church buildings.

⁶⁶ Ross, *Gods House, or the House of Prayer*, pp. 10-11.

⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 16.

⁶⁸ *ibid.*, Sig. A2r.

⁶⁹ R. C. Anderson (ed.), *The Book of Examination and Depositions, 1622-1644* (Southampton, 1929), IV, p. 36, quoted in Glenn, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

enemies. The revised title of the new sermon shows Ross's disappointment and desperation. Gods House, was now "*Made a Den of Theeves*."⁷⁰

His aim was clearly the defence of the rights and privileges of the ordained clergy. "Gods word is a sharpe two-edged Sword, dangerous for fooles and mad-men to play with," he warned.⁷¹ Ross continued his defence of the clerical prayer, wondering why "some men most stumble at" set form of prayers. He insisted that the prayer of the ministry is greater than preaching: "for the excellencie of the action dependes from the excellencie of the object; man is the object of Preaching, but God is the object of prayer."⁷² Ross asks why this is the "the scar-crowes that keepe them backe from the house of prayer." "[I]s it the matter? why, that is consonant to Scripture: is it the forme? that is plaine, methodicall and easie: are they the words? they are significant, intelligible, and without affectation. Are they the compilers of them that they dislike? why, these were our first reformers, holy men, learned divines, blessed martyrs, who sealed these prayers with their blood, they had the honour once to weare the crowne of Martyrdome and now they are crowned with glory, shall any then be so thanklesse as to spurne at their prayers?"⁷³

Ross here brought in his knowledge in ecclesiastical history. He argued that the sectaries' dislike of the set prayers was based on an utter ignorance of the history of the Christian religion. "I doe not remember, that there is at this day any publicke Congregation (of private conventicles I speak not) which hath not their set formes of prayers." The Greeks and Jews held it, as well as "Turks, Persians, Arabians," not to mention the Latin Church.

So all the Christian sects have also their set Prayers; as the Georgians in Iberia, the Cophti in Egypt; the Iacobits in Ethiopia, the Melchits in Syria, the Armenians in Turcomania and Cilicia, the Maronits in mount Libanus the Christians of Saint Thomas, the Muscovits, yea all the reformed churches beyond seas have some set prayers before their Sermons, and shall our Church onely be quarrelled with for her set service, or shall her Ministers be disliked for using rather her formes, and words then their owne?⁷⁴

Ross's study of comparative religions, referring to other forms of Christianity and justifying the English Church within its historical context, already showed the methods developed in *Pansebeia*.

⁷⁰ A. Ross, *Gods House made a Den of Theeves: delivered in a second sermon* (London, 1642).

⁷¹ *ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷² *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷³ *ibid.*, p. 9.

It is clear that he saw the Church of England at this time within the history of the continuous battle of the Christian Church against heresies. In *Gods House Made a Den* Ross blamed different sorts of “theeves” for ruining the Church: sacrilege, faction, idolatry, simony (buying or selling of the church offices), popery, libertinism, and hypocrisy. In addition, “there is pride, extortion, covetousnesse, Atheisme, gluttony, drunkennesse, and indeed a whole legion.”⁷⁵ Such a “multitude of hereticall theeves” had been vexing the Church “from *Simon Magus* till these modern hereticks” making her “stript, wounded, and left half dead.”⁷⁶ Ross ended his sermon calling for a good Samaritan to rescue the deserted Church.

Ross probably left Southampton not long after he delivered the second sermon. In June 1642, the town declared for the Parliament, and a curate tended All Saints until December 1645 when a new minister was installed by the Committee for Plundered Ministers.⁷⁷ His harassed departure in 1642 was not unusual, as this was the year when the persecution of ‘scandalous and malicious’ ministers was fiercest throughout the country.⁷⁸ Ross’s two sermons against the sectaries, which he immediately published in London, tell us how Ross saw the turmoil in the Church during the Civil War as a bitter experience in which his own living was threatened. “There are but two golden pillars that support Church and State, viz. Unitie and Order,”⁷⁹ preached Ross, and this statement was to remain one of his constant arguments in the matters of religion.

A professional controversialist? Ross and the new science

His unhappy farewell to a clerical life was the beginning of his new career as a voluminous writer. After leaving Southampton, it seems Ross headed straight for London. He was now 51. Not much is known about Ross’s first five years in London. He had still some income from his benefices in Southampton, but it seems he worked as a private tutor, while also constantly writing books

⁷⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 9-10.

⁷⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 10-13.

⁷⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 13-14.

⁷⁷ Upon the Bishop’s visitation of 26 September 1642, Ross was still the rector but had already left the town. Glenn, *op. cit.*, p. 14; A. G. Matthew (ed.), *Walker Revised* (Oxford, 1948), p. 189. For the Committee for Plundered Ministers, see I. M. Green, ‘The persecution of ‘scandalous’ and ‘malignant’ parish clergy during the English Civil War’, *English Historical Review*, xlv (1979), pp. 507-531.

⁷⁸ The royal magistrates of Southampton also had left by August of the same year. Johns, ‘Prudence and Pedantry’, p. 55 n45.

on various subjects, and seeking patronage. He was soon recognized by Henry Oxinden of Barham (1607-1670), the guardian of Thomas Denne (1622-1648), one of Ross's pupils in Latin and Logic. Oxinden became a friend and an enthusiastic supporter of Ross, and composed a couple of prefatory verses to Ross's *Mystagogus Poeticus* (1647). This handy reference book of Greek and Roman mythology, was one of the most popular books by Ross.⁸⁰ Thus an anonymous preacher in 1659 consulted "that little *Scotch* Mithologist," when he preached of the need of wearing spiritual "boots" to survive the severe wintry situation England was enduring, explaining how barefoot Achilles was "pierced into the heal" as he left "his boots behind him."⁸¹

The amount Ross wrote and published between 1645 and his death in 1653 was truly extraordinary. Samuel Butler wrote in his *Hudibras* (1663):

There was an ancient sage *Philosopher*,
That had read *Alexander Ross* over;
And swore the world, as he could prove,
Was made of Fighting and of love.⁸²

It is, however, unclear whether Butler's words were complimentary or sarcastic. Whatever his subject, continuously criticizing other authors seemed to be the habit of Ross, and he attracted public attention in London exactly by attacking the well-known writers of the time. Thus Ross has earned a reputation as the most combative, though not the most admired, controversialist in science and philosophy in seventeenth century.

In the 1630s Ross had already revealed his ambition in the world of polemics. Seeking William Laud's favour, Ross started by attacking Copernican

⁷⁹ Ross, *Gods House made a Den of Theeves*, p. 10.

⁸⁰ "Great ALEXANDER conquered onely men. / With swords and cruell weapons, used then; / But Thou the MONSTERS which *Parnassus* hill / Brought forth, hast vanquisht onely with they quill. / Hee in his conquests sometimes suffered losse, / Thouth non, (my Friend) GREAT ALEXANDER ROSS." A copy of *Mystagogus Poeticus* in the British Library (shelfmark 9.103.79) had been sent as a gift from Oxinden to Elizabeth Dixwell. See Dorothy Gardiner (ed.), *The Oxinden and Peyton Letters 1642-1670: being the correspondence of Henry Oxinden of Barham, Sir Thomas Peyton of Knowlton and their circle* (London, 1937), pp. xxix-xxx, 90-1, 117-8 and *passim*. It is not certain, however, if Oxinden offered any substantial financial patronage.

⁸¹ A sermon *Good Counsel Against Cold Weather* in John Chandos (ed.), *In God's Name: Examples of preaching in England from the Act of Supremacy to the Act of Uniformity 1534-1662* (London, 1971), p. 533.

⁸² Samuel Butler, *Hudibras, written in the time of the late wars*, part. i. canto ii (first authorized edition (London, 1663), p. 71.)

astronomy.⁸³ His 1634 book *Commentum de terrae motu circulari*, dedicated to the archbishop of Canterbury, derided the Dutch astronomer Philip van Lansberg (1561-1632) and the English Calvinist, Nathaniel Carpenter (1589-1628?), who had criticized Laudian adaptations of scholastic natural philosophy. Though the book itself did not attract much attention, Ross received the Carisbrooke living from Laud shortly afterwards. After the outbreak of the Civil War Ross's critique of Copernicanism continued. In 1640 the cleric and young astronomer John Wilkins blamed Ross for being too assertive, passionate in defending "the superficial knowledge of things, as they seem at their first appearances" and yet blind to "what things are in themselves by our owne experience."⁸⁴ Ross struck back in his *The new planet no planet: or, the Earth no wandring star except in the wandring heads of Galileans*, although this was not published for another 6 years, probably due to the confusion caused by the Civil War.⁸⁵ The subtitle of the book sufficiently explains Ross's basic standpoint:

Here, out of the principles of Divinity, Philosophy, Astronomy, Reason, and Sense, the Earth's immobility is asserted; the true sense of Scripture in this point, cleared; the Fathers and Philosophers vindicated; divers Theologicall and Philosophicall points handled, and COPERNICUS his Opinion, as erroneous, ridiculous, and impious, fully refuted.

It was clearly a clash between the newly emerging experimental philosophy and classical Aristotelian natural philosophy. After writing against Wilkins' astronomy, Ross moved on to criticize Sir Thomas Browne's *Religio Medici* (1642) in his *Medicus Medicatus* (1645), and in 1651 he continued his attack on Browne in *Arcana Microcosmi ... with a Refutation of Doctor Brown's Vulgar Errors* (1651). The second edition of *Arcana Microcosmi* which came out in the following year also included his critiques of Dr. William Harvey's *De Generatione Animalium* (1651) and Francis Bacon's *Natural History*.

Thomas Denne, a student of Ross, recommended *Medicus Medicatus* to Henry Oxinden "because it is generally applauded,"⁸⁶ but historians of science describe Ross as intellectually null, however pugnacious and enthusiastic, and

⁸³ See Johns, 'Prudence and pedantry', pp. 23-59. "Ross-Wilkins controversy" was a term Grant McColley coined in his 'The Ross-Wilkins Controversy', *Annals of Science*, 3 (1938), pp. 153-189. Astronomy was, however, not the first topic on which Ross engaged himself polemically. In 1627 Ross wrote *Tonsor ad Cutem Rasus*, a confutation of an anonymous Jesuit's work questioning the legitimacy of the church and monarchy of England.

⁸⁴ John Wilkins, *A discourse concerning a new planet. Tending to prove, that 'tis probable our Earth is one of the planets* (London, 1640), Sig. aa3v, p. 5; Johns, op. cit., p. 43.

⁸⁵ The book was registered for publication by September 1640. Glenn, op. cit., p. 9.

as a shallow pedant who, without noticing, ended up showing off his ‘ignorance’ to ‘innovative’ thinkers.⁸⁷ “The blindly intolerant reactionaries who sought to reassert the inviolability of Aristotle’s natural philosophy, without either understanding that philosophy or the basis of the criticism launched against, found a zealous champion in Alexander Ross,” wrote Francis Johnson.⁸⁸ Ross’s contemporaries too felt the same frustration. Wilkins in 1640 complained that “our hot adversaries,” including Ross, would only show “more *violence* in opposing the *Persons* against whom they write, than *strength* in confuting the *cause*.”⁸⁹ Thomas Hobbes, whose *Leviathan* was ridiculed by Ross in *Leviathan Drawn Out with a Hook* (1653), wrote in 1654:

[...] And yet here we must complain of want of sufficiencie or ingenuitie, to acknowledge the truths, or confute the errors of that book [*Leviathan*]; which till it is done, we shall not count the author an heretick. On this side the sea, besides the dirt and slander cast on him [Hobbes] in *sermons* and private meetings, none hath put any thing in print against him, but Mr. Rosse; one who may be said to have had so much learning, as to have been perpetually barking at the works of the most learned.⁹⁰

In the same year Richard Whitlocke mocked Ross as a writer who would write anything against anyone in order to eat:

Inke must earne Ale, and three Penny Ordinary’s; write they must against Things or Men (if the Spirit of contradiction prove saleable) that they can neither Master, nor Conquer; Sparing neither Bacons, Harveys, Digbys, Brownes, or any the like ... but such a credit as he did, that set Diana’s Temple on fire, to perpetuate his name.⁹¹

Why did Ross keep writing in such an aggressive and determined way? And did it in any way differ from, for instance, the militant style of Thomas

⁸⁶ *The Oxinden and Peyton Letters*, p. 76.

⁸⁷ See for example, Francis R. Johnson, *Astronomical Thought in Renaissance England* (New York, 1968), pp. 277-282; Geoffrey Keynes, *The Life of William Harvey* (Oxford, 1966), pp. 358-9; James N. Wise, *Sir Thomas Browne’s Religio Medici and Two Seventeenth-Century Critics* (Columbia, 1973), ch. 4; Richard S. Westfall, *The Construction of Modern Science: Mechanisms and Mechanics* (Cambridge, 1977, first published 1971), p. 116-117.

⁸⁸ Johnson, *Astronomical Thought in Renaissance England*, p. 277.

⁸⁹ Wilkins, *A discourse concerning a new planet*, Sig. aa4v.

⁹⁰ Hobbes, *Of Liberty and Necessity* (1654), ‘The Epistle to the Reader’, in Sir William M. Bart (ed.), *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes* (1962), p. 237. Words inside the brackets are mine.

⁹¹ *Zootomia, or Observations on the Present Manners of the English: Briefly Anatomizing the Living by the Dead* (London, 1654), quoted in Glenn, op. cit., p. 16.

Edwards in religious controversies? Adrian Johns suggests that Ross had to appeal to the new readership emerging in the world of printing-press where there was still no solid “public sphere.” The Church of England, the Crown, and Archbishop Laud — all the sources of authority that Ross had formerly submitted himself to — was now destroyed by the Civil War.⁹² But what appears to matter most here is Ross’s attitude towards knowledge and its legitimate structure. Ross doubtless considered that his arguments were totally legitimate, based on secure learning. Modern scholars all agree that Ross’s approach to any philosophical and scientific debates made no contribution to the development of the disciplines; but for Ross himself there was not much to contribute. When Hobbes’s *Leviathan* came out, Ross claimed that the points made by Hobbes were merely repetitions of old heresies. According to Ross, Hobbes was an Anthropomorphist, Sabellian, Nestorian, Sadducean, Arabian, Tacian, Manichean, Mohammedan, Cerinthian, Tertullianist, Audean, Montanist, Aetian, Priscillianist, Luciferian, Originist, Socinian and a Jew.⁹³ Ross’s role was therefore to classify each error in *Leviathan* according to familiar categories of heresies, and warn his readers by making clear the problems and consequences to which *Leviathan* could lead. Errors, for Ross, were merely those cases in which the truth about things was not correctly known and understood. What he thought he had to do was to clear the misunderstandings and put knowledge back in order. In his criticism of Wilkins, Ross wrote: “[...]that which I reprove, is the vaine curiosity of men, who cannot be content to know with sobriety things revealed.”⁹⁴ As Adrian Johns was right to point out, Ross was a self-styled ‘pedant’. This was a counter-identity of the experimental scientist, or in Ross’s eyes, the heresy of ‘mathematical’ demonstration. Pedantry was not altogether a pejorative term in the seventeenth century, and Ross himself was proud of it.⁹⁵

Seeing Ross simply as a bad controversialist who kept missing the point of argument may be misleading. Many of Ross’s attacks on ‘progressive’ thinkers were not necessarily directed at the arguments for which those thinkers are now

⁹² Johns, ‘Prudence and Pedantry’, p. 28.

⁹³ A. Ross, *Leviathan Drawn Out with a Hook: or Animadversions upon Mr Hobbs his Leviathan* (London, 1653), ‘To the Reader’, sigs. A[9]v-A[10]v.

⁹⁴ *New Planet*, p. 67. “I will not condemne the good uses that may be made of Astronomy in calculation of times, observation of seasons, prediction of eclipses, and such things as have their immediate dependence from the opposition and conjunction of starres; and the uses that may be made of it in physicke, and in the campe: but...”

⁹⁵ Johns, op. cit., pp. 23-59; S. Shapin, “A scholar and a gentleman’: The problematic identity of the scientific practitioner in early modern England’, *History of Science*, xxix (1991), pp. 279-327; Shapin, *A social history of truth: Civility and science in seventeenth-century England* (Chicago, 1994).

known. In many controversial writings, Ross would not examine their larger argument but would pick up any detail of his victims' works — however minor or unrelated to their main theme. Then he would lay out his lengthy, strictly word-by-word 'confutation', which could be a quite exhausting read. For example, upon Hobbes's statement in *Leviathan*: "Life is but the motion of limbs," Ross retorted: "life is not motion, but the cause of motion: there may be life in the limbs when there is no motion, as in sleep, [...] and there is motion, when there is no life at all, as in a wooden leg."⁹⁶ As Samuel Mintz observes, Ross did not see *Leviathan* "as the expression of a coherent and closely-knit philosophical system."⁹⁷ Whether he was simply *incapable* of seeing the heart of Hobbes's philosophy is another question. Whatever the subject was astronomy or anatomy, Ross was not constructing a coherent, consistent body of scholarship, he did not feel the need to do so. To Wilkins Ross wrote: "For any great skill that either you or I have in Astronomy, wee may shake hands: Astronomy is not my profession." Ross did not see himself as an astronomer and that was not a problem. "[S]o much I have is as convenient for a Divine, and enough to discover your vaine and ridiculous conceits."⁹⁸

So, if he did not need to worry about learning astronomy, what was then "convenient" knowledge for a divine, or for a "spiritual shepherd by profession," as Ross described himself to Hobbes?⁹⁹ Here we are able to see these disciplines of knowledge which Ross truly trusted, and even sought to develop: history and religion. Wilkins wrote that men like Ross were not capable of scientific inquiry, but "in other things perhaps are able Schollars."¹⁰⁰ This may have been Wilkins' sarcasm, but it is true that there has not been much inquiry made by historians into "other things" of Ross's trade, especially his non-polemical works, in which he was indeed able. Ross's position in early modern philosophy lies not in his supposed role in 'defending' the 'old' ideas, but in his belief in a certain way of acquiring and maintaining knowledge, and preserving its legitimacy. His last work *Pansebeia*, in which errors were *not* refuted, but collected, displayed and made manifest, should be understood in this context.

⁹⁶ Ross, *Leviathan Drawn Out with a Hook*, p. 2.

⁹⁷ Samuel I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan* (Bristol, 1996, first published in 1962), p. 45. Mintz says "it would be unhistorical to expect" Ross, as "one of the first of the critics," to understand this coherence of Hobbes's argument.

⁹⁸ Ross, *The New Planet No Planet*, pp. 69-70.

⁹⁹ Ross, *Leviathan Drawn Out with a Hook*, Sig. A2v.

¹⁰⁰ John Wilkins, *A Discourse concerning a New world & Another Planet* (London, 1640), pp. 27.

We shall next explore Ross's particular encyclopedism, through a brief examination of his English translation of the Koran (1649) and his *The History of the World* (1652), before returning to *Pansebeia* to discuss his contribution to the early modern idea of 'religion'.¹⁰¹ Samuel Mintz wrote "all his life he waged war against new ideas,"¹⁰² but in this aspect, Ross might even have been 'innovative.' And we hope to find out why the writer whose militant pen was so notorious did not produce another *Gangræna* but came up with a relativistic catalogue heresies that allowed the plural use of 'religions.'

4. Vindication of knowing

Translating the Koran

Though not apparently related to the genre of heresiography, two major projects of Alexander Ross influenced *Pansebeia*: his English translation of the Koran, and his *History of the World*. Ross's Koranic scholarship is most unusual.¹⁰³ While some accounts of Islamic religion had been introduced by English authors like Samuel Purchas or the Arabist William Bedwell (1563-1632),¹⁰⁴ the text of the Koran was not accessible in England until the mid-1640s. According to Nabil Matar, the first manuscript of the Koran arrived in the University Library of Cambridge in 1631, and there were no published copies of the Koran in England.¹⁰⁵ In 1647 Abraham Wheelock (1593-1653), professor of Arabic at Cambridge, began a translation of the Koran into Latin and Greek, hoping also to print the whole Arabic text, but faced financial and technical difficulties in carrying on the project. Although Thomas Smith, friend of Samuel Hartlib, lobbied the members of the Assembly of Divines to support the

¹⁰¹ The same aspect may be examined also in Ross's another non-controversial, and encyclopedical work, *Mystagogus Poeticus*, which this thesis does not cover. See Glenn's introduction in his *A critical edition of ... Mystagogus Poeticus*.

¹⁰² Mintz, *Hunting of Leviathan*, p. 68.

¹⁰³ For Ross and his *Alcoran*, see Justin A. I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and its Enemies, 1660-1730* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 104-105; Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain 1558-1685* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 73-82; G. J. Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom and Learning: The Study of Arabic in Seventeenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1996), pp. 200-1.

¹⁰⁴ Bedwell produced a list of suras (chapters) of the Koran, *Index Assuratarum Muhammedici Alkorani, That is, A Catalogue of the Chapters of the Turkish Alkoran* (1615). The third edition of *Purchas his Pilgrimage* (1617) made reference to Bedwell's work. See Matar, *Islam in Britain*, pp. 73-74; Toomer, *Eastern Wisdom*, pp. 56-64; Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*, p. 104 n12.

¹⁰⁵ Matar, *Islam in Britain*, pp. 74-75.

translation and the printing of the text, neither translation nor the Arabic edition of the Koran ever came out in print.¹⁰⁶

Alexander Ross was certainly not within the Hartlib circle, but he did not hesitate about using his talent for languages when André du Ryer's French translation of the Koran appeared in 1647.¹⁰⁷ In March 1649 news that "Turkish Alcoran" was being translated in English and printed reached the government. Parliament immediately ordered the arrest of the printer as well as the seizure of printed copies of translation awaiting to be bound. On March 31 the Council of State summoned Ross to explain the matter, but no further record survives to show us what happened during the proceedings.¹⁰⁸ Ross's English Koran eventually came out in print on 7 May.¹⁰⁹ Samuel Gardiner described these Parliamentary proceedings against the publication, concluding that "the book appeared, without causing a change in the religious views of a single Englishman."¹¹⁰ But according to Matar, both Samuel Hartlib and John Dury noted the publication of Ross's English *Alcoran*.¹¹¹ Ross's *Alcoran* was reprinted in 1688, implying some continuing interest in the book.

Ross's careful presentation of the Koran shows that he knew the dangerous nature of his enterprise. The title page declared it was "newly Englished, for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish vanities." Ross did not put his name to the front page of the book nor to his epistle to the readers. Nor did he claim anywhere in his other writings that he translated the Koran himself. In *Pansebeia* (1653) Ross listed his past and forthcoming books, but mentioned only his postscript to *Alcoran*, "A Caveat for reading the Alcoran."¹¹² It is evident that the English *Alcoran* was Ross's work, but he was very much aware of the risk of possible persecution by reason of being associated with the

¹⁰⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 73-76.

¹⁰⁷ *L'Alcoran de Mahomet traduit d'Arabe en François, par le Sieur du Ryer Sieur de la Garde Malezair* (Paris, 1647). Du Ryer was the French Consul in Egypt.

¹⁰⁸ *Commons Journal*, vi. 168; *Journals of the House of Commons*, comp. Timothy Cunningham (London, 1985), vol. VI, pp. 168-170; *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic, Commonwealth. 1649-50*, ed. by Mary Anne Everett Green (London, 1878), vol. I. pp. 42, 45.

¹⁰⁹ A. Ross, *The Alcoran of Mahomet, Translated out of Arabique into French; by the Sieur Du Ryer, Lord of Malezair, Resident for the King of France, at Alexandria, and newly Englished, for the satisfaction of all that desire to look into the Turkish vanities* (London, 1649). Publisher unknown.

¹¹⁰ Samuel Rawson Gardiner, *History of the Commonwealth and Protectorate 1649-1656*, vol. I (London, 1903), p. 56.

¹¹¹ *The Hartlib Papers*, 31/22/9B; 4/1/25A-28B, both cited from Matar, *op. cit.*, p. 81. In 1654 the Independent theologian Nathaniel Homes cited Ross's *Alcoran*, and so too did the Quaker George Fox in 1680.

¹¹² 'The desire of some Friends hath occasioned the publishing of this list of Books, complied by the Author.' *Pansebeia*, Sigs. A[11]r-v.

'Turkish heresy'. In fact, a short pamphlet in 1649 condemned the publication of Ross's *Alcoran*, maintaining that even the acquisition — not to mention the translation — of "that Academy of Heresies, the Turkish *Alcoran*, [...] in the dayes of Queen *Elizabeth*, King *James*, and King *Charles* of blessed Memory, was treason."¹¹³ Instead of claiming authorship of the translation, Ross appealed to the authority of the French text which he relied upon. Ross translated also du Ryer's "Epistle to the reader", "A Summary of the Religion of the TURKS", and two letters from French consuls approving du Ryer's work. By doing so, Ross sought to show the respectability of the project in France, if not in the new-born English republic.

Ross's own voice is heard in the 4-page "The Translator to the Christian Reader" in which he excused the publication of *Alcoran*, and criticized the present regime that threatened his endeavour.

[T]hough some, conscious of their own instability in Religion, and of theirs (too like Turks in this) whose prosperity and opinions they follow, were unwilling this should see the Presse, yet am I confident, if thou hast been so true a votary to orthodox Religion, as to keep thy self untained of their follies: this shall not hurt thee.¹¹⁴

Reading the Koran, therefore, was not at all dangerous, as long as one held on to a stable religious foundation — which was now, in Ross's eyes, undermined by the collapse of the Church and the execution of the king. Yet "those of that Batch" who were now in power, "having once abandoned the Sun of the Gospel, I believe they will wander as far into utter darknesse, by following strange lights, as by this Ignis Fatuus of the *Alcoran*." Here Ross was playing with a subtle rhetoric of danger and otherness. While on the surface setting forth the "Turkish vanities," Ross also distanced himself from puritans in the Rump Parliament. The ground where Ross stood was the secure and authentic knowledge unchallenged by, and unchanged over time. Translating the French Koran that had been submitted to Louis XIV might be in a way Ross's challenge to the new republican regime. "There being so many Sects and Heresies banded together, against the Truth, finding that of Mahomet wanting to the Muster, I thought good to bring it to their Colours, that so viewing thine enemies in their full body, thou mayst the better prepare to encounter, and I hope overcome

¹¹³ Richard Holdsworth, *An Answer Without a Question, or, The late schismatical petition for a diabolically toleration of severall religions expounded* (London, 1649), p. 5.

¹¹⁴ *The Alcoran of Mahomet*, 'The Translator to the Christian Reader', Sig. A3r.

them.”¹¹⁵ The main text “The Alcoran of Mahomet”, a word by word translation of du Ryer’s version, extended for 394 pages. Though modern scholars agree the translation is by no means dependable, it remained the only available English version until 1734 when the English Orientalist George Sale (1697?-1736) translated the original Arabic text.¹¹⁶

What is of interest to us is Ross’s 14-pages treatise titled *A needfull Caveat or Admonition for them who desire to know what use may be made of, or if there be danger in reading the Alcoran, by Alexander Ross*, appended to the main text of the Koran, together with a 13-pages section: *The life and death of Mahomet, the Prophet of the Turks, and Author of the Alcoran*. These two sections seem to have been prepared separately from the translation itself, for they have separate pagination, and the *Caveat* bore Ross’s name as the author. As Matar suggests, it seems that, after the printed text of *Alcoran* was “seized” by the Council of State, Ross decided at the last minute to add this part in order to further explain and justify his cause and secure his position. This *Caveat* thus gives some good hints of Ross’s attitude towards his subject.¹¹⁷

“I know the publishing of the *Alcoran* may be to some dangerous and scandalous,” Ross wrote; “dangerous to the reader, scandalous to the higher powers, who notwithstanding have cleared themselves by disliking the publishing, and questioning the publishers thereof.”¹¹⁸ But it was nothing like as outrageous as they might think, Ross explained in the 18 propositions that followed. One: reading of “Mahomets Heresies” was no more dangerous than the errors already mentioned in the Bible; two: the “Errors of ancient and modern Heretikes” recorded by “Tertullian, Irenaeus, Epiphanius, Austin and other Fathers” were even more “damnable,” and yet they have been read and known. All knew about the Gnostics, Manicheans, Arians, Simonians and so on. “Besides; are not the damnable Heresies of the modern *Familists*, who deny Christs Divinity, [...] illuminated Elders in their Congregations? are not also the Heresies of the *Socinians*, *Antitrinitarians*, *Adamites*, *Servetians*, *Antisabbatarians*, and many others exposed to the view of all that will read them? why then may not the *Alcoran*?” Three: knowing the error of the Koran was good for Christians, as it would “confirm us in the truth, and cause us love the Scripture so much the more: for as a beautiful body is never more lovely then when she is

¹¹⁵ ‘The Translator to the Christian Reader’, Sig. A2.

¹¹⁶ Matar, *Islam in Britain*, p. 73; George Sale, *The Koran, Commonly Called the Alcoran of Mohammed* (London, 1734).

¹¹⁷ Ross’s *A Needful Caveat*, together with *Life and Death of Mahomet*, was placed after the main text of the *Alcoran* in the first impression, but in the second impression that came out in 1688, it moved to the opening, serving as introduction to the whole book.

placed neer a Black-moore.” Four: in the nations where the Koran was accepted, it was not necessarily for its excellence or loveliness anyway; those people are “forced by the Sword,” or simply ignorant. And so on.

But Ross’s argument went beyond a simple stigmatization of “Turkish vanities,” and therefore, beyond conformity to the stereotypical. Rather than presenting the Islamic religion as altogether defective, and as being opposite to Christian religion, Ross engaged in a more complex negotiation. In propositions 6 and 7 Ross wrote that men should “see the vanity, impiety, and foolishnesse of” the Koran, because “there is a kind of necessity we should know evill as well as good, falshood as well as truth.” On the other hand, in the proposition 11 Ross confessed; “In reading the *Alcoran*, though we find much dung, yet in it we shall meet with some gold, as *Virgil* did in reading of *Ennius* his Verses. [...] even so in the dirt of the *Alcoran* you shall find some Jewells of Christian vertues.” In fact, Christian readers would “blush to see how zealous they are in the works of Devotion, Piety, and Charity, how devout, cleanly, and reverend in their Mosques, how obedient to their Priests...”

[...] surely their devotion, piety, and works of mercy are main causes of the growth of Mahometanisme, & on the contrary, our neglect of Religion, and loosenesse of conversation, is a main hindrance to the increase of Christianity; is it not a shame, that they should read over their *Alcoran*, once every moneth, and we scarce read over the Bible in all our life? that they shall give such reverence to their *Alcoran*, as to honour the very Camell that carried it to *Mecca*, and to lay up for holy reliques the napkins and handkerchiefs that rubbed off the sweat from his skin; and we shall prefer lascivious Poems, and wanton Ballads to the sacred Word of Almighty God? do we not make our selves unworthy of such an inestimable treasure?

Nabil Matar sees this passage as “a scathing attack on the new regime in England” and on the “sectaries” who had built up their power by regicide and religious vandalism. The Koran would embarrass those in the Rump Parliament, because it would show “how inferior they were compared to the Muslims in their piety and social order.”¹¹⁹ However, while admitting Ross’s sarcasm, it is difficult to accept that Ross upheld the Koran simply in order to criticize the religious disorder of the new Commonwealth. If we consider what

¹¹⁸ Ross, *A Needful Caveat*, not paginated.

¹¹⁹ “The censorship against ‘*Alcoran*’ had not been intended to protect English society from Islam, but to shield the regicides from an unflattering comparison with the Muslims. For Ross, the Qur’an was a suitable text with which to attack the Commonwealth authority.” Matar, op. cit., p. 80.

Ross was trying to defend, the matter appears rather different; his vindication of the translation and publication of the *Alcoran* was a vindication of his Koranic study.

As Glenn notes, it is hard to know how exactly Ross viewed the Koran and its religion and what truly motivated him to translate it. His language in the *Caveat* was carefully crafted so as to avoid any possible charges. But it seems that his interest lay more in the pursuit of knowledge, especially about religion, than the immediate and political use of the text. Without needing to say that Islamic religion had some good aspects, here Ross found a way of excusing his conduct. What Ross needed to defend was not the Koran itself but the *knowing* of it. Ross wrote in the proposition 8: "They that learn Arts and Sciences, desire the knowledge, not only of the good things, but of the evil things also." Just as a logician would need to know both "sophisticall and fallacious" logic, and as historians would describe both "the vertuous and vicious actions of Princes," the Koran provided those who study 'religion' with something they *need to know*. "...[T]herefore if you would know what be the damnable errors to be avoided by Christians, read the *Alcoran*, and you shall find in it the sink of all, or most part of ancient heresies." As Glenn notes, this was by no means a justification of "academic freedom,"¹²⁰ but here Ross revealed his genuine interest in the comparative study of religions. While calling the Koran "ridiculous fables," it is also certain that Ross acquired an enormous amount of knowledge about the Islamic religion. His later study of world religions, *Pansebeia*, was no doubt founded on this philosophical conviction.

The History of the World

After publishing *Alcoran*, Ross set about working on world history. His main source was Sir Walter Raleigh's *The History of the World* (1614). In 1650 Ross published a book, *The Marrow of Historie*, an epitome of the massive volume by Raleigh.¹²¹ Ross says the 574-page duodecimo book would be a "pocket companion," being "more portable, more legible, and more vendible, then the great Book."¹²² "God was the first that taught us to epitomie; for hee abridged the Microcosm into the Microcosm of Man's bodie and Nature imitates

¹²⁰ Glenn, op. cit., p. 27.

¹²¹ *The Marrow of Historie, or an Epitome of all Historicall Passages from the Creation, to the end of the last Macedonian War: First set out at large by Sir Walter Rawleigh, and now abbreviated by A. R.* (London, 1650). For the readership of Raleigh in the mid-seventeenth-century, see Anna R. Beer, *Sir Walter Raleigh and his Readers in the Seventeenth Century: Speaking to the People* (London, 1997), ch. 5.

him daily.”¹²³ Ross made the maximum use of Raleigh’s *History*, and while putting together this abridgement of Raleigh, he also made another book out of it: a ‘correction’ of Raleigh. *Som Animadversions and Observation upon Sr Walter Raleigh’s Historie of the World* was probably published in late 1650.¹²⁴ Its subtitle, *Wherein his mistakes are noted, and som doubtful passages cleered*, may sound hostile, and indeed the book reveals Ross’s usual captious and patronising language. But Ross did show a certain kind of respect for his Elizabethan predecessor, and preferred to present himself as submitting amendments to a great work which he admired. Both *The Marrow* and *Animadversions* were preparations for his larger book, *The History of the World: The Second Part* (1652).¹²⁵ Almost completely ignored by historians, this massive volume of some 770 folio pages, composed to perfect Raleigh’s ‘unfinished’ project, shows Ross’s love and respect for history as a discipline. Rather than boosting his own originality, Ross presented his work as a “continuation” of Raleigh.¹²⁶ Ross’s *History* began from “the end of the Macedonian Kingdom” where Raleigh stopped, and closed with the summoning of the Long Parliament in November 1640. He avoided describing the Civil War years. “I will not venture upon the stormy rock, quick-sands, contrary tides, and whirlpools of these last ten years,” he wrote, “lest I make shipwrack, and so be forced to hand up my wet cloaths in Neptunes temple.” Yet Ross clearly showed his sympathy to Charles I and his grief for his time “overcast with a dark and dismal cloud.”¹²⁷

This way in which Ross saw his writing of *History* reveals much about the forms of knowledge he esteemed. In his preface to the *Marrow of Historie* Ross ridiculed “this ignorant Age” in which scholars were “needlesly troubling themselves and the world with his Atoms.” History, Ross argued, would only

¹²² *Marrow of Historie*, Sig. A3r.

¹²³ *ibid.*, Sig. A3v. Laurence Echard who also composed an abridgement of Raleigh’s *History of the World* in 1698 criticized Ross’s *Marrow* as a piece of “small Skill and Success: for he has injudiciously fill’d his Epitomy with the most trifling and trashy parts of the Original, and omitted too much of what was most material and substantial.” Quoted in Glenn, pp. 54-55 n104. Anna Beer observes that Ross indeed carefully removed the element of Raleigh’s personal plea for justice, to produce a plainer and useful reading for historical knowledge. Beer, *Sir Walter Raleigh and his Readers*, pp. 153-154.

¹²⁴ Not dated. See Glenn, pp. 27-28.

¹²⁵ The subtitle follows: “... The Second Part, in six books: Being a Continuation of the famous history of Sir Walter Raleigh, Knight: Beginning where he left; viz. at the End of the Macedonian Kingdom, and deduced to these Later-Times: That is, from the Year of the World 3806. or, 160 Year before Christ, till the end of the Year 1640. after Christ.”

¹²⁶ Anthony Wood noted Ross as a re-writer of Raleigh. Wood, *Athenæ Oxonienses*, 2nd edn. (London, 1721), pp. 438-439.

¹²⁷ Ross, *The History of the World: The Second Part*, pp. 646-7.

prove the unchallenged truth.¹²⁸ In his *History of the World* Ross maintained that history is “indeed one of the most delightfull and profitable employments of a mans life, [...] it makes a man serviceable, both to the Church and State; it is a Study fit for *Divines* to illustrate and confirm their Doctrins, [...] it shews them also the increase and decrease of Religion...”¹²⁹

Once again, the modern interpretation that all Ross wished to do was constantly to bark against every new idea, overlooks the other side of Ross’s occupation. Towards the end of his career, Ross might have seen his refutative writing as no more than a sideline. The number of pages Ross expended in ‘controversial’ writings is relatively small compared with the enormous volume and time he spent with *History*, both of Raleigh and himself, as well as with the Koran. Ross explained: “I have not inserted any *Theologicall, Politicall, or Chronologicall* Discourses or Digressions, as Sir WALTER RALEIGH hath done in his History, whereby his book is so voluminous; for what I have written here, is meerly Historical.”¹³⁰ Ross held it “fittest” to separate “such observations” from “meerly Historicall” knowledge. It may well be that this absence of a ‘political’ voice in these ‘reference’ works made modern scholars dismiss Ross’s non-polemical works as uninventive. No wonder, said Ross; in “this illiterate Age, wherein *Ignorance* is honored & *Knowledge* slighted, by our unlearned Lacedemonians.”¹³¹ Ross would find ‘knowledge’ neither in the experimental philosophy nor new sciences. *Pansebeia*, was built up upon this line of intellectual conviction. We will now return to it, examining the final section of the book in which he attempted to “make some use of what we have viewed” after spending more than 500 pages on the examination of the history of world heresies.¹³²

5. Natural religion and the ‘fear of Deity’

The closing part of *Pansebeia*, Section 15, is where the book differed most radically from other Civil War heresiographies, for it defended the ‘fear of Deity’ against irreligion, rather than orthodox Christianity against heresy. Ross’s conclusion to *Pansebeia* was that the possession of some sort of religion, “by which they are taught to acknowledge and worship a Deity,” was essential

¹²⁸ Ross, *Narrow of Historie*, ‘To the Reader’, Sig. A4r.

¹²⁹ Ross, *The History of the World: The Second Part*, ‘Preface to the Reader’, Sig. a[4]v.

¹³⁰ *ibid.*, Sig. (b4)v.

¹³¹ *ibid.*, Sig. (b4)v.

¹³² *Pansebeia*, p. 517.

to the human being. There was no nation in which men would not “acknowledge and worship a Deity,” Ross argued, “for Religion is the pillar on which every Common-wealth is built.”¹³³ If Israel had maintained its Religion and piety it would not have suffered captivity; neither would Rome have fallen, had they been careful enough to preserve “their sacred and mysterious learning.” Ross’s treatment of religion as a foundation of human society was pragmatic and in some way Erastian. All nations held some form of religion, Ross argued, because it was ‘necessary’. Religion provided security and comfort to men who would otherwise live in fear. It encouraged people to obey their rulers. It reinforced the unity of a commonwealth. It gave soldiers reason and courage to fight in battles, and thus enabled a commonwealth to defend itself.¹³⁴ Religion was “the Foundation of all States and Kingdomes.”¹³⁵ According to Ross, the role of a Christian prince was to ensure this function. Princes and magistrates should have “a special care” for the preservation of religion. A Christian prince’s dissembling of his religion would be inexcusable.¹³⁶

Ross’s discussion of the toleration of different religious beliefs also distinguished *Pansebeia* from works by other conservative writers. In principle, a plurality of religions should not be tolerated, Ross wrote, for religion must be the only one foundation of a state, the “band & cord” to secure its unity.¹³⁷ On the other hand, however, Ross tolerated holding of different religious opinions if “in private.” As long as they were not against their government and the “fundamentals of truth,” being “honest, simple, tractable, obedient to Superiors, having no other end in holding their opinions of Religion, but Gods glory, and satisfaction of their own conscience,” diversities of opinions in religion might be allowed. Ross commended the way the Turks gave freedom to Christians, Jews and other religious practice in their territories, and also referred to the conclusion of the Thirty Years War in order to stop the bloodletting for the Catholic-Protestant conflict. Ross even praised the broad-mindedness of ancient Romans who built the Pantheon, the temple of *all* gods. Religious contests would degrade their own cause, Ross argued. “For indeed by such disputes, Religion it self is weakned, and the State indangered. ... By questions and disputes the Majesty of Religion is slighted; and that made dubious which

¹³³ *ibid.*, p. 518.

¹³⁴ *ibid.*, pp. 518-22.

¹³⁵ *ibid.*, p. 525.

¹³⁶ *ibid.*, pp. 530-32.

¹³⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 522-27.

ought to be most certain; the objects and high mysteries of our faith, are not to be measured by our shallow reason.”¹³⁸

So crucial was religion to the order and security of society, that Ross stretched his point and argued that for states ‘false religions’ might even be preferable to ‘superstition’ and ‘atheism’. False religions would keep men’s obedience to their superiors and indeed, be a manifestation of God’s “goodness” towards the “wellfare of mankind.” Sacrilege would always result in the fall of states, “even among the Gentiles.” “God prospereth false Religions, when conscientiously practised; and curseth wicked professors of the true Religion; for hee preferres Practice to Knowledge, and honest Gentiles to wicked Israelites.”¹³⁹

Ross’s belief in the ‘need’ for religion in human society supported his criticism of anticlericalism. Dishonouring and slighting the ministry would make religion “contemptible,” he claimed.¹⁴⁰ Ross also excused ceremonial aspects of religion on the same basis. Although he stated that the “true Christian Religion” would not require “humane Policie,” common to false religions, such as “Sacrifices, Priests, Deities, Festivals, Ceremonies, Lights, Songs, Altars, Temples, Odors, and such like,” he was not echoing puritan condemnation of ceremonialism. Instead, drawing close to the theory of *adiaphora*, Ross wrote that ceremonies were not essential but not necessarily harmful to true religion. “Religion without Ceremonies, is like solid meat without sauce.”¹⁴¹ What mattered to Ross was the degree of respect for religion in society. “I observe, that where are no Ceremonies, there is small reverence and devotion; and where some cost is bestowed, even on the outside of Religion, there some love is manifested.”¹⁴²

It is with this concession that Ross closed the section declaring the superiority of Christianity, a preeminence which he proved by the excellence of its doctrines, history, authors and martyrs, and by Jesus himself.¹⁴³ It was an argument that Christianity was true because it was the closest religion to the *ideal*. Therefore, Ross exhorted the readers, Christians must keep their unity and stay away from “self-interest, idle quarrels, needless debates, unprofitable questions in points of Religion.” But by claiming it as the “best of all Religions,”

¹³⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 527-30.

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 533-34.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 566.

¹⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 535.

¹⁴² *ibid.*, p. 536.

¹⁴³ *ibid.*, pp. 569-575.

Ross relativised the Christian religion among all other religions. The chief lesson he gave was that men need some sort of religion.¹⁴⁴

Comments like these could never have been heard from Edwards, Baillie or Pagitt, who had clear ideas about what confessional and theological tradition they were writing for. But Ross, while posing as an critic of 'heretics' and 'atheists', distanced himself from propagandists of particular religious and political convictions. What he advocated instead was the "nature and humanity" of man who "naturally delights in the knowledge and contemplation of heavenly things."¹⁴⁵ With his encyclopedic knowledge in 'religions in the world', he discussed 'religion' without defending or propagating narrowly ideological positions. Such an intellectual stance was not simply another example of Erastian conformist theology which sometimes bargained over doctrinal differences; indeed *Pansebeia* should be placed in the wider context of the philosophical discussions about 'natural religion', particularly on the ground of comparative studies of 'religions'.

Debates on 'natural religion', the rational defence of Christianity, are generally attributed to late seventeenth and eighteenth-century philosophers, but scholars have traced some of their important ideas to the early seventeenth century.¹⁴⁶ The Dutch Arminian humanist Gerard Vossius, for example, was strongly influential in this respect. His *De theologia gentili, et physiologia christiana, sive de origine ac progressu idolatriae* (Amsterdam, 1641) contained a massive taxonomy of heathen religions, by which, apparently, he intended to show the importance of the essence of the true Christian religion.¹⁴⁷ Among those who were inspired by Vossius's idea was Lord Edward Herbert of Cherbury (1583-1648). Herbert, brother of the devotional poet George, showed a particular interest in the study of heathen religions, and discussed whether there were fundamental bases of religion that he thought to be true to *any* human religions. His first work was *De veritate* (Paris, 1624), followed by *De Causis Errorum* (1645) and *De Religione Laici* (1645). These were incorporated into the famous *De Religione Gentilium* (1663) which was translated into English later in early eighteenth-century.

In *De Religione Gentilium* Herbert wrote that he started with "many Doubts and Difficulties" about the fate of the heathens. That those under pagan

¹⁴⁴ *ibid.*, p. 542.

¹⁴⁵ *ibid.*, p. 521.

¹⁴⁶ Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty*, ch. 3; Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*, ch. 5.

¹⁴⁷ Richard H. Popkin, 'The Deist challenge', in O. P. Grell, J. I. Israel and N. Tyacke (eds.), *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 195-215.

religions were excluded from salvation, appeared “to me too rigid and severe to be consistent with the Attributes of the *Most Great and Good GOD*,” Herbert argued.¹⁴⁸ He reached two conclusions. The first was that what the heathens meant by ‘God’ was the same as Christians, because God meant ‘good’ and ‘most great’. “So that the Homonymy of the Word [‘God’] being explained, the Doubts that arise by comparing our GOD with theirs, will soon be cleared.”¹⁴⁹ His second conclusion was that all false doctrines, superstition and idolatry were the invention of the priests, and not the fault of “the Populace, who were only passive in the matter.” As Champion and Popkin noted, this second point would later encourage English Deists like Charles Blount to venture towards scepticism and to denounce traditional Christianity as a corrupt institution.¹⁵⁰ In order to find a “Thread of Truth” out of the “Labyrinth of Error,” Herbert proposed what he saw the fundamentals of religion that were universal, innate in the mind of man and given by God. These “five undeniable Propositions ... which not only we, but all Mankind in general, must needs acknowledge” were:

- I. That there is one Supreme God.
- II. That he ought to be worshipped.
- III. That Vertue and Piety are the chief Parts of Divine Worship.
- IV. That we ought to be sorry for our Sins, and repent of them.
- V. That Divine Goodness doth dispense Rewards and Punishments both in this Life, and after it.¹⁵¹

Herbert advanced a new philosophical way of objectifying ‘religion’, and discussing it from outside. His discussion transcended the traditional framework of theological debates, especially the debates between different branches of the Christian confession. Herbert provided a way to discuss religion without involving particular ideological (i.e. Catholic, Protestant, Calvinist or Independent) positions.

This mode of vindicating ‘religion’, instead of a particular theology, seems to have influenced some — if not a majority of — mid-seventeenth-century English religious writers. That a belief in deity was man’s most natural or ‘innate’ idea, was one of the common points of argument of those who wrote in order to defend orthodox Christianity. For instance, Richard Allen, the Calvinist writer, started his *An antidote against heresy* (1648) with defining the

¹⁴⁸ Edward Herbert, *The Antient Religion of the Gentiles, and causes of their errors consider’d*, trans. Lewis, William (London, 1705), pp. 1-2.

¹⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁵⁰ Popkin, *op. cit.*, p. 199; Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*, pp. 140-160.

¹⁵¹ Herbert, *Antient Religion*, pp. 3-4.

worship of God as “the very nature of man it self,” a nature which was universal to mankind, including the heathens. “And indeed never any people was heard of so barbarous, but did acknowledg [sic] a God, and though otherwise, rude and voyd of all civility, yet did profess and practise some Religion. [...] The Heathen made them Gods of wood and stone rather then have none at all, and gave Divine Honours, not to men only like themselves, but even to base and vile creatures, rather then be without a Religion.”¹⁵²

Alexander Ross’s *Pansebeia* demonstrated this natural religion (though he did not use the term), by constructing an encyclopedia of diverse different religions. English sects — Anabaptists, Quakers, Ranters and Muggletonians — were gathered together not only with ancient Christian heretics but also with ‘Mahometanism’ and other pagan religions in the world in order not simply to attack and condemn the sects, but rather to prove the validity of his subject, ‘religion’. In section 15 Ross gave an astonishing verdict about which religion, apart from Christianity, was the “most consonant to naturall Reason”; he nominated sun-worship. Because “no sensible entitie was comparable to the Sun in glory, light, motion, power, beauty, operation, &c.,” Ross reckoned it understandable that the gentiles “concluded that the Sun was the onely Deity of the world.”¹⁵³ Ross might have used works of Edward Herbert, who discussed various practices of worshipping the Sun among the heathens to prove the historicity of monotheistic human religion.¹⁵⁴ Ross’s lengthy description, in Section 15 of *Pansebeia*, of various sacred names given to the Sun by different pagan religions may also be a reproduction of Herbert. Again Ross did not bring Sun-worshippers into his catalogue of heresies in order to condemn their error; his point was that those “wise *Gentiles* did acknowledge but one Deity.”¹⁵⁵

Ross did state that Christianity was still the most ideal religion. However, *Pansebeia* was essentially a defence of ‘religion’, not the Church of England or Protestantism. Even Christianity did not seem to be in the centre of his concern. The catalogue of heresies ultimately justified not ‘orthodoxy’ but Ross’s study of ‘religion’ itself.

¹⁵² Richard Allen, *An antidote against heresy* (London, 1648), Sig. A[6]r. Imprimatur was given by James Cranford.

¹⁵³ *Pansebeia*, p. 539.

¹⁵⁴ Herbert, *Antient Religion*, ch. 4.

¹⁵⁵ *Pansebeia*, p. 566.

6. Conclusion

Observing the text and intellectual background of *Pansebeia*, one feels very forcefully that Christopher Hill's description of Ross as a "professional heresy-hunter" is rather debatable. Although as a source of information historians rely on *Pansebeia* for contemporary accounts of the Quakers, Ranters and Muggletonians, what Ross was doing differed considerably from Presbyterian heresiographers like Robert Baillie and Thomas Edwards. Ross exploited Ephraim Pagitt's encyclopedic method of classifying religious sects, but Pagitt used his catalogue of heresies not to relativize his own religious convictions, and by no means to commend Sun-worshipping to his readers.

Yet the difference between the Civil War anti-sectarian writings and Ross's *Pansebeia* poses us a further question; what did it really mean to 'hunt heresy professionally'. Ross's *Pansebeia* suggests that there was a process in which the very meaning of writing about 'heresy' might have changed. As we discussed at the beginning of the chapter, until the middle of the seventeenth century there was a widely shared understanding among conservative divines and writers that cataloguing of religious errors was a dangerous business, for heresies were essentially things that should *not* be made *known*. When conservative writers nevertheless felt the need to collect and display heresies in their heresiographies, their purpose was clear: firstly to expel any ambiguity from various uncertain erroneous ideas and to give them clear shapes and places; secondly to establish the identity of "orthodoxy" and to stigmatize 'heretics'. Contrarily, Ross's massive collection of 'religions in the world' signified that there were different *kinds* of 'religion', just as there were for 'heresy'. It meant the *necessity* of studying 'religion' *accordingly*, studying it as something that was plural. It was almost implying that knowing only about Christianity was knowing only partially about 'religion'. Ross therefore gave the catalogue of heresies a new meaning; from an indication of human frailty to a worthy project to be pursued. When in 1656 Thomas Blount's dictionary *Glossographia* managed to list as many as 134 names of heresies for the entry 'heresy', he used Ross's *Pansebeia*.¹⁵⁶ The study of heresies was becoming a matter more of taxonomy than of theological confutation. In this aspect, we might even be able to call Ross, in a different sense, "a professional heresy-hunter."

Of course, it is a different matter if such an attitude of Ross was welcomed in seventeenth-century England. Instead, Ross's interest in natural religion, his

¹⁵⁶Thomas Blount, *Glossographia: or a Dictionary, Interpreting all such Hard Words* (London, 1656, reprinted by the Scholar Press, Menston, 1969).

mode of cataloguing religions, and his vindication of *knowing* religious heterodoxy, appeared radical rather than conservative. Indeed, it is possible that Ross's texts were read and interpreted very differently from other heresiographies. Some evidence suggests that contemporaries saw Ross's *Pansebeia* as a work *encouraging* irreligion. In Richard Head's popular novel, *The English Rogue*, first officially published in 1665, Meriton Latroon the protagonist encountered an old friend, who had "desperate, irreligious, and atheistical tenents."¹⁵⁷ Having failed in a robbery of the Exchequer, this friend was now imprisoned, waiting for his execution. "I" visited him in prison to express sorrow and advise him to repent before God, but he would only laugh at "such idle fancies." He argued that Christian religion was "levied both from the stately fabrick of the arched Heaven, and from the inimitable embroidery of the flowry earth," and pointed to many contradictions in the Scriptures. "Let me tell you plainly, Religion at first was only the quaint Leger-de-main of some strong pated Statesmen, who to over awe the Capriciousness of a giddy multitude, did forge the opinion of a punisher of all humane evil actions."¹⁵⁸ Religion was simply a means of power for the rulers, he argued, giving as examples Mahomet and the Pope. To prove the point, this friend, who was "like an experienc'd Stoick," suggested that Latroon should "take a view thereof in Mr. Ross his *Pansebeia*."¹⁵⁹ This might be an extreme case, but it is certain that *Pansebeia* was read and used as a reference point when such debates on fundamentals of religion took place in the later years of the Interregnum, and after the Restoration. We will next conclude this study by briefly reviewing the development of the idea of 'heresy' after the Restoration, and consider the implication of the new way of discussing 'religion' proposed by Ross.

¹⁵⁷ Richard Head, *The English Rogue* (London, 1665), ch. XXV, pp. 79-83. See also Michael Shinagel's critical introduction in Head, *The English Rogue* (Boston, 1961), pp. i-ix.

¹⁵⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 81-2.

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 82.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

‘Phanatics’, Thomas Hobbes and ‘heresy’ after 1660

The discussions of ‘heresy’ in the 1640s and 50s were in many ways *sui generis*. We have studied the process in which the growing anxiety about the proliferation of religious sects in the 1640s was shaped into the ‘heresy’ controversy in revolutionary London. We have also observed that this controversy was largely led by Presbyterian propagandists. In this context Thomas Edwards fiercely attacked the sectaries, making use of vivid physical language and stereotypical images, and condemning their bodily practices. In *Gangraena* a collection of horrid relations was used to marginalize the sects. On the other hand, Ephraim Pagitt’s *Heresiography* was elaborated more systematically and with greater sophistication by its encyclopedic method of classification. Pagitt’s comprehensive list of heresies was, however, produced with the same hatred of sects as that of Edwards, and he developed his catalogue of heresies as a disciplinary tool in order to stigmatize the sects effectively. These two authors’ works also contributed to the contemporary understanding of ‘heresy’. While MPs and members of the Westminster Assembly of Divines were busy discussing an exact definition of ‘heresy’, Edwards and Pagitt, though in very different ways, concretized it with specific languages and forms. Edwards’ metaphors of disease and monstrosity, and Pagitt’s cataloguing scheme, were all dedicated to one purpose: to spell out what ‘heresy’ was. At the same time, these works were strong yet inverted expressions of what the authors believed as the orthodox, or proper religion. For the godly, ‘heresy’ was an intolerable offence, corruption of the soul, and the worst imaginable situation for a Christian nation and individuals. On the other hand, Alexander Ross, writing in the early 1650s, was seemingly less involved in the heated disputes about the sects than other heresiographers, and wrote his catalogue of religions for more intellectual purposes. He did, like Edwards and Pagitt, state what was right and wrong about the various religious sects which he described in *Pansebeia*, but the picture he drew up from his observation of ‘religions in the world’ was starting to look rather relativistic. In the background of Ross’s intellectual attitude was his strong interest in the re-definition of ‘religion’, which he believed was possible only by studying as many examples of human religious activities as possible. In this framework, knowing about religious heterodoxy was considered as the best way to approach the true ‘religion’. Ross’s *Pansebeia* was also a logical extension of Pagitt’s catalogue of heresies, for it discussed ‘religion’ as a countable object and

exploited the language of religious pluralism. The meaning of the seventeenth century writings about 'heresy' was therefore not only political attack or social control against the Anabaptists and the Separatists in Civil War London; they also embodied a particular world view which consciously or unconsciously conceptualized 'religion' (and 'religions') in a new way. Whether by learned scholars like Pagitt and Ross or by the 'yellow press' pamphleteers, these texts were deeply involved in the redefinition 'religion' in England.

The range of meanings and implications which surfaced in the mid-seventeenth-century heresiographies was to further develop after 1660. Firstly, there developed a widely accepted (but largely Tory) understanding of religious sects as threats to social stability. Historians have noted intense anti-sectarian sentiment in English society around 1660, and a fierce persecution of Quakers in 1659.¹ Sectaries were called 'phanatics' and were often associated with 'Popery', in terms of their dangerous religious enthusiasm. In March 1661, a pamphlet entitled *Semper Idem* reviewed the past 20 years of "our late horrid Rebellion and Anarchial confusion in Government," and concluded that the blame lay on the "fanatic Spirit" of those religious sects that flourished during the Interregnum.² The pamphleteer drew parallels between medieval dissenters like Wycliffian heretics and "our *Anabaptists, Fift[h]-Monarchy-men, Levellers* and *Quakers*, now branched out from that Seminary into particular Sects."³ In fact, "much of what the worst of our modern *Phanatics* have in these late dayes acted and attempted" were, he argued, "strangely copy'd out to their hands by their Brethren in the former Age."⁴ One of the main sources used was John Foxe's *Acts and Monument*, but *Semper Idem* dismissed the martyrology-side of Foxe's accounts and claimed that 'Phanatics' were — whether Lollards or Independents — *semper idem* ('always the same'); "they were drunk [...] with the pride of Heresie, and put out of their right sences by the frenzy thereof."⁵

However, the *language* used to describe the threat of religious sects was not in fact *semper idem*. 'Phanatic' was largely a term appropriated for the new Restoration religious settlement, in which not only Quakers and Baptists but also puritans were marginalized as enemies of the restored Church of England. Edward Burrough, the Quaker apologist, wrote that before 1660 "we had very

¹ Tim Harris, *London Crowds in the Reign of Charles II: Propaganda and politics from the Restoration until the exclusion crisis* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 36-61; B. Reay, 'The Quakers, 1659, and the Restoration of the Monarchy', *History*, 63 (1978), pp. 193-213.

² *Semper Idem: or, a Parallel betwixt the Ancient and Modern Phanatics* (London, 1661), p. 14.

³ *ibid.*, Sig. A2v, p. 4.

⁴ *ibid.*, Sig. A2r.

little or no use of the word *Phanatick*." It was when the Republic collapsed and the "Sectaries (so called) were *turned out* of places" that "the *rage* and *indignation* of the then *Presbyterians* (so called) and that party" started to call "Anabaptists" and other sectaries by the name "Phanatick."⁶ However, the Presbyterian counter-attack did not last long, Burrough continued, for they soon discovered that they too were stigmatized under the Clarendon Code. "[W]hen the Publick was generally *presbyterian*, then they that would not conform to that, but opposed it, were called *Phanaticks*; and now when the Publick is *Episcopal*, even the *Presbyterians* themselves, and all that differ from that way and cannot conform to it, are *reproached* by the scornfull name of *Phanaticks*."⁷ The inclusion of the Presbyterians among the sects fundamentally distinguished the post-1660 era from the 1640s and 1650s. In *The Countermin*e (first published in 1677), the royalist historian John Nalson bitterly attacked the nonconformists, in a similar style of Presbyterian anti-sectarian writings produced during the Civil War. But in fact Nalson's criticism, of unlawful conventicles and private preaching, and the danger they presented to social and ecclesiastical order, were levelled at the "dangerous principles, and secret practices of dissenting party, especially the Presbyterians."⁸ In the later seventeenth century, therefore, the term 'Phanatic' had become a label to signify political sedition and threats to the restored church and state, whether Papists or nonconformists, including puritans.⁹

Such views on sects were assimilated into the propaganda politics of the 1680s, when the Exclusion Crisis, following the Popish Plot, brought back intense religious and political debates over the issues of the king's prerogative, anti-Popery and toleration. While Whigs exploited popular anti-Catholicism and criticized Tories for their sympathy towards the allegedly Catholic-inclined monarch, the Tories' common strategy was to assert that Whigs' plea for the

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 14.

⁶ Edward Burrough, *Persecution Impeached* (London, 1661), pp. 9-10. See also George Fox's criticism of the term, in *A distinction between the phanatick spirit and the spirit of God* (London, 1660).

⁷ *ibid.*, p. 11.

⁸ John Nalson, *The countermin*e (1677). Quotation is from the title page. The book was reprinted in 1678 and 1684.

⁹ As Christopher Hill wrote "'Fanaticism' and 'enthusiasm' were the bugbears of polite and scholarly restoration society," recent scholars have critically studied 'enthusiasm' as an idea against civility, gentlemanship and modern science. Hill *The World Turned Upside Down* (1972), p. 355; Adrian Johns, 'The physiology of reading and the anatomy of enthusiasm', in A. Cunningham and O. Grell (eds.), *Religio Medici: Religion and medicine in seventeenth-century England* (Aldershot, 1996), pp. 136-170; Mark S. R. Jenner, 'Quackery and enthusiasm, or why drinking water cured the plague', in Cunningham and Grell (eds.), *Religio Medici*, pp. 313-339; S. Shapin, 'A scholar and a gentleman': the problematic identity of the scientific practitioner in early modern England', *History of Science*, 29 (1991), pp. 279-327.

exclusion of the Catholic Prince James from the future throne paralleled the horrible confusion of the 1640s caused by religious sects.¹⁰ For example, an engraved plate in a broadside *The Committee* (1681) by the Tory propagandist, Sir Roger L'Estrange, presented various sects as responsible for the former regicide and plotting further destruction of the church and state, even with the help of the Pope. The depiction of a group of sectaries in the plate — a Muggletonian, a Ranter, a Quaker, an Anabaptist, an Independent, a Fifth Monarchist, James Naylor and a naked Adamite, with a Presbyterian as a chairman — was a rehash of the Civil War heresiography [see Figure 18].¹¹

However, the social marginalization of religious sects was not the sole consequence of the debates on 'heresy' in the mid-seventeenth century. Nor was it regarded as the prime issue by those who sided with the Restoration church. As the sectaries were denounced and ridiculed as 'phanatics', and as the Presbyterian initiative in religious polemic faded away, the issue of 'heresy' against orthodox Christian religion was becoming less relevant. Rather, the fear of 'heresy' was reshaped into a new threat: philosophical and learned scepticism about the conventional Christianity. Michael Hunter has noted that Robert Boyle, writing in the 1650s, saw religious sects *not* as a serious intellectual threat but as a 'triviall' matter, comparing to the learned issues of 'Socinianism' and 'atheism' which for him were far more pressing. Sectarianism had become "a kind of background noise, illustrating what would happen if religious control was relaxed, rather than a source of specific views worthy of refutation."¹² Hunter has further demonstrated how the term 'atheist' and the idea of 'atheism' were used to represent various intellectual and social tendencies in the later seventeenth-century, ranging from naturalist philosophy to the immoralities of the 'fashionable' aristocratic culture of the day. Doctrines such as atomism and mechanism seemed to limit or even deny the providence of God. The new experimental science, led by men like Isaac Newton, was also in an ambiguous position, for it too was viewed by some as a kind of 'atheism' threatening the traditional Christian philosophy.¹³ The mortality of soul, a

¹⁰ Harris, *London Crowds*, pp. 130-155.

¹¹ L'Estrange, *The Committee; or Popery in Masquerade* (London, 1681); Harris, *op. cit.*, pp. 137, 139-40.

¹² Michael Hunter, 'How Boyle became a scientist', *History of Science*, 33 (1995), appendix, pp. 86-92. 'Socinianism', meaning rational anti-trinitarianism, was a major theological threat during the 1650s. See Blair Worden, 'Toleration and the Cromwellian protectorate', in W. J. Sheils (ed.), *Persecution and Toleration* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 203-5.

¹³ Michael Hunter, 'The Problem of 'Atheism' in Early Modern England', *TRHS*, Fifth Series, vol. 35 (1985), pp. 135-157; *idem*, 'Science and heterodoxy: an early modern problem reconsidered', in David C. Lindberg and Robert S. Westman (eds.),

doctrine which was fiercely condemned by the Civil War Presbyterians as an error, continued to be discussed after the Restoration by rationalists like Robert Boyle as well as by the Cambridge Platonists. Alexander Ross too had once engaged in this debate in 1645, while Henry Oxinden sought his advice upon this confusing topic.¹⁴ The Restoration bishops were also concerned by Erastian anti-clericalists, who claimed the superiority of the monarch to episcopacy in church politics.¹⁵ There was also what was to become the 'Deist' challenge, posed by men like Charles Blount and John Toland, whose writings critically questioned the authenticity of the institutional Christian religion.¹⁶ In short, the Restoration purge of the sects by no means guaranteed the new Church of England from challenges.

The changing nature of religious heterodoxy, and the growing concern about the threat of such 'atheistic' trends in the later seventeenth century formed the background of the controversy over Hobbes's *Leviathan* in the 1650s and 1660s. The case provides us with a picture which is more complex than a mere example of conservative puritans attacking radical sectarians. When Thomas Hobbes published *Leviathan* in 1651, it was Alexander Ross who first attacked the book. "*Leviathan*; which I do not finde so fierce and terrible as he in *Job*, that people should be cast down at the sight of him," wrote Ross; "this may be drawn out with a Hook, and held even with a single bridle."¹⁷ Ross's attack, *Leviathan Drawn Out with a Hook*, was published in 1653. Modern scholars of Hobbes do not hide their discomfort with Ross's over-minute and word-by-word 'confutation' armed with Aristotelian philosophy and medieval logic. The generally patronizing tone of the treatise also seems to frustrate them.¹⁸ John R. Glenn admits that *Leviathan Drawn Out* revealed "neither the ability nor the

Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 437-460; Richard S. Westfall, *The Construction of Modern Science: Mechanisms and Mechanics* (Cambridge, 1977).

¹⁴ Norman T. Burns, *Christian Mortalism from Tyndale to Milton* (Cambridge, 1972); Alexander Ross, *The Philosophicall Touch-stone* (London, 1645); Dorothy Gardiner (ed.), *The Oxinden and Peyton Letters 1642-1670* (London, 1937), p. 76.

¹⁵ Justin A. I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and its Enemies, 1660-1730* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 77-98.

¹⁶ Richard H. Popkin, 'The Deist challenge', in O. P. Grell, J. I. Israel and N. Tyacke (eds.), *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 195-215; Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*, ch. 5.

¹⁷ Alexander Ross, *Leviathan Drawn Out with a Hook: or Animadversions upon Mr Hobbs his Leviathan* (London, 1653); Preface, Sig. A[12]v.

¹⁸ Samuel I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan* (1962); John Bowle, *Hobbes and His Critics: A study in seventeenth century constitutionalism* (London, 1969), pp. 61-71.

inclination to understand Hobbes's system in its unity and entirety."¹⁹ Yet considering the controversy which *Leviathan* was to provoke later in the 1660s, it is noteworthy that Ross was one of the earliest critics to publish against Hobbes's famous book. Ross stated that personally he had "no quarrel against" Hobbes, who he honoured as "a man of excellent parts" with "worth and learning." It was the content of *Leviathan*, Ross argued, that was "dangerous both to Government and Religion."²⁰ Above all, it was Hobbes's scepticism about the traditional authority of religion that alarmed Ross most. In *Leviathan*, Hobbes asserted that only the civil sovereign, not the Church, had the power to interpret Scripture, and to determine what doctrine was and was not to be believed by the people. What constituted heresy was completely left to the discretion of the sovereign prince.

For Haeresie is nothing else, but a private opinion, obstinately maintained, contrary to the opinion which the Publique Person (that is to say, the Representant of the Common-wealth) hath commanded to bee taught. [...] Haeretiques are none but private men, that stubbornly defend some Doctrine, prohibited by their lawfull Soveraigns.²¹

To this Ross objected, arguing that Christ and his apostles too "held doctrines contrary to the traditions and opinions of the Scribes and Pharisees" who ruled the Israelites. Differing in opinion from the prince had nothing to do with the definition of heresy, Ross argued.

It is not the person private or publick that makes an heretick, but it is the doctrine, repugnant to Gods word, and the articles of our faith, maintained obstinately for sinistrous ends, as lucre, honor, &c. that makes heresie: a private man may maintain an opinion in Philosophy contrary to the opinion of the

¹⁹ Glenn, 'Introduction' to Glenn (ed.), *A critical edition of Alexander Ross's 1647 'Mystagogus Poeticus, or the Muses Interpreter'*, (New York & London, 1987). p. 24.

²⁰ Ross, *Leviathan Drawn Out with a Hook*, 'To the Reader', 'The Preface', Sigs. A10v-A11r, A12r. On Ross's expression of respect towards Hobbes, Glenn suggests that Ross was "no doubt aware of his [Hobbes'] sometime connection with the exiled Charles II." Glenn, 'Introduction', p. 25.

²¹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (Richard Tuck (ed.), Cambridge Texts in the History of Political Thought), ch. 42, p. 399. That 'heresy' was simply a 'private opinion' was discussed elsewhere in *Leviathan*. See, for example, ch. 11 where he wrote: "Men give different names, to one and the same thing, from the difference of their own passions: As they that approve a private opinion, call it Opinion; but they that mislike it, Haeresie: and yet haeresie signifies no more than private opinion; but has onely a greater tincture of choler." p.50; also ch. 42, p. 351. See also Patricia Springborg, 'Hobbes on religion', in Tom Sorell (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hobbes* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 346-380.

Prince, and yet no heretick in this, because he holds nothing against our Christian faith, his opinion may be erroneous but not heretical.²²

Consequently, Ross did not dismiss Hobbes as a private man with some erroneous philosophical opinions. "When he distinguisheth Religion from Superstition, I hear the voice of *Leviathan*, not of a Christian," Ross wrote. "It seems then that both Religion and Superstition are grounded upon tales and imagination, onely they differ in this, that tales publicly allowed beget Religion, not allowed Superstition:... Wee must mend the Creed, if Mr. *Hobbs* his religion be true; and instead of saying I believe in God, we must say, I imagine, or feign in my mind an invisible power."²³ Hobbes was mentioned again in the section on the modern 'Libertines' of Ross's *Pansebeia*, published also in 1653. "That sin was nothing but an opinion that the knowledge we have of Christ, and of our Resurrection, is but opinion; that we may dissemble in Religion, *which is now the opinion of Master Hobbs*."²⁴ Indeed it seems that Ross's *Leviathan Drawn Out with a Hook* was welcomed by those who were alarmed by the radicalism of Hobbes's doctrine. The association of *Leviathan* with 'heresy' was thus never farfetched. In 1655 Thomas Barlow (1607-1691), Oxford teacher during the Interregnum and later Bishop of Lincoln, recommended Ross's treatise in his reading list for young scholars for reference "against ... Libertines."²⁵ It retained a readership in the eighteenth century as one of the key criticisms of *Leviathan*.²⁶

However, the contest — if not controversy — between Hobbes and Ross, or between Hobbes's idea and Ross's, cannot be fully understood within the familiar mid-seventeenth-century setting of the 'heresy-hunters' and the hunted. Indeed it was Restoration orthodoxy, *not* the puritans of the Interregnum, that *Leviathan* truly provoked. In October 1666 a committee of the House of Commons condemned Hobbes for promoting "Atheism and

²² Ross, *Leviathan Drawn Out with a Hook*, pp. 62, 3.

²³ *ibid.*, pp. 9-10. This comment was targeted against at Hobbes's definition of religion and superstition: "Feare of power invisible, feigned by the mind, or imagined from tales publicquely allowed, RELIGION; not allowed, SUPERSTITION. And when the power imagined, is truly such as we imagine, TRUE RELIGION." *Leviathan*, ch. 6, p. 42.

²⁴ Alexander Ross, *Pansebeia: or, a View of all Religions in the World* (London, 1653), p. 230.

²⁵ *A Library for Younger Schollers* (1655), p. 49. The list was widely circulated both in Oxford and Cambridge, and several times revised by Barlow himself. Quoted from Noel Malcolm (ed.), *Thomas Hobbes: The Correspondence*, vol. II (Oxford, 1994), p. 786. According to Malcolm, Barlow was critical of Hobbes's philosophy, and prepared a refutation of Hobbes's *Historical Narration concerning Heresie*, which did not get published. See Malcolm, p. 787.

Profaneness", and proposed a bill against them, specifically aiming at *Leviathan*. The crisis was even more serious; in the early 1660s a number of bishops in the Lords agitated in the House, suggesting the burning of Hobbes for heresy. This led, however, to no official action against Hobbes.²⁷ In his defence Hobbes prepared several papers about the problem of 'heresy'. He argued against the punishment of heretics in an appendix to the Latin translation of *Leviathan* (1668). Another tract upon this issue, *An Historical Narration concerning Heresie*, was not published until 1680, the year after Hobbes' death, but there are also unpublished manuscripts on the same topic, which seem to have been written during the early 1660s.²⁸ In his *Historical Narration*, Hobbes first explained that the word 'heresy' originated from a Greek word signifying "a taking of any thing, and particularly the taking of an Opinion."²⁹ Then the Arian, Nestorian and other early controversies in the Christian Church were referred, but it was emphasized that capital punishment of heretics never entered the minds of the early church fathers. The arbitrary executions of heretics under the Popes in the middle ages were due to the corruption of the Roman Church, where "the careless cold Christian was safe, and the skilful Hypocrite a Saint."³⁰ In England, the first law to put the Lollard heretics to death was enacted by the King Richard II, and repealed by Edward VI. The law was revived by the Queen Mary, but then repealed by Elizabeth I, and never revived again. So ever since then, Hobbes argued, there had not been "any humane Law left in force to restrain any man from Preaching or writing any Doctrine concerning Religion that he pleased." His writing of *Leviathan* could not be condemned, especially because by that time the High Commission had been abolished by the puritans, and "in this heat of the War, it was impossible to disturb the Peace of the State,

²⁶ Bowle, *Hobbes and His Critics*, p. 62.

²⁷ Charged by the Commons committee were Hobbes and the Catholic priest Thomas White. According to Richard Tuck the proposed bill resembled the Blasphemy Act of May 1648, which the Presbyterians prepared during the 'heresy controversy' of the mid-1640s. Tuck, 'The 'Christian Atheism' of Thomas Hobbes', in Michael Hunter and David Wootton (eds.), *Atheism from the Reformation to the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 1992), p. 127; Philip Milton, 'Hobbes, heresy and Lord Arlington', *History of Political Thought*, 14, no. 4 (1993), pp. 501-46; Samuel I. Mintz, 'Hobbes on the Law of Heresy: a new manuscript', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 29 (1968), pp. 409-14; Robert Willman, 'Hobbes on the Law of Heresy', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 31 (1970), pp. 607-13; A. P. Martinich, *Hobbes: A Biography* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 319-322.

²⁸ Thomas Hobbes, *An Historical Narration concerning Heresie, and the Punishment thereof* (London, 1680). For the unpublished manuscripts, see the above articles by Mintz and Willman.

²⁹ Hobbes, *Historical Narration*, p. 3. Here Hobbes also made clear that 'sect' was simply a Latin synonym of the Greek 'heresy'. p. 4.

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 14.

which then was none.” Those bishops who were now accusing Hobbes, never “before the War had declared what was Heresie.”³¹

The accusation that Hobbes had promulgated ‘heresy’ was rooted not in the fear of religious sectarianism but in a growing concern about religious scepticism in Restoration England. Indeed it is interesting and revealing that Hobbes’s *Historical Narration* made no mention of the Civil War sects, or of the fierce debates on ‘errors, heresies and blasphemies’ in the 1640s. Hobbes’s explanation of ‘heresy’ and his defence of *Leviathan* were couched in a different context from the issues of sects and other ‘phanatic’ nonconformists. This tells us about changing ideas not only of ‘heresy’ but also of religious orthodoxy. The quest for the new ways of constructing religious authority in Restoration England has been studied in detail by a number of scholars.³² It is generally observed that after the close of the Interregnum the centre of religious polemics shifted towards establishing of the Christian faith grounded upon ‘reason’. The search for ‘natural religion’, discussed in Chapter 5, was part of this process. Many theologians tried to establish a new Christian doctrine that was natural and rational, a doctrine that could compete with rivalling philosophies and tendencies. Various groups of intellectuals, such as the Great Tew Circle (William Chillingworth), the Cambridge Platonists (Rulph Cudworth), or Latitudinarians (Edward Stillingfleet) wrote extensively in defence of the Christian religion. They thus defended traditional Christianity against not only the ‘phanatic’ spiritualism of sects (or ‘enthusiasts’) but also scepticism of the ‘atheists’. Henry More’s statement in 1653, that “*Atheisme* and *Enthusiasme* though they seeme so extreamely opposite one to another, yet in many things they do very nearly agree [... in] their joyint conspiracy against the true knowledge of God and Religion,” foretold the character of Restoration orthodoxy.³³ And it was with the trend towards ‘atheism’ that *Leviathan* was associated. “Hobbes was a godsend to orthodox writers,” says Michael Hunter, “because he directly expressed ideas of a kind that [...] otherwise remained frustratingly hard to pinpoint in written works.”³⁴ If Ross, in the early 1650s, failed to fully comprehend Hobbes’s political philosophy, he unequivocally

³¹ *ibid.*, pp. 16-17.

³² Barbara J. Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England* (Princeton, 1983), esp. ch. 3; Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*; Peter Harrison, ‘Religion’ and the Religions in the English Enlightenment (Cambridge, 1990); Hugh Trevor-Roper, ‘The religious origins of the Enlightenment’, in Trevor-Roper, *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change* (London, 1984), pp. 193-236.

³³ Henry More, *An antidote against Atheisme* (1653), Sig. A[1]r.

announced later seventeenth-century theologians' concern about scepticism and associated Hobbes with 'atheism'. In 1655 the bookseller John Saywell wrote in a foreword to the second edition of *Pansebeia* how Ross, after his death, was slandered by a certain "Hobbist, that I wish he turn not Atheist."³⁵ It is therefore not surprising that Ross, who was quickly alarmed by the potential threat of Hobbes's scepticism, was also closely working on the discussion of 'natural religion' with his encyclopedic history of 'religions of the world'. Ross's strong interest in the knowledge of religious heterodoxy, and his relativistic view on the variety of beliefs, were part of the intellectual development in which Hobbes and his critics disputed 'heresy' and 'atheism'. This may also explain why *Pansebeia*, among many other works of his, enjoyed the longest and possibly largest readership into even the eighteenth century.

The shift of interest within the discourse about 'heresy', from defending particular theological convictions against erroneous sects, to defending 'religion' itself against irreligion, could also be seen in some of the surviving heresiographies written during the Civil War and reprinted after the Restoration. Revisions and additions in these works hint at how the publishers, and possibly readers too, attributed new values and meanings to these books on sects and heresies. For example, the revised and enlarged 6th edition of Ephraim Pagitt's *Heresiography*, published by William Lee in 1662, shows clear signs of adaptation to the new climate of the Restoration.³⁶ While the 7-page vindication of the Presbyterians "concerning the Kings death" declared the innocence of the Covenanters in the regicide,³⁷ the book clearly criticized "some mistaken Reformists" and rejoiced the restoration of the Episcopal church government, reciting the maxim of King James I: "No Bishops, no King."³⁸ The anti-heresy work which once equipped the Presbyterian cause with propaganda was now appropriated for the Restoration praise of order and the Church under

³⁴ Hunter, 'Science and heterodoxy', pp. 450-1. See also Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan*, ch. 3; Quentin Skinner, 'The Ideological Context of Hobbes's Political Thought', *Historical Journal*, 9 (1966), pp. 286-317.

³⁵ "As for the Book, I shall adventure it the Test of the most censorious Mome; and for the Author, in his life time; there was not found the mouth or pen so black, that durst asperse his name, or parts; but since his death, One (so much a Hobbist, that I wish he turn not Atheist) hath in print given him a snarling character, whom leaving to his folly, I shall only desire that this short sentence, *de mortuis nil nîse bonum*; may be his remembrancer for the future." 'The Booksellers Advertisement to the Reader', in Alexander Ross, *Pansebeia*, 2nd edn. (1655), Sigs. A3-A3v.

³⁶ Pagitt, *Heresiography*, revised 6th edition (London, 1662). In addition to Pagitt's original dedication in 1645 to Thomas Atkins, then the Lord Mayor, there is inserted a new dedication to Lord Mayor John Frederick, signed by 'J. Heath', probably James Heath (1629-1664), the royalist historian.

³⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 295-302.

the bishops. But this change was not a simple jump back to royalist propaganda from puritan polemics. In 'An Exhortatory Conclusion for Peace' added to the end of the book, the anonymous author emphasized the importance of 'Religion' for the order of society, an argument which somewhat resembled Ross's *Pansebeia*.³⁹ The conclusion claimed that the Reformation had been constantly maintained by the monarchy, from Edward VI and Elizabeth to Charles I, who all suffered from "Faction and some mens sacrilegious covetousness," and by the new King Charles II, "now healing and repairing" the Religion of England. *Heresiography* now stood as a monument not to the Presbyterian battle against errors and heresies, but to the fact that the new settlement did "restore Religion again to its pristine state and condition." Criticism was levelled at the "Divisions and Animosities of the several Parties who pretend to Piety and sincere Devotion." It was "the shame of Christianity," that they gave "so great an advantage to the greater and lesser Beasts of prey, the *Papist* and the *Sectary* to make havock of the Flock and Church of Christ."⁴⁰ A plate inserted in the text portrayed a female figure, probably representing 'Peace', standing under the rays of light from heaven, with the sheaves of wheat on the left suggesting 'plenty', reminding the reward to be given to those who were obedient to God (as described in Deuteronomy 28:3-6). On the right hand side of Peace was an engraved stone depicting a bishop preaching to a crowd [see Figure 19]. Beneath the plate it is declared:

Peace and Plenty still are joyn'd
By Peace good Arts are more refined.
Nay Peace Religion doth maintain:
While War brings Atheisme in again.⁴¹

The prime emphasis of the catalogue of heresies was no longer what 'heresy' was or how many kinds of 'heresies' there were; instead, the varieties of 'heresies' described in Pagitt's work represented 'atheism' and 'war', from which the 'peaceful' present status of 'religion' under bishops was contrasted. Clearly 'heresy' on its own was becoming less and less an object of interest, and a subject of controversy. During the Civil War, 'heresy' was the object of enquiry upon a fairly well-grounded orthodox religious belief. It appears that a reversal of this framework took place in the later seventeenth century.

³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 303

³⁹ The author might be either William Lee, the publisher and the biographer of Pagitt, or James Heath. See above note 36.

⁴⁰ Pagitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 308-309.

⁴¹ *ibid.*, p. 308.

'Heresies' became examples, almost like a body of scientific data, to enable the questioning of what 'religion' really was, or should be.

In the early 1960s Wilfred C. Smith, in his *The Meaning and End of Religion*, posed an intriguing question about the Western concept of 'religion' and 'the religions'. Smith argued that the plural term 'religions' was an artificial concept constructed in the West, and was made possible by "mentally making religion into *a thing*, gradually coming to conceive it as an objective systematic entity."⁴² Smith's claim, that the age before the plural 'religions' was the age of 'faith', leaves questions unanswered. But his argument that the plural form 'religions' could become conceptually possible only by the objectification, or 'reification', of 'religion' in Western consciousness, still appears useful. John Bossy took up this theme and argued that the lack of the plural of the Latin word *religio* in the Middle Ages might suggest that people before the early modern era were in fact not capable of seeing their Christian religion from outside, and conceptualizing it as a system, or *one of systems*, of belief.⁴³ C. J. Sommerville has argued this making religion 'a thing' as part of a process of 'secularization', a process in which the meaning of 'religion' was transformed from the inclusive "religio-political regime" that regulated the whole world-view to a mere matter of personal spiritual concerns. Though Sommerville admits that actual societies characterize 'religion' in ways which lie somewhere between these two extremes, he observes a general tendency towards this transformation of 'religion', or "marginalization of religion" in early modern England, "making religion more self-conscious, exposing it as only one part of culture rather than the basis of all."⁴⁴ Peter Harrison has argued that the origin of the modern Western idea of 'religions' can be traced to the English Enlightenment, when 'religion' began to be studied not through the Scripture but by the external knowledge of various religious practices. The long lasting disputes over the appropriate form of religious policy since the sixteenth century enabled unprecedented 'free' comparison of various forms of Christianity, while the discovery of the New Worlds inevitably made English people realize that Christianity was not the only 'religion' in the world. The Enlightenment thus

⁴² Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *The Meaning and End of Religion: A new approach to the religious traditions of mankind* (New York, 1963), p. 51. My *Italic*.

⁴³ John Bossy, 'Some elementary forms of Durkheim', *Past and Present*, 95 (1982), pp. 3-18; Peter Biller, 'Words and the Medieval Notion of 'Religion'', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36, no. 3 (1985), pp. 351-369.

⁴⁴ C. John Sommerville, *The Secularization of Early Modern England: From Religious Culture to Religious Faith* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 4-6.

enabled comparison and objective studies of 'religions'.⁴⁵ However, our examination of mid-seventeenth-century heresiographies has suggested that such a pluralistic ideation of 'religion(s)', not only grew out of those who stood for free thought and the toleration of different opinions, but also had one of its roots, though paradoxically, in the bitter condemnations of religious deviation in the 1640s and 1650s. If encyclopedic, comparative or 'scientific' knowledge of diverse human religions featured the enlightenment conception of 'religion', the seventeenth-century writings on 'heresies' might also have taken part in this development.

In our history textbooks 'religious issues' are described as having had considerable importance in seventeenth-century England, whether in early Stuart constitution or in the 'Puritan' and the Glorious Revolutions. This thesis has tried to suggest that the very idea of 'religion' itself too was much dependant on language and culture. And as we talk about 'cults' using an A to Z list, we too are taking part in the ideation of 'religion' that is, as it was, in process.

⁴⁵ Peter Harrison, *'Religion' and the Religions in the English Enlightenment*(Cambridge, 1990); Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1995), ch. 3.

Figures

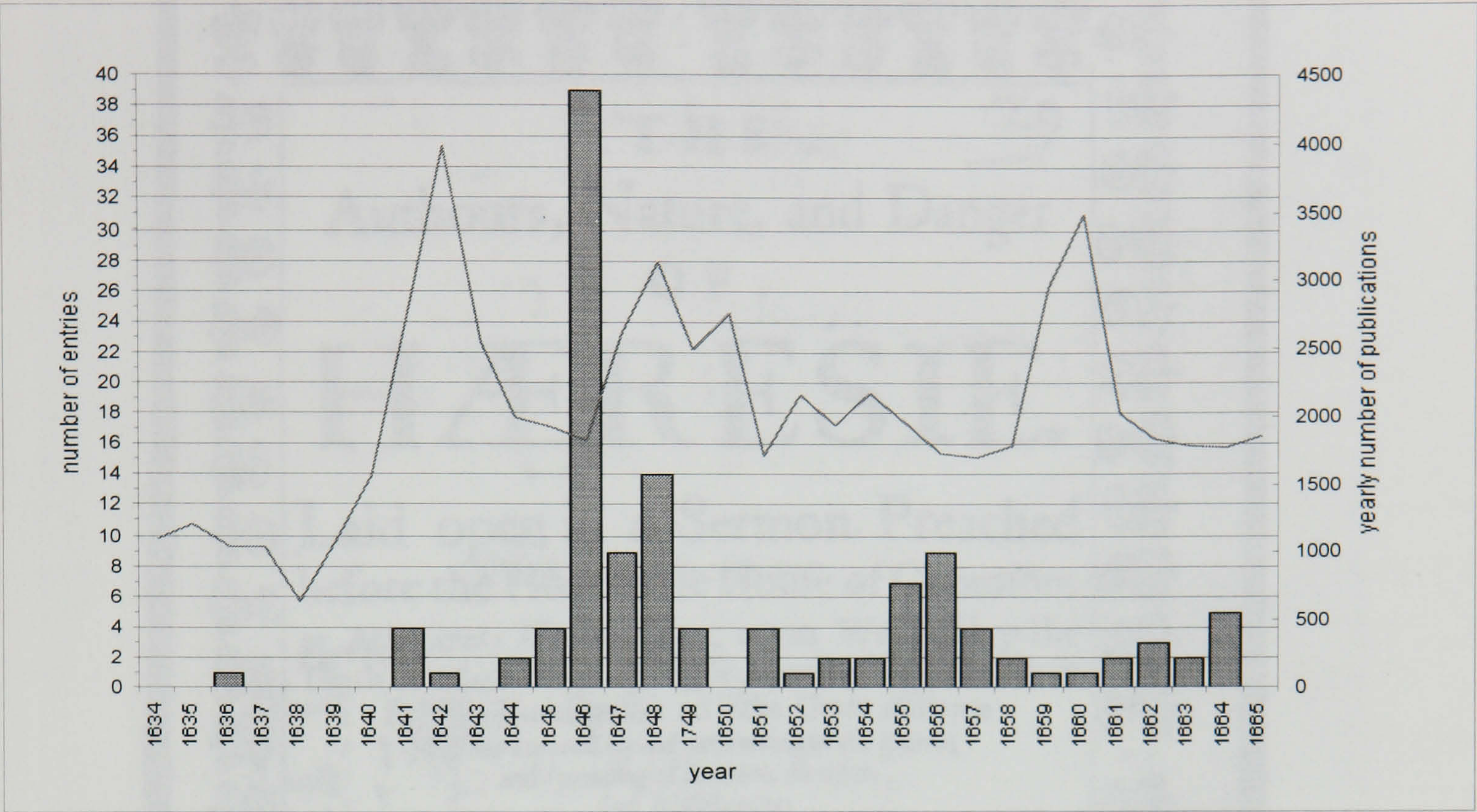


Figure 1: Titles with 'heresy' and 'heretic', 1634-1665 in the British Library catalogue.

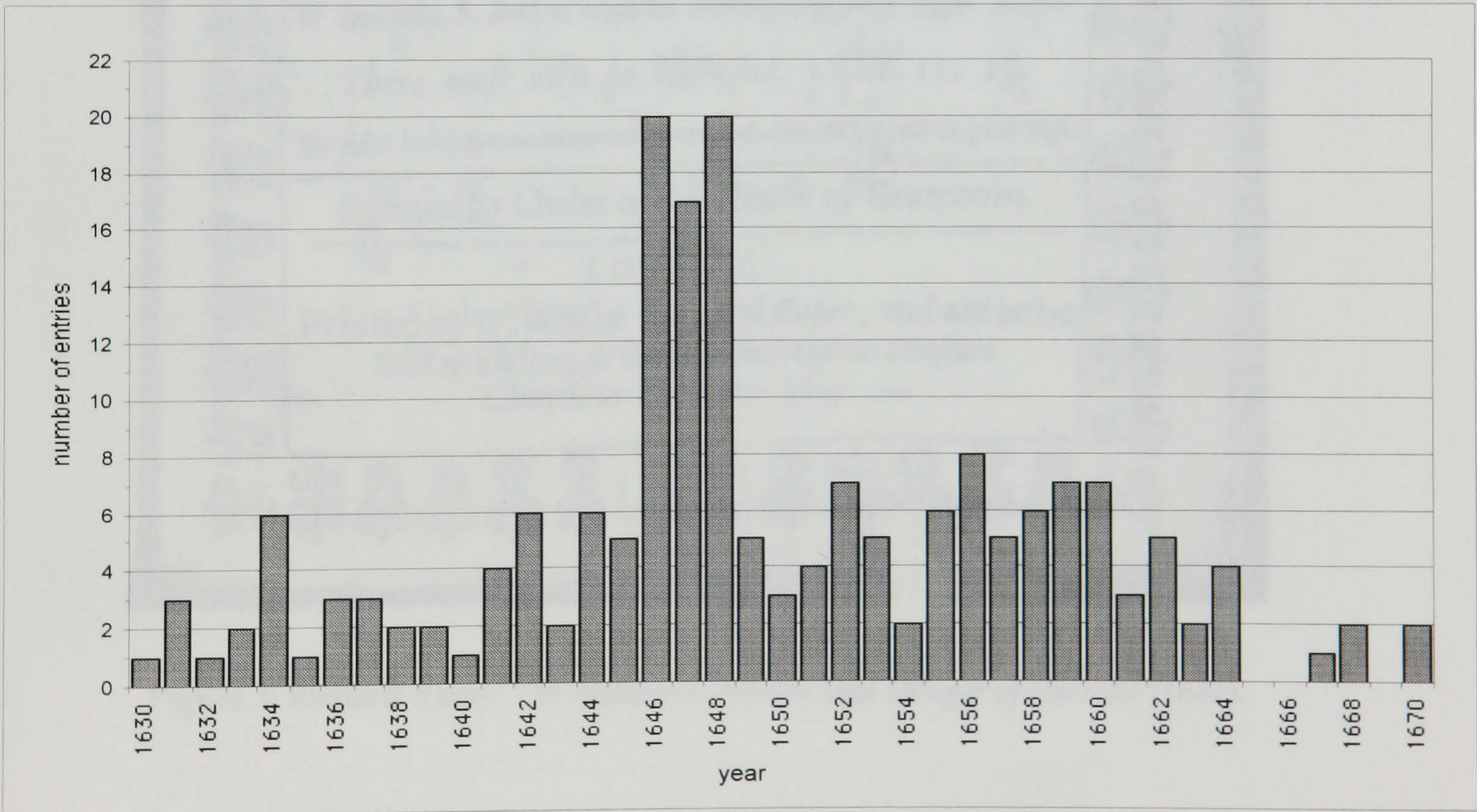
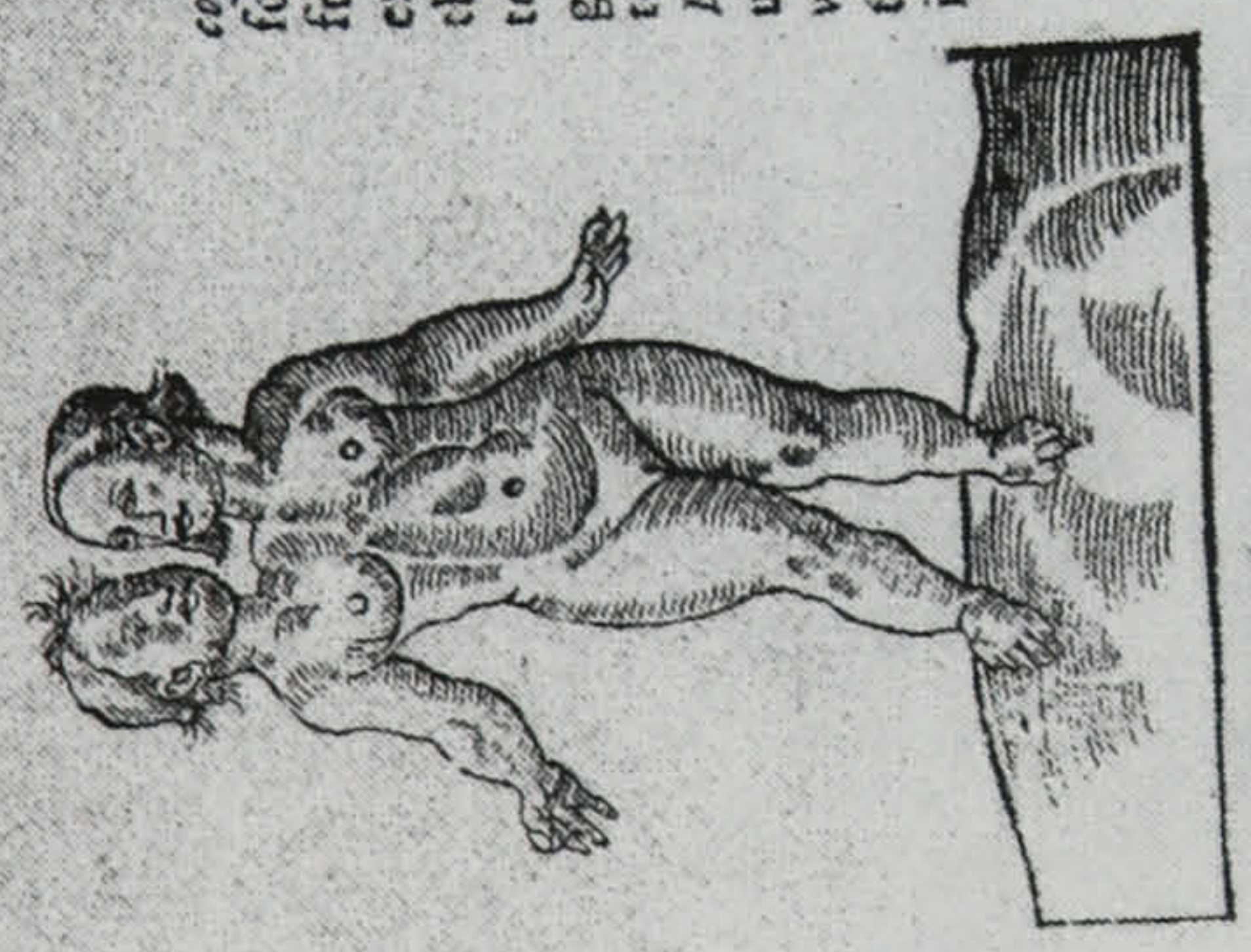


Figure 2: Titles with 'heresy' and 'heretic', 1630-1665 in ESTC CD-ROM.

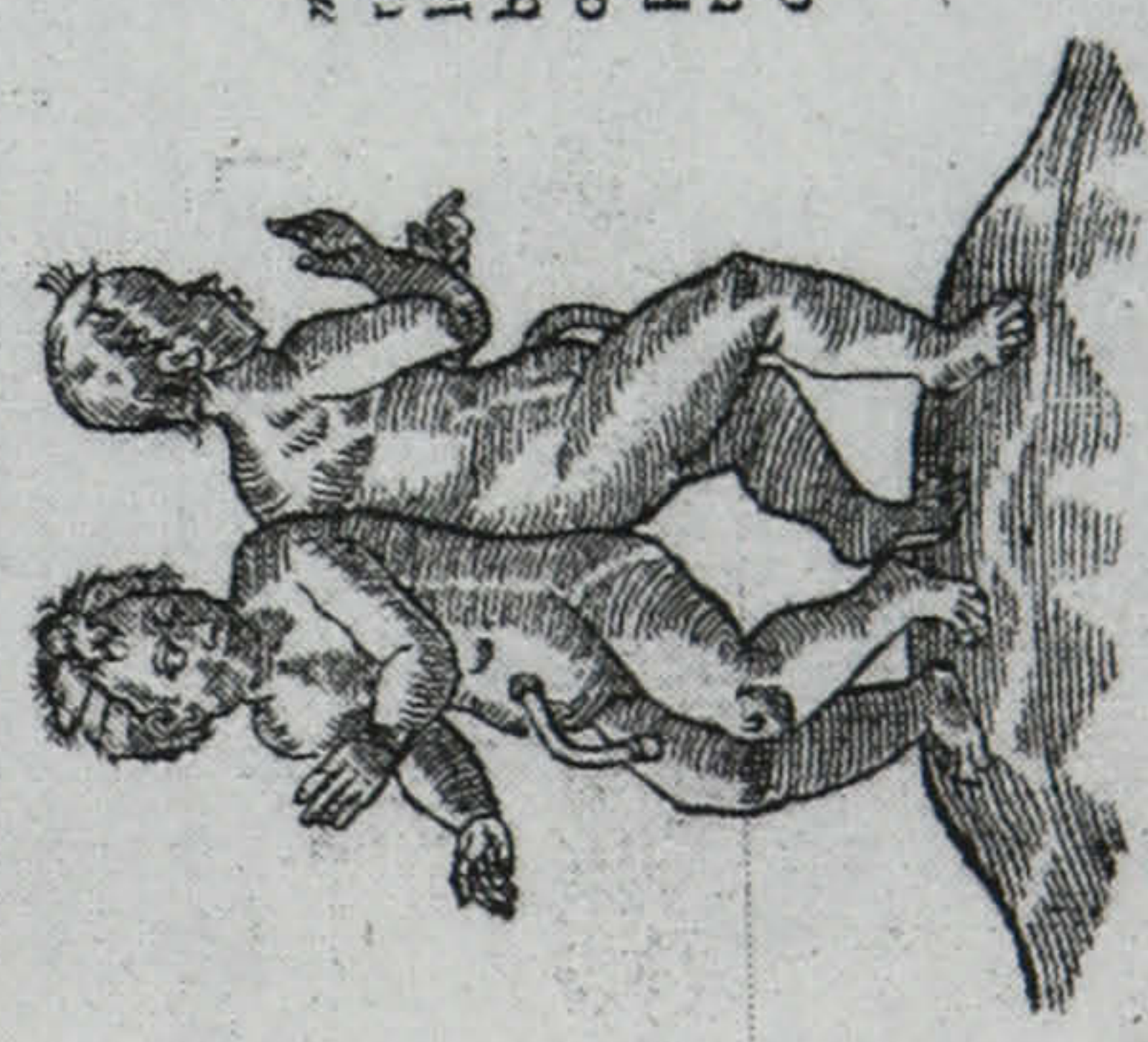
Printed by W. Wilson for Abel Roper, and are to be
sold at his shop at the Sun over against Dunstons
Church in Fleetstreet. 1647.

The effigies of a murtherer with two heads.



But it is most remarkable which *Lycophanes* telleth of this woman-monster, for excepting her two heads, shee was framed in the rest of her body to an exact perfection: her two heads had the like desire to eat and drinke, to sleepe, to speake, and to doe every thing; she begged from dore to dore, every one giving to her freely. Yet at length she was banished *Bavaria*, lest that by the frequent looking upon her, the imaginations of women with childe, strongly moved, should make the like impression in the infants they bare in their wombes.

The effigies of two girles whose backs grew together.

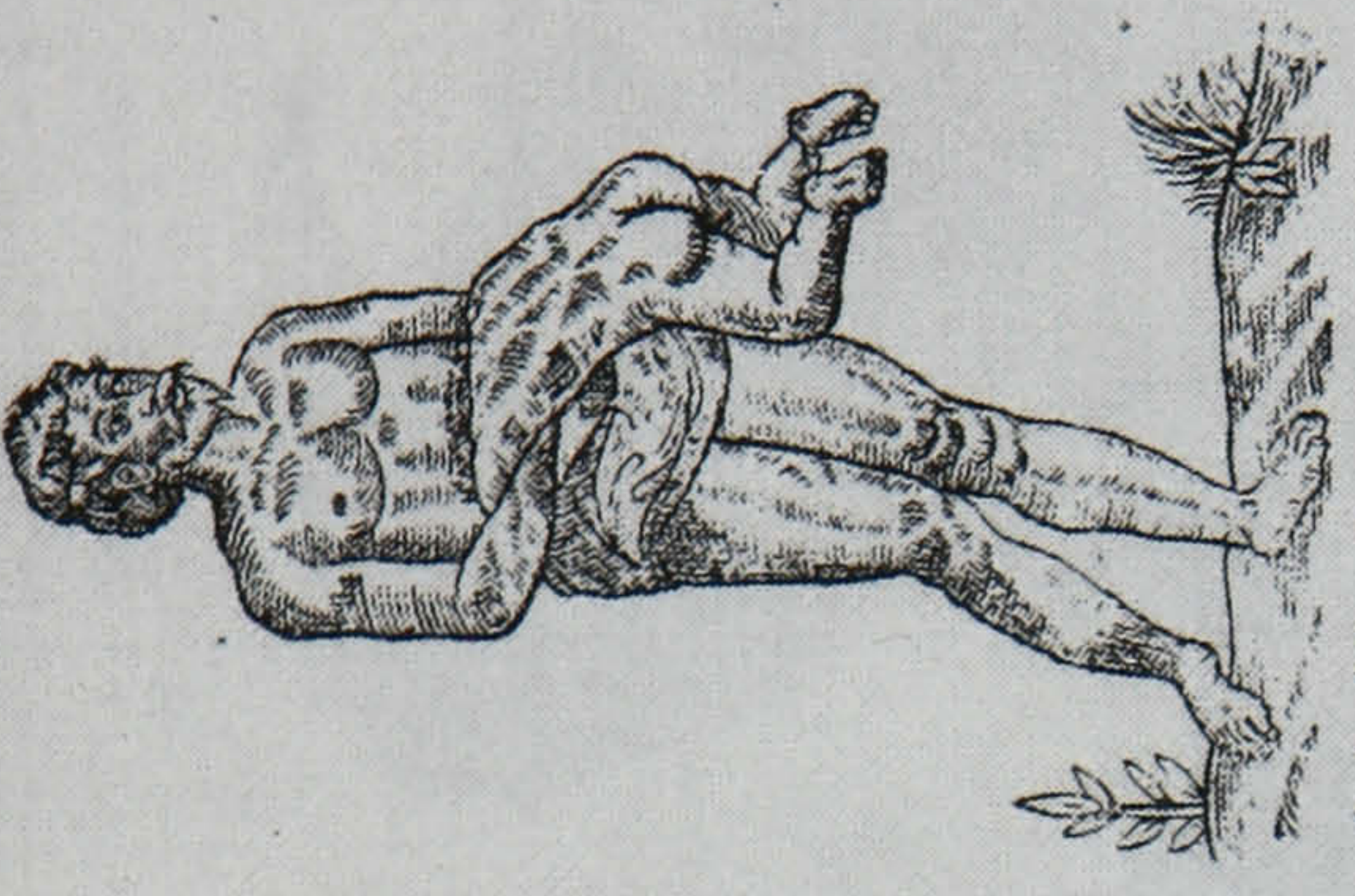


In the yeere of our Lord 1475. at *Perugia* in *Italy*, two *Cyrcles* were borne with their backs sticking together from the lower part of the shoulders unto the very buttockes. The novelty and strangenesse of the thing moved their parents, being but poor, to carry them through all the chiefest townes in *Italy* to get money of all such as came to see them.

In the yeere 1530. there was a man to bee seene at *Paris*, out of whose belly another, perfect in all his members except his head, hanged forth as if he had been grafted there. The man was forty yeeres old, and hee carried the other implanted or growing out of him, in his armes, with such admiration to the beholders, that many ranne very earnestly to see him.

The

The figure of a man with another growing out of him.



The effigies of the horned or hooded monster.



At *Quier*, a small village some ten miles from *Turine* in *Savoy*, in the yeere 1538. upon the seventeenth day of January, a woman brought forth a childe having five hornes, like to Rams hornes, set opposite to one another upon his head: hee had a long piece of flesh, like in forme to a French hood which women used to wear, hanging downe from his forehead by the nape of his necke almost the length of his backe: two other pieces of flesh, like a collar of a shirt, were wrapped about his necke: the fingers ends of both his hands somewhat resembled a *Huilexalons*, and his knees seemed to be in his humeres: the right leg and the right foot were of a very red colour; the rest of the body was of a tawny colour: it is said hee gave forth, that a scritch when he was brought forth, that the Midwives, and the rest of the women that were at her labour, were so frighted that they presently left the house and ran away. When the Duke of *Savoy* heard of this monster, hee commanded it should be brought to him, which performed, one would hardly thinke what various censures the Courtiers gave of it

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Figure 4: The section on monstrosity in Thomas Jonson's English translation of Ambroise Paré, *The Works* (1634).

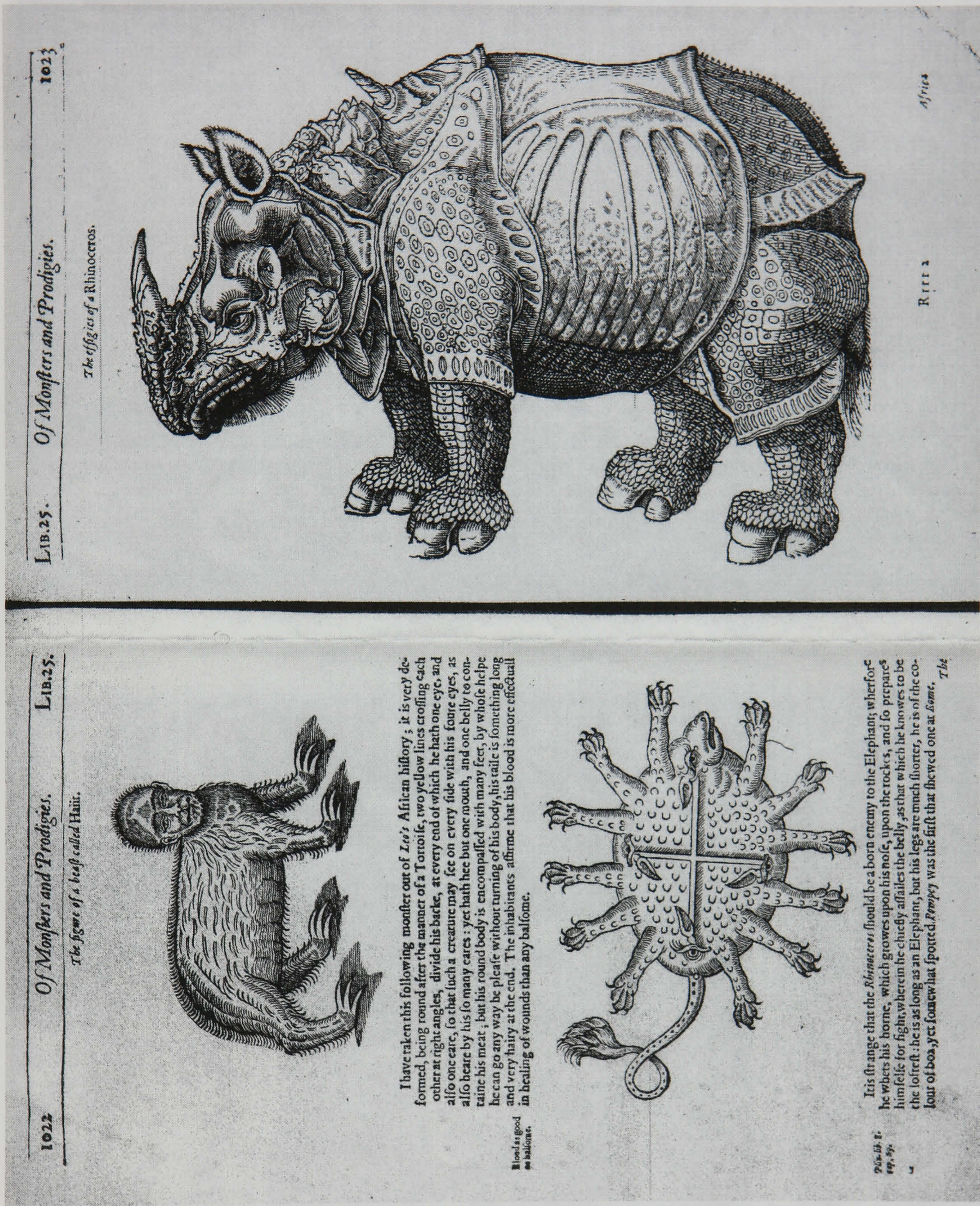


Figure 5: African monsters in Paré, Works.

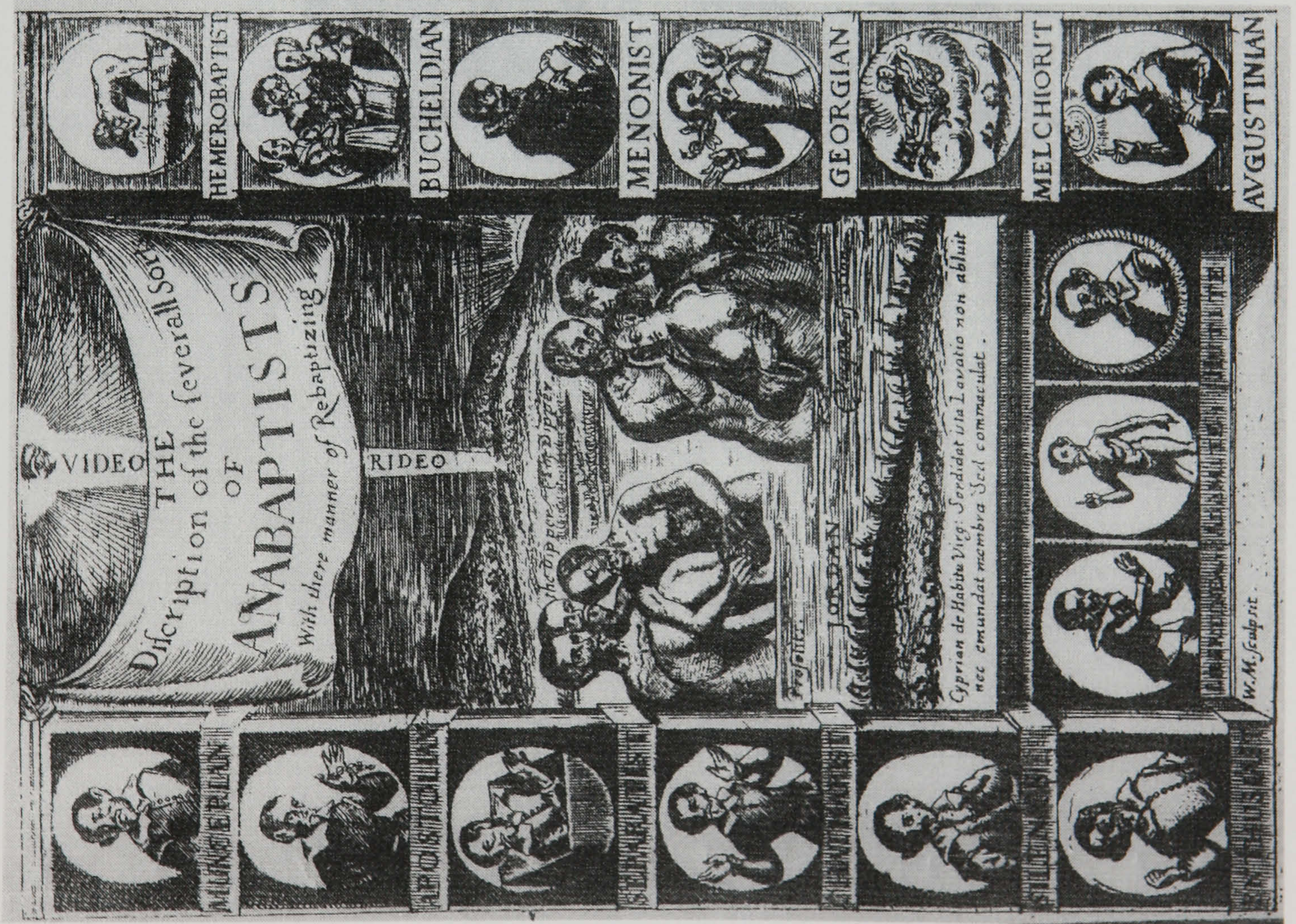
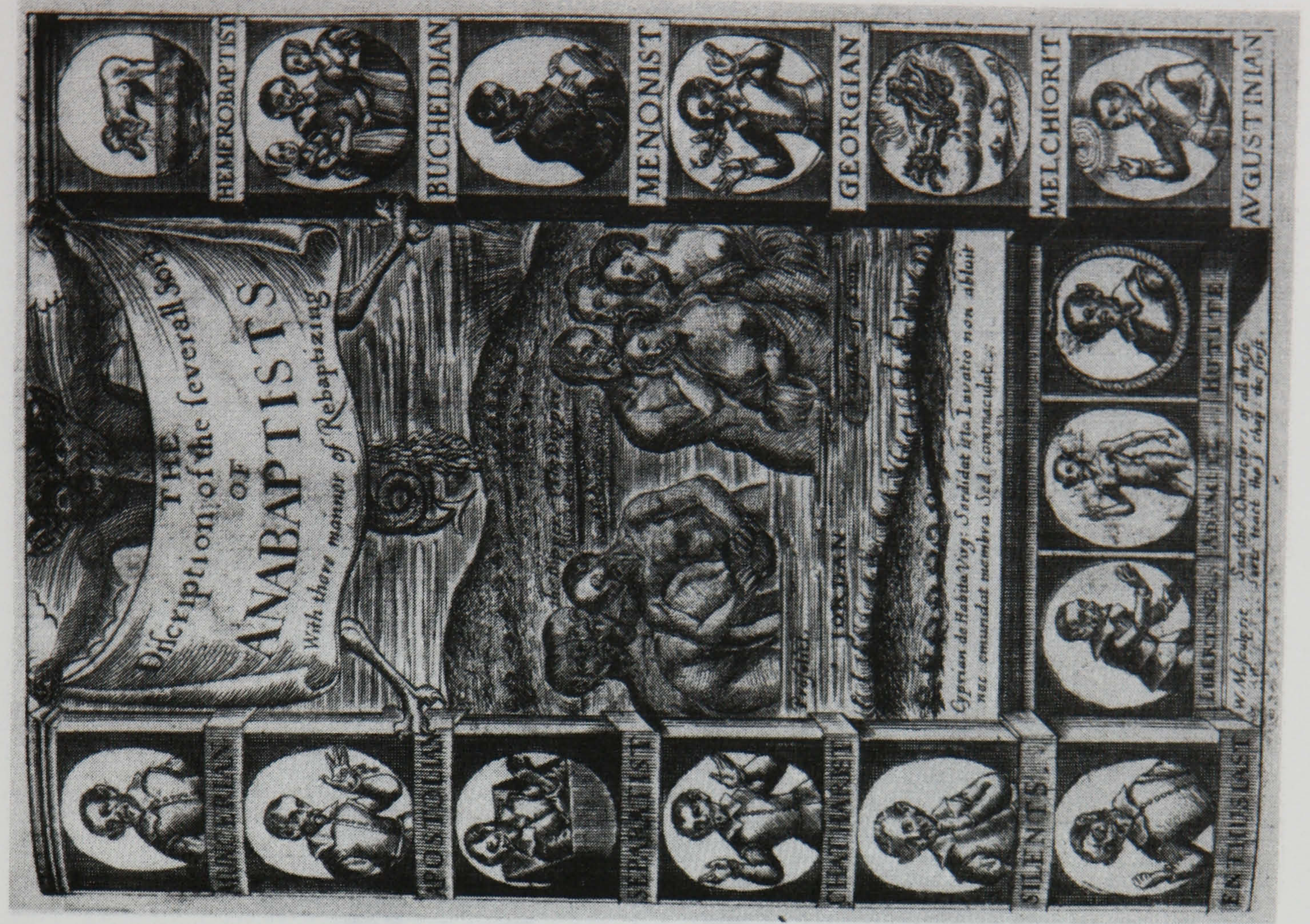


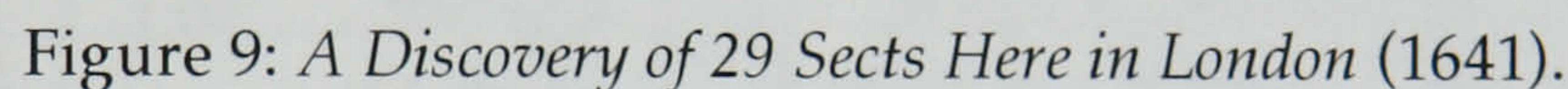
Figure 6 and Figure 7: Frontispieces of Daniel Featley, *Dippers Dipt*, 1645 (above) and 1646 (below) editions.

A DISCOVERY OF THE MOST DANGEROVS AND DAMNABLE TENETS THAT HAVE BEEN SPREAD WITHIN THIS FEW

years: By many Erronious, Hereticall and Mechannick Spirits. By which the very foundation of Christian knowledge and practise is endeavoured to be overturned.



Figure 8: A Discovery of the Most Dangerous and Damnable Tenets (1647).



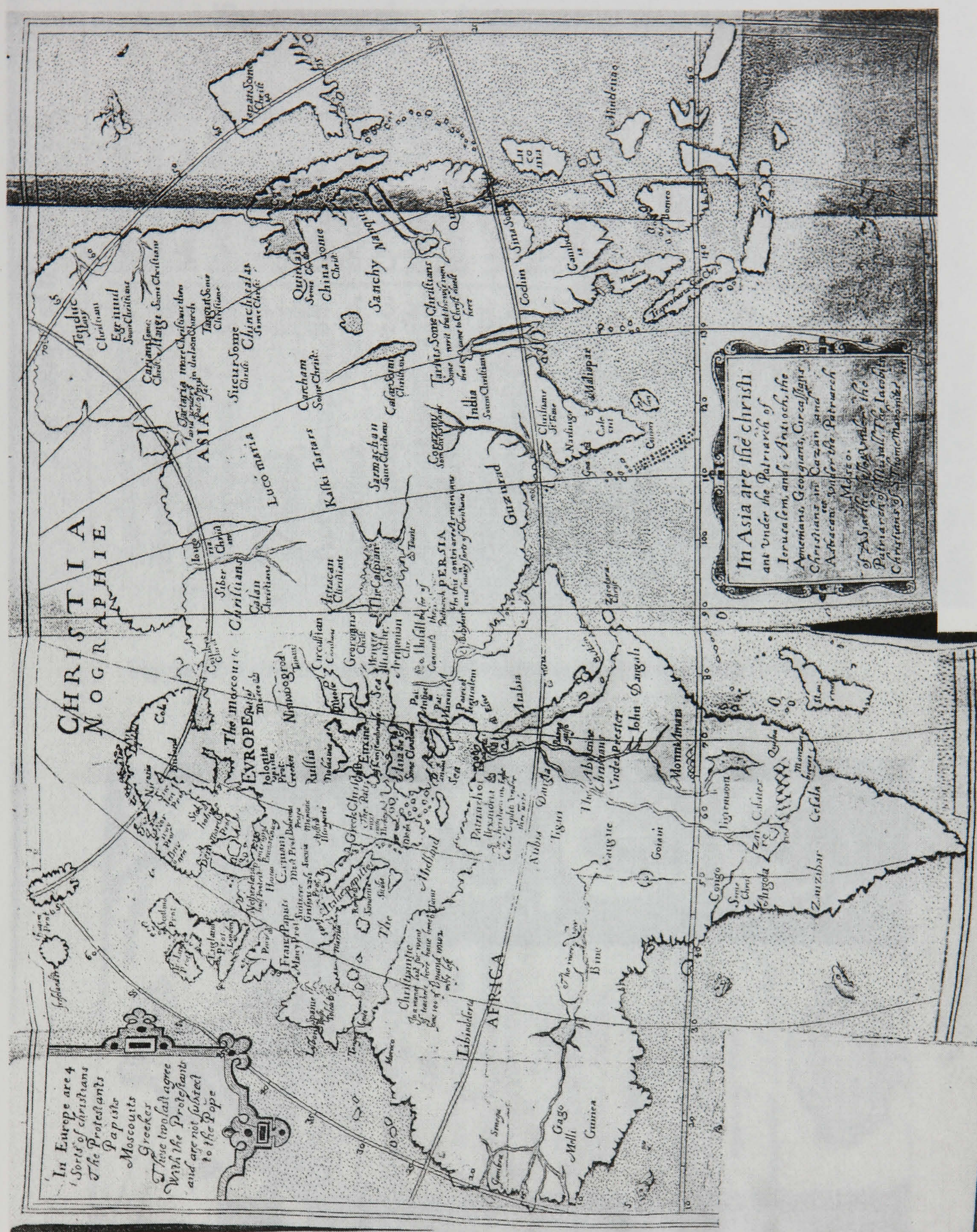


Figure 11: A map showing Christian churches in the world, in Ephraim Pagitt, *Christianographie* (1635).

The names of the Sects, viz.

Anabaptists, page 1	Melchiorites.
Brownists, 44	Georgians.
Semi-separatists, 68	Menonists.
Independents, 69	Pueris Similes. 35
Familists, 75	Servetians.
Adamites, 85	Libertines.
Antinomians, 88	Denkians.
Arminians, 100	Semper orantes,
Socinians, 116	Deo-religi.
Antitrinitarians, 118	Monasterienfes,
Millenaries, 120	Barrowists, 62.
Hethringtonians, 121	Wilkinsonians,
Anti-sabbataria, 122	Johnsonians.
Traskites, 124	Ainsworthians.
Jesuites, 126	Robinsonians.
Muncerians, 31	Lemarists. 64.
Apostolikes, 32	Castalian familists, 63.
Separatists.	Grindletonians.
Catharists.	Familists of the moun-
Enthusiasts, 33	tains. 64.
Liberi.	Of the valleys.
Hutites.	Scattered flocke.
Augustinians.	Cape Order, &c.
Bewkeldians.	

Imprimatur, Ja: Cranford.

Figure 12: Table of contents of Ephraim Pagitt, *Heresiography* (1645).

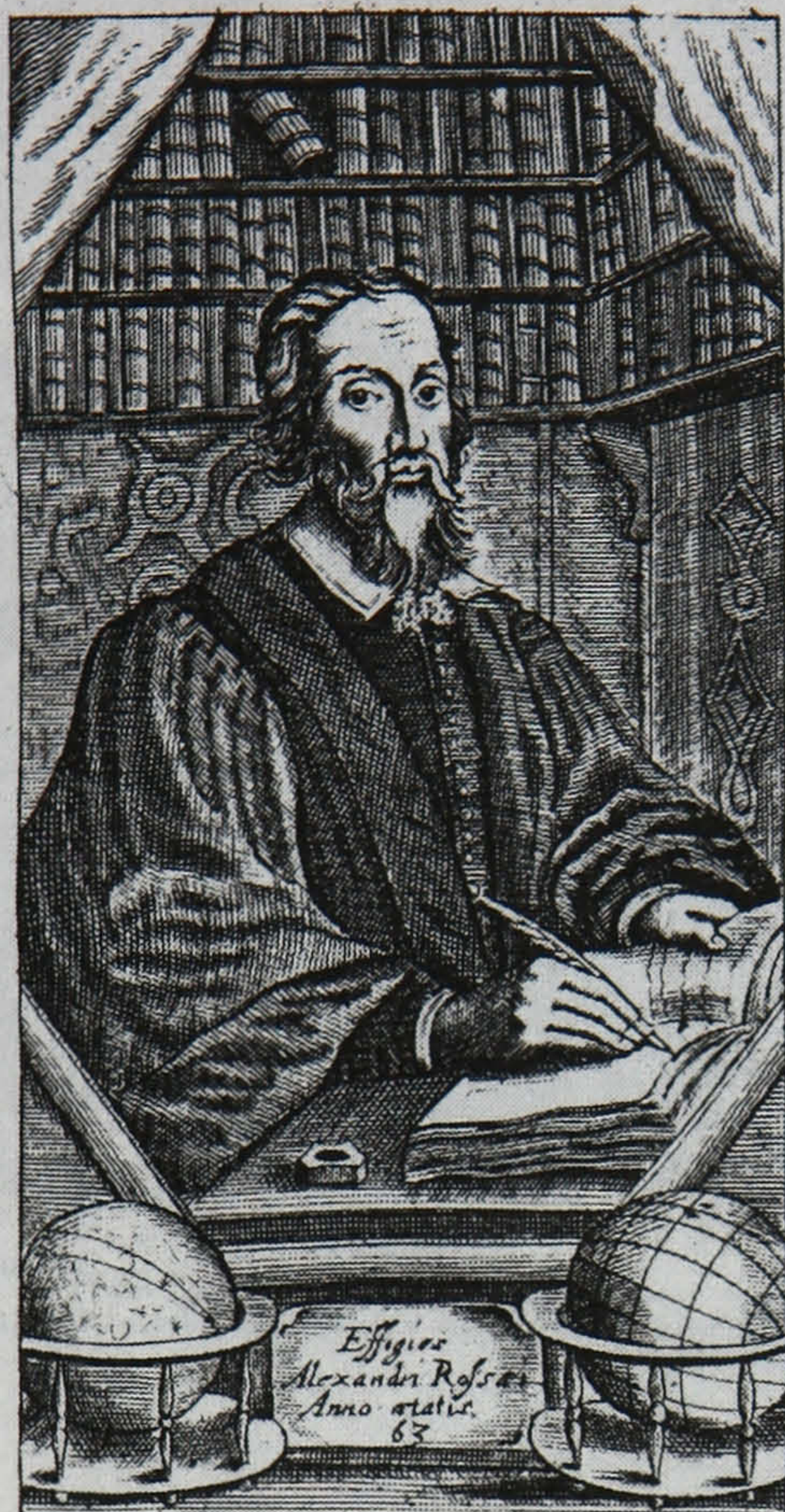


Figure 13: Frontispiece of Pagitt, *Heresiography*, 5th edition (1654).



Figure 14, Figure 15 and Figure 16: Portraits of various heretics in Pagitt, *Heresiography*, 6th edition (1661).

'Pelagius' (top), 'James Naylor' (middle) and 'Adamite' (bottom).



ΠΑΝΣΕΒΕΙΑ:

OR, 1080 N

A View of all Religions
IN THE
WORLD:

WITH

The several Church-Governments from
the Creation, till these Times.

ALSO,

A Discovery of all known *Heresies* in all
Ages and Places: and choice Observati-
ons and Reflections throughout the Whole.

The Sixth Edition, Enlarged and Perfected,
By ALEXANDER ROSS.

To which is annexed, The Lives, Actions,
and Ends of certain notorious *Heresicks*. With
their Effigies in Copper-Plates.

1 Thes. 5. 21. *Omnia autem probate: quod bonum est tenete.*

LONDON,

Printed for John Williams, at the Sign of
the Crown, in St. Paul's Church-yard.
M DC LXXXIII.

Figure 17: Alexander Ross, *Pansebeia* (1653).



Figure 18: A group of sectaries depicted in Roger L'Estrange, *The Committee* (London, 1681).

From left: a Muggletonian, a Ranter, a Quaker, an Anabaptist, a Presbyterian, an Independent, a Fifth Monarchist, James Naylor and an Adamite.



An Exhortatory Conclusion for Peace.

ANd now since it hath pleased God through so many Labyrinths of Confusions and dangers to extricate and rescue these 3. Nations, and restore Religion again to its pristine state and condition, though
not

Figure 19: Female figure representing 'Peace', in Pagitt, *Heresiography*, revised 6th edition (1662).

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