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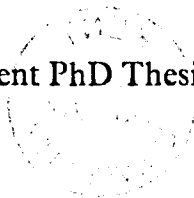
*An Examination of Published Works in Support of Comprehension of Puritans  
in the Church of England between 1656 and 1689*

by

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*An Examination of Published Works in Support of Comprehension of Puritans  
in the Church of England between 1656 and 1689*

This thesis examines the published works in support of comprehension of puritans in the Church of England between the Protectorate and the Toleration Act of 1689. Special attention is paid to works related directly to specific proposals being discussed by Parliament or the court, or making specific proposals of their own, as opposed to works giving general support to the idea of comprehension.

This examination shows that comprehension was not just about agreement on liturgy and ceremonies, but that reform of the episcopate was an important issue for large parts of the period under review; that support for comprehension among conformists was wider than is usually assumed; that John Humfrey was the most prolific and perhaps the most influential of press campaigners and the source of some hitherto unattributed published works; and finally that the printed debate suggests that there was more support for comprehension among conformists than among non-conformists, whose interest in being comprehended steadily declined during the period studied.

The thesis first describes briefly the trend towards a more comprehensive church already under way at the time of the restoration of the episcopate, and the very limited comprehension achieved between 1660 and 1662, then proceeds to examine in that context the publications and press campaigns in support of greater comprehension and the various attempts made by the court or by Parliament to modify the Act of Uniformity over the next twenty five years. A bibliography of works by Humfrey is included as an appendix.

## Abbreviations and Conventions

### *Abbreviations:*

- CCRB** N. H. Keeble and G. F. Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1991) 2 Vols
- CSPD** *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles II, James II*, accessed electronically at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk>. Reference is made by date rather than volume and page number.
- CJ** *Journal of the House of Commons*. Accessed electronically at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk>. Reference is made by date rather than volume and page number.
- Grey** *Grey's Debates of the House of Commons*, 10 Vols (1769). Accessed electronically at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk>. Reference is made by date rather than volume and page number.
- HMC** *Reports of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts*
- LJ** *Journal of the House of Lords*. Accessed electronically at <http://www.british-history.ac.uk>. Reference is made by date rather than volume and page number.
- Morrice** Roger Morrice, *The entring book of Roger Morrice (1677–1691)*, edited by Mark Goldie, John Spurr, Tim Harris, Stephen Taylor, Mark Knights, Jason McElligott, (Boydell Press, Woodbridge 2007) 6 Vols
- ODNB** *The Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*
- PH** William Cobbett, *The Parliamentary History of England* (London 1808)
- RB** M. Sylvester, *Reliquiae Baxterianae; or Richard Baxter's Narrative of His Life and Times* (1696)

### *Conventions:*

In quotations, punctuation and spelling are as in the original, but without the use of capitals and italics for some whole words and phrases.

Dates are as in the original, with notation where necessary to avoid confusion between old style and new style; the year is assumed to begin on 1 January.

# 1 Introduction: Comprehension and the Church

The subject of this thesis is the issue of what, during the period under review, was most often called comprehension: the drive to make the Church of England as broad as possible in terms of its membership, especially in relation to those known in earlier decades as puritans.<sup>1</sup> After several years during which episcopalians and presbyterians had tried to exclude each other and the independents from the national church, the period following the Civil Wars saw a significant shift towards a more comprehensive religious settlement. This tendency was stopped soon after the restoration of the monarchy. Efforts to restart it continued for years, and the purpose of this thesis is to examine those efforts, and in particular the proposals published during the period. The examination begins with proposals for a *rapprochement* between episcopalians and presbyterians in the mid-1650s, and for reasons of space must stop at the passage of the Toleration Act in 1689. The movement for comprehension did not end then, but the Toleration Act changed the context sufficiently that it can serve as a *terminus ad quem* for this thesis.

The leading studies already in print on the subject of comprehension that cover all or most of the period under review are by Norman Sykes,<sup>2</sup> Roger Thomas,<sup>3</sup> and John Spurr.<sup>4</sup> There are other studies which focus on comprehension at particular times within this period, to which the reader will be referred in due course, but these are the only ones still read that attempt to cover the whole of it, even briefly. The

<sup>1</sup> See below pp 5–8 for an explanation of this and related terms.

<sup>2</sup> *From Sheldon to Secker* (Cambridge University Press 1959) pp 68–91.

<sup>3</sup> 'Comprehension and Indulgence' in Geoffrey Nuttall and Owen Chadwick, *From Uniformity to Unity 1662–1962* (SPCK, London 1962).

<sup>4</sup> 'The Church of England, Comprehension and the Toleration Act of 1689', in *English Historical Review* (1989), and *The Restoration Church of England* (Yale University Press 1991) pp 927–946.

majority of references to comprehension in more general works cite one or more of them, and they comprise the basis on which currently accepted views of the comprehension movement rests.

Sykes's main interest was in the effects of events in this period on the Hanoverian church, and his chapter on comprehension charts its history mostly in terms of the desire of Charles II to provide some freedom of worship to Catholics and James II to establish Catholicism as a serious alternative, if no more, to the national church. He devotes more time to the period after 1672 than to the earlier period. While the role of Catholicism was a factor in the fortunes of the comprehension movement, it was not the only one, as this examination will show. Sykes refers to only three of the contemporary published works that supported comprehension, and gives details of only those comprehension proposals that were under consideration by Parliament, which he considered 'more serious' than the other proposals made from time to time.<sup>5</sup> These constraints raise the possibility that there may be aspects of the comprehension movement not addressed in his work.

Thomas's study is one of a collection of articles on church unity, and like Sykes, he begins his examination at the Restoration. What he called the 'story of comprehension' was not his chief interest; his primary interest was 'indulgence' or toleration rather than comprehension, and because toleration was eventually achieved he saw no need to explore more widely than Sykes had, although he describes the proposals referred to in greater detail than Sykes did. His essay becomes more detailed the closer it gets to 1689, and treats earlier events merely as precursors to more important debates later. He did not consider the fear of popery a factor in the

<sup>5</sup> Sykes *op cit* pp ix, 68–91 *passim*, 71.

comprehension debate till the Popish Plot of 1678, and argued that fear of toleration being extended to Catholics was what made comprehension unacceptable. The question of whether ecclesial bodies other than the church established by law should be tolerated was one much discussed by contemporaries, but again it was not the only one, so there still remains the possibility that there may be aspects of the comprehension movement not addressed in his work.<sup>6</sup>

Spurr's analysis gives 'a more detailed account of the comprehension negotiations' than the earlier works, and begins with the passage of the Act of Uniformity. Spurr directed his efforts towards the question of why comprehension as well as toleration was not part of the Revolution Settlement of 1689. His main purpose is 'to show what was at stake in calls for comprehension and to explain, in particular, the unyielding attitude of the Church of England', arguing that it was the Church of England's 'intransigence, rather than the divisions within the Non-conformist camp, which had done most to thwart comprehension... Forbearance and tolerance of Restoration Anglicans has been misinterpreted as evidence of support for toleration or comprehension... it was almost unheard of for an Anglican cleric to champion comprehension'.<sup>7</sup> He pays more attention to the evidence of contemporary published arguments than does Sykes or Thomas, but only insofar as it sheds light on those occasions when comprehension appeared to be under serious consideration by the powers that be in church or state, and makes no claim to have examined all works published. In all three works, therefore, the full range of contemporary published proposals remain unexamined, and no attention is paid to any movement towards a

<sup>6</sup> Thomas, *op cit* pp 192, 229.

<sup>7</sup> John Spurr, 'The Church of England, Comprehension and the Toleration Act of 1689' in *English Historical Review* Vol 104 (1989) p 943.

comprehensive church before 1660. However, since Spurr's study, there has been no further examination of the comprehension movement, and such references as are made to it in more general works cite one of these three.

None of the works referred to above are book-length studies, which also suggests that a more detailed exploration might be possible, and even a cursory glance over the titles published during the period under discussion suggests that the debate in print is substantial enough to deserve a study of its own. Without such a study, there can be no confidence that there are no further questions that remain unanswered or unsatisfactorily answered and therefore call for further research. An examination of the printed texts as thorough as the examinations that have been made of the manuscript evidence is an obvious next step in research in the subject. It should be noted, however, that this thesis does not examine the whole of the published debate, but only those contributions to it that supported comprehension. The many replies to such works and other works by those opposed to comprehension are considered here only insofar as is necessary to explain some of the things said in the works that support it. Nor is this thesis about the relationship between religion and Restoration politics, although contemporary political and social issues are also referred to where necessary. Proposals for comprehension in Scotland are not examined, although the influence of events there on English churchmen is noted.

Despite the reasons given above for considering the period 1656–1689 an appropriate one for a single thesis, finding and examining all relevant printed texts is no small challenge. While many contemporary printed texts are referred to in the existing studies described above, no complete search of the surviving texts appears to

have been conducted. The number of documents issued during these years is quite large; a 1998 study by Maureen Bell and John Barnard concluded that an exact count was virtually impossible, because of the policy in the principal printed catalogue, *Short-title catalogue of books printed in England, Scotland, Ireland, Wales, and British America, and of English books printed in other countries, 1641–1700* by Donald Wing,<sup>8</sup> of listing printings with minor differences on the title page separately, as well as its treatment of undated documents.<sup>9</sup> Wing's printed chronological index only covers documents printed outside London, and the on-line catalogues, *Early English Books Online* (<http://eebo.chadwyck.com.chain.kent.ac.uk/home>) and the British Library's *English Short Title Catalogue* (<http://estc.bl.uk>) both have slightly different standards for inclusion than Wing, and both were still adding titles throughout the period during which this thesis was researched and written. In addition, the *English Short Title Catalogue* cannot be searched simply date. The differences between the three catalogues were not large, however, and *Early English Books Online* (EEBO) was used because it saved time by linking directly to images of the relevant documents, or if the images were not yet available, gave a reference to the microfilmed images, which the other catalogues do not. It seems reasonable to conclude that a search of the EEBO database will give as close as is possible under present circumstances to all the titles of surviving works from the period in question.

It was quickly established that searching these titles by keywords like 'comprehension', 'accommodation', or even 'religion', 'church' and so on omitted too many titles relevant to the research. Between 2005 and 2009, therefore, the writer

<sup>8</sup> 2nd edition, Modern Language Association of America, New York 1994–1998.

<sup>9</sup> John Barnard & Maureen Bell, 'Provisional Count of Wing Titles 1641-1700' (*Publishing History* 44 (1998) pp 89-97); cf Mason, Wilmer 'The Annual Output of Wing-listed Titles 1649–1684' in *The Library* 5th series v XXIX no 2 June 1974.

found it necessary to go through a total of 42,152 titles listed by EBO as published between 1656 and 1689. Periodicals, almanacs and ballads were not examined, although some of them might well have had some indirect relevance to the research; a ballad by John Phillips, *Of all the factions in the town* (1660), for instance, shows how effectively those opposed to any moderation of conformity used this cheapest and most popular form of communication in order to discredit their opponents,<sup>10</sup> and had there been time to explore them some interesting nuances to the debate over comprehension might have surfaced. In those that I did look at I came across no example of writers in favour of comprehension using media of this sort, however, so the decision not to use them seemed reasonable. No record was kept of the exact number of titles that needed further examination in order to determine their relevance, but in a typical publication year there would be anywhere between ten and thirty titles which were likely to refer to the subject, and all these were examined. In addition, other titles, which did not seem at first sight to be relevant, needed to be examined when reference was found to them in the texts whose titles did suggest a relationship to the subject of comprehension, or in the secondary literature. While most of the titles that turned out to be relevant were pamphlets of less than 60 pages in length, several were full length books. All this seemed to make the proposed period, 1656–1689, formidably broad, and for this reason the writer decided to examine only the proposals made for comprehension and the arguments in favour of them, referring to the published objections to these proposals only when they shed some light on the campaigns in favour of comprehension.

<sup>10</sup> *The starry Rule of Heaven is fixt/There's no Dissension in the Sky:  
And can there be a Mean betwixt/Confusion and Conformity?*



Apart from the numbers of texts involved, the natures of the texts must be taken into account. The fact that printed texts were used at all shows that there was little hope of achieving results by direct proposals to the powers that be; printed texts are essentially appeals to public opinion,<sup>11</sup> and those that appear to be directed to an individual or group of individuals (such as the bishops, or Members of Parliament) are an attempt to pressure those individuals by enlisting public opinion on the side of the proposer. Care must be taken, therefore, in concluding that any printed text represents all the hopes of its writer; it is entirely possible that the writer is only proposing what he thinks will find public support, and is silent on other aspects of the subject that he may personally find equally important. It will be argued in the conclusion that some subjects on which supporters of comprehension were silent during some periods were in fact important to them throughout the period.

After 1662, the Licensing Act also limited what any writer could say in support of any change in the current practice of the church, since it specifically forbade the printing of 'any heretical seditious schismatical or offensive Bookes or Pamphlets wherein any Doctrine or Opinion shall be asserted or maintained which is contrary to ... the doctrine or discipline of the Church of England or which shall or may tend or be to the scandall of Religion or the Church'. This clearly prevented any suggestion that there should be a change in church government, although some writers were willing to risk discussion of ceremonial and other issues in order to keep the issue of comprehension a matter of public conversation. The whole subject was a difficult one on which to write since the church was involved in the enforcement of the Act. Licenses for all books except those printed by the universities, law books, histories

<sup>11</sup> Cf Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge University Press 2003) p 26.

and books on state affairs, and books on heraldry were issued by the Archbishop of Canterbury or the Bishop of London (or York, should any press be active there). Lists of imported books were to be given to these bishops and imported books in other languages were to be specifically approved by them, and they were involved in the enforcement of the Act in several other ways.<sup>12</sup> This no doubt had what is today called a 'chilling effect' on the willingness of some supporters of comprehension to express their support in print, but enough were willing to do so for the purposes of this thesis, as will be seen. The expiration of the Act in 1679 and its renewal in 1681 will be noticed as appropriate.

The chief enforcer of the Licensing Act was Roger L'Estrange, who worked as the Secretary of State's 'surveyor' of the press for most of the period covered in this thesis. L'Estrange pointed out that 'they that write in the fear of a Law, are forc'd to cover their Meaning under Ambiguities, and Hints', and gave as an example one writer who will be cited often in this thesis, Richard Baxter.<sup>13</sup> The hints L'Estrange was concerned about were those pointing to a desire for a change in civil rather than ecclesiastical government, but the two were related closely enough during the restoration period that the documents must be read carefully. The fact that L'Estrange was as likely as anyone to see the suggestion of any change to the way the church does things as the first step towards another revolution in the state means that it is likely that all the documents covered in this thesis were read by L'Estrange himself, and the fact that he does not have appeared to have made any of our authors, not even Baxter, the targets of the special investigations for which he was famous

<sup>12</sup> 'Charles II, 1662: An Act for preventing the frequent Abuses in printing seditious treasonable and unlicensed Bookes and Pamphlets and for regulating of Printing and Printing Presses', *Statutes of the Realm volume 5: 1628–80* (1819), pp 428–435. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=47336> Date accessed: 18 January 2011.

<sup>13</sup> *Considerations and proposals in order to the regulation of the press* (1663) p 10.

suggests that they can be taken at their face value.<sup>14</sup> While an examination of the responses to them is not part of this thesis, it is clear that they were taken at face value by those who responded to them, even if one of the arguments against comprehension was that any compromise with puritan concerns would encourage those whose hopes went beyond comprehension or indulgence to revolution. The writers on behalf of comprehension, however, are in any case unlikely to have been comfortable putting any sort of double meaning into their works. John Wilkins, who although he did not go into print on behalf of comprehension was an important figure in the movement, as we shall see, is well known for his espousal of the 'plain and simple' style both in preaching and in prayer,<sup>15</sup> and after the restoration this style characterised most persuasive writing on ecclesiastical matters.<sup>16</sup> While the texts should be read with care, therefore, there is no reason not to take the published arguments at face value.

The use of evidence other than printed texts is not, of course, avoided, and manuscripts will be referred to where they provide further evidence for or explanation of issues raised by printed works. Manuscript notes assembled by Thomas Barlow and pasted into some of his collections of printed works, now in the Bodleian Library, have been particularly helpful, as have many of his manuscript annotations of those printed works. The collection of his manuscripts in the library of Queens College was also consulted. BL Egerton 2570 was useful for Edward Pearse, and BL Stowe 185, 'The Present State of the Non-conformists' for non-conformist reactions to the Declaration of Indulgence. Most of the manuscript evidence, such as the manuscript

<sup>14</sup> Although L'Estrange did initiate Baxter's prosecution over his *Paraphrase on the New Testament* (1685), a work which did not bring up the subject of comprehension.

<sup>15</sup> *Ecclesiastes, or, A discourse concerning the gift of preaching* (1646), *A discourse concerning the gift of prayer* (1651)

Date: 1653

<sup>16</sup> James Sutherland, *Restoration Literature 1660-1700* (Clarendon, Oxford 1969) p 306.

copies of the various bills in Parliament, checked in Bodleian Ballard 70 and Tanner 43, seems to have been examined thoroughly in the studies by Thomas and others, and further examination appeared to add nothing. Printed works, on the other hand, do not appear to have been given the same attention, even when they have been frequently quoted, and this thesis very quickly seemed to demand a concentration on the published material, especially the many works on the subject of comprehension to which reference has seldom been made.

The thesis will be structured chronologically rather than thematically, not so much for reasons of space as for reasons of time; a thematic treatment becomes possible only after chronological study has revealed the full range of themes that informed the discussion of comprehension, and in the limited time allowed for the completion of a thesis, and given the absence of an existing narrative covering the period fully, only a narrative study seemed possible at this stage. Some of the themes are more visible at some periods than others, as the chapter titles suggest, but the chapters are not intended to be explorations of a theme or topic. The writer does hope to explore some of these themes in post-doctoral work.

The question of what terminology to use for those who supported and those who opposed comprehension presents a challenge. People on both sides of most of the fault-lines in the seventeenth century church could be found on both sides of the comprehension issue, and no solution is likely to please all readers. In the period under review terms such as such as episcopalian, presbyterian, and so on did not refer to organised proto-denominations with recognisable theological or ecclesiological

boundaries, but to multiple ‘polarities of belief’<sup>17</sup> within a chaotic but single church. Terms like conformist, non-conformist, dissenter, etc also mean different things to different users of them, and it is important that I explain my own use of them.

By ‘Church of England’ I mean the national church as established by law at whatever time is under discussion. By the 1660s the term was beginning to acquire a meaning similar to the one it frequently has today, that of a denomination that stands for a particular set of beliefs concerning Christian doctrine, discipline and worship, but in the period with which I am concerned it still meant to most the church of the nation, as established, regardless of its current ecclesiological and theological complexion: a church that could be Calvinist and episcopal under Elizabeth and James (these are broad brush strokes here, I realise, but they make my point), Arminian and episcopal under Charles I, Calvinist and presbyterian in the 1640s, and tolerant of all but papists and prelatists for most of the 1650s. To many people today it makes no sense to call the English church of the 1650s the Church of England, but it was the standard term at the time. After 1689, and the emergence of the denominations, something like the modern use of the term becomes dominant. My usage differs from that of some contemporary historians, such as John Spurr, who wrote, for instance, that at the restoration of the monarchy ‘there was no doubt the Church of England would return’. Even though he acknowledges that it was a question as to ‘what form the Church of England would take’, he still expresses this question most comfortably in terms of whether there would be ‘acceptance of the

<sup>17</sup> The phrase is borrowed from Jonathan Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the Restoration Crisis 1677–1683* (Cambridge University Press 1991) pp 11–14, where it refers to political rather than religious opinions.

Church of England' by the presbyterians.<sup>18</sup> Many contemporaries<sup>19</sup> would have seen the issue as the Church of England changing (again) rather than returning, and I think it important to avoid terms that might allow the reader to apply too easily his own assumptions about the nature of the church today to the Restoration church.

The basic distinction in religious opinions between 17th century English people, that is to say the members of the Church of England, for the purposes of this thesis, can be expressed by the terms 'puritan' and 'anti-puritan'. Although rejected by many historians as too vague to be useful, the term 'puritan' continues to be used because it refers to such a wide range of those who wanted to preserve or continue the reformation of the Church of England according to scripture, to what Mark Goldie calls the 'tradition of intramural Church reform', whether episcopalian, presbyterian or independent. Peter Lake has suggested the term 'anti-puritan', and that seems to work well, in that it recognises that anti-puritans could differ in many other respects than their opposition to the concerns that animated puritans. The terms 'anti-puritan' and 'puritan' are used here in accordance with Lake's distinction between those who 'particularly at moments of crisis... tended to privilege or emphasize the puritan or the popish threat' respectively.<sup>20</sup> Both puritans and anti-puritans are found among episcopalian churchmen, although for the sake of variety in language I also refer to them as old-style and new-style episcopalians respectively, terminology derived from

<sup>18</sup> *The Restoration Church of England 1646–1689* (Yale University Press 1991) pp 30, 31.

<sup>19</sup> Henry Ferne, Isaac Allen, Zachary Crofton, John Corbet, Edward Bagshaw, and John Milton could all be cited; not to mention Charles II, who when discussing the possibility that his chaplains would not wear the surplice, said that 'it had always been held to be a decent habit in the Church of England until these late ill times', implying that even these late ill times were times in the history of the Church of England (quoted in Swainson, C. A. *The Parliamentary History of the Act of Uniformity* [George Bell, London 1875] p 5). Cf Monck's statement in 1659 that the religious radicals who had overthrown Richard Cromwell 'wished to dismantle the Church of England' (ODNB).

<sup>20</sup> Peter Lake, 'Anti-puritanism: the structure of a prejudice', in Kenneth Fincham and Peter Lake, *Religious Politics in Post-Reformation England* (Boydell and Brewer, Suffolk 2006) p 97. Lake would use the term 'anti-papist' for 'puritan', but too many of the anti-puritans were also anti-papist for that term to work easily in this thesis.

Baxter's description of them in *Five disputations concerning church-government* (1659), where he describes anti-puritan episcopalians as being episcopalians of a 'new strain'.<sup>21</sup> Gary de Krey's suggestion of a distinction between episcopalians, Reformed, and sectarians does not seem to work any better than the terms proposed here, given that some of the reformed also claimed to be episcopalian (but not prelatist) and some of the episcopalians claimed to be Reformed (but not puritan).<sup>22</sup>

After the passage of the Act of Uniformity in 1662, the terms 'conformist' and 'non-conformist' can also be used, as long as it is clear that they are not interchangeable with the terms 'anti-puritan' and 'puritan' respectively. Many conformists were puritans, and worked hard, as we shall see, to set the boundaries of the church wider, while many conformists were not really 'conforming' at all, but enthusiastically supporting a position to which they were bound in conscience. These were often referred to by their contemporaries as 'zealous' conformists, and this phrase will be used here in order to distinguish them from 'mere' conformists, who conformed because it was their duty to do so regardless of their personal opinions. Terms like 'high episcopalian' and 'super-conformist' were also used occasionally for the zealous conformist, and may occasionally be used here. Non-conformists likewise will be described as 'mere' or 'zealous' as appropriate for those whose non-conformity was grievous to them, and who hoped to change the terms of communion to something they could conform to, and for those for whom non-conformity became a badge of honour that in the end they preferred to communion with the national church.

<sup>21</sup> *Five disputations* pp 6f.

<sup>22</sup> *Restoration and revolution in Britain: a political history of the era of Charles II and the Glorious Revolution* (Macmillan, Basingstoke 2007) pp 76f.

The term 'Anglican' will not be used; apart from the fact that the term was hardly used at the time, it is also the case that among those who use the word of themselves today are people who fit naturally and easily into both puritan, anti-puritan, and mere conformist traditions, and to use the term for only one of these groups would be to fly in the face of current usage in a way that is likely to confuse, and may even offend.

Reference has already been made to suggestions that the debate that took place after the Restoration in 1660 cannot be fully understood apart from the comprehensive church coming into being during the previous decade, and the published material, as will be seen, confirms the truth of these suggestions. The question of how to include a wider range of Christian belief in a single national church was under discussion as early as the mid-1650s, when episcopalians began to reassert their views in print and found some sympathy among moderate members of other traditions. This thesis, therefore, will examine the published works in support of a more comprehensive Church of England between 1656 (when the first serious proposal for an episcopate acceptable to presbyterians was published) and the Toleration Act of 1689. All works found which give general support to the idea of comprehension are noted, although works making particular proposals are examined in greater detail. An examination of this corpus makes it clear that there was public debate on the subject even at times when no specific proposals were before Parliament, and that the desire for a broader church was more than a desire by ejected ministers for the resumption of their maintenance, or for a united front against popery. For some contributors to the debate, a Protestant church in which any of the matters about which Protestants could legitimately disagree could be optional in



opinion and practice was an end in itself—the fact that comprehension was briefly on the political agenda simply gave them another opportunity to work for that end. In the chapters that follow the public debate will be surveyed, and a final chapter will describe how this survey adds to, corrects or confirms the descriptions in the leading studies referred to.

Chapter two describes various proposals for a modified episcopacy that might allow episcopalians and presbyterians to work together, beginning with the publication of Archbishop Ussher's 'reduction of episcopacy' to a form compatible with a moderate presbyterianism in 1656 and going as far as the Worcester House declaration of 1660. It is important to start with debates over episcopacy because the extent to which disagreement about it continued to influence the comprehension debate is not always acknowledged.

Chapter three describes the print debate over the liturgical changes that took place in parish churches between 1660 and 1662, the ecclesiological implications of the changes in the ordinal, and the Act of Uniformity requiring episcopal ordination, and assesses the significance of these things to the comprehension debate.

Chapter four examines the renewal of published proposals for comprehension and its social context, beginning with first of John Humfrey's many proposals in 1667, and continuing with the various published arguments made in 1668 and 1669.

Chapter five looks at some of the published responses to the perceived role of the separatists in the failure of the comprehension attempt described in chapter four, particularly the widely followed debate between Richard Baxter and Edward Bagshaw

during 1670 and 1671, in which Baxter attempted to prevent separatist ideas from spreading any further in the non-conforming community.

Chapter six covers the period 1672–1675, showing how those supporting comprehension coped with the Declaration of Indulgence, and resumed pressure for comprehension once the indulgence policy fell apart. The growing importance of Humfrey as a press campaigner is also noticed.

Chapter seven traces the press campaign for comprehension from 1675 to 1683, which includes but is by no means limited to the period when Parliament was sufficiently fearful of a popish plot as to once again give serious consideration to the subject.

Chapter eight covers the material that followed three years of silence on the subject of comprehension, and covers the press campaign, such as it was, in 1687 and 1688, and is the last part of the campaign that can be dealt with in this thesis; the Toleration Act changed the situation enough that it provides a suitable conclusion for this survey, although it does not mark the end of efforts to bring or keep puritans in the established church.

In chapter nine the various conclusions suggested by the examination in the preceding chapters are drawn. The remainder of this introduction will describe the pre-restoration ecclesiastical context.

The Church of England experienced many upheavals during the 1640s and 1650s. Its form of government and its liturgy were changed several times. In the early 1640s it had experienced a period when the disciplinary and ordaining powers were

removed from its bishops and exercised by committees appointed by Parliament, resulting in a church that according to one historian was neither episcopal nor presbyterian in government,<sup>23</sup> although the Book of Common Prayer continued to be used. One estimate suggested that by this time two thirds of the clergy of England supported the idea of some reform of the episcopate.<sup>24</sup> In 1646 the episcopate was abolished entirely and the government of the church was removed from these committees and given to presbyteries from whose judgement Parliament was the final court of appeal—famously by Scottish standards a ‘lame Erastian Presbytery’—and the Prayer Book was replaced by a Directory giving what is now known as an ‘order’ for worship which did not prescribe any particular text or ceremony.

Congregationally governed churches which had managed to establish themselves since the bishops lost their power considered themselves outside this system, although not all those governing the church would have agreed. Within or without the national church, however, they enjoyed a *de facto* toleration. In 1650, the Elizabethan Act of Uniformity and other laws establishing penalties for non-attendance at church were repealed,<sup>25</sup> and the brief establishment of a presbyterian Church of England was effectively over. For the rest of the 1650s the Church was to all intents and purposes governed directly by Parliament and its ‘single person’, known for most of the period as the Lord Protector. The traditional patronage system

<sup>23</sup> William Shaw, *A History of the English Church During the Civil Wars and Under the Commonwealth 1640–1660* (Longmans Green, London 1900) Vol 1 pp 97–99.

<sup>24</sup> James Spalding and Maynard Brass, ‘Reduction of Episcopacy as a Means to Unity in England, 1640–1662’ in *Church History* Vol XXX (1961), p 421.

<sup>25</sup> Observation of the Lord’s Day was still required; all were to ‘diligently resort to some publique place where the Service and Worship of God is exercised, or shall be present at some other place in the practice of some Religious Duty, either of Prayer, Preaching, Reading or Expounding the Scriptures, or conferring upon the same’, and ‘every person and persons that shall not diligently perform the Duties aforesaid, according to the true meaning hereof (not having reasonable excuse to the contrary) shall be deemed and taken to be Offenders against this Law, and shall be proceeded against accordingly’. Such proceedings must have been exceedingly rare, given the vague nature of the required ‘duties’.

continued to function, deploying ministers screened by Parliament-appointed Commissioners for the Approbation of Preachers (the Triers),<sup>26</sup> and ordained by whatever method commended itself to the ordinand and the congregation he was to serve. Parish clergy continued to be supported by legally imposed tithes, and when necessary by direct grants from Parliament.<sup>27</sup> Papists and those desiring, among other things, to govern as or be governed by a undiminished diocesan episcopate, were the only Christians who did not enjoy the right to ‘the profession of [their] faith and exercise of their religion’,<sup>28</sup> at least until 1657 when Socinians and Quakers lost their tolerated status. Unofficially, even some new-style episcopalians in parish ministry were winked at,<sup>29</sup> while old-style episcopalians, both clergy and lay, who were willing to work within the present establishment could exercise a religion differing little from that enjoyed in many English parishes during the first three decades of the century,<sup>30</sup> and most English Christians were free to gather with other Christians, worship, and order their spiritual relationships in whatever way conscience led them. As one modern scholar has put it, it was ‘a very broad Protestant Church with toleration in practice for all peaceable Christians who could not accommodate themselves within it’.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> The word was also used for those parishioners who helped the Minister determine who was fit to receive Communion in the parish, according to Herbert Thorndike, *An epilogue to the tragedy of the Church of England* (1659), Book III pp 146, 150. For the full title see Geoffrey Nuttall, *Richard Baxter* (Stanford University Press 1965) p 76.

<sup>27</sup> C.H. Firth, R.S. Rait (eds), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660* (1911) *passim*.

<sup>28</sup> The ‘Instrument of Government’ XXXVII, in J. P. Kenyon, *The Stuart Constitution* (Cambridge University Press 1986) pp 312f.

<sup>29</sup> See, for instance, Matthew Griffith’s comment (see below, p 43 n 77, for details) that he and others were able ‘(by the connivance of the higher powers that then were) to fall to the exercise of our ministerial function again’, *The Fear of God and the King* (1660) Epistle to the reader, sig a3.

<sup>30</sup> Claire Cross, ‘The Church in England 1646–1660’ p 99, in G. E. Aylmer, ed., *The Quest for Settlement 1646–1660* (Archon, Hamden Connecticut 1972) p 107.

<sup>31</sup> Claire Cross, *op cit* p 99. Jeffrey Collins is right to point out, in ‘The Church Settlement of Oliver Cromwell’ (*History*, Vol 87 [2002] pp 18–40) that this was a settlement imposed by the government rather than toleration by society in general, but the imposed church was undeniably broader than the established church has been before or since. On episcopalians, see Kenneth Fincham and Steven Taylor, ‘Vital statistics: episcopal ordination and ordinands in England, 1646–1660’, forthcoming in the *English Historical Review*.

While Parliament did not insist on binding the different traditions in English Christianity together, representatives of most traditions were included in committees such as the Triers,<sup>32</sup> and most clergy continued to uphold the idea of all belonging to a single national church, and in many places serious efforts were made to make this effective. Best known then and now was the Worcestershire Association, which included presbyterians, independents and episcopalians. Richard Baxter, who would later describe his churchmanship as a combination of all these elements, was effectively the Association's bishop—he was called 'the great rabbi' and 'the chiefest priest in Worcestershire'. The Worcestershire Association never got as far as a common policy on ordination, but similar associations in other parts of the country did.<sup>33</sup> Episcopalians like John Gauden supported such efforts and tried to bring similar cooperative relationships into existence at the national level.<sup>34</sup> While there were some in all traditions who hoped to be able to bring such relationships to an end, Cromwell always managed to sidestep their pressure,<sup>35</sup> and the policies pursued by him under the Instrument of Government appeared to be slowly bringing into being a Church of England that could successfully comprehend most of the various sorts of Protestantism that had emerged in England since its first reformation.

Only a minority of Cromwell's contemporaries appear to have seen a comprehensive church as a good thing, and when the government of the nation began to change after Cromwell's death, his comprehensive church was soon under threat.

<sup>32</sup> Claire Cross, *op cit* p 105; cf Ann Hughes, "The public profession of these nations": the national church in Interregnum England' in Christopher Durston and Judith Maltby, (eds), *Religion in revolutionary England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), pp 94, 98f. But see J. Collins, *op cit* pp 18–40, and Derek Hirst, 'The Lord Protector' in John Morrill, ed., *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution*, (Longman, London 1990) pp 119–48, for a contrary view.

<sup>33</sup> Nuttall, *op cit* pp 71,72. See his cap 4 for a description of the various associations and their role in church life.

<sup>34</sup> George Abernathy, 'The English Presbyterians and the Stuart Restoration 1648–1663' in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* (NS Vol 55 pt 2, 1965) p 14.

<sup>35</sup> Claire Cross, *op cit* p 104.

Richard Cromwell, who succeeded Oliver as Lord Protector, appeared to favour a presbyterian rather than a comprehensive church, and independents, together with army leaders who felt their own influence on affairs threatened, suspected that under his government the presbyterians would not only reorder the government of the church but bring back Charles Stuart eventually, and this soon led to an end to the unifying process.<sup>36</sup> The presbyterians were too disunited to achieve any change in church government during Richard Cromwell's brief administration, but after his abdication independents abandoned the idea of a national church, even one comprehensive enough to include them.

The intervention of George Monck brought opportunities to presbyterians that they found impossible to resist, and such support as they had earlier given to the idea of a comprehensive church gave place to a drift towards the re-establishment of presbyterian government. During Richard's protectorate he had recommended 'strengthening the Church of England by favouring moderate presbyterian ministers and calling an assembly of divines to achieve greater unity within the church' and 'hinted' that the policy of tolerance for traditions that were essentially separatist should be changed. Monck's intervention when the Army in England 'interrupted' the Rump Parliament was, according to his own statement, because the policy of toleration being revived masked an attempted 'overthrow of the National Ministry'.<sup>37</sup> After the restoration of the Rump Parliament in December 1659, and the readmission of the secluded members in February 1660, the presbyterians in Parliament were once again the dominant party, and the drift became a determined attempt to re-establish a

<sup>36</sup> Austin Woolrych, 'Last Quests for Settlement 1657–1660' pp 189ff, in G. E. Aylmer, ed., *The Quest for Settlement 1646–1660* (Archon, Hamden Connecticut 1972), Abernathy *op cit* p 17.

<sup>37</sup> Cited by Gary de Krey in *London and the Restoration 1659–1683* (Cambridge University Press 2005) p 55.

presbyterian government in the national church. During the first two weeks of March a *de jure* if not *de facto* re-establishment of classical presbyterian government was restored. An act was passed declaring the Westminster Confession ‘to be the Publick Confession of Faith of the Church of England’ (apart from the chapters dealing with the relationship of church and magistrate, which were to be given further consideration), the Solemn League and Covenant was ordered to be set up in and read annually to parish churches and Parliament, parish clergy were ordered to use the Directory (a new edition of which was published for the purpose), the *Form of Church Government* of 1648 (which provided for the election of lay elders) was to be in force, classical presbyteries were ordered to be set up by September in accordance with the *Form* in those places where there were none, and the collection of tithes for the public maintenance of clergy was enforced with new vigour in An Act for Ministers, and Payment of Tythes.<sup>38</sup> George Abernathy speaks as though this were not the re-establishment of presbyterianism—‘there was now little chance that Presbyterian government would be adopted’<sup>39</sup>—but it is hard to see what more would be required. How much progress was made in the implementation of these policies is another matter, of course, although one writer noticed not long after this that many churches had dutifully put the Covenant back on display.<sup>40</sup> In any case, all that the tail of the Long Parliament could do at this point, having already decided on its own dissolution, was done. The comprehensive church of the Commonwealth was over, independents and episcopalians both being (theoretically) brought under presbyterian authority.

<sup>38</sup> *CJ* Vol 7, Feb 29th–March 16th 1660.

<sup>39</sup> Abernathy *op cit* p 41.

<sup>40</sup> *The covenant acknowledged by an English Covenanter, and the manifested wants of the common prayer, or divine service, formerly used, thought the fittest for publique worship* (1660) p 7.

Before this change could be made effective, however, there was another revolution, brought about by the restoration of the monarchy. Parliament being now dominated again by Presbyterians, most of whom supported Charles' return, and Charles' personal preference being assumed to be episcopalian, most people in the first few months of 1660 believed that the church would soon comprehend both of these traditions. The next two chapters will begin the examination in detail of the debate in the press over the issue of just how comprehensive the church could be.



## 2 Comprehension and Episcopacy

During the late 1650s, the debate about how comprehensive the church could be was mostly focussed on how episcopalians could be brought into a church in which episcopacy had been abolished. On this general question, there is very little in the way of historiography. A study appeared in 1961, by J. C. Spalding and M. F. Brass, which devoted three pages to the 1650s,<sup>1</sup> but since then there have been no more detailed studies. John Spurr has written extensively about the new 'intellectual case' for the episcopate that was being developed by some writers during the 1650s,<sup>2</sup> and he and others have pointed out the continued attraction that episcopal ordination had for many during that period,<sup>3</sup> but there have been no attempts to show how this continuing interest in episcopacy could be expressed in or incorporated into the church of the 1650s. Kenneth Fincham and Steven Taylor, in an article entitled 'Episcopalian conformity and nonconformity 1646–1660',<sup>4</sup> touch on the subject very briefly,<sup>5</sup> but their work is mostly about those episcopalians who outwardly conformed to the church of the 1650s while privately continuing episcopalian practice. Some episcopalians were willing to discuss with those of different opinions ways in which some aspects of episcopacy could be preserved under the conditions of the 1650s, and these discussions continued for some months after the restoration. This chapter will examine this discussion.

<sup>1</sup> J. C. Spalding and M. F. Brass, 'Reduction of episcopacy as a means to unity in England, 1640–62', *Church History* Vol 30 (1961), pp 414–432.

<sup>2</sup> John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England 1646–1689* (Yale University Press 1991) pp 129–143.

<sup>3</sup> In addition to Spurr, see Kenneth Fincham and Steven Taylor, 'Vital statistics: episcopal ordination and ordinands in England, 1646–1660', forthcoming in *English Historical Review*.

<sup>4</sup> In J. McElligott and D. L. Smith, eds, *Royalists and Royalism during the Interregnum* (Manchester University Press, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> See below, p 28.

One particular plan for a modified episcopacy, that of James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh until his death in 1656, has attracted much attention from historians. Ussher's first biographer, C. R. Elrington, implied that we no longer had the plan in the form in which Ussher had written it, but only in a version that had 'received some pruning from the anti-episcopal presuppositions' of an editor. If true, this would not of course be an argument against studying the use of the plan in the 1650s, but his only argument for this was that some of Ussher's other writings evince a view of the episcopate 'much more in conformity with his station in the Church'.<sup>6</sup> Most historians, however, have accepted the work as Ussher's. In 1947, F. R. Bolton made a study of Ussher's plan as a contribution to the debate about ecumenism that was then getting under way. Bolton described Ussher's proposal, and its reception in the 1640s and again at the restoration, but mentioned nothing in the 1650s except one printing of it. He argued that the plan was Ussher's, and that there was no inconsistency between it and his other comments on episcopacy.<sup>7</sup> There has been no further doubt cast on its origin. The work by William Abbott in 1990<sup>8</sup> is primarily a study of Ussher's own attitude to his proposal and the use likely to be made of it in 1641 when he first proposed it, and contains little discussion of the use to which it was put in later years. In 2006 Jack Cunningham returned to the subject,<sup>9</sup> as did Alan Ford in the most recent examination,<sup>10</sup> both of whom set Ussher's proposal in the setting of his activities in 1641, and say almost nothing about the subsequent use of it, even

<sup>6</sup> Bolton, *op cit* p 15; C. R. Elrington and J. H. Todd, *The whole works of the most Rev. James Ussher, D.D...* Vol 1 (1864) pp 209f.

<sup>7</sup> F. R. Bolton, 'Archbishop Ussher's Scheme of Church Government', in *Theology* Vol 50 (1947) pp 9-16.

<sup>8</sup> William M. Abbott, 'James Ussher and "Ussherian" Episcopacy, 1640-1656: The Primate and His Reduction Manuscript', *Albion* Vol 22 (1990) pp 237-259.

<sup>9</sup> Cunningham, Jack 'The Eirenicon and the "Primitive Episcopacy" of James Ussher: an Irish Panacea for Britannia's Ailment', *Reformation & Renaissance Review: Journal of the Society for Reformation Studies* Vol 8 (2006) pp 128-146.

<sup>10</sup> Alan Ford, *James Ussher: Theology, History and Politics in Early-Modern Ireland and England* (Oxford University Press 2007) pp 240-256.

during Ussher's lifetime. Spalding and Brass's limited account, therefore, remains the only study of the proposals made during the 1650s and surveyed in this chapter, which will fill out the narrative of the period and give a fuller examination of the texts published during it.

Despite the broad nature of the church described in the previous chapter, there could be no question of practising episcopacy as it had been exercised in the 1630s, but the subject of some other form of the office was discussed not only by episcopalians but by some presbyterians, and there were many models for a more moderate form of episcopal government. A moderated episcopacy had been practised in Scotland from time to time since 1560,<sup>11</sup> and as episcopacy came under scrutiny in 1640, many other proposals had been made. Some were made in the House of Commons by Lords Digby and Falkland and a modified episcopacy as an alternative to the Root and Branch Bill was proposed by Edward Dering. Old-style episcopalians like Joseph Hall, Bishop of Norwich, had accepted the need to distinguish 'tyrannical government of prelates' from 'fatherly and brotherly pre-eminence'.<sup>12</sup> The best-known form of moderate episcopacy has already been referred to, that outlined by James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh. In fact, so well-known is Ussher's version of the idea that many historians tend to lump all descriptions of moderate episcopacy together with Ussher's. John Spurr says that John Gauden spent several years recommending Ussher's plan, for instance, and that he and Edward Reynolds 'preached up the

<sup>11</sup> Ussher's proposal may have drawn on the Scottish experience; he corresponded with John Forbes, who wrote an *Irenicum* commending the Scottish system in 1629. Cf Spalding and Brass, *op cit*, p 429 n 6. In addition, Irish dioceses were much smaller than English dioceses, and some Irish bishops, such as William Bedell of Kilmore (1629–1641) had involved their presbyters very closely in their episcopal government; Bolton, *op cit* p 10.

<sup>12</sup> Spalding and Brass *op cit* p 421; cf William Abbott, *op cit* p 250.

virtues of Ussher-style reduced episcopacy' in 1660.<sup>13</sup> I. M. Green implies that when Gauden used the phrase 'primitive episcopacy' he was referring to Ussher's plan.<sup>14</sup> As we shall see, these views fail to do justice to the variety of ideas proposed. Ussher's plan was one among many, and did not become the '*locus classicus*' of moderate episcopacy, as one writer calls it, until close to the end of the period with which this thesis deals.

Ussher's proposal was drawn up in 1641, and Abbott describes it as something informal, circulated in manuscript among a few powerful fellow-episcopalians, designed only to meet the political situation of the time, and less explicit than two other plans being circulated at the same time. Ussher himself, Abbott argues, soon lost interest in the plan.<sup>15</sup> Others, however, did not, and we shall see that Ussher's was one of the models under discussion during the 1650s and 1660s, and to which attention would return for the rest of the century, despite any reservations he himself may have had about it. There was, of course, opposition to all such proposals, both from those committed to *jure divino* presbyterianism, and from new-style episcopalians or zealous conformists, committed to a *jure divino* monarchical episcopate.

Ussher's plan called for a revival of suffragan bishops, or *chorepiscopi*, one for each rural deanery, who would preside at monthly deanery synods consisting of the suffragan and the incumbents of the deanery. Matters brought before them would include parish discipline: the parish incumbent and selected lay persons would have authority to suspend those living scandalous lives from receiving Communion until

<sup>13</sup> Spurr, *op cit* pp 26, 32.

<sup>14</sup> I. M. Green, *The Re-establishment of the Church of England 1660–1663* (Oxford University Press 1978) p 7f.

<sup>15</sup> Abbott *op cit* pp 237–259. But see Cunningham, *op cit* pp 128–146, and Ford, *op cit* pp 223–256, where he argues persuasively that Ussher was deeply committed to the ideas in the *Reduction*.

the deanery synod met, when it would confirm or set aside such actions by majority vote. Deanery synods would also consider charges made against clergy, whether for scandalous lives or 'new opinions', and discipline them as necessary. Deanery synod decisions could be challenged at a diocesan synod. The diocesan synod would consist of the suffragans and the parish clergy, with the diocesan bishop presiding, and decisions at this synod would also be settled by majority vote. Diocesan synod decisions could be appealed to a national synod, consisting of diocesans, suffragans, and presbyters elected by the diocesan synod. The national synod would also make decisions 'which concerne the state of the Church of the whole Nation'. Ussher's plan did not discuss decisions about ordination or about the selection of bishops, the two other areas most often discussed in proposals for a moderate episcopacy. It was circulated only in manuscript during Ussher's lifetime,<sup>16</sup> although it became part of several press campaigns later.

The discussions of the early 1640s led Parliament to abolish rather than reform the episcopate, and the subject of a moderate (or 'reduced', to use Ussher's phrase) episcopacy disappeared for a while from the national conversation. Henry Hammond referred to moderated episcopacy approvingly in his *Power of the Keyes*, published in 1647 and again in 1651: 'if the abuses, and excesses, and mistakes (that have crept in in that matter) were timely discerned, and removed, and that which is Christian and Apostolical revived, and restored in prudence and sobriety, [it] might yet again show the world the use of that Prelacy, which is now so zealously contemned', he wrote in the preface. 'A moderate episcopacy, with a standing assistant presbytery, and every of

<sup>16</sup> *ODNB* article on Ussher, where Alan Ford says that the Reduction 'probably circulated in London during [1641] (though its precise history in manuscript is far from clear)'. That it circulated is certain; Baxter had a copy, as will shortly appear.

those assigned his full task and province of employment... will certainly satisfy the desire of those whose pretensions are regular and moderate'.<sup>17</sup>

There had also been discussion of the subject in the early 1650s. In 1652 Ralph Brownrigg, one of the 'moderate' episcopal appointments of Charles I in 1641, participated briefly in talks with some Presbyterians and Independents to see if there was a possibility of working together, but nothing came of them.<sup>18</sup> Not long afterwards, Richard Baxter and John Dury exchanged letters on the subject of how to restart the conversation about episcopacy. Baxter believed that with a little good will ways of comprehending episcopalians, presbyterians and even independents in the national church could be found, and used his acquaintance with Dury, who had a reputation as a proponent of unity among Protestants of all nations, to bring his ideas to the attention of those in power. When Baxter heard that Parliament had been asked, in the *Humble Proposals* of Owen, Nye and other independents<sup>19</sup> to Parliament's Committee for the Propagation of the Gospel, to consider the future of the church, he wrote to Dury, who was a member of the committee, and urged him to use his influence to turn the Committee's meetings into a forum in which four parties (described by Baxter as episcopalian, presbyterian, independent and Erastian) would speak, and all would agree to listen:

'that which hath ruined us is, that each party trusteth to their carnal weapons and advantages, and will not debate the case with those brethren that are in their power as if they were on equal terms... When the Episcopal party had power, they will impose without dispute; when the Presbyterians have power, they will do the like with the Episcopal (though not with others), not suffering them to plead their cause in the Assembly; now the Independents have the power, it's like they may

<sup>17</sup> Henry Hammond, *The Power of the Keyes* (1651) Preface, np no sig [pp v, vi]. But see F. J. Trott, *Prelude to restoration: Laudians, Conformists and the struggle for 'Anglicanism' in the 1650s* (PhD Thesis, University of London 1992), p 65 for the view that Hammond was accepting what was possible in 1651 rather than stating his true opinions.

<sup>18</sup> Fincham and Taylor, *Episcopalian conformity and nonconformity 1646-1660*.

<sup>19</sup> The text of the proposals is in the *Transactions of the Congregational Historical Society*, Vol 9 (April 1924), pp 22-8.

think it's a losing of the advantage God hath given them to set all right (that is, in their way), if they should take themselves as on equal terms, and debate the case, and abate of their rigour, for accommodation and peace.<sup>20</sup>

Dury replied (months later) that he had attended a meeting of the Committee, and that there had been discussion of reconciling differences, but that Cromwell wanted the discussion to include more than the four parties proposed by Baxter.<sup>21</sup> Baxter wrote to Dury again with more suggestions about how to make the project successful, but early in 1653 Dury reported that the Committee had put the matter on hold, and he suggested to Baxter that ministers interested in accommodation correspond among themselves, as had been done in France successfully. Dury also asked for more detailed proposals from Baxter, having heard that Baxter had drawn something up.<sup>22</sup> Baxter sent him information about the Worcester Association, in which several episcopalians participated and which had been meeting 'above half a year' (he was writing in January 1653), and mentioned the 6,000 signature *Humble Petition* sent by the Association to Parliament in December 1652, urging that

'because our sad divisions in matter of Religion, especially about Church-Government, have been such a hinderance to the propagation of the Gospel... you will be pleased speedily to imploy your utmost wisdom and power for the healing of them: And to that end would call together some of the most godly, prudent, peaceable Divines of each party, that differs in points of Church-Government, and lay upon them your Commands and Adjuration, that they cease not amicable consulting and seeking God till they have found out a meet way for accommodation and unity'.

Baxter also asked Dury if he would show their correspondence to Ussher and ask for his advice.<sup>23</sup> The Association's request to Parliament sparked a brief press debate

<sup>20</sup> CCRB, Letter 83, Vol I pp 77f. See also George Abernathy, 'Richard Baxter and the Cromwellian Church' *Huntington Library Quarterly* Vol 24 (1960-1961) pp 213-231.

<sup>21</sup> CCRB, Letter 99, Vol I pp 85f.

<sup>22</sup> CCRB, Letters 104, 106, Vol I pp 89, 90.

<sup>23</sup> CCRB, Letter 109, Vol I p 92; Richard Baxter, *The humble petition... to the Parliament of the Common-wealth of England* (1652) p 7.

during February and March of 1653, with Baxter arranging for his pamphlet defending the Association's suggestion to be handed to MPs as they arrived at the House of Commons, but nothing had been achieved when Parliament was dissolved in April.<sup>24</sup> Dury reported that Ussher had made some suggestions regarding doctrinal matters, but apparently had not commented on church government, thinking it 'not fitt to appeare much for any new Models'. Dury had also tried to get some of the London clergy together in furtherance of his own suggestion, but few ever showed up. He told Baxter, however, that 'thoughts of union amongst brethren are not wholly laid aside'—but whether he refers to his thoughts or theirs is not clear. Such success as Dury had seems to have involved only presbyterians and independents, with small groups meeting, perhaps only once in 1653 or 1654.<sup>25</sup> Baxter and Dury had no success with their plan at this period, but their determination to include episcopalians in their comprehension attempts should not be overlooked.

In 1653 Baxter republished the Worcester Association material under the title *Christian Concord*. This kept the subject before the public, and in the same year John Gauden published his *Hieraspistes*, a defence of the ministry of the Church of England as it was formerly, but described in such a way as might induce presbyterians to own it eventually. In the work Gauden, an old-style episcopalian, tried to make common cause with the presbyterians against the independents, without spelling out in too much detail how the differences between episcopalians and presbyterians could be overcome. The time seemed to be right for such a move, Gauden suggested: 'I perceived that this long hot and bloody dispute, which seemed to hold forth the

<sup>24</sup> Richard Baxter, *The Worcester-shire petition to the Parliament for the Ministry of England defended* (1653); Geoffrey Nuttall, *Richard Baxter* (Stanford University Press 1965) p 77.

<sup>25</sup> CCRB, Letters 111, 114, 141, Vol I pp 93f, 95, 114.



question and title of divine right for presbytery without a bishop, was now referable to the judgement of prudence rather than of conscience; a matter of policy rather than piety'.<sup>26</sup> Gauden addressed the subject of episcopacy, and made the point which he was to argue more strongly in 1660, that the Solemn League and Covenant taken by so many did not prevent acceptance of episcopacy as long as bishops were in the right relationship with their presbyters. Gauden was convinced that 'primitive episcopacy' could make union possible.<sup>27</sup> By this he meant an episcopate in which the bishop and presbyters worked together, respecting and supporting each other and doing nothing without each other. Gauden did not suggest a detailed way of institutionalising their partnership, such as Ussher had, but touched on subjects that Ussher had not: he said that the bishop was to govern with the 'suffrage' of selected presbyters, and that bishop and presbyters should 'joyntly' ordain. Gauden's approach also differed from Ussher's in that he said nothing about any role in government for lay-persons. The role of laity in church government, Gauden suggested, was satisfied by the oversight exercised by Parliament. Gauden also called for the bishop to be an example of a painstaking preacher, as distinct from the new-style bishops, some of whom had abandoned preaching almost entirely.<sup>28</sup> It is not accurate, therefore, to say that Gauden was an advocate of Ussher's plan. He considered Ussher's episcopacy an acceptable alternative to the one he described, as we shall see, but he spoke publicly for his own ideas, not Ussher's. He ended with a call to the surviving bishops to resume their leadership at least of episcopalians.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>26</sup> *Hieraspistes: a defence by way of apology for the ministry and ministers of the Church of England* (1653) p 280

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid* p 266.

<sup>28</sup> Kenneth Fincham, 'Episcopal Government, 1603–1640' in Fincham, ed., *The Early Stuart Church, 1603–1642* (Macmillan, Basingstoke 1993), pp 71–91. Cf Richard Baxter, *Christian Concord* (1653), 'Explication of some passages in the foregoing propositions' p 51, where he reports a statement by Bishop Pierce that preaching had been needed in apostolic times, but was now unnecessary.

<sup>29</sup> *Hieraspistes* pp 561–568.

In 1654, Parliament considered the subject of accommodation among the various factions in the church, at Cromwell's urging, apparently, and Ussher was approached by a member of the committee considering the matter, who invited Ussher to talk to them about the subject. Ussher refused the invitation, and at a private meeting with Cromwell in January 1656, Cromwell made it clear that the revival of any sort of episcopacy was in any case not being offered (not that Ussher was asking for it; he had met Cromwell to discuss some of the difficulties episcopalians were still experiencing). Baxter sought out Ussher privately at about this time on his own account, and compared his own ideas for a moderated episcopate with Ussher's.<sup>30</sup> Baxter's suggestions were close enough to Ussher's that Baxter would tell and retell the story of how he and Ussher had within half an hour's conversation agreed on a proposal that should be acceptable to any reasonable person.<sup>31</sup> A year or so later the MP Edward Harley, who considered the different governments at work in the church a form of schism, wrote to Baxter and asked his recommendations for the 'service of the distressed church', and Baxter offered at length to describe briefly the conversation between himself and Ussher on church government.<sup>32</sup> Of course, episcopacy was never part of what Parliament was considering at this time, as Baxter's published summary of his suggestions makes clear,<sup>33</sup> but it is significant that once the subject of a church settlement was raised, hopes for a reformed episcopate were brought into the discussion, even if only in private. Baxter's letter to Harley stressed his desire for the 'reconcilinge of the Presbyterians, Independants & Prelaticall'.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Baxter's version is printed in *RB* II p 206.

<sup>31</sup> Beginning with his letter to Edward Harley, see n 32 below, and repeated in many different works. It was included in *RB* II at p 217. See below, p 35, for more on this conversation.

<sup>32</sup> *CCRB* Vol I pp 221–226, Letters 323, 324.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Baxter, *Humble advice: or The heads of those things which were offered to many Honourable Members of Parliament by Mr Richard Baxter at the end of his sermon, Decemb. 24. at the Abby in Westminster* (1655).

<sup>34</sup> *CCRB* Vol I pp 224.

In September of 1656, Gauden wrote to Nicolas Bernard, one of Cromwell's chaplains, in which he reported that there were discussions taking place involving many clergy to whom a modified episcopacy might be acceptable. In the first letter, which is not dated but which Bernard transcribed first when he sent copies of all three to Cromwell's Secretary of State, John Thurloe, in November of that year, Gauden said that many clergy were ready for some sort of compromise: 'even episcopall men, whose antipathies seemed irreconcilable, are upon a very calme temper.' The consensus of a meeting attended by Gauden, and by an unnamed 'person of honour, formerly hot enough upon that interest' (ie one of the 'episcopall men') and some whom he described as 'masters in Israel', is 'that the succession of ministeriall order and authority [*sic*] might be preserved most unquestionable by the happy accord of bishops and presbyters; that there might bee presidency and counsell in the government of the church'. One of the supporters of this development was referred to by Gauden as 'that person, at whose feet most of the Presbyterians in London and elsewhere doe sit'.<sup>35</sup> Gauden's next letter, dated September 1656, seems to refer to the same meeting, since a 'person of honour' is said to be present, and also 'one diocesse [*sic*, but it is clear from the context that Gauden intended to refer to a person] that hath been a great *antesignanus*<sup>36</sup> of the presbyterian party, whom you [Bernard] know well', no doubt the same person as the one at whose feet the London presbyterians sat. In this letter Gauden said that this person

'expressed this candor, that yf were moderated, he should be glad to have a bishop or president (for he scrupled the old name as lesse current with many people) among the presbyters chosen by them, *durante vita bene gesta*; that nothing should

<sup>35</sup> *A Collection of the State Papers of John Thurloe*, edited by Thomas Birch (London 1742), Vol 5, hereafter *State Papers*, p 598. Baxter's name springs to mind here, but he says nothing about it in the *Reliquiae*, despite describing many other conversations and exchanges of letters about episcopacy at this time.

<sup>36</sup> Standard-bearer.

be done in ordination or other great actions without the president and the major part of the presbyters; that he would willingly contribute to an honorable mayntenance of the president... He seemed content, that the succession of episcopall or presidentiall power should bee orderly derived or transmitted from those bishops, now remayning, yf they pleased to join in this union; yf not, that others might as suffragans *pro tempore* be chosen.'

Thus Gauden makes clear that those involved in the discussions were even willing to have the surviving bishops participate in the consecration of the new ones. The use of lay-elders, however, was out of favour.<sup>37</sup> Gauden suggested that both episcopalians and presbyterians would be satisfied if 'nothing was done without the consent of the presbytery or common counsell, yet by the moderation, and under the presidency of one, whom they chose to be chief among them'.<sup>38</sup> There is no evidence that Bernard replied to Gauden, or that anything came of these discussions.

Ussher's plan first became part of the public discussion after his death in March 1656. Two different versions of his *Reduction* were published within a month of each other, beginning a press debate on episcopacy that continued up to and beyond the re-emergence of the episcopate in 1660. In October 1656, someone published Ussher's proposal, 'to be considered by all conscientious persons, and tendred to all the Sons of Peace and Truth in the three Nations, for recovering the peace of the Church, and settling its proper Government.' Despite his earlier advocacy of a different plan, it may have been Gauden who arranged this first printing of Ussher's work. Gauden had apparently received a manuscript copy from Bernard, who had once been Ussher's chaplain, for in one of the letters already referred to he said 'you know well it is noe

<sup>37</sup> *State Papers* p 598, 599.

<sup>38</sup> *State Papers* p 600. George Abernathy, 'The English Presbyterians and the Stuart Restoration, 1648–1663' in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society* Vol 55 (1965), p 14, assumes that it was Ussher's reduced episcopate that was suggested to Bernard, but there are differences between Ussher's plan and the one Gauden refers to here. Ussher had not said how bishops were to be chosen, whereas here they are to be chosen by the presbyters; and there is no mention in Gauden's letters of the regional or national synods in Ussher's plan, or any role for archbishops.

hard matter to find out the primitive paterne as to church order, which the incomparably learned and pious lord primate both described and proposed sometime in his papers, which you imparted to mee'.<sup>39</sup> 'Imparted' need not mean the giving of an actual copy, but that is certainly a possibility, and in the light of the eagerness Gauden showed in those letters for the opportunity provided by the discussions to be seized—'I apply to severall men and minds, hoping that I may bee some small instrument to promote soe good a work... to endeavour in all fayre ways to promote soe great and good an interest'—it seems quite possible that it was his copy of the manuscript that was printed and circulated late in November. Baxter also appears to have been among those who had a manuscript copy of Ussher's plan, for when he met Ussher he asked him if he were the author of 'the Paper... that is called [A Reduction of Episcopacy to the Form of Synodical Government]', as though he had seen a document, not just heard about a plan, and when Baxter transcribed the *Reduction* in his account of the period he included a note that appears to be his own, suggesting to 'your Grace' that he consider amending one part of it, which he must have scribbled on his own copy.<sup>40</sup>

Soon afterwards Bernard decided to publish his own version of Ussher's text because, he explained, the October printing was unsatisfactory in several ways. While there were only two inaccuracies in the text, the word 'community' being substituted for 'company' and 'primate' for 'Archbishop', the wording of the title page seemed intended to give the impression that Ussher had written the work recently in order to address the current situation, and Bernard wanted to correct the record on that, as

<sup>39</sup> *State Papers* p 599.

<sup>40</sup> *RB II* pp 206, 240. The editor of the *Reliquiae* in 1696 inserted such documents without further editing.

well as make some changes in the marginal annotations which he said Ussher had asked for should the proposal ever be printed. Bernard's introduction to his edition confirmed that there was a growing interest in the idea of moderate episcopacy by 'many pious and prudent persons'.<sup>41</sup> The discussions Gauden had been party to had not resulted in any public statements, but the two editions aroused renewed interest in primitive episcopacy.<sup>42</sup>

But there were also signs of a resurgent 'prelacy', or new-style episcopalianism. Prelacy, of course, was still illegal, specifically exempted from the various toleration statements of the 1650s, but a minister had written to Baxter in January 1658 telling him of difficulties he was having with the 'new Prelatical party', whose leading exponents were 'learned adversaries... tall Cedars in knowledge in comparison of many of us', and asking Baxter to help.<sup>43</sup> Later that year, Thomas Pierce's *Eautontimoroumenos, or... a vindication... of episcopal divines* (1658) defended new-style episcopalianism. Encouraged by the reappearance in print of open support for episcopacy of one sort or another, lay episcopalians, too, began to be more outspoken. Some episcopalians<sup>44</sup> had publicly challenged the Manchester presbytery for acting as though the presbyterian system, now disestablished some years, still had legal standing. In September 1657 the presbytery had summoned these episcopalians for examination, apparently for not receiving the Lord's Supper.<sup>45</sup> The episcopalians

<sup>41</sup> James Ussher, *The Reduction of Episcopacie unto the Form of Synodical Government* (1656) 'To the Reader', Sig A4 ff; Bernard's version is Wing No U217, Gauden's is U216.

<sup>42</sup> Bernard kept the plan before the public by adding it as an appendix to a work published the following year, *The Judgement of the late Arch-bishop of Armagh, and Primate of Ireland, of the Extent of Christ's Death... of the Sabbath... of the Ordination in Other Reformed Churches*, and its second edition in 1658.

<sup>43</sup> *Five disputations of church-government, and worship* (1659) p 127.

<sup>44</sup> That they were episcopalians is made clear by their comments as reported in Isaac Allen, *Excommunicatio excommunicata, or, A censure of the Presbyterian censures and proceedings in the Classis at Manchester* (1658) pp 85f.

<sup>45</sup> Isaac Allen, *op cit*. The presbytery said that these episcopalians were among those who availed themselves of all the other privileges of church fellowship: they listened to the sermons, said 'Amen' to the prayers, had their children baptised, and 'received satisfaction for wrongs done to them', but lived in 'total and sinfull neglect of the Lords Supper', p 1.

complained, reminding the presbytery that 'it hath pleased his Highness in his wisdom and clemency, to secure all godly and peaceable men professing Jesus Christ, from those Ordinances which the rigour of Presbytery had mounted against them', and asserting that the presbytery had 'made Laws and Canons, and published them openly in the Church for all to obey upon pain of excommunication... contrary to the present establishment and the magistracie under which we now live'.<sup>46</sup>

In the debate that followed, the Classis had kind words for Ussher, but Abernathy went too far when he described the exchanges between the Classis and their episcopalian neighbours as an example of rapprochement between presbyterians and episcopalians.<sup>47</sup> The classis rather said that they 'dare not admit of moderate Episcopacy as the terms of accommodation'. Although episcopacy had proved useful in the early church as a means of dealing with heresy and schism, the remedy had proved worse than the disease, they argued. Since it had been introduced for practical reasons, they would only offer practical arguments against it, such as

'the Tyrannicall Bondage, and wofull Slavery, that thousands of Gods precious servants were brought under, during the prevalency of Episcopacy'... if it 'should once have footing in this Land, there is very great danger, it would presently incroach upon the Pastors right, and in time grow up to the full height, that it was in heretofore... we consider, how far short, the Proposals mentioned, do fall, of the strong Bonds that were layd upon Episcopacy in Scotland, and yet it burst them all... the admitting of moderate Episcopacy, would... occasion much strife and contentious Debates... by admitting of moderate Episcopacy, great offence might be taken by the best reformed Churches abroad'... and finally 'there be... more probability of union, amongst all sound, Orthodox, godly, moderate Spirited men, by means of some other expedients, and upon some sober ground, then upon the admission of moderate Episcopacy'.

Despite their rejection of even a moderate episcopacy, they agreed that 'all parties that have soundness, and favour in them, seem... to be weary of their Divisions, and to

<sup>46</sup> Allen *op cit*, np no sig [p iv].

<sup>47</sup> Abernathy, *op cit* p 16.

earnestly thirst and pant after Union'.<sup>48</sup> The episcopalians' thirst, however, did not stop them publishing the account of the dispute from which quotation has been made.

The first few months of 1659 saw the publication of Baxter's *Five Disputations of Church-Government and Worship*, a collection of articles written over the previous year or so. In these Baxter urged a version of his own model of moderate episcopacy, convinced that it was now a serious possibility. He dedicated the work to the new Protector, Richard Cromwell, and addressed him in the preface. 'I perceive also that some settlement of Church-affairs will be expected from you by the most,' he wrote.

'Your Highness hath a fair opportunity for this happy work—You enter<sup>49</sup> in a season when we are tired with contention, and sensible of our loss and danger, and tenderer then formerly of one another, and the most angry parties are much asswaged, and there is not so much reproach and bitterness among the Godly, as lately there hath been. A Spirit of Peace and Healing is lately risen in the hearts of many thousands in the Land, and Ministers that differed, do lovingly associate, and most do feel the smart of our Divisions, and are so prepared for a perfecter closure, that they wait but for some Leading hand.'<sup>50</sup>

Baxter's proposals in this text began with what he had already proposed, a bishop-presbyter-moderator (all meaning the same thing) in every parish large enough to have one, with as many assistant presbyters as he needed or could afford; parishes too small to have one should band together (but four of them at most) and choose one, who would then provide for the ministry of the member churches; the presbyters of all the parishes should meet together in the nearest market-town regularly, and choose one of their number as president, or bishop if they prefer that title, an office which would be lifelong. There should be no ordination without him except in an

<sup>48</sup> John Harrison, *The Censures of the Church Revived* (1659) pp 88–101.

<sup>49</sup> Although Richard Cromwell had made his exit by the time the dedication was published; events overtook discussion from this point on.

<sup>50</sup> Richard Baxter, *Five Disputations concerning church government* (1659) Epistle dedicatory sig A3.



emergency. He also added some other elements: no one should have to say more about this system than that they accept it for the sake of peace—no one had to believe it to be *jure divino*, even if some in fact did. The magistrate would appoint someone, normally but not necessarily the bishop, to visit all the parishes in his jurisdiction, admonish pastors and people as necessary, and report to the magistrate the state of the parishes. Where necessary, there should be itinerant evangelistic and church-planting ministers. ‘There is enough in this much to satisfie any moderate honest men for Church-government, and for the healing of our Divisions thereabout: And there is nothing in this that is inconsistent with the Principles of the moderate of any Party’.<sup>51</sup>

Baxter also took the opportunity to distinguish the old-style bishops like Jewel, Pilkington, Alley, Parry, Babbington, Baily, Abbot, Carlton, Morton, Ussher, Hall, and Davenant, from two kinds of ‘New Episcopal Divines that are now most followed’, another indication of a revival of confidence among new-style episcopalians. These two kinds were ‘The New Reconciling Protestant party’, and ‘The New Reconciling Papists, or Grotians’. ‘The old Episcopal Divines did take Episcopacy to be better then Presbyterian Equality, but not necessary to the Being of a Church, but to the Better being where it may be had... The Old Episcopal Divines thought it lawful to joyn in actual Communion with the Pastors and Churches that were not Prelatical. But the New ones separate from their communion, and teach the people to do so, supposing Sacramental administrations to be there performed by men that are no Ministers, and have no authority.’ The ‘New Reconciling Protestants’ ought to be able to come to an agreement with the presbyterians very easily, since ‘you see in the published Iudgements of Bp Hall, Bp Usher, Dr Holdsworth, Forbes,

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid* pp 335–337.

and others, (after cited) that they would have all Presbyters to be Governors of the Churches, one of them having a stated Presidency or Moderatorship, and this will content them. And are we not then agreed? I am confident most of the Ministers in England would be content to yield you this'.<sup>52</sup> Episcopacy of this sort could be practised now, under the present law. The fact that ministers who did not want to be under such a bishop could not be compelled to merely meant that it was an episcopacy of the sort practised in the first four centuries of the church.

Not long after the publication of this work, Baxter was involved in some private discussions on its subject that show how seriously the possibility of a reconciliation between presbyterians and episcopalians was taken in some quarters. He was approached by Sir Ralph Clare, the Kidderminster episcopalian who had been doing his best to undermine Baxter's ministry there ever since 1641, and told him that a rising was being planned by people from both royalist and parliamentary backgrounds in opposition to the new military government. Baxter told Clare that

'if the Presbyterians and Episcopal Men had but before come to some Agreement, they would the more unanimously join against the Fanaticks... and if such leading Men as Dr. Hammond would but beforehand come to Terms of some Moderation, and promise to endeavour faithfully to bring things to that pass as now should be thought indifferent, it would greatly facilitate Mens Conjunction against the turbulent Sectaries and Souldiers.'

Clare knew Hammond<sup>53</sup> well, and told Baxter that Hammond had heard from an episcopal divine with the exiled court that 'all Moderation was intended; and that any Episcopacy how low soever would serve the turn and be accepted: And a bare Presidency in Synods, such as Bishop Usher in his Reduction did require, was all that

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid* p 9.

<sup>53</sup> Concerning whom see p 27 above.

was intended; Yea, Bishop Hall's way of Moderation would suffice.<sup>54</sup> Baxter agreed to write a proposal to Hammond, which Clare would take to him, outlining (among other things) a moderate episcopacy that would be acceptable to presbyterians and independents: the incumbent at each parish to have disciplinary authority in it, but with accountability to a local synod under a president elected for life ('the Name we leave to you'). Hammond's reply was disappointing, and Baxter wrote a further letter, but it was never delivered because after the failure of the rising, led by Sir George Booth, the 'Tumults' of the time prevented it.<sup>55</sup>

Another moderate episcopacy in print in 1659 was a reprint of a work called *Directions propounded and humbly presented to the High Court of Parliament, concerning the Booke of Common Prayer and episcopall government*, first published in 1641. This book had been reprinted in slightly revised form in 1642, when it was attributed to Ussher under the title *The Bishop of Armaghe's direction, concerning the liturgy, and episcopall government. Being thereunto requested by the honourable, the House of Commons*. The relationship of Ussher to the text is not clear. Bolton is wrong to say that it is Ussher's plan;<sup>56</sup> there are elements found in this plan, such as the requirement to preach and the financial provisions, not found in the *Reduction*. Ussher's 19th century biographer, C. R. Elrington, says that the text was stolen from Ussher's desk, implying that they were at least notes he had taken, if not a plan of his own; but Ussher asked Parliament to suppress the publication as 'most injuriously fathered upon him', which they did.<sup>57</sup> Later studies have attributed it to Ephraim Udall,<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> *RB II* p 208.

<sup>55</sup> *RB II* pp 207-214.

<sup>56</sup> Bolton *op cit* p 13 n 1.

<sup>57</sup> *The whole works of the most Rev. James Ussher, D.D...* (Dublin 1864) Vol 1 p 208; Nicholas Bernard, *Clavi Trabales* (1661) pp 151f.

<sup>58</sup> Arnold Hunt, *ODNB* article on Udall.

although the original printing described the author only as ‘a reverend and learned divine now resident in London’. The work, reprinted in 1659 under the second of the above titles, certainly reads like notes prepared from or for a discussion, and contains a very brief description of a moderated episcopacy, in which bishops (who must ‘constantly preach’) needed the consent of three or four presbyters before ordaining anyone, could suspend clergy from their ministry only for breaking the law of the land, could only excommunicate someone with the consent of the pastor of the parish where the person in question resided, and that bishops could not demand money from their clergy, or burden the clergy with the expense of feeding them during their visitations. Bishops were also to be accountable to provincial synods.

Also in the press in 1659 was the proposal found in the document *Englands Deplorable Condition*, whose author identifies himself only as E. F. In this proposal all ordained presbyters (ie teaching rather than ruling elders) have full authority in their churches, the senior among them being consecrated ‘Angel’ rather than bishop—almost every writer of the period, on all sides of the issue, accepted that the ‘angels of the churches’ in the seven letters of Revelation were in fact the bishops of the churches addressed.<sup>59</sup> The Angel was to have certain duties that presbyters did not, but no have jurisdiction over them. He was to act as a moderator in the assembly, collecting the votes, propounding questions about what needed to be reformed, and seeing that all things were done decently with the advice and consent of his co-presbyters. The Angel was not to ordain; Presbyters were to ordain candidates chosen by the congregation.<sup>60</sup> The plan does not appear to have commended itself widely, but

<sup>59</sup> Although Baxter came to have doubts about it; see William Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millenium* (Croom Helm, London 1979) p 247.

<sup>60</sup> E. F., *Englands Deplorable Condition... and its Remedy* (1659) pp 31–42.

it shows the variety of proposals on offer, and helps confirm that interest in a moderate episcopacy was widespread. Ussher's was just one among many varieties under discussion.

During 1659, of course, the government began to change rapidly, and because of the intervention of General Monck, in the opening months of 1660 it suddenly seemed to almost everyone that a permanent 'settlement' in government, involving the return of the king, was possible. Since such a settlement was bound to include ecclesiastical as well as civil affairs, the question of church government now became a topic of great importance. The sudden appearance of such a moment seems to have caught the moderate presbyterian clergy on the back foot: in January, a broadsheet was circulated calling on the London clergy to 'draw up the heads of your desires... with a subscription of all your names, and appoint their delivery by some of your own hands' to Monck, unless they wanted a settlement imposed on them.<sup>61</sup> Within a week, a document signed by the leading London presbyterian clergy was on the bookstalls, but it offered no thought-out plan, and Abernathy is surely wrong to say that it urged an understanding with episcopalians.<sup>62</sup> The document warned of a danger of a return of popery (and did not seem to be using this phrase as code for the return of a new-style episcopacy, as some published documents did at this period, since it gave as examples such practices as not reading the scriptures in the vulgar tongue, refusing the cup to the laity and so on), and urged people to pray more and behave better, so that the Lord would arrange things in the nation's best interest. Other presbyterians were willing to go even further: Edward Hyde, the exiled king's secretary, was told in

<sup>61</sup> *To the reverend, learned and grave divines, in the City of London* (1660).

<sup>62</sup> *A seasonable exhortation of sundry ministers in London to the people of their respective congregations* (1660); Abernathy, *op cit* p 37.

January 1660 that 'some sober Presbyterians, and other good men' were ready to discuss an episcopate of 26 dioceses—hardly a moderate episcopacy—in return for the confirmation of all land purchases.<sup>63</sup>

Gauden, in a preface to a published version of one of his sermons written in January of 1660, gave his opinion that 'most ministers and people' were now 'reconcilable to Venerable episcopacy' (ie moderate episcopacy). Gauden assumed his hearers and readers were as convinced as he was of the benefits of modified episcopacy (with no mention of Ussher except as another good bishop) and that Bishop Brownrigg (at whose funeral on 17 December 1659 he was preaching) had been a good example of it.<sup>64</sup> Sir William Morice rewrote a work he had published in 1657, to which he added several statements indicating a willingness to accept episcopacy, and predicting 'some union or close' between presbyterian and episcopalian 'at last'.<sup>65</sup> However, Parliament was busy restoring presbyterian government to the church in order to present Charles with a *fait accompli* when he arrived.<sup>66</sup>

During March 1660 Gauden published another sermon delivered not long before, in which reference was made to the possibility of a settlement involving moderate episcopacy. This sermon was delivered before the Mayor and Common Council on the day of thanksgiving for the return of the secluded Members of Parliament, and commended 'primitive episcopacy with presbytery'. The details are referred to only incidentally, but Gauden added some features to the system he had proposed in 1653. One was the suggestion that the church make its own decisions, rather than have

<sup>63</sup> Abernathy, *op cit* p 37.

<sup>64</sup> *A sermon preached in the Temple-chappel, at the funeral of the Right Reverend Father in God, Dr. Brounrig late Lord Bishop of Exceter* (1660) Epistle Dedicatory to the Societies of the Temple, np no sig [p xxv].

<sup>65</sup> William Morice, *Coena quasi koinh: or, The common right to the Lords Supper asserted wherein that question is fully stated. The second edition enlarged* (1660) p 150.

<sup>66</sup> See above, p 21.

Parliament impose them; Gauden added that a free synod was as important as a free Parliament. He also tried to bring independents into his 'one National church' by giving a role to the Christian people at large as well as their presbyters. The terms in which he expressed this were somewhat vague, but appear to reflect a genuine desire to accommodate independents as well as episcopalians and presbyterians: 'their souls are so much concerned, what Ministers they have, and how both he and others of their congregation behave themselves... no publique transactions, much less impositions, should be made, without fairly acquainting the Clergy and Christian People too with the grounds and reasons of them'.<sup>67</sup>

Those who wanted the re-establishment of an unrestricted episcopate had become mostly silent at this point, not even trying (in print, at least) to win over moderate episcopalians to the new-style position the way some presbyterians tried to warn their more moderate colleagues about the dangers of even a moderate episcopacy. Apologists for new-style episcopacy were almost certainly included in the general warning to all royalists to be guarded in their speech about what the return of the king might involve, lest any sudden last-minute concerns about that upset the negotiations being conducted.<sup>68</sup>

Nevertheless, the gulf between old-style and new-style episcopalians helped ensure that the efforts made by Gauden during the next month or two to organise the moderates did not enjoy much success. It would not in any case have been an easy task, since old-style episcopalians had little access to power: the presbyterians had the best links with the Parliament for the moment, while the new-style episcopalians had

<sup>67</sup> *A sermon preached in St. Pauls Church London ... February 28, 1659 being a day of solemn thanksgiving unto God for restoring of the excluded members of Parliament to the House of Commons* (1660) pp 79, 101f, 105. This sermon was also published as *Kakourgoi stoe medicastri: Slight healers of public hurts* (1660).

<sup>68</sup> See below, p 48.

had Charles's ear for years, since many of them went into exile with him. Even moderate presbyterians had better access to the king at this point, being courted by Charles's agents and visiting him in Breda, than Gauden and other old-style episcopalians did.

Several other moderates followed Gauden into print. Some who preferred not to use their names rejoiced in the possibilities without being too specific:

'nor is there so great difference between a moderate Episcopal man, and a sober Presbyterian, but that both will jointly meet and kiss each other, for the settlement of the Nation in peace and unity';<sup>69</sup> 'the sober and moderate Party, excluding both extremes, (whether Fanatique Common-wealths-men or Royal Hectors) doth now carry with it the sense of the people... the moderate Presbyterian and the sober Royall Principle do manifestly divide almost the whole Nation between them'.<sup>70</sup>

One writer borrowed the image Gauden had used in one of the printed versions of his sermon just a few weeks earlier, pleading for 'moderation, moderation, moderation' in order 'that we may not be slightly healed'.<sup>71</sup> Another had a very specific set of proposals: set up a synod of divines representing all shades of churchmanship ('Hammond, Peirson, Seman, Pool, Nye, Owen and Baxter' were all suggested as members, as though all were moderate enough to find an agreement); then let them publish the results of their deliberations, so that the public will be won over to them. Let any four people in a parish be able to bring in a candidate for the minister's place, let the candidate preach to the congregation, and then let the parish choose from all those heard, and present him to those in authority, who will authorise him. In his ministry he will use a minimum of formal prayers, from which those who do not like

<sup>69</sup> Anon., *The Army's Declaration: Being a True Alarm in Answer to a False and Fiery One...* (1660) p 7. Baxter had said the same thing in December 1659: 'I am confident the most of the sober godly Ministers in England, are for the Apostolical primitive Episcopacy still', *Catholic Unity* (1660).

<sup>70</sup> Anon., *Expedients for publique peace. Shewing the necessity of a national union and the way to it in this time of danger* (1660) pp 4, 6.

<sup>71</sup> Salem Philalathes, *The moderate Independent proposing a word in season to the gathered churches, the Episcopal and Presbyterian parties tending to their humiliation for what is past, to be reconciled to each other for the time to come, and joyntly to acquiesse in the determinations of this present Parliament, as to the government of church & state* (1660). Cf n 67 above.



them may be excused as long as they come to the rest of the service. 'Thus far most sober good men of the Episcopalian, Presbyterian, or Congregationall party might agree'.<sup>72</sup> Another writer described himself as a *jure divino* episcopalian, but still agreed that the episcopate had before its abolition acquired some 'luxurious excrescencies' and 'exorbitancies', and was willing to see episcopacy 'to be so moderated in [its] exercise of power... [that] the bishops with their presbyters may joyn to make the close of our harmony most melodious'.<sup>73</sup>

John Gaule, an old-style episcopalian, believed episcopacy could be restored without adding any new legal restrictions if people would accept the implications of the *adiaphora* approach, which they ought to be able to do if they would moderate their passions a bit, and wait for a properly convened synod, under Charles, to settle the matters in dispute, 'not by absolute commanding and imposing, but by fair entreating, and perswading'. Gaule appealed to his brother ministers not to try to 'preoccupate and forestal the Publick Authority'.<sup>74</sup>

But of course, just as that was exactly what the presbyterians in Parliament had tried to do during March, so it was what the new-style episcopalians were striving for behind the scenes in April, and plenty of those participating in the public discussion made it clear that they had noticed it. One writer devoted a work exclusively to the subject of the attitudes of each side and the damage that imposition without the consent of those imposed upon might do. Episcopalianism had had a glimpse, and so far only a glimpse, he pointed out, of regaining a place in the church, and yet 'will

<sup>72</sup> Anon., *Councill humbly propounded for the speedy settlement of these long disturbed nations. Wherein is offered such a King, such a church-government, such liberty for tender consciences, as that the royalist, Presbyterian, and persons of different judgements (the three great interests of our nations) may acquiesce in* (1660) p 4.

<sup>73</sup> Person of quality and of a publick spirit, *Three letters of publick concernment as to the present affairs* (1660) pp 2, 11, 14.

<sup>74</sup> John Gaule, *An admonition moving to moderation, holding forth certain brief heads of wholesom advice to the late, and yet immoderate party* (1660) pp 11, 108.

nothing, now, already, content you but absolute dominion?’<sup>75</sup> Matthew Griffith seems to have been given a semi-public warning to tone down his ‘bitternesse and uncharitableness’ by a writer claiming to speak for the king: there seems no other candidate for the ‘D. Gr.’ referred to by that writer<sup>76</sup> than Dr Griffith, whose published sermon *The Fear of God and the King* was so vitriolic that some royalists were afraid that it might threaten the possibility of restoration.<sup>77</sup> Griffith, like most new-style episcopalians, lumped presbyterians together with independents as rebels and traitors to whom no concessions of any kind should be made, and by April this theme was widespread in print despite the warning. One of them asserted that even those who had resisted the execution of the king in 1649 were no better than Judas, asserting after the event his sorrow that his betrayal of Jesus led to His death. Now, he wrote, they were hoping to excuse their betrayal of the father by feigning love for the son, but the king should not trust them, they would undo him too if they could. Their present show of loyalty was just a trick by which they hoped to perpetuate some form of presbyterian government in the church.<sup>78</sup>

Since no one knew how effective such behind-the-scenes tactics might be, the campaign to ensure that the coming church was as comprehensive as possible continued. When the new Parliament<sup>79</sup> met on April 25th, it began as always with a sermon, and the preacher chosen, Edward Reynolds, followed Gauden’s theme of healing, preaching on Malachi 4.2, ‘the Sun of Righteousness arise with healing in his

<sup>75</sup> Anon., *A Word in due season to the ranting royallists, and rigid Presbyterians &c. by a person wholly disinterested in any of the late or present factions* (1660) p 6.

<sup>76</sup> Anon., *A seasonable advertisement to all that desire an happy settlement particularly to those of the Royal Party : being 1. The extract of a letter from Breda, and 2. A letter written upon it to a friend in the countrey* (1660), pp 1f.

<sup>77</sup> Matthew Griffith, *The Fear of God and the King* (1660).

<sup>78</sup> Anon., *The grand rebels detected or, the Presbyter unmasked* (1660). The author implies that he is ordained on p 6.

<sup>79</sup> ‘The King called it a Parliament, [though] it has not had since so great a Reputation’—Sir Harbottle Grimstone speaking in 1679 (Grey, March 10 1679).

wings', and applied this in terms of a settlement of the Church, although the terms were very general.<sup>80</sup> Richard Baxter, preaching to the same congregation a few days later, was more specific:

'our calamities began in differences about religion, and still that's the wound that most needs closing... the terms on which the differing parties most considerable among us, may safely, easily and suddenly unite are very obvious... the late Reverend Primate of Ireland consented (in less than half an hour's debate) to five or six propositions which I offered him, as sufficient for the Concord of the moderate Episcopall and Presbyterians, without forsaking the Principles of their Parties. O that the Lord would yet show so much mercy to a sinfull Nation, as to put it into your hearts to promote but the practice of those Christian principles which we are all agreed in'.<sup>81</sup>

It should be noticed, however, that Baxter is not commending Ussher's plan. The text usually quoted when referring to this conversation between Ussher and Baxter is the one written by Baxter much later, and printed in the *Reliquiae*; the wording in this sermon (to which he urges readers of the *Reliquiae* to turn for more accurate information) gives a slightly different impression. Baxter was commending a system of his own which he had proposed to Ussher, and which, presumably, was as acceptable to Ussher after their half-hour talk as his own proposals of a dozen years earlier. Certainly many of the old-style episcopalians listening to his sermon took it that way: for 'many moderate Episcopal Divines came to me to know what those Terms of our Agreement were', which they would not have if they thought Baxter was simply commending Ussher's plan, now well known through its three printings.

The details of Baxter's proposal on this occasion are described in the *Reliquiae*. Every incumbent was to be the 'governor' as well as the teacher of his flock; in those parishes that had more presbyters than one, one was to be the stated President (by

<sup>80</sup> Edward Reynolds, *The author and subject of healing in the church set forth in a sermon preached before the Right Honorable the Parliament of England at St. Margarets Church in Westminster* (1660).

<sup>81</sup> *A sermon of repentance. Preached before the Honourable House of Commons, assembled in Parliament at Westminster, at their late solemn fast for the settling of these nations, April 30. 1660* (1660) pp 41f.

'stated' he meant permanent rather than just for a particular occasion); in every market town there were to be assemblies of ministers, and in their meetings, one was to be a stated President; in every County or Diocese there were to be not less than annual assemblies of all the incumbents, and these assemblies also were to have a fixed President; ordinations were not to be done without the President; and coercive power was to be wielded only by the Magistrate.<sup>82</sup> Baxter's proposals, which had been described not only to Hammond, as described above, but to Ussher and to Brownrigg,<sup>83</sup> were in some ways less accommodating to presbyterians than Ussher's: he made no provision for the involvement of lay elders in church discipline and suspension from communion, whereas Ussher's plan had given a disciplinary role to wardens and sidesmen. In Brownrigg's comments on Baxter's plan, he associated himself with Ussher's proposals, referring to them as 'ours': 'This Proposal looks like our Rural Deaneries, or Choriepiscopal Order'.<sup>84</sup> Nevertheless, Baxter made it clear that local church discipline was still of the fundamental characteristics of a moderated episcopacy: 'I foretell you that you shut out me and all that are of my mind, if you would force us to administer Sacraments without Discipline... The question is not, whether Bishops or no? but whether Discipline or none?'<sup>85</sup>

Gauden, preaching on the same occasion, contented himself with a calls for the restoration of episcopacy, but without going into further detail.<sup>86</sup> He was also one of those who spoke to Baxter about the proposals Ussher had thought would work, and

<sup>82</sup> *RB II* p 206.

<sup>83</sup> Bishop of Exeter since 1642, appointed by Charles I as a moderate.

<sup>84</sup> *RB II* p 175.

<sup>85</sup> *A sermon of repentance. Preached before the Honourable House of Commons* (1660), p 43.

<sup>86</sup> *Megaleia theou, Gods great demonstrations and demands of iustice, mercy, and humility set forth in a sermon preached before the Honourable House of Commons, at their solemn fast, before their first sitting, April 30, 1660* (1660) p 62.

not long afterwards tried unsuccessfully to bring Baxter and Morley together to consider them.

Another moderate episcopacy proposed at this time, although his careful arguments appear to have been a long time in preparation, was that of George Lawson. In his plan the 'civil Sovereign' appointed the bishop, who was 'reduced to his Ancient Superintendency and Inspection'. Bishops, priests and laity must all have a voice in the exercise of discipline, although how exactly this was to be worked out was a matter for discussion. Dioceses should be no bigger than counties, so that discipline can be effective.<sup>87</sup>

Gauden republished his edition of Ussher's *Reduction* on June 25th, and the presbyterians quickly realised that Ussher's plan, simply because it was by a widely respected archbishop, was their best hope. Baxter no doubt still believed what the royalist Sir Ralph Clare had told him earlier in the year concerning the king's intentions, that 'a bare Presidency in Synods, such as Bishop Usher in his *Reduction* did require, was all that was intended... there should be no Lord Bishops, nor so large Diocesses, or great Revenues, much less any persecuting Power, but that the Essentials of Episcopacy was all that was expected', not to mention the fact that 'Dr. Morley, and other of the Divines on that side, did privately meet with several Persons of Honour, and some Ministers, and professed Resolutions for great Moderation and Lenity'.<sup>88</sup> Morley, however, talked only of moderation in general, and every time Baxter tried to get his agreement to some specific compromise, Morley evaded it—and the king was appointing new bishops to the vacant Irish sees even as they

<sup>87</sup> *Politica sacra & civilis: or, A modell of civil and ecclesiasticall government* (1660) p 351.

<sup>88</sup> *RB II* pp 208, 217.

spoke. At any rate, Ussher's plan was what the moderate presbyterians proposed to the king, with one or two of its points made more specific: that the suffragans, or *chorepiscopi*, were to be chosen by the appropriate Synod; the 'associations'<sup>89</sup> (diocese or rural deanery) were not to be so large as to make discipline impossible; no oaths of obedience to the Bishops were to be made a condition of ordination; and bishops were to be bound by canons established by Parliament (which the 1604 canons had never been). The plan was given to the King in July; shortly afterwards someone also reprinted Udall's plan for modified episcopacy, 'for the common good', although still attributing it to Ussher.<sup>90</sup> The *Directions propounded* attributed to Ussher in 1659 was also reprinted this year.

At the beginning of August Cornelius Burges came out of retirement to add his once considerable reputation in support of modification of the episcopate, in a pamphlet commending the subject to Parliament, and also recommending Ussher's model in particular. Burges pointed out that such an episcopate could be set up by any means Parliament chose to use, ie that election by cathedral chapters and so on was merely tradition, not law, and that the episcopal supervision of discipline was also subject to the law of the land, since the canons of 1604 did not have the force of law. He also suggested that more than 200 dioceses would be needed if there were to be 'any due care of Souls, by such as have power to do it, if Episcopacy be again set up'.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>89</sup> By 1659 13 counties had associations like Worcester's, see Geoffrey Nuttall and Owen Chadwick, *From Uniformity to Unity 1662-1962* (SPCK London 1962) p 172 nn 5, 7, but the 'confusion buried all', *CCRB* Vol 2 p 70.

<sup>90</sup> *The Bishop of Armagh's direction, concerning the lyurgy, and episcopall government Being thereunto requested by the Honourable, the House of Commons, and then presented in the year 1642* (1660).

<sup>91</sup> *Reasons shewing the necessity of reformation of the publick 1. doctrine, 2. worship, 3. rites and ceremonies, 4. church-government, and discipline, reputed to be (but indeed, not) established by law* (1660) p 53. Burges (the work was presented as being by several un-named ministers, but Baxter tells us that Burges was chiefly responsible, *RB* II p 264) had been a supporter of moderate episcopacy in 1640, but later accepted the idea of a purely presbyterian government.

The press debate assumed that decisions on the matter, and on the liturgical matters in disagreement (described in Chapter 3), would be made by the king and Parliament (although some pamphlets urged that a re-called Convocation be involved), but some opposed to any modification of the former episcopate did not wait. 'Episcopal men carry as if they concluded nothing could stand in their way', wrote one observer,

'[they] now make it their work to put off the meeting of a synod, which hitherto hath been in the Talk of all, seeking to settle their way before a synod be called. I see generally the Cassock Men appearing everywhere boldly, the Liturgy in many places setting up... The Parliament... are ready to set up Episcopacy to the Height in Matters Ecclesiastical; and with the rest moderate Episcopacy will go down... The sober party have no Reserve but in the King, whose Inclinations lead him to Moderation.'

By June 21st this observer could say 'the course of prelacy is carrying on without any opposition; so that they who were for the moderation thereof, apprehend they have lost the game.'<sup>92</sup> Some new-style episcopalians were open to some small degree of accommodation, however; Herbert Thorndike was willing to accept a greater role for presbyters than had been the case before the abolition of the episcopate, suggesting that a college of presbyters be set up in each county town, so that in dioceses that included more than one county the bishop would work with several such presbyteries. In dioceses which covered only one county, there was already a cathedral chapter in place which would serve the same purpose. The consent of the presbyters would be needed before the bishop could ordain anyone. How serious he was about this must remain a matter for speculation; his additional proposal that the members of such a college of presbyters live celibate lives in a semi-monastic community, with married

<sup>92</sup> Sharp to Douglas, in R. Wodrow, *History of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland* (1721) Vol I pp xxxiiiif, xxxix.

clergy serving the villages outside the county seat, could not have been likely to appeal to many.<sup>93</sup>

What to all appearances was a restored prelacy as a *fait accompli* may have resulted not so much from a thought-out strategy as from the intensity of the desire for revenge on those who had turned them out a dozen or so years earlier, a revenge that would be impossible if there was a genuinely comprehensive church. The returning and reviving new-style episcopalians acted, as William Godman told Cambridge University, 'not from their principles, but from their temper'.<sup>94</sup> Several contributors to the press debate pointed out the level of anger expressed by them, and that they were bent on revenge, regardless of other considerations, was a common theme. Reference has already been made<sup>95</sup> to the observation of one writer that extreme royalists civil and ecclesiastical were in a temper that would ruin the reign of Charles II as they had ruined the reign of his father; the quoted passage continues, 'Is it no fault in you, who glory in being so Orthodox, to breath out Violence, cherish your lusts, and steep your souls in revenge?'<sup>96</sup> George Lawson made a similar point: they are 'very high and must be revenged'.<sup>97</sup> 'Many of your Episcopal men as I know from conversation with them, are of a most revengeful nature, and I believe, if their power were extended as far as their desires, their cruelty would be in the height,' wrote the recently arrived French Protestant, Jean Gailhard.<sup>98</sup> A collection of reminiscences of

<sup>93</sup> *The due way of composing the differences on foot, preserving the Church, according to the opinion of Herbert Thorndike* (1660), pp 37ff, 40–44. In his *An epilogue to the tragedy of the Church of England* (1659) Book III pp 146–152 he had argued for the traditional understanding of the episcopate, without any 'consenting' role for presbyters.

<sup>94</sup> Godman, *Ben horim filius her +um* [the son of nobles : set forth in a sermon preached at St Mary's in Cambridge before the university] (1660) p 31.

<sup>95</sup> See above, p 48.

<sup>96</sup> Anon., *A Word in due season to the ranting royallists, and rigid Presbyterians &c. by a person wholly disinterested in any of the late or present factions* (1660), p 6. The writer had a single sheet version of this printed to give away free; the 12-page pamphlet is Wing W3542.

<sup>97</sup> Lawson, *op cit*, Epistle to the Reader, sig A3.

<sup>98</sup> *The controversie between episcopacy and presbytery stated and discussed, by way of letters, at the desire of a person of quality and learning* (1660) p 5.



just how awful episcopacy had been in the 1630s to which three different writers contributed apologised for not naming the writers because ‘envie and revenge’ were in the air.<sup>99</sup> Some of those arguing for the restoration of the episcopate in its most powerful form even hinted that the king’s future depended on his support of this policy. Gryffith Williams, the surviving bishop of Ossory, after a description of how God punished Jeroboam for failing to honour the Aaronic priesthood,<sup>100</sup> warned that ‘so he can do with all those Kings and Monarchs, whoever they be, that by their timorous conniving with Sects, or a popular favouring either the greater part, or the stronger side, do think it the most politick course, to be securely established, and so suffer the service of God, to be either neglected, or perverted, and the faithfull Governours of his church, to be suppressed’.<sup>101</sup> ‘Until our bishops receive their right though we are glad to have our king, we may rationally fear we shall not hold him’, wrote another.<sup>102</sup> Matthew Griffith, in the work referred to above, had gone into print with an even more explicit warning to Monck in March, reminding him that ‘God’s word is never more lively and mighty in operation, than when it is countenanc’d, and assisted with the power of the sword’, and quoting Esther 4.13 as a reminder of what might happen to him if he failed to take the opportunity to restore the king—‘thou, and thy house shall be destroyed’.<sup>103</sup> Those who had said to Baxter, ‘You know not the Principles or Spirit of the Prelates, if you look for any Liberty in Publick or in Private, to be granted to any that do not conform’<sup>104</sup> had their measure exactly, and

<sup>99</sup> *A landskip: or a brief prospective of English episcopacy* (1660, reprinting a pamphlet from 1641), Preface Sig A2.

<sup>100</sup> II Chronicles 11.14f.

<sup>101</sup> *Ho Antichristos the great antichrist revealed, before this time never discovered, and proved to be neither pope, nor Turk, nor any single person, nor the succession of any one monarch or tyrant in any policies, but a collected pack, or multitude of hypocritical, heretical, blasphemous, and most scandalous wicked men* (1660) epistle dedicatory, np no sig [p iv]. The main body of this work had been written long before, but dedication was written when it finally found a publisher in 1660.

<sup>102</sup> Thomas Pierce, *Englands season for reformation of life* (1660) p 14.

<sup>103</sup> Griffith, *op cit*, Epistle to Monck, sig A4, np no sig [p vii].

<sup>104</sup> *RB II* p 216.

the vengeful nature of much of the published work of new-style episcopalians was still remembered 20 years later.<sup>105</sup> The argument made by some modern scholars that the failure of moderate episcopacy to win acceptance was due to defects in the proposed system<sup>106</sup> is undermined by the fact that most new-style episcopalians were determined from the beginning that no moderate episcopacy be seriously considered. Once the king was restored, they were even more determined to use their advantage to the full than the presbyterians had been earlier in the year.

So the temperature of the debate rose, and in the first half of October William Prynne had his *The unbishoping of Timothy and Titus* reprinted, 'to reconcile and unite (as much as may be) the Episcopal and Presbyterian Clergy, by discovering and moderating both their Excesses'. His hope was that things would be restored as approved by Charles I at the Isle of Wight.

'I earnestly intreat, (and O that I might perswade) all Bishops, Prelates, Presbyters... patiently to expect and cheerfully to submit to that Model of Church Government... which we all hope will ere long be settled by His Majesty's pious endeavours, and Royal Authority (according to the Ministers and Commons House Addresses to His Majesty in pursuance of his own Royal letters and Declaration from Breda), with the Advice of moderate, learned and pious Divines of all formerly dissenting parties, and both Houses of Parliament'.<sup>107</sup>

Shortly after the publication of Prynne's appeal, the king invited episcopalians and puritans, mostly presbyterians, to gather at Worcester House and work something out, and took a close interest in their proceedings. The king's own religious opinions

<sup>105</sup> *A Caution to all true English Protestants concerning the late popish plot by way of a conference between an old Queen-Elizabeth-Protestant, and his countrey-neighbour* (1681), p 10.

<sup>106</sup> Hugh Trevor-Roper, for instance, says that the alleged failure of the church to accept the idea was 'as much through its inherent defects as through the pressure of political circumstances', H. Trevor-Roper, 'James Ussher, Archbishop of Armagh' in *Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans: Seventeenth Century Essays* (London 1987) pp 151f, because 'it was a purely clerical compromise', and Spurr also blames 'the inherent feebleness of the Ussher platform,' *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (Yale University Press 1991) p 144, apparently referring to the fact that Ussher leaves parish discipline in the hands of the presbyter. Stephen Sykes, on the other hand, thought that 'Ussher's scheme for the blending of episcopal and presbyteral elements has not received the attention it merited, either from contemporaries or modern reformers', *Theology* Vol 49 (1946) p 81.

<sup>107</sup> William Prynne, *The unbishoping of Timothy and Titus* (1660) 'Appendix touching the occasions and ends of re-printing this treatise', np no sig [pp xxvii, xxviii, xxxf].

have been much debated, and this thesis cannot enter into that debate, but the writer agrees with the generally accepted view that although he intended a restoration of the episcopate in some form, the king felt he owed his presbyterian supporters, to whom he was most immediately indebted for his return, and English catholics, many of whom had supported his father in arms and whose religion he may well have shared, whatever he could give them in terms of a church settlement. His willingness to consider all the possibilities is clear from the declaration from Breda referred to by Prynne:

‘because the passion and uncharitableness of the times have produced several opinions in religion, by which men are engaged in parties and animosities against each other (which, when they shall hereafter unite in a freedom of conversation, will be composed or better understood), we do declare a liberty to tender consciences, and that no man shall be disquieted or called in question for differences of opinion in matter of religion, which do not disturb the peace of the kingdom’.<sup>108</sup>

What this liberty meant to most presbyterians and many moderate episcopalians was a more controlled version of the ecclesiastical changes that had been under way since the early 1650s: free discussion leading to the composition of differences, with liberty for most during the process, leading to a resettled national church under the final authority of Parliament. The presbyterians apparently felt that a declaration by the king would be all that was needed by way of guarantee of their own place in the national church, since they still dominated Parliament at this point. They also placed a great deal of reliance on the fact that Charles had taken the covenant in 1650; many of them seem to have assumed his assent to it was whole-hearted,<sup>109</sup> although the press had already been used to remind him of it, the pamphlet describing his acceptance of

<sup>108</sup> Kenyon, *The Stuart Constitution* (Cambridge University Press 1986) p 332.

<sup>109</sup> *RB II* p 216.

the covenant being reprinted within weeks of his return, just so that he was aware that it had not been forgotten.<sup>110</sup> New-style episcopalians were determined to see the episcopate restored as closely as possible to what it had been in the 1630s, but Charles does not appear to have believed he needed to give them this in return for their support. What they wanted, they would not necessarily get from Charles, and they began a press campaign of their own against comprehension. Their campaign will be noticed in this thesis only as far as is necessary to understand the points made in the campaign for comprehension.

The king intended to intervene in these matters himself on his own authority while Parliament was in recess. Clarendon told the adjourning Parliament in September 1660 that the king was very concerned to fulfil the promises made in the Breda declaration, and had spent ‘many a Sigh, many a sad Hour, when He hath considered the almost irreparable Reproach the Protestant Religion hath undergone, from the Divisions and Distractions which have been so notorious within this Kingdom.’ Parliament could relax and leave it all to him:

‘What Pains He hath taken to compose them, after several Discourses with learned and pious Men of different Persuasions, you will shortly see, by a Declaration He will publish upon that Occasion, by which you will see His great Indulgence to those who can have any Protection from Conscience to differ with their Brethren; and I hope God will so bless the Candour of His Majesty in the Condescensions He makes, that the Church, as well as the State, will return to that Unity and Unanimity, which will make both King and People as happy as they can hope to be in this World.’

Clarendon warned off those episcopalians who might want to interfere with this process: ‘Let all those who are too proud of having been, as they think, less faulty than other Men, and so are unwilling to be reconciled to those who have offended

<sup>110</sup> *A declaration by the Kings Majesty. To his subjects of the kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland* (1660). Cf Green, *Re-establishment* pp 14f.

them, take Heed of the Apostacy of Nicephorus<sup>111</sup>; and that those Fumes of Envy, and Uncharitableness, and Murmuring, do not so far transport and intoxicate them, that they fall into those very Crimes, they value themselves for having hitherto declined.<sup>112</sup>

The king in fact was already at work on the promised Declaration as Clarendon spoke, and completed it before Parliament reconvened. The details of the king's religious settlement and its concessions to presbyterians were published in what modern historians call the Worcester House declaration, a document known for at least the first fifty years of its life as the king's Gracious Declaration. The discussions at Worcester House had achieved little, and eventually the king asked the puritans what absolutely needed to be added to the Declaration as of 'flat necessity' if it were to be acceptable to them. They listed ten such necessities: first, a statement that the Declaration's purpose was 'to promote the Power of Godliness, to encourage the Exercises of Religion, both publick and private, and to take care that the Lord's Day be appropriated to holy Exercises, without unnecessary Divertisements; and that insufficient, negligent, non-resident, and scandalous Ministers be not permitted in the Church'; second, that the number of suffragan bishops be 'sufficient for the due Performance of their Work'; third, that 'No Bishops shall ordain, or exercise any part of Jurisdiction which appertains to the Censures of the Church, without the Advice and Consent of the Presbyters, and no Chancellors, Commissaries, Archdeacons, or Officials shall exercise any Act of Spiritual Jurisdiction'; fourth, that the Dean and Chapter cannot be described as 'the most proper' advisers to the bishop, but may be

<sup>111</sup> Nicephorus was a 3rd century layman who sought forgiveness from a priest called Sapricius, which was refused. Sapricius ended up denying Christ, at which point Nicephorus volunteered to be martyred in his place. Clarendon's application of this story is not clear, since it was Sapricius who fell into apostasy and also refused to be reconciled.

<sup>112</sup> *LJ* 13 September 1660.

'better fitted' to be so if chosen from among the 'the most learned and pious Presbyters', and that 'that at least an equal Number of the most learned, pious, and discreet Presbyters of the same Diocess, (annually chosen by the major Vote of all the Presbyters of that Diocess) shall be assistant and consenting together with those of the Chapter' in all matters of spiritual jurisdiction, including ordination, with an equivalent requirement for suffragans; fifth, confirmations should only take place 'with the Consent of the Minister... Who shall admit none to the Lord's Supper, till they have made a credible Profession of their Faith' or 'openly declared themselves to have truly repented, and amended... former naughty Lives'; sixth, any review of the liturgy should be conducted by an equal number of 'both persuasions', with any changes 'in Scripture Phrase as near as may be', and 'none... punished or troubled for not using it, until it be reviewed and effectually reformed'; seventh, 'none shall be required to kneel in the act of receiving the Lord's Supper'; eighth, 'the religious Observation of Holy days of human Institution be left indifferent'; ninth, the sentence describing the surplice as 'a most decent Ornament for the Clergy' to be omitted; tenth, the subscription required by the Canons and the Oath of Canonical Obedience not to be required for ordination, those ordained by presbyters alone not to be re-ordained by a bishop, and reference to a synod to make a final determination on these things be dropped; and finally that no minister to be ejected for not reading the three of the thirty nine articles that dealt with church-government or ceremonial issues.<sup>113</sup>

The king's declaration granted almost all the points requested by the puritans, omitting only the consent of presbyters for ordinations, the leaving optional of holy

<sup>113</sup> *RB II* pp 275f.

days, and the acceptance of presbyterian ordination. He had even added other language in the presbyterian interest that they had not described as a 'flat necessity': provision for equal representation of elected and appointed presbyters at meetings of the Cathedral chapter, not just in membership but in actual participation at meetings—if at any particular meeting clergy of one sort outnumbered the other, the most junior of the outnumbering side were to withdraw; rural deans, appointed by the bishop, together with clergy elected by the presbyters, are to meet monthly to decide on disciplinary matters and oversee arrangements for the training of young people; much more of the prefatory remarks about ceremonies were omitted than the puritans had asked for; and the statement that those who did not object to ceremonies were 'Superiour in Number and Quality' to those who did was omitted.<sup>114</sup> This was enough to keep the presbyterians on board, Baxter wrote: 'now the Terms were (though not such as we desired, yet) such as any sober honest Ministers might submit to', he wrote.<sup>115</sup>

The published Declaration required the restored episcopate to be exercised according to the following guidelines:

'the Bishops be frequent Preachers, and that they do very often preach themselves in some Church of their Diocese... We will appoint such a Number of Suffragan Bishops in every Diocese, as shall be sufficient for the due Performance of their Work... no Bishop shall ordain, or exercise any Part of Jurisdiction which appertains to the Censures of the Church, without the Advice and Assistance of the Presbyters; and no Chancellors, Commissaries, or Officials, as such, shall

<sup>114</sup> But would be referred to when the Savoy Conference papers went into print, see the letter from the presbyterians that is included at the beginning of some copies of *The Grand Debate*, p 5.

<sup>115</sup> *RB II* pp 276–9. The quoted passages are on pp 276, 278, 279. Barry Till, 'The Worcester House Declaration, 1660', in *Historical Research* Vol 70 (1997) p 215, says that because the provision for monthly meetings of the rural deanery was added without being requested by the presbyters, and the 'basic idea' comes from Ussher's *Reduction*, the 'Worcester House drafters' must have had the *Reduction* in front of them. He offers the use of the word 'precinct' in another section of the Declaration, a word which Ussher had also used, as further argument for this. But while the monthly meeting idea is similar to one in Ussher, it does not seem close enough to argue that Ussher's document was actually in front of them, and the suggestion of the word 'precinct' came from the puritans, who were explicit about their preference for Ussher according to Baxter. That the puritans referred to Ussher carefully there is no doubt.

exercise any Act of Spiritual Jurisdiction in these Cases; (videlicet,) Excommunication, Absolution, or wherein any of the Ministry are concerned’;

the Chapter’s role in such advice and assistance would be supplemented by

‘an equal Number (to those of the Chapter) of the most learned, pious, and discreet Presbyters of the same Diocese, annually chosen by the major Vote of all the Presbyters of that Diocese present at such Elections, [who] shall be always advising and assisting, together with those of the Chapter, in all Ordinations, and in every Part of Jurisdiction which appertains to the Censures of the Church... Confirmation be rightly and solemnly performed, by the Information, and with the Consent, of the Minister of the Place’;

and ‘no Bishop shall exercise any arbitrary Power, or do or impose any Thing upon the Clergy or the People, but what is according to the known Law of the Land.’ The king had ‘not the least Doubt but that the present Bishops will think the present Concessions now made by us to allay the present Distempers very just and reasonable, and will very chearfully conform themselves thereunto’, and ended by calling on ‘all Our loving Subjects to acquiesce in, and submit to, this Our Declaration concerning those Differences, which have so much disquieted the Nation’.<sup>116</sup>

One of the ‘flat necessities’ which the Declaration had not taken up would prove to be contentious in the future, the question of re-ordination. The Declaration set a policy for future ordinations—by the bishop with the advice and assistance of the presbyters—but nothing was said about the many ordinations in the previous dozen years or so in which no bishop had been involved. Perhaps the presbyterians thought its silence on the subject represented an implicit acceptance of such ordinations. It is easy to see why the presbyterians would not have pressed the issue; they had been taking counsel with episcopalians for the future of the church on equal terms for five or six years. They could not have been unaware that there were episcopalians who had

<sup>116</sup> *His Majesty’s Declaration to all His loving Subjects, of His Kingdom of England and Dominion of Wales, concerning Ecclesiastical Affairs* (1660).



refused to participate in such talks precisely because they were ‘not just scandal but [did] real damage to episcopalianism’,<sup>117</sup> or perhaps they assumed that because the most articulate leader of such non-participating episcopalians, Henry Hammond, had died, they were no longer important.

The Gracious Declaration was greeted by many presbyterians and episcopalians (even some not particularly interested in moderate episcopacy) with some satisfaction. It was widely assumed that the Declaration had all the authority needed for its purpose, and ought to be obeyed, as the Declaration itself expected: ‘the king hath removed the main bone of division [from the upcoming Parliament], by taking into his own hand, and his Declaration determining, the great point of church government,’ commented Secretary of State Sir Edward Nicholas.<sup>118</sup> Baxter concluded that ‘by the King’s Declaration the Essentials at least of Church-Government is restored to the Pastors, whereas before the Pastors had no Government’.<sup>119</sup> Prynne wrote happily that what was promised from Breda was ‘punctually performed’ in the Gracious Declaration.<sup>120</sup> Other moderates also thought the church government issue was settled, with only liturgical matters still outstanding. Gauden almost immediately (before the end of November) tried to move the discussion on by publishing a work on liturgy. The king certainly thought the question of church government was settled; it was shortly after its publication that he offered bishoprics to the puritan Baxter, and to the presbyterians Reynolds and Calamy, and he had the Declaration published in Ireland several weeks before allowing any of the bishops he had

<sup>117</sup> See Fincham and Taylor, ‘Episcopalian conformity and nonconformity 1646–1660’.

<sup>118</sup> Quoted by R. S. Bosher, *The Making of the Restoration Settlement 1649–1662* (Dacre, Westminster 1957), p 185, citing PRO SP 94/44, f. 125.

<sup>119</sup> *RB II* p 284.

<sup>120</sup> *A moderate, seasonable apology for indulging just Christian liberty to truly tender consciences* (1662) Epistle Dedicatory np.

nominated to take up office, in order to ensure that they would exercise a moderate episcopate according to its provisions.<sup>121</sup> Clarendon later wrote that no one had ever suggested that it had no force.<sup>122</sup> Many in the church exercised their religion and their ministry on the assumption that the Declaration determined the atmosphere, if not all the details of the government and liturgy of the Church of England, for the next thirty years, despite the contradictions of it soon enacted by Parliament.<sup>123</sup>

When Parliament reconvened on 6 November, the House of Commons immediately passed a resolution thanking the king for the declaration, and began discussion of the question of whether to pass a law based on it. The Speaker, Sir Harbottle Grimston, assured the king there would soon be such a bill ready for his signature.<sup>124</sup> Those who spoke against such a bill did so because the declaration itself left some things to be settled by a future synod, and thought therefore that Parliament should not try to settle the issue before the synod met.<sup>125</sup> Nevertheless, a committee was appointed to consider the matter further. The Committee appears simply to have recommended giving the declaration the force of law, rather than preparing a bill based on it, but when the proposal was debated, on November 28th, this procedure ran into opposition. Sir John Masham made the point, saying ‘they had before them an excellent Declaration, metamorphosed into a very ugly bill’, because to enact it would be to make an eventual settlement harder to achieve. He was also in no doubt

<sup>121</sup> Green, *Re-establishment*, p 32.

<sup>122</sup> Abernathy, ‘English Presbyterians’ p 90, although in his *Life*, written some years later, Clarendon seems to remember it differently, chiding the presbyterians for criticising the bishops ‘as if they assumed a jurisdiction yet at least suspended’, *The life of Edward Earl of Clarendon*, (1759) Vol II p 282.

<sup>123</sup> A study of the proposed standard set of Visitation Articles prepared for use by a committee of Convocation in 1661 shows several important differences with earlier articles, many of which seem designed to conciliate Puritans willing to conform. The proposed standard was not imposed, but the majority of dioceses used them for many years. See, for example, *Articles of visitation and enquiry concerning matters ecclesiastical exhibited to the ministers, churchwardens, and side-men of every parish within the Diocese of Lincoln, in the first episcopal visitation of the Right Reverend Father in God, Robert ... Lord Bishop of Lincoln* (1662).

<sup>124</sup> *Mercurius Publicus* No 45, 1st–8th November 1660.

<sup>125</sup> *PH* Vol IV col 141f.

that the Declaration had force as it stood, though: when he spoke against the Lord's Day bill, his argument was that a proper observance of the Lord's Day was already decreed in the Declaration.<sup>126</sup> Sir Edward Thurland, a lawyer said to be a supporter of moderate episcopacy,<sup>127</sup> agreed that 'it was very disputable whether such an excellent declaration would make an excellent law... He never knew a Declaration, by wholesale, voted into an act'.<sup>128</sup> Thurland was a member of the Committee that brought in the bill, as was John Maynard, who after the debate had gone on for several hours suggested that they not reject the bill, because the Declaration was so 'pleasing to everyone',<sup>129</sup> but simply not read it a second time. This motion was approved 183–157.

This majority is sometimes thought surprising in a Parliament assumed to be predominantly presbyterian, and various explanations have been put forward for it,<sup>130</sup> but it is possible that even members of Parliament with presbyterian sympathies thought there was no need for parliamentary approval of the Declaration, since there was so much agreement that it achieved its purposes by itself, by virtue of the king's role as supreme governor of the church.

The Declaration gave a reason for presbyterians, at least, to consider themselves still members in good standing in the Church of England, and most of them continued to function as they had before Charles returned. Puritan clergy serving in parishes whose incumbent, ejected after the abolition of episcopacy, was still living,

<sup>126</sup> *PH* Vol IV col 142.

<sup>127</sup> *ODNB* article.

<sup>128</sup> *PH* Vol IV col 154.

<sup>129</sup> *PH* Vol IV col 154.

<sup>130</sup> Boshier suggests that the episcopalians were bolder than presbyterians because they knew the government was on their side, *Restoration Settlements* p 196; Abernathy, Spurr, and Till suggest that it was independents joining episcopalians in voting against it that turned the scale, Abernathy 'English Presbyterians' p 78, Spurr *Restoration Church* p 36, Till 'Worcester House Declaration' p 226.

were required to return their places to their former holders, but the rest carried on. Lay presbyterians likewise continued to worship in the parish church, 'constantly resorting to Common Prayer, the Lords Supper, and all God's publick Ordinances, without separation'.<sup>131</sup> Even the allegedly 'uncompromising presbyterian' Zachary Crofton received Holy Communion according the Prayer Book rite while imprisoned in the Tower of London for treason, and wrote to a friend in explanation that 'communion with the church visible' was a 'positive duty, not without sin to be omitted'. Those outside the Tower still enjoyed 'a liberty of worshipping God, in due and right order, and may drink the Waters of the Sanctuary in clean Vessels', thanks to the Gracious Declaration; if he could have taken advantage of the 'indulgence' offered by it in the Tower he would have, but the fact that such an opportunity was not available did not excuse him from his role in the established church.<sup>132</sup>

The failure of Parliament to give legal force to the Declaration appears to have been interpreted variously by the bishops appointed during the following months, with some (like Reynolds) exercising an episcopate in the way envisaged in the Declaration,<sup>133</sup> and others in various places along the spectrum from there to the Laudian model, but there is not space to explore that issue here. The debate over episcopacy did not subside immediately, and re-emerged at various points during the period covered in this thesis, but for the most part took second place to the need for accommodation in liturgical matters, to which we now turn.

<sup>131</sup> *Moderate, seasonable apology* Epistle Dedicatory.

<sup>132</sup> ODNB article on Crofton; *Reformation not separation* (1662) pp 4, 3, 6, 40; *RB* p 298.

<sup>133</sup> Jeffrey Jeremiah, 'Edward Reynolds (1599–1676) "Pride of the Presbyterian Party"', PhD thesis, George Washington University (1992), pp 320, 377.

### 3 Comprehension and Liturgy

Most people in the Church of England in the first few months of 1660 believed that even if monarchy was restored the church would continue to accommodate puritan liturgical practice, even if some forms and ceremonies returned with the monarch. Since liturgical practice was the subject of so much of the debate over comprehension, it will be helpful to summarise what actually happened, as well as the press debate about what happened, in the early years of the restoration.

The historiography of the liturgy that emerged from this process has been dominated by the views of either the new-style episcopalians or the non-conformist denominations that emerged after 1689. Almost from the time of the process itself, those whose personal views tend towards one of these traditions have coloured their accounts accordingly. Publication in 1661 of the arguments used against the proposed Prayer Book during the negotiations by the puritans who took part in them was thought to be an attempt to persuade conformable puritans not to accept the final result—Bishop Sanderson forbade his clergy to read it.<sup>1</sup> A substantial re-examination of the history began during the 19th century and continued into the 20th, generated by and serving the needs of contemporary High Churchmen, and stressing the elements of the revision that were satisfying to them.<sup>2</sup> The general theme of these

<sup>1</sup> Edward Pearse, *Conformists Plea for the Nonconformists* (1681) p 34, where a marginal note reads 'Bishop S. at Stony-Stratford in Bucks'. Stony Stratford was in the diocese of Lincoln at the time.

<sup>2</sup> See Edward Cardwell, *A history of conferences and other proceedings connected with the revision of the Book of Common Prayer from the year 1558 to the year 1690* (Oxford 1840); E. C. Ratcliff, *The Booke of Common Prayer of the Church of England: its origins and revisions, 1549-1661* (Alcuin Club 1949); F. Proctor, and W. H. Frere, *A New History of the Book of Common Prayer* (Macmillan, London 1951); W. Jardine Grisbrooke, *Anglican Liturgies of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (SPCK, London 1958); G. Cuming, 'The English rite' in *Theology* Vol 69 (1966) pp 447-52, and *A History of Anglican Liturgy* (Macmillan Press, Hong Kong 1982).

works has been that ‘small regard was paid to the objections of the Puritans’,<sup>3</sup> and that the changes that were made were a rejection of their desire for further reform of the Prayer Book. More recent scholarship has not been quite so dismissive of the value of the changes, but even so one recent scholar calls the revised book ‘a liturgy with little change’, and a favourite quote is Sancroft’s handwritten comment, ‘all in the old method’, which tends to leave a stronger impression in the reader’s mind than the brief references to the changes actually made.<sup>4</sup> Even a historian who accepts that the change was more significant than Sancroft allows is content to describe the failure of the proposals of the new-style episcopalians to gain acceptance as ‘strange’ and move on.<sup>5</sup> This chapter will argue that the general trend of the 600 or so changes in the book is in fact in favour of the puritans, even if it goes only a very small distance in that direction. It’s true that they did not get two of their most important liturgical changes, which concerned the use of the sign of the cross in baptism and kneeling to receive communion, but the biggest disappointment for them in this revision was not liturgical, but the changes concerning the role of the episcopate. The process of revision has been described fully in works like those just cited, but this chapter will attempt to put the revision process in the context of the comprehension debate, and focus on those aspects of the process, and the changes made, most relevant to it.

In the Gracious Declaration the king had announced that he would appoint ‘an equal Number of learned Divines of both Persuasions, to review the [liturgy], and to

<sup>3</sup> Proctor and Frere p 199. The term ‘puritan’ is sometimes used by them for all those seeking further reformation, sometimes only for those who refused to use the new liturgy; the text quoted appears to refer to all.

<sup>4</sup> Bryan Spinks, *Sacraments, Ceremonies and the Stuart Divines* (Ashgate, Aldershot 2002) pp 161f; cf R. S. Bosher, *The Making of the Restoration Settlement* (Dacre, London 1957) p 246, Colin Buchanan, *The Savoy Conference Revisited* (Grove, Cambridge 2002), p 10.

<sup>5</sup> John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England 1646–1689* (Yale University Press 1991) p 40.

make such Alterations as shall be thought most necessary; and some additional Forms (in the Scripture Phrase, as near as may be), suited unto the Nature of the several Parts of Worship; and that it be left to the Minister's Choice, to use one or other at his Discretion'. Decisions about ceremonies (as opposed to texts) would be made differently, by 'the Advice of a National Synod, which shall be duly called, after a little Time, and a mutual Conversation between Persons of different Persuasions, hath mollified those Distempers, abated those Sharpnesses, and extinguished those Jealousies, which make Men unfit for those Consultations; and, upon such Advice, We shall use Our best Endeavour that such Laws may be established as may best provide for the Peace of the Church and State'. In this chapter we will look briefly at both elements in the king's process, the gathering of an 'equal Number of learned Divines of both Persuasions' and the 'National Synod' which followed, which in the event made the decisions about texts as well as rites and ceremonies.

The mutual conversation called for by the Gracious Declaration was held at the Savoy, where twelve men of each persuasion gathered for a series of discussions on liturgy that lasted from 15 April to 24 July 1661.<sup>6</sup> The episcopalians (all bishops except when a substitute was needed) started the discussion by asking the puritans to list everything they thought needed to be changed from the 1604 Prayer Book. Instead of sticking to the 'flat necessities', a procedure that had served them well in the discussions on episcopacy, they provided a list of everything they would have liked in eye-glazing detail, some of it having more to do with good liturgical procedure than further reformation, such as the request that the collects be revised

<sup>6</sup> The fullest description of these talks is by Baxter in *RB* II pp 303–372. 'Despite periodic searches for additional evidence... historians have not been able to add much' to Baxter's account—Abernathy, *English Presbyterians* p 80. The most thorough modern analysis is by Buchanan, *op cit*.

because ‘the Prefaces of many Collects have not any clear and special respect to the following Petitions’.<sup>7</sup> They also proposed a brand new liturgy, which the Declaration had spoken of and the Royal Commission that called the conference together had also mentioned— ‘additional forms in the scripture phrase as near as may be’.<sup>8</sup> The episcopalians opposed almost all of the puritans’ suggestions; by the end of the conference, however, some changes in the puritans’ favour had been accepted, but few of them would have appeared on a list of ‘flat necessities’. Such changes as the episcopalians accepted seem to have been mostly due to the efforts of John Gauden, by now bishop of Exeter.<sup>9</sup> The changes accepted included the use of readings in the most recent translation of the Bible, a more consistent numbering of the psalms, a less casual system of ensuring that those who came to Holy Communion had time to prepare and a statement in the Prayer Book about the Minister’s authority to deny Communion to the apparently unrepentant, more use of the exhortations to worthy reception, more clarity about the importance of baptism over confirmation, and the necessity of proper preparation for confirmation.<sup>10</sup> Once the Savoy talks were finished, Convocation, now sitting in parallel with a new and heavily episcopalian Parliament, and filled with clergy restored to parishes and cathedrals from which they had been ejected during the previous fifteen years, began to discuss whether any changes in the Prayer Book were appropriate to the new situation, but before examining these, it will be helpful to look at the press debate, and see whether it is possible to see how this affected the various face-to-face discussions.

<sup>7</sup> Richard Baxter, *The Grand Debate* (1661) p 7.

<sup>8</sup> Baxter, *Grand Debate* sig A2ff for the Royal Commission, which quoted the phrase from the Gracious Declaration.

<sup>9</sup> Edward Pearse, *Conformists Plea for the Nonconformists* (1681) p 35f; Edmund Calamy, *An Abridgement of Mr Baxter’s History of His Life and Times* (1702) p 173.

<sup>10</sup> *Grand Debate* (1661) pp 147f.



Ever since it became clear that the monarchy was to be restored, a public debate in print had gone on about the Common Prayer, which was assumed by almost all as bound to return with it. Anthony Sparrow had published, anonymously, his *Rationale Upon the Book of Common Prayer* as early as 1655, and in 1659 Hamon L'Estrange published his *Alliance of Divine Offices*, both of which doubtless had their influence, but not until restoration of monarchy was imminent did a significant press debate start.<sup>11</sup> During 1660 at least 30 titles were issued arguing for and against a return to a 'stinted' liturgy. The most influential were, from the episcopalians' point of view, *Considerations touching the liturgy of the Church of England* by John Gauden, and from the puritans' point of view, the title by Cornelius Burges in which he had advanced a moderate episcopacy, *Reasons shewing the necessity of reformation of the publick doctrine, worship, rites and ceremonies, church-government, and discipline*; both of these works went into two editions.

During 1661, the debate intensified, and there were replies both to Gauden's work and Burges's. Once the Savoy debate had ended, the presses became even more active. Records of the proceedings of such meetings were not normally made public (the habit some news-books had developed of reporting the proceedings in Parliament had been stopped pretty quickly once the monarchy was restored), and in any case according to Baxter all involved had agreed not to publish any of the various papers presented.<sup>12</sup> But not long after the end of the conference someone published a collection containing the puritans' criticisms of the Common Prayer and the

<sup>11</sup> Anthony Sparrow, *A rationale upon the Book of common prayer of the Church of England* (1655); Hamon L'Estrange, *The alliance of divine offices, exhibiting all the liturgies of the Church of England since the Reformation* (1659). Thorndike's *Epilogue to the tragedy of the Church of England* of 1659 has a section on sacraments and some liturgical issues, but set in the midst of such a dense theological survey of the church that it seems unlikely to have influenced the average reader.

<sup>12</sup> *RB* II p 379.

episcopalians' replies. Edward Bagshaw's younger brother Henry may have been the one responsible for these printings,<sup>13</sup> although since many of the documents in them from the puritans' side had been written by Baxter, he was suspected by many of being involved, and his name has now become attached to them.<sup>14</sup> The extent of public interest in the future of parish worship can be seen not only in the fact that money could be made by selling copies of the papers presented at the conference ('surreptitiously printed... by some poor Men for gain'),<sup>15</sup> but by the great number and variety of the printings—so much so that one modern scholar has raised the possibility of a critical edition.<sup>16</sup> There are two different collections of the material, with more than one version of one of them, as well as separate printings of one of the documents in the collections. The first to be published was probably the one entitled *An Account of all the Proceedings of the Commissioners of both Persuasions*, which ran to two editions. This collection printed the text of the king's commission, the puritans' 'Exceptions' to the 1604 Book of Common Prayer, the episcopalians' response and the puritans' reply, and what Baxter called the puritans' 'last Account and Petition to the King', headed in the printed texts 'To the Kings Most Excellent Majesty'. The second collection was given the more sensational title *The Grand Debate*, and claims on the cover to be 'the most perfect copy', so presumably this one has the correct copy of the episcopalians' response and the presbyterians' reply that Baxter admitted providing. However, not all editions of *The Grand Debate* are the same. There are three different

<sup>13</sup> White Kennett, *A Register and Chronicle Ecclesiastical and Civil* (1728) p 525. Edward Bagshaw's *The great question concerning things indifferent in religious worship*, published in September 1660, had started a discussion that is important for understanding the public context of the Prayer Book debate, and will be examined in a later chapter. See below, p 124.

<sup>14</sup> Baxter admits to providing a more accurate text of one of the published documents, the one usually headed 'The papers that passed between the commissioners', since earlier printings had been filled with inaccuracies, and 'Bishop Morley's misreports with so great confidence uttered had made it of some necessity' (*RB II* p 379). Nevertheless, a comparison of the printed texts with Baxter's own copies of them as later printed in the *Reliquiae* makes it unlikely that he had any role in their 1661 publication.

<sup>15</sup> *RB II* p 379.

<sup>16</sup> Buchanan, *op cit* p 12 n 33.

versions microfilmed by UMI, for example. UMI Reel 370:11b contains the same material as *An Accompt of all the Proceedings* plus a letter to the episcopalians introducing the puritans' reply.<sup>17</sup> UMI reel 416:11 lacks the king's commission and the last Account and Petition to the King, while UMI reel 1518:08 lacks the latter. It is clear from the pagination that these are different printings, not just a difference in what UMI filmed of three copies of the same edition. In addition, the last Account and Petition to the King was printed separately in two different editions.<sup>18</sup> The 'additional forms in the scripture phrase as near as may be', prepared by Baxter and usually known as the Reformed Liturgy, together with a paper introducing it to the episcopalians, were printed in a separate work entitled *A Petition for Peace*, and went through two editions. Baxter says that in some of these 'Whole Lines are left out; the most significant words are preverted by Alterations; and this so frequently, that some parts of the Papers (especially our large Reply, and our last Account to the King) are made Nonsense; and not intelligible.' The publication of all this material was clearly an attempt to win public opinion back to the puritans' side following some negative comments about their participation by George Morley. As Baxter said of his contribution to the printings, 'I added not one Syllable by way of Commentary, the words themselves being sufficient for his Confutation.' The most interesting to the public of the various published papers, to judge by the number of printings of it, appears to be the puritans' 'last Account to the king', in which they assured the king that the failure of the talks was due to the particular procedure required of them by the episcopalians, and denying that their inability to agree to the imposition of things

<sup>17</sup> All footnote references to *The Grand Debate* in this thesis refer to this edition.

<sup>18</sup> *To the Kings most excellent Majesty. The due account, and humble petition of the ministers of the Gospel, lately commissioned for the review & alteration of the liturgy* (1661), and *The Due account and humble petition of the ministers of the Gospel, lately commissioned for the review and alteration of the liturgy to His Majesty* (1661) which went through three editions.

which may violate the conscience of some was from any desire for 'popular applause'. In *A Petition for Peace* the puritans pointed out that the issues on which they had stood were not simply issues for presbyterians: 'it will appear... strange to the world, that you should cast out the Episcopal also, that dare not go beyond the Rule of Holy Scripture'.<sup>19</sup>

This publication of the Savoy material led to a flurry of replies also with provocative titles, including Roger L'Estrange's *The Relaps'd Apostate* and Laurence Womock's *Pulpit-conceptions, Popular-deceptions, or, The Grand Debate Resumed*.<sup>20</sup> Other pamphlets on the subject published while the debate was under way that kept the pot boiling included, from the puritan side, a reprint of *The Prayer-Book Unmasked* of 1641, which claimed that the reactionary Scottish liturgy of 1637 had been the ultimate goal of the episcopalians,<sup>21</sup> and from the episcopal side the anonymous *A Throat-hapse for the Frogges and Toades that Lately Crept Abroad Croaking Against the Common-prayer Book*.<sup>22</sup> More respectably Anthony Sparrow, who had participated at the Savoy and was a member of Convocation, reprinted his *Rationale* in 1661, and William Prynne, a Member of Parliament, made what he called a *A short sober pacific examination of some exuberances in, and ceremonial appurtenances to the Common prayer*.<sup>23</sup>

Whether the puritan contributions to all this had any influence on the discussions that took place in the Convocations which had been summoned, as had once been standard practice, at the same time as the Parliament, cannot be demonstrated in the

<sup>19</sup> *A Petition for Peace* (1661) p 10.

<sup>20</sup> Roger L'Estrange, *The relaps'd apostate, or, Notes upon a Presbyterian pamphlet, entituled A petition for peace* (1661); Laurence Womock, *Pulpit-conceptions, popular-deceptions, or, The grand debate resumed* (1662, but published November 1661 according to Kennett, *op cit* p 572).

<sup>21</sup> *The common prayer-book unmasked. VVherein is declared the unlawfulness and sinfulness of it, by several undeniable arguments* (1660) p 3.

<sup>22</sup> 1660.

<sup>23</sup> 1661.

absence of any detailed contemporary account, but puritans certainly got more from Convocation than from the bishops at the Savoy, and the pressure of public opinion generated by the press cannot be ruled out as an explanation of this fact. The Canterbury Convocation opened on 8 May 1661, but took no action on the Prayer Book at that time, because the Savoy discussions were still going on; it was ‘an antecedent commission to ours’ said the prolocutor of the lower house, Henry Ferne.<sup>24</sup> Instead it put together a committee to come up with a standard set of Visitation Articles setting out a surprisingly moderate episcopal government<sup>25</sup>—and when after the failure of the Savoy talks it turned to the matter of the Prayer Book, it used almost the same personnel, and arrived at a similar result, a limited but real blow to the new-style episcopal agenda and encouragement to that of the puritans.

Puritans got more of what most of them needed in order to stay within the national church than the anti-puritans got of what they had hoped for. In fact, the 1662 revision was in all but one case a small step in the direction of further reformation.<sup>26</sup> In the order for Morning Prayer, the bishops at the Savoy had refused all suggested changes, except the use of readings both at Morning and Evening Prayer and at Holy Communion in the most recent translation, and the revision of the introduction to readings from the Old Testament or elsewhere in the New Testament so as not to suggest that the reading was an epistle. Convocation added the following revisions: the doxology was added to the Lord’s Prayer, as had been asked for at the

<sup>24</sup> Barry Till, ‘Participants in the Savoy conference (act. 1661)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edn, Oxford University Press, Oct 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/92781>, accessed 2 March 2009] citing BL Add. MS 28053.

<sup>25</sup> See n 124, p 59 above.

<sup>26</sup> And was offered as such: ‘the Change of the Liturgy on pretense of easing us’ was how Baxter would later refer to it (*Richard Baxter’s Answer to Dr Edward Stillingfleet’s Charge of Separation*, 1680, Preface np). Cf *Letter from a person of Quality to his friend in the country* (1675) p 21, and William Allen, *A friendly call, or, A seasonable persuasive to unity directed to all nonconformists and dissenters in religion from the Church of England* (1679) p 22: ‘Have not your requests been gratified... in altering several passages in the Liturgie, as in the offices of Marriage, Churching of Women and Burials...?’

Savoy, at the most widely used occasions, ie at the beginning of Morning and Evening Prayer, was included in both instances of the prayer at Holy Communion, and added to the version of the prayer in the service for the Churching of Women. In addition, the rubric 'and to the end the people may the better hear in such places where they do sing, there shall the Lessons be sung in a plain tune, after the manner of distinct reading, and likewise the Epistle and Gospel' was omitted, as had been asked for at the Savoy, on the grounds that it turned 'the edifying simplicity and plainness of Gods service into such affected unnatural strains and tones, as is used by the Mimical, and Ludicious, or such as feign themselves in raptures'.<sup>27</sup> Some of the canticles at Evening Prayer which were referred to by their Latin titles had English translations provided; likewise the litany was given a sub-title in plainer language, 'general supplication'. The words *Quicumque Vult* were omitted as a page heading for the Athanasian Creed, replaced by the words 'At Morning Prayer'. This change had not been discussed at the Savoy, but met traditional puritan objections to any hint of a return to the use of a language 'not understood of the people'.<sup>28</sup>

In regard to the propers, the presbyterians at the Savoy had named some collects that needed revision but not specified the particular changes desired, and none were agreed to by the bishops except where the collect for a particular day, using the words 'this day', was used on following days.<sup>29</sup> In Convocation, however, many other collects were rewritten, and while there is no space to describe them all here, a comparison shows that some of the changes met puritan concerns. In the collect for the fourth Sunday after Easter, for instance, the 1604 preface 'whiche doest make the mindes of

<sup>27</sup> *The Grand Debate* p 118.

<sup>28</sup> 'The Holy Ghost hath so plainly and copiously disowned that serving of God in an unknown tongue, 1 Cor. 14', said Baxter in *RB II* p 223.

<sup>29</sup> The phrase 'this day' was changed by the bishops to 'as about this time', and amended again by Convocation to 'as at this time'.

all faithful men to be of one will' was amended to read 'who alone canst order the unruly wills and affections of sinful men', stressing in orthodox puritan manner the sinfulness of man as well as the sovereignty of God.

In the text of the Communion service, the following changes were agreed to at the Savoy: more notice was required to be given by those wishing to receive the sacrament, so that the minister could exercise discipline more effectively, and it was made easier for the minister to refuse communion to those he considered in need of that discipline in that the bishops were willing to allow the rubric to use the terms of Canon XXVI of 1604, which gave the minister a more explicit right of refusal, with the addition that the bishop be informed of such refusal afterwards. A lay-person was no longer permitted to say the confession on behalf of those present. Directions for manual acts were added to the text of the prayer over the elements. Convocation approved these changes and others: the exhortations to receive, and to receive worthily, were rewritten for use the Sunday before Communion rather than the Sunday of Communion, a concession to the puritan goal of a more effective parish discipline, and the expectation that a sermon would be preached, rather than one of the homilies read, was stated more clearly.

In the public baptism service, the bishops at the Savoy resisted all changes except the placement of the font, but Convocation addressed one of the issues of 'flat necessity', the use of the sign of the cross in baptism, by adding a rubric at the end of the baptism service referring to Canon XXX, which stated that the child was 'by vertue of Baptisme, before it be signed with the signe of the Crosse, received into the

congregation of Christ's flocke as a perfect member thereof, and not by any power ascribed unto the signe of the Crosse.'

In the catechism, Convocation confirmed the concession of the bishops at the Savoy by changing the language that says that baptised infants 'doe perform' what is required of them 'by their sureties' [godparents] so that it says only that they 'promise' them by their sureties, and the language in the 1604 rubric that suggested that baptised children were saved was changed to say that this was only true if they died before committing actual sin.

At Confirmation, despite the bishops' refusal to concede this at the Savoy, Convocation allowed the minister to present to the bishop only such candidates 'as he shall think fit', rather than anyone who can recite the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments, and answer some questions from the catechism. The function of the Godparents was made more clearly that of a witness rather than a presenter, again as requested but not conceded at the Savoy. In addition, those who wish it may be admitted to Communion once the minister thinks they are ready for it, even if they have not yet been confirmed.

In the marriage service, the requirement that the couple receive Holy Communion the day of their wedding, insisted on by the bishops, was dropped by Convocation. Finally, in the Churching of Women, the requirement that the woman make her thanksgiving in 'some convenient place nigh unto the place where the table stands', insisted on by the bishops at the Savoy, was changed by Convocation to 'some convenient place, as hath been accustomed', allowing puritan ministers who had long given up the practice, with its implication that some places within the church



building were more sacred than others, to continue whatever they had been doing instead.

As far as changes in ceremony are concerned, the following revisions were made: in the ornaments rubric, 'the minister... at all... times in his ministration shall use such ornaments' was changed to read 'such ornaments of... the ministers at all times of their ministration, shall... be in use', ie the language of the Elizabethan Act of Uniformity was substituted for the offending rubric. While this did not resolve arguments over the use of such ornaments, it did make it slightly easier for reformers to avoid the most unwelcome interpretation. The Essex minister Ralph Josselin, for instance, tells of a clergy friend who was able to avoid wearing the surplice by affirming that it was 'in use' just once a year.<sup>30</sup> Similar changes in wording concerning ornaments had been made in the Visitation Articles referred to above.<sup>31</sup> Also added was the Declaration on Kneeling, restored from the 1552 book, making clear that the consecrated elements are not the presence of Christ's 'natural flesh and blood', which is 'in heaven, and not here', and that there is therefore nothing about the elements to be worshipped, and to receive them kneeling is not an act of such worship.

As far as the 'flat necessities' of the puritans listed at Worcester House were concerned, steps toward comprehension in the new book were very limited. The three liturgical items in those necessities (not being required to kneel in the act of receiving Communion, or to observe 'Holy Days of human Institution', or to use the sign of the cross in baptism) were still required, although the Declaration on Kneeling and the changed baptismal rubric took some of the sting out of two of them.

<sup>30</sup> Alan MacFarlane, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin 1616-1683* (Oxford University Press 1991) p 523.

<sup>31</sup> The articles required by the Canons of 1640 asked detailed questions about ceremonial actions, such as 'doth he neglect, refuse, or pretermitt at any time to signe the child baptized with the signe of the crosse'; these were replaced in the articles most commonly used after 1662 with the simple 'doth he use all such rites and ceremonies... as are appointed'. See n 25 above.

Of things less flatly necessary, the book gave more. The subject of a single form of prayer before the sermon, for example, referred to in the canons rather than the Prayer Book, was also one of great importance to the puritans, as being the only place in the service where those who had 'the gift of prayer' could exercise it spontaneously. A rubric had been proposed forbidding this, but was 'afterwards dropped upon prudential reasons'.<sup>32</sup> Much is sometimes made of the change in wording from 'congregation' to 'church', but the older word was left in several places, and the word 'elect' was deleted at one point and left in at another.

A complete account of the book's compromise with puritanism would include those changes requested by the more fervent anti-puritans, but refused; the comprehensive nature of the revised book is shown as much by the changes not made as the changes made, especially when the evidence of long struggle before a final decision is considered. There is not space to include them all in this chapter, but some that are particularly significant in the case of ceremonial matters should be noted. The treatment of the rubric from 1604 concerning the place of the Communion table at Holy Communion, for instance, shows an ongoing struggle between those in favour of the puritan position, in the middle of the chancel, and those in favour of the anti-puritan position at the east or upper end of the chancel. The rubric was first changed in the book in which Convocation noted its revisions, often called the Convocation Book, from 'shall stand in the body of the Church, or in the Chancell, where Morning and Evening Prayer are appointed to be said' to 'shall stand in the most convenient place in the upper end of the Chancel (or of the body of the Church where there is no Chancel)'; then changed back to 'shall stand in the body of the

<sup>32</sup> Kennett, *op cit* p 576.

Church, or in the Chancell, where Morning and Evening Prayer are appointed to be said'; then in the final manuscript version drawn up to be submitted to the king, known as the Annexed Book, it was transcribed 'shall stand in the convenient place in the upper end of the Chancel (or of the body of the Church where there is no Chancel)'; this was then corrected back to 'shall stand in the body of the Church, or in the Chancell, where Morning and Evening Prayer are appointed to be said' as in 1604. In the list of corrections and additions inserted in the beginning of the Annexed Book the rubric is still given in the form 'the upper end of the chancel', so it must have been finally corrected very late in the process.

Similarly, the rubric concerning the place where the priest stands at Holy Communion was changed from 'north side' to 'north part' then back to 'north side'; then in the Annexed Book it was transcribed 'north part', which was then corrected again to 'north side'. It also was mentioned in the list of corrections and additions in something earlier than its final form, ie as 'north part', so it must likewise have been finally corrected at the same late stage in the process. The Declaration concerning kneeling, the so-called 'black rubric', also was added to the Annexed Book, and could have been added to the Convocation Book after it had been finished, being at the bottom of a page. It too is not mentioned in the list of corrections and additions, so is a late addition in any case.

There was, of course, plenty to distress puritans as well as to console them, especially concerning the episcopate. The hope that the Gracious Declaration might continue to provide a framework within which episcopal government would be moderately exercised was undermined by the changed language used in the revised

book about the relationship between presbyter and bishop. In the old book, the role of the presbyter in church discipline was essential and clearly expressed: in the ordination service for priests the bishop's charge referred to the appointed reading from Acts 20.27f as describing the ministry of presbyters—'overseers to rule the Congregation of God', and then asked for a promise from the candidate to 'minister the doctrine and Sacraments, and the discipline of Christ'. Ussher had referred to all this in the introduction to his *Reduction* as the justification for his proposal to 'conjoyn' the ministry of presbyter and bishop. In the new book, however, the Acts reading was transferred to the service of consecration of a bishop, although the command to minister discipline was left intact. Episcopacy was also described as a separate order for the first time, both in the preface to the revised ordinal, which claimed that 'from the Apostles' time there have been these Orders of Ministers in Christ's Church; Bishops, Priests, and Deacons', and in the changed wording that described candidates as being admitted to the 'order and ministry' rather than just to the ministry of priesthood, and in the addition of the word 'now' in the clause 'receive the Holy Ghost for the Office and Work of a Bishop in the Church of God, now committed unto thee by the Imposition of our hands'. The 1662 Licensing Act, which specifically forbade the printing of any matter 'contrary to ... the doctrine or discipline of the Church of England', prevented any printed criticism of the failure to modify the episcopate, but that this element was particularly keenly felt is shown by the comments on it that surfaced when the Act finally expired in 1679. Baxter said specifically that his *The Nonconformists Plea for Peace* was made possibly by the expiration of the Licensing Act,<sup>33</sup> and puritan disappointment over the failure of the

<sup>33</sup> RB III p 187. Cf John Humfrey, *A Reply to the Defence of Dr. Stillingfleet* (1682) p 145.

Gracious Declaration to achieve a moderate episcopacy is referred to several times in the book.<sup>34</sup> John Humfrey would also note, after the expiration of the act, that the changes in the Prayer Book showed ‘that tho’ heretofore the Presbyters had power to Rule, yet now they have none’, and argue that this change was a real stumbling block to conformity for many.<sup>35</sup>

But what the puritans did not get, many of them persuaded themselves that they could live with anyway. In a general way, Baxter said, they ‘expound the words [*all things contained in the Books*]<sup>36</sup> which they assent and consent to [*All things which they are to use*]: and their [*Assent and Consent*] they limit only to the use: q. d. [*I do dissent, that there is nothing in these Books which may not lawfully be used, and I do consent to the use of so much as belongeth to me*].<sup>37</sup> This applied also to such things as the rubrical statement about the salvation of baptised children: ‘these are not things to be used by them, and therefore not within the Compass of the declared *Assent* or *Consent* in the Act.’ More particularly, the continued use of apocryphal readings, even though not on Sundays, could be justified by regarding them as ‘edifying Lessons, as the Homilies are’; the continued use of Litany-style prayers in which the congregation made so many responses by arguing that they are ‘disorderly indeed, but that is not the Sin of the Users (when they are imposed) but of the Framers and Imposers’. For the various other issues that gave puritans problems, they were able to argue ‘they are but such as according to the Judgment of Charity we may use: And if there be any fault, it is not in the Common Prayer Book, which useth but such words as are fit to be used by the Members of the Church: but it is in the Canons and Discipline of the Church, which

<sup>34</sup> eg Epistle to the Conforming Clergy, sig A3, np no sig [p vii], 36, 135.

<sup>35</sup> John Humfrey, *The Healing Attempt* (1689) pp 57–59.

<sup>36</sup> Brackets and italics are Baxter’s.

<sup>37</sup> *RB* II p 389 and 390 for all these examples.

suffereth unfit Persons to be Church-Members.' Similar arguments were used for the ceremonies imposed by the book. For kneeling to receive Communion, some puritans argued that

'kneeling is freed from all suspicion of Idolatry, by the annexing of the Rubrick out of King Edward the Sixth's Common Prayer Book: which though the Convocation refused, yet the Parliament annexed; and they are the Imposers, and it is their sence that we must stand to. And as it is lawful to Kneel in accepting a sealed Pardon from the King, by his Messenger, so is it in accepting a sealed Pardon from God, with the Investiture of our Priviledges'.

From the point of view of the minister conducting the service and required to deny the sacrament to those refusing to kneel, 'it is better to Administer the Sacraments to some, than to none at all'. For the cross in baptism, conformists argued that 'it is but a professing sign, as words are, or as standing up, or holding up the hand'. For the use of the surplice, 'they say that the Surplice is as lawful as a Gown, it being not imposed primarily because significant, but because decent'. By 1665, when Baxter wrote his account of the years 1660–1665, he says that the puritans who had used these interpretations to justify their conformity were 'numerous'.<sup>38</sup>

That most of the changes in the revised book were made to meet the needs of the puritans was obvious to contemporaries, so much so that the Convocation of York suggested a declaration that changes were 'not made on the grounds pretended by those of the separation'.<sup>39</sup> The suggestion was not taken up, and the preface to the new book, written by Sanderson, admitted that the changes were driven by the king's 'pious inclination to give satisfaction... to all his subjects of what persuasion soever', and by public pressure, including the 'divers Pamphlets', rather than 'any strength of argument'. This perception was sufficiently widespread that over time it grew rather

<sup>38</sup> RB II p 389.

<sup>39</sup> Lathbury, T. A., *History of the Convocation* London (1853) p 287.

than faded: forty years later White Kennett listed some of the wording of the Prayer Book as changed for these reasons when in fact it had not been changed at all: the rubric before the confession at Holy Communion, for example, which the puritans had wanted to be said only by the minister; the rubric at private baptism discouraging people from asking for such baptism except in an emergency; and in the calendar, providing that there were no apocryphal readings on Sundays. All these were listed by Kennett as changes made for the new book when in fact they were left unchanged from the old.

To sum up, what we see when we examine the 1662 Prayer Book is a church that was willing to conciliate puritans to the extent necessary to get them to conform, or appear to conform. The concessions were small, but did enable conformity for a significant number of them. For the puritan laity, Baxter observed, conformity was easier after 1662 than before, because they had an improved book and were not required to repudiate the Solemn League and Covenant.<sup>40</sup> For the puritan clergy, the failure to obtain relief from the three ceremonies in the ‘flat necessities’ would provide the basic framework for the continuing pressure for comprehension, although the requirement to observe ‘Holy Days of human Institution’ would usually be replaced by the requirement to wear the surplice, as the rest of the thesis will show.

It is interesting to speculate about the extent to which the concessions to puritan concerns in the revised book were the result of a deliberate policy, or were simply the result of conflicting pressure during what was actually a very fast piece of work by Convocation—given that they waited for the Savoy Conference to end before considering the matter themselves, they had only five weeks in session before

<sup>40</sup> *A defence of the principles of love* (1672) p 55.

completing the revision. If there was a driving force behind the revision, it seems most likely that it was Robert Sanderson, bishop of Lincoln, who wrote the preface to the new book as well as being the chief reviser of many other parts. Sanderson, 'the outstanding figure of the revision',<sup>41</sup> is known to have been sympathetic to puritans throughout his life—he had only with difficulty been dissuaded by Hammond from participating in some of the comprehension talks of the 1650s<sup>42</sup>—and although he went through a period of hostility to those who were not mollified by the new book soon after its publication (understandably, if he was reaching out to them by it), he is said to have quickly regained his equanimity.<sup>43</sup> It was not, plainly, the book the most vocal puritans wanted, and many of the changes in it, even apart from those concerning episcopacy, appear to be aimed at satisfying other parties in the church, but it contained a liturgy which many puritans could, and did use.

But it was far from what had been envisaged in 1660. The 'mutual conversation' called for by the king was not long enough to achieve the purposes outlined, there never was a synod about ceremonies, and the synod about liturgy had to work without being 'national' in the sense in which the declaration envisaged, and with the distempers, sharpnesses and jealousies still very much unabated—in fact they were rather exacerbated than mollified, because Parliament approved the new Prayer Book in a new Act of Uniformity, which required clergy not only to 'say and use' the services in the book, as the old Act of Uniformity had put it, but to declare formally their 'unfeigned assent, and consent to all, and every thing contained, and prescribed in, and by' the Book of Common Prayer annexed to the Act, whether they intended to

<sup>41</sup> Cuming, 'The prayer book in convocation, November 1661', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* Vol 8 (1957) p 192.

<sup>42</sup> Fincham and Taylor, 'Episcopalian conformity and nonconformity 1646–1660'.

<sup>43</sup> Edward Pearse, *Conformists second plea for the nonconformists* (1682) p 35.



use them or not. The Act also insisted on re-ordination of any who had not been ordained by a bishop, denying another 'flat necessity' to the puritan clergy hoping to remain part of the national church. The passage of the Act of Uniformity made it clear that the time for discussion of these issues, whether in the press or other fora, was over, and puritan clergy must either conform or give up their ministries. We know how many refused to conform, because they were remembered and celebrated in later years; how many conformed only on the terms described by Baxter, and continued to exercise a basically puritan ministry, can only be guessed at, but it will be seen that they were at least a substantial minority, and their influence continued to be felt in pulpit and press throughout the period under examination. Their number would grow—approximately ten percent of the clergy who at first refused to conform changed their minds over the next few years and found their own personal comprehension plan.<sup>44</sup> It must also be remembered that there were many currently serving who had served before the abolition of episcopacy and the Prayer Book, and had conformed to the puritan establishment of the 1650s; the puritan strength of the restoration church was not confined to those who had been ordained and instituted during the interregnum.<sup>45</sup>

The failure of the puritans to be given more in 1662 should not blind us to the level of support for their inclusion in the church among conformists. Not all anti-puritans were conformists in the strict sense of the word, after all: many were not conforming to something decided by others but were, as Peter Lake pointed out, enthusiastic devotees of the imposed rites working for their imposition on others.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Spurr, *Restoration Church* p 43 n 56.

<sup>45</sup> Kenneth Fincham and Stephen Taylor, 'Episcopalian conformity and nonconformity 1646–1660'.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Lake, *Anglicans and Puritans? Presbyterianism and English Conformist Thought from Whitgift to Hooker* (Unwin Hyman, London 1988) p 7.

They would have used the rites and ceremonies of the Prayer Book whether or not there was an Act of Uniformity requiring it of them. They urged conformity on others for all sorts of reasons—the excellence and antiquity of the liturgy and episcopacy, the presence of rites and ceremonies in Scripture and church history, but few who conformed as a result of the passage of the Act could have done so for these reasons. Many who conformed were persuaded only by their belief that conformity to the law of the land was a godly principle in itself, and even some who urged conformity on others did so for no other reason than the importance of that principle.

The London apothecary Richard Lytler provides an example of a puritan conformist who urged conformity on the broader community of puritans, in his book *The Reformed Presbyterian* (1662), which made little or no attempt to say that the liturgy or the restored episcopate were good things, or that free worship and presbyterian discipline were bad things. The only argument was that conformity, or uniformity, was a good thing in itself, as long as the thing imposed was not sinful. What united both puritan and anti-puritan conformists was the belief that the things imposed were *adiaphora*, and whether their own preference was for presbyterian rather than episcopal government, or ceremonial rather than plain worship, they could unite over the value of conformity.

The press campaign would have to take a different form from now on, however: as has already been observed,<sup>47</sup> the 1662 Licensing Act would act as a powerful restraint on what could be written in future, even though its enforcement was never an easy matter for the government. Church government would be a forbidden topic; but

<sup>47</sup> See above, p 82.

ceremonial and other issues continued to provide ways of keeping the issue of a broader comprehension alive, as will appear.

## 4 Comprehension Revisited

There were few works in favour of a more comprehensive church between the years 1663 and 1667, when the matter publicly resurfaced. The historiography concerning this second attempt begins with Frank Bate's publication in 1908 of *The Declaration of Indulgence 1672*,<sup>1</sup> which has four detailed chapters on comprehension and toleration attempts in the 1660s. According to the introduction by C. H. Firth, Bate was the first writer to make extensive use of contemporary printed material, and Bate does cite many printed works. For Bate, 1667 is mostly rumours and hopes of eventual accommodation, 'despite the fact that Newcome professes to have seen a copy of a bill to secure comprehension'.<sup>2</sup> Only in 1668 does he consider that there was a serious attempt to bring the issue back before Parliament. Unlike some later commentators, Bate puts all this very clearly in the context of the political and social issues of the 1660s.

Sykes covered the subject in the work mentioned in the introduction, giving a brief, broad-brush picture. 'Comprehension v. Indulgence... became the leitmotiv of ecclesiastical politics during the generation dividing the Restoration from the Revolution'.<sup>3</sup> Sykes describes comprehension in terms of the reasonable expectation of the Presbyterians, who believed they had made Charles' restoration possible. The king's personal desire for the toleration, to say no more, of papists, was merely an 'additional incentive' to comprehension. The *Declaration to all His Loving Subjects* of 1662 was the 'first shot' in the royal campaign, and the proposals to be considered in

<sup>1</sup> Liverpool University Press.

<sup>2</sup> *The Declaration of Indulgence 1672* (University Press, Liverpool 1908) p 58.

<sup>3</sup> *From Sheldon to Secker* (Cambridge University Press 1959) pp 68-105; the quote is on p 68.

this chapter, which Barlow's annotations (more on these below) prove were more advanced than Bate seems to allow, mark the point at which comprehension 'took the field formally'. For Sykes, the 1668 proposals are most important as a foreshadowing of 'later ecclesiastical diplomacy',<sup>4</sup> which they do, but there may be as much to be learned by looking at them for a deeper understanding of the events of the period covered by this thesis.

In 1965 Walter Simon published *The Restoration Episcopate*. Simon described the 1667–1668 attempts as the 'principal' and 'most involved' and most likely to succeed of all the plans made during the second half of the seventeenth century. These attempts form a single event, 'born in 1667 and matured in 1668'. Simon relied even more heavily on the manuscript notes by Thomas Barlow, although some of his sources are impossible to check because he is so careless in his references.<sup>5</sup> Simon stresses the participation and support of many bishops for the comprehension plan.

Thomas's essay on the subject addressed the issue mostly from the point of view of participants in private discussions, avoiding reference to public opinion and the contemporary situation. He downplayed Sheldon's role in 1668 in comparison to Simon, and was noncommittal on the role of Barlow.<sup>6</sup> But the private discussions were only part of the picture; public opinion must also have been a factor likely to affect the outcome or people wouldn't have wasted their time trying to influence it.

Spurr offers 'a more detailed account of comprehension negotiations than was possible in the only other serious modern studies of the subject' but this is not done for the period 1667–1668, which is the main focus of this chapter; Simon's account of

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, pp 70, 71, 73.

<sup>5</sup> See n 35 below for a full discussion of Simon's material.

<sup>6</sup> 'Comprehension and Indulgence', in Geoffrey Nuttall and Nora Chadwick, *From Uniformity to Unity 1662–1962* (SPCK, London 1962).

1667–68 is much more detailed than Spurr's, even if Spurr demolishes some of Simon's points. Spurr has in fact one page on 1667 and one on 1668, and then moves on to 1672. He says the Church of England rejected comprehension with 'unanimity', a position contradicted by Simon, as will be shown below.

In addition to looking at the printed works in support of these comprehension attempts, this chapter will attempt to place the 1667/68 proposals more firmly in their social context, especially the state of public opinion after the disasters of plague, fire and defeat by the Dutch, and the fear of another civil war. It will also reassess Spurr's rejection of the use of certain Barlow manuscripts, thereby showing that there was more support for comprehension in the Church of England than he allows.

It is clear that the failure of the Gracious Declaration to achieve a settlement that could comprehend the majority of puritans came as a great shock to them. What they thought was to be a restoration, a return to something known, turned out to be another religious revolution: the presbyterians had achieved one in the 1640s, using the power of Parliament, the independents had achieved a second in the 1650s, using the power of the army, the presbyterians then turned the clock back early in 1660 again using Parliament, and now the episcopalians had brought about a fourth, also using the power of Parliament. The presbyterians, having lost their majority in Parliament in 1661 and with it their control of their revolution, had considered a church settlement that included both parties to be the way forward, and had looked to the king to achieve it. The failure of this plan, coupled with their fear that the Licensing Act had made it illegal to go public about their problems with the new

settlement, led to the loss of a place at the ecclesiastical table for non-conformists after 1662; they tried to make a virtue of it by talking about turning the other cheek, becoming 'mourners in Sion',<sup>7</sup> but it was obvious to all that they felt betrayed, and that the divisions in the nation had hardened and deepened.

After the departure of many puritan clergy from parish leadership in 1662, supporters of the new Act of Uniformity counted on the passage of time and the weight of authority to accustom people to the latest change in church affairs, but too many of the clergy that submitted to the new episcopal leadership, and the clergy they ordained, had qualities unlikely ever to endear them to those used to the more earnest endeavours of their ejected predecessors. 'How should Christ's Kingdom and Interest, and the Power of Holiness be supported by these hands? If Idleness will do it, if Ignorance will do it, if Loosness will do it, if Malice will do it, then these men will bear up the Power of Godliness', wrote some of the younger non-conformists, after watching the new ministry in action for over a year.<sup>8</sup> And while this tract was clear that its criticism did not apply to all conformist clergy, the record shows a good number who seem more interested in the income suddenly available from these positions than in the ministry opportunities, especially in the parishes of London.<sup>9</sup>

The mettle of the clergy recruited by the new ecclesiastical regime was soon tested. The first of three blows to public confidence that seemed to many to have a direct relationship to the new religious situation was the plague of 1665. London, the city hit hardest by the failure to achieve a comprehensive church—55 of its 109 parishes

<sup>7</sup> See the anonymous pamphlet wrongly attributed to Sir John Birkenhead, *A Mystery of Godliness and no Cabala* (1663), in which Bishop Hall's society for proscribed episcopalians in the 1650s was revived for the benefit of presbyterians, pp 30ff.

<sup>8</sup> Alleine, Joseph (attrib.), *A Call to Archippus* (1664). The reality behind such charges may be debated, but that many people believed them is undeniable, as is the effect of their belief on events.

<sup>9</sup> See Walter Bell *The Great Fire of London* (Bodley Head, London 1951) pp 307f for detailed examples.

lost their clergy, many of them long-serving, some of them household names—was also the city hit hardest by the epidemic, and a perceived failure of conformist clergy to minister to the city, apart from a few notable exceptions, further deepened the religious divide. By the time the plague was at its height, somewhere between 70 and 80% of the conformist clergy had disappeared, leaving either an empty church or, in a few cases, a curate, too poor to have a country place to which he might retreat. These few curates, and a handful of more important figures, genuinely willing to risk their lives in ministry to the stricken population, did their best to pray for, comfort and all too often bury the loved ones of the Londoners who had no choice but to remain, but the reaction to the episcopalians' apparent abandonment of their flocks was bitter. It was not only the non-conformists who publicly called upon the absent clergy to explain themselves for the sake of the church's reputation: J. W., in his *A friendly letter to the flying clergy wherein is humbly requested and modestly challenged the cause of their flight* (1665) was clearly a conformist. By September, when the death toll was seven or eight thousand per week, graffiti advertising 'pulpit to be let' or even 'pulpit to be sold' appeared on the doors of churches whose ministers had disappeared.<sup>10</sup> There were 130 or so parishes in the City and Liberties, some of them with more than one clergyman, yet I can find only 27 names in the record of conformist clergy who remained at their post.<sup>11</sup> A broadsheet poem circulating with that phrase as a title commented: 'Wing'd with fear, they flee to save their lives, /Like Lot, from Sodom, with their brats and wives'.<sup>12</sup> The poem also contained the lines 'Who now, those sons

<sup>10</sup> *Historical Narrative of the Great Plague* (1769) pp 409ff.

<sup>11</sup> 10 of the 27 died at their posts, and should not be forgotten: John Pechell, Samuel Austin, Timothy Long, Francis Raworth, Edward Wakeman, Mandrill, Bastwick, Throckmorton, Knightley, Phillips. Some non-conformist clergy also died but I'm not yet able to name them.

<sup>12</sup> *A Pulpit to be let* (1665).



of Aaron being fled, / Shall stand between the living and the dead?', and the ejected non-conformist Thomas Vincent tells us that it was after seeing printed copies of this 'flung about the streets' that he and some other clergy who had accepted the new settlement only by giving up their ministry began to consider the possibility of filling those pulpits and serving the abandoned congregations.<sup>13</sup>

The reaction to the return of the non-conformists (although only Gabriel Sangar of St Martin-in-the-Fields actually returned to the church of which he had once been the incumbent; Vincent seems to have avoided preaching at Maudlin's Milk St, where he had been Vicar) was overwhelming—not least because the week after they began preaching, the mortality figures began an impressive drop!<sup>14</sup> There was 'such a vast concourse of people in the Churches, where these Ministers are to be found, that they cannot many times come near the Pulpit doors for the press, but are forced to climb over the pews to them', said Vincent.<sup>15</sup> Vincent did the rounds, going Sunday by Sunday to St Botolph Aldgate, St Helen's Bishopsgate, and All-Hallows-the-Great. People would constantly be asking where he was going to be the coming Sunday, and he was said to have visited personally everyone who asked for him.<sup>16</sup>

In a sermon preached in September 1665, Vincent said that the plague was punishment for the ejection of godly ministers from the church, and warned of worse to come if the lesson against persecution was not learned.<sup>17</sup> The death of so many righteous persons, especially ministers, in the plague was a 'reproof of such as... persecute and injure them whilst they live'; 'much evil may be the consequence of the

<sup>13</sup> *God's Terrible Voice in the City* (1667) p 42.

<sup>14</sup> *God's Terrible Voice* p 52.

<sup>15</sup> *God's Terrible Voice* p 50.

<sup>16</sup> Introduction by John Evans to Vincent's *God's Terrible Voice*. Cited by Bell, *The Great Plague in London in 1665* (The Bodley Head, London 1951).

<sup>17</sup> *God's Terrible Voice in the City* p 223f (1668 edition; illegible in earlier editions).

fall of this and other righteous persons; the Lord may continue the plague until it hath depopulated and emptied this city... or he may send a Famine, or the Sword of Forreign Enemies, or some other Judgements we don't think of'.<sup>18</sup> The printed version of the sermon 'ran to sixteen editions within just eight years'.<sup>19</sup>

The statement by Gilbert Burnet that this 'invasion' of the church by the non-conformists so angered the zealous conformists who dominated Parliament that the Five Mile Act was passed in response for the express purpose of keeping silenced clergy away from their old parishes is well-known.<sup>20</sup> But an equally important factor in the passage of the act was the conviction of the episcopalians in Parliament that puritans were sufficiently upset about the church settlement that they were planning another rebellion, and were not only hoping that the war against the Dutch, an adventure undertaken the previous year, would so weaken the government as to make its overthrow possible, but were actually supporting the Dutch effort.<sup>21</sup> The king's speech to Parliament, prorogued in August and now summoned to Oxford because of the plague, mentioned only the need for more money for the war, but Clarendon's speech immediately afterwards, after amplifying the king's point, was full of comments about the 'godly' and their foul designs and the need to act swiftly to prevent them taking over the kingdom again. A plot planned for 'their so much celebrated Third of September' had already been forestalled, he informed the House.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid* p 223.

<sup>19</sup> *ODNB*.

<sup>20</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *History of My Own Times* (1725), hereafter *HOMOT*, p 377. Spurr cites additional evidence in *The Restoration Church of England* (Yale University Press, 1991) p 52.

<sup>21</sup> *CSPD* 1664/1665 pp 500, 505, 508, 509, 512, 514.

<sup>22</sup> *LJ* 11 October 1665. For details of the plot see Richard Greaves, *Enemies Under His Feet: Radicals and Nonconformists in Britain 1664-1677* (Stanford University Press 1990) p 34 where he also refers to the link between the Five Mile Act and fears of sedition by non-conformists.

Within two days of this speech the Commons had its first reading of the Five Mile Act imposing an oath on clergy who had not taken the oaths prescribed in the Act of Uniformity not to endeavour any change in government of church or state. Sheldon explained the oath this way, according to notes taken by one of those present: 'It did not hinder the altering of what should be thought fitt soe this government were well preserved. What the government is in England is well knowne, It is Monarchy in the State and Episcopy [sic] in the Church, and the thing promised in the Oath is not to alter the Government in either. [Sheldon] is sorry to see there is such tendernesse for such ill men; They have their Emissaryes over all the three Nations & abroade in Holland among our enemies.' Clarendon's theme in his opening speech, as well as Sheldon's view that doubts about episcopacy were as treasonous as doubts about monarchy, was reflected in the act: 'The Act which Imposeth this Oath, openly accuseth the Nonconformable Ministers (or some of them) of Seditious Doctrine; and such hainous Crimes,' wrote Baxter.<sup>23</sup>

The same fears animated the Speaker in his speech at the close of the Oxford Parliament, rejoicing in the passage of the act:

'Tacitus has a Saying, Such as are false in their Love, are true in their Hatred; and this we find verify'd in our Non-conformists: While they were in the Bosom of the Church of England, they were like inward Vapours, and inward Bleedings, always oppressing and strangling the Body of the Church; and now they are rejected and excluded from the Ministerial Function, they have more Malice, and no less Opportunity to propagate their Principles than they had before... their Jesuitical Leaders keep up their Spirits, and herd with them in Cities and Corporate-Towns, where, by the Pretence of Persecution and Self-denial, they move the Pity of good-natur'd People, who with their Charity keep up the Party, lessen the Maintenance of Conforming Ministers, and spread their Contagion amongst the Youth of the Nation. For the Prevention of this growing Mischief, we have

<sup>23</sup> *RB III* p 13. 'Charles II, 1665: An Act for restraining Non-Conformists from inhabiting in Corporations.', *Statutes of the Realm: volume 5: 1628-80* (1819), pp. 575. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=47375> Date accessed: 04 August 2009.

prepared a Shiboleth, a Test, to distinguish amongst them who will be peaceable, and give hopes of a future Conformity, and who, of Malice and evil Disposition, remain obdurate: The one, we shall keep amongst us with all Love and Charity; the other we shall exclude from Cities and Corporation-Towns, like those that have an infectious Disease upon them.<sup>24</sup>

The fire of the following year had an impact on the public consciousness even greater than that of the plague, despite the lower number of victims. This was partly because of the searing visual impact of the fire: it lit up the night fifty miles away, and smoke rose from the ruins for months afterwards. Once the ruins cooled, they became the haunt of muggers, especially at night—Pepys could not get a cab to cross them, and on the rare occasions when he crossed them on foot, he did so with sword drawn. For the best part of a year, London had this huge visible wound acting as a constant reminder that things were not well with the nation. In addition, despite the results of the official enquiry, few believed that the fire was accidental. Various French, Dutch and Catholics were rounded up, beaten up and imprisoned on suspicion of starting the fire; even some of the highest officials believed the fire was deliberately set.<sup>25</sup>

The fire seems to have been the seventeenth century equivalent of the Kennedy Assassination—conspiracy theories abounded before it was even extinguished, and grew over subsequent years. Many government actions which under other circumstances would have seemed innocent took on a sinister hue. Charles prorogued Parliament the day before it was due to debate the report of its investigation into the fire, for instance, and since the report included some evidence against the Duke of York (see Parliament's *A True and Faithful Account*<sup>26</sup>, unofficial copies of which the

<sup>24</sup> *The History and Proceedings of the House of Commons* Vol 1 pp. 85-92.

<sup>25</sup> Clarendon, *Life* Vol III p 668.

<sup>26</sup> *A True and Faithful Account* (1667). Another version was published with the title *Londons flames discovered by informations taken before the Committee* (1667).

government tried to suppress<sup>27</sup>), there were not wanting people to suggest cover-up as his motive. A few years later, the magistrate Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey was murdered when it became known that he was investigating charges that the Duke of York knew more about the fire than he had let on—which started the whole Popish Plot uproar, part of which included a new investigation into the fire in 1681.<sup>28</sup> In order to get some idea of the extent of the impact of the fire on public consciousness, it is worth noting that annual memorial services for its victims were still being held over a hundred years later, with forms for the service still being printed in 1787.<sup>29</sup>

Popish plotters stirred up as much fear among the general public as non-conformist plotters stirred up among the episcopalians. Pepys wrote of a friend's wife being 'much frightened in the country with the discourses about the country of troubles and disorders like to be', and commented 'This is now the general apprehension of all people. Particulars I do not know, but my own fears are also great, and I do think it time to look out to save something if a storm should come'.<sup>30</sup> Fear for the future could hardly have been deeper on all sides. Neither plague nor fire caused the extremists on either side to repent, says Baxter: 'the Dividers cried out, its long of the Persecutors, and the persecuters cried out, its long of the Schismatics... if there were not between them a sober party, that lamented sin most but were guilty of least, We should see no Prognosticks of any thing but utter desolation'.<sup>31</sup>

The conformist clergy who still had churches to preach in after the fire were mostly moderates—Stillingfleet, Tillotson, Patrick and others.<sup>32</sup> Between them and

<sup>27</sup> Pepys says copies were ordered to be burned by the hangman; Robert Latham and William Matthews, eds, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* (University of California Press, Berkeley) Vol 8 (1974) p 439.

<sup>28</sup> Hanson, pp 233f.

<sup>29</sup> *A Form of Prayer to be used yearly on the Second of September* (1787)

<sup>30</sup> Latham and Matthews, *op cit* Vol 7 (1972) p 347f.

<sup>31</sup> *RB III* p 18.

<sup>32</sup> *RB III* p 19.

the non-conformist ministers who had continued preaching in rooms and halls after the return of the truant incumbents, London was less episcopalian than ever. 'Blind eye' toleration was forced on the authorities by the fire.

Within the year came the Medway raid, in June 1667, when the Dutch sailed to within 20 miles of London, burning ships and towing away the royal flagship. The raid seems to have produced complete panic: 'they who remember that conjuncture and were then present in the galleries and privy lodgings at Whitehall, whither all the world flocked with equal liberty, can easily call to mind instances of such wild despair and even ridiculous apprehensions, that I am willing to forget, and would not that the least mention of them should remain', wrote Clarendon.<sup>33</sup> Pepys wrote that the news put him

'into such a fear, that I presently resolved of my father's and wife's going into the country; and at two hours' warning they did go by the coach this day—with about 1300*l* in gold in their night-bag... my heart is full of fear. They gone, I continued in frights and fear what to do with the rest. W. Hewer hath been at the banquiers and hath got 500*l* out of Backewell's hands of his own money; but they are so called upon that they will be all broke, hundreds coming to them for money... never were people so dejected as they are in the City all over at this day, and do talk most loudly, even treason; as, that we are bought and sold, that we are betrayed by the papists and others about the King'.

All the talk now, he says, is of the need to bring the presbyterians on board. A friend believed that 'nothing but the reconciling of the presbyterian party will save us, and I am of his mind'. There was talk of a new civil war and a return to the Commonwealth, with people being 'encouraged... to speak and even to print (as I have one of them) as bad things against [the bishops] as ever in the year 1640'.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *The life of Edward Earl of Clarendon* (1759) Vol II 418–19.

<sup>34</sup> Latham and Matthews, *op cit* Vol 8 (1974) pp 263*f*, 275, 585. According to Clarendon, a new Parliament at this time would return nothing but presbyterians, Samuel Parker, *History of his Own Time* (1730) Vol III p 710*f*.

Non-conformists, therefore, began to hope that modification of the Act of Uniformity might be possible, and that Parliament and the court might be persuaded to work together to reduce the number of dissenters who might be tempted into another 'rebellion'—there had been one in Scotland during the previous year—by bringing back into the national church the moderates among them.

Clarendon's departure from office and his replacement by Sir Orlando Bridgeman brought in an administration that was basically sympathetic to this plan. By August 1667 the chancellor's departure could be seen to be imminent, and by the end of the month the seal had been given to Bridgeman. Sheldon, the Archbishop of Canterbury, also lost his influence with the king at this time, and modification of the Act of Uniformity seemed a real possibility, and proposals issued from the press almost immediately.

The first of these was a pamphlet called *A proposition for the safety and happiness of the King and kingdom, both in church and state, and prevention of the common enemy tendered to the consideration of His Majesty and the Parliament against the tenth of October by a lover of sincerity and peace*, dated in the text June 18th 1667, and certainly published by August.<sup>35</sup> The writer does not give his name, but it is probably the work

<sup>35</sup> Barlow MS I, p 19. A description must be given here of the Barlow sources for this period, since there is some confusion about them. Two significant sources have been described; the confusion results from the fact that only one of them can be found. Both documents are (or were) in the Bodleian Library.

The first has the shelf-mark B.14.15.Linc, and was first referred to by the anonymous editor of Herbert Thorndike's works in the 19th century. B.14.15.Linc is a collection of 17 printed pamphlets and broadsheets, bound together with some manuscript material. Most of the manuscript material is thought to be by Thomas Barlow, since it is in the library assembled by him and later given to the Bodleian. The collection consists of pamphlets, broadsheets, and notes in handwriting generally accepted as Barlow's. Barlow hand-wrote a table of contents for it, and numbered all the pages, so that most of the printed material has both its own pagination and Barlow's.

The second source is referred to only by Walter G. Simon, a Colorado University professor in the 1960s, author of *The Restoration Episcopate*. Simon described a printed text in the Bodleian, published in 1680, and entitled *Several Tracts Relating to the Great Acts for Comprehension*, a collection of tracts printed earlier but republished in the midst of the popish plot. Into this book another manuscript by Barlow had been inserted, in which Barlow gives more information about the 1667/1668 proposals than he had given in B.14.15.Linc.

The confusion arises from the fact that this second book cannot now be found. The Bodleian does not catalogue books by the titles someone wrote on the spine, but by the titles of the individual books bound in them. The Bodleian staff are therefore unable to search by Simon's description. Spurr suggests that Simon is actually talking about B.14.15.Linc ('The Church of England, Comprehension and the Toleration Act', p 941 n 4). But Simon's description of the book makes it clear that this cannot be the case. He gives extracts from letters that are not in B.14.15.Linc, and his citations suggest that the manuscript

by John Humfrey referred to by Baxter, who wrote that 'About this time they renewed the talk of liberty of Conscience... Whereupon many wrote for it (especially Mr. John Humfrees and Sir Charles Wolsley), and many wrote against it, as Dr. Perinchief, and others mostly without Names'.<sup>36</sup> In a work replying to criticism of this pamphlet, there is enough biographical information to establish Humfrey's authorship beyond doubt.<sup>37</sup> Thomas Barlow believed that Humfrey's work was the opening of a coordinated campaign: 'The presbyterians having some intelligence and hopes (by their friends at court) that his majesty when the Parliament met [which was to be 10 October 1667] would be willing to grant them some indulgences and a Toleration; to make way for it, caused a little book to be writ and printed', he wrote, and then named this work.<sup>38</sup>

Humfrey had been ordained by presbyters in 1649, although he insisted he took no side in the church's disputes, and never associated himself with other presbyters for the purposes of church government. Nor had he ever taken the Solemn League and Covenant. During his ministry as vicar of Frome, Somerset, he had written against and refused to conform to the practice then popular of refusing admission to

material by Barlow, which Simon refers to as the manuscript Introduction, is longer than the corresponding material in the earlier collection: there are at least 23 pages of manuscripts in the book to which Simon refers, as opposed to 18 in B.14.15.Linc.

Simon is extremely careless in the matter of citation, and it is easy to believe that he miswrote the title and shelfmark of the book, which would explain why it cannot now be found. For example, on p 159 of *The Restoration Episcopate*, Simon quotes from p 15 of what he calls *A Conformist's Plea* by Edward Reynolds in 1667, but there is no such work. *Conformists' Plea for the Non-Conformists* is actually a 1681 work by Edward Pearce, and the quote from Reynolds is on p 15 of that. Similar mistakes are found throughout Simon's work. But carelessness with references is one thing, making up evidence is quite another. Simon read the material he cites somewhere, and even if he so mis-cites his original that it can no longer be found, the information to which he is a witness should not be set aside. Simon must be regarded as a latter-day Epiphanius: his direct quotes may be accepted, although his own inferences from what he read but did not quote can have little authority. Both manuscripts will be referred to in what follows; B.14.15.Linc will be referred to as 'Barlow manuscript I', Simon's source will be referred to as 'Barlow manuscript II'.

In Barlow manuscript I, Barlow made annotations on some of the pamphlets he collected. He numbered the pages consecutively after the manuscripts and pamphlets were bound together, but did not give the bound volume a title. For references to Barlow's handwritten notes, whether one of the manuscripts or an annotation on one of the printed pamphlets, his handwritten pagination will be used. References to printed texts in the pamphlets contained in the volume will be by title and year, using the printed page numbers.

<sup>36</sup> *RB III* p 19. Sykes attributed the work to the Welsh judge David Jenkins, following Wing.

<sup>37</sup> *A defence of the proposition* (1668), see esp pp 77ff.

<sup>38</sup> Barlow MS I p 4.



Holy Communion to those who had not given an account of their faith to the minister. He was arrested for preaching positively about the prospect of the restoration of monarchy in 1659, and after the restoration of the episcopate he was invited by the restored bishop of Bath and Wells to assist at the first round of episcopal ordinations,<sup>39</sup> and to accept such ordination himself. He agreed to this, and was ordained without being asked to make the subscription required by Canon XXXVI, accepting the Thirty Nine Articles and promising to use the Book of Common Prayer. He later renounced this 'reordination' and was presumably for that reason ejected from Frome in 1662.

The context in which Humfrey made his proposal was the series of disasters that had struck the nation and the danger it would be in if something were not done: 'It shall be an argument good enough for me from this late calamity on the City and upon our Ships, to alarm you [king and Parliament] to the quenching of those Flames which we have helped to enkindle by the over-rigour of such acts' as those of the Clarendon Code.

'There is the subtilty of the Jesuite, with those many, too much to be feared advantages of that party; and there is on the other side, the wildness of the Sectary, with their multitudes, and high exasperations. Both these are, as it were, the upper and nether jaw of destruction opening her mouth upon us: If we do not find out a way to reconcile the sober Protestant, that we may have their combined strength to oppose these extrems in case of inundation, I known not how soon these jaws may shut upon us, and overwhelm us in our confusion.'

Baxter and Barlow were wrong to link Humfrey with Wolsey as a proponent of liberty of conscience: Humfrey's work would always be aimed primarily at comprehension, although he supported indulgence for Protestants who would not be comprehended. He asked Parliament for an 'Act of Accommodation' which would give

<sup>39</sup> *ODNB*, no citation.

comprehension to 'those who are sober in their principles, and Indulgence to others who are so in their lives'. He pointed out that they were meeting, often in their hundreds, to pray and preach, and rather than arresting them let them have 'a due and Christian regulation'. The suggested Act would consist of the Gracious Declaration of 1660 with as little alteration as possible, and a renewal of the already existing acts against plurality. No reordination should be required for those content to exercise an assisting ('Gibeonite') ministry, only for those seeking institution and induction to a benefice. The Act should also restore civil officers ejected by the Corporation Act. Meetings in places other than the parish church should be allowed provided the doors were kept open to all and the person presiding was someone 'of gravity and years as is fitting'; if such a policy were followed the desire for such meetings would soon subside in favour of the (comprehensive) parish church. Any 'inconveniences' in the plan would be dealt with during its passage through Parliament.<sup>40</sup>

Humfrey argued for this Act first on the grounds of the national interest, saying the nation needed healing and its divisions were dangerous, especially in current circumstances, giving rise to multitudes of exasperated sectaries, as well as opportunities for the Jesuits. Severity had been tried and was not working, and could not work unless it were to become more severe than anyone's conscience would allow: non-conformists must either be all killed or accommodated. A majority of the public was in favour of such accommodation.<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> *A proposition for the safety and happiness of the King and kingdom* (1667) pp 7f, 8, 10, 54, 57, 64, 82, 89.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid* pp 7, 11, 17, 30ff, 42, 44f.

It was the required oaths that kept non-conformists out, not the liturgical differences, he went on. Many saw prelacy and popery as equally the anti-Christ, and persecution on behalf of prelacy strengthened them in this view. The younger generation were hot now; if the government would moderate its position their fire would soon burn out, and there would be no provocation left to start anew the 'strange fire, which speaking against Government usually enkindles'. The work was addressed to Parliament, but Humfrey still saw the king as comprehension's ultimate hope. He wrote as one who had no problem worshipping as the Act of Uniformity required, but understood why others did—they had been raised to believe prelacy was equivalent to popery, even to the extent of being equally the anti-Christ, and they could no more be forced to worship with prelatists than frightened children could be forced to enter a dark place. Only 'time and liberty' could overcome such fears. The Oxford Oath (in the Five Mile Act, passed when Parliament met at Oxford because of the plague) may have appeared to divide them because some had taken it and some not, but in fact it was a difference no more significant than that between presbyterians and baptists—their 'combined Interest is all one' nevertheless.<sup>42</sup>

He also added religious arguments in favour of the plan. The plan would please the Lord, 'who was so mercifull and good to every body, that he exercised Indulgence all his life long, and then died that he might obtain more'. To force people to conform against their conscience would be to force them to sin, which would be a burden on the consciences of the nation's leaders.<sup>43</sup> It should be noted that despite Barlow's statement that Humfrey's work was deliberately planned to support the campaign in

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid* pp 19, 30, 31, 34, 40, 57.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid* pp 69, 74.

Parliament, the bill differed from Humfrey's suggestion in significant ways, as will shortly appear. Nevertheless, it had its effect; the *Proposition* was read widely enough to warrant a second edition the same year, and provoked at least two replies by those opposed to its proposals.<sup>44</sup>

Not long after the publication of Humfrey's work, John Corbet, who had written on behalf of a 'just and equal Accommodation' in 1660 in his *The Interest of England in the Matter of Religion*, supported Humfrey's arguments in *A discourse of the religion of England asserting, that reformed Christianity settled in its due latitude, is the stability and advancement of this kingdom*, echoing his points about the national interest and the strength and importance of the puritan element in the nation:

'How momentous in the Ballance of this Nation, those Protestants are, which are dissatisfied in the present Ecclesiastical Polity. They are every where spread through City and Countrey; they make no small part of all ranks and sorts of men; by Relations and Commerce they are so woven into the Nations Interest, that it is not easie to sever them, without unravelling the whole. They are not excluded from among the Nobility, among the Gentry they are not a few; but none are of more importance then they in the Trading part of the people, and those that live by Industry, upon whose hands the Business of the Nation lyes much.'

It was also in the interest of the Church that non-conformists be brought in, for there would immediately be a plentiful supply of worthy ministers to replace the many unworthy that had been given places, and Corbet also mentioned the growth and increasing power of papists, who 'in these times they have taken much Liberty and Boldness, with an undisturbed Security, and lately have been observed to be more then ordinarily active, jocund and confident'.<sup>45</sup>

Corbet did not specify the exact form accommodation should take. Its general terms were a 'Relaxation of the Prescribed Uniformity, and some Indulgence to

<sup>44</sup> See below, pp 109ff.

<sup>45</sup> *Discourse* pp iii, 3, 23, 33.

Dissenters of Sound Faith, and Good Life'. While Humfrey had asked for the Gracious Declaration to be made into an Act, which would have reformed church government as well as given relief from objectionable ceremonies, Corbet said that change in church government was not requested; 'Episcopacy is not undermined, nor any other Form of Government here insinuated'. But the authorities should at least consider what things they might moderate for the sake of a wider conformity, and at least there should be an end to 'assent and consent', for if not forced to state their approval men still 'may submit to some things, which they cannot approve'. Those who still could not be brought in could be given toleration or at least 'connivence'. Those who accused the non-conformists of having a seditious nature should remember that the 'present time do shew, That the Anti-Puritan Interest, when occasion serves, and the urgency of Affairs requires, can contest with Princes, and pretend Conscience too, in crossing their Designs.' Defiance of the king and his Gracious Declaration seems to be what Corbet had in mind here.<sup>46</sup>

According to Barlow, the bill for which Humfrey and Corbet were supposed to be generating public support was drawn up by Sir Robert Atkins and others and contained 'the desires of the Presbyterian party, as to Toleration, which they desired to be dispensed with in the lawes injoyning our Discipline and worship'.<sup>47</sup> A correspondent sent Barlow what he described as 'The Comprehensive Bill (as they called it) or a bill for some Toleration or indulgence to be granted to the Presbyterians prepared against October 10 1667 on which day the Parliament met but (they despairing of success) it is not yet [Nov 19 1667] put in'.<sup>48</sup> But the 'bill' sent to

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid* pp iv, 21, 23, 31, 38, 41.

<sup>47</sup> Barlow MS I p 4.

<sup>48</sup> Barlow MS I p 6.

Barlow is far from the enactment of the Gracious Declaration asked for in Humfrey's *Proposal*. Not only are none of the Declaration's modifications of episcopacy mentioned, but neither is any of its reform of parish discipline. Nor is there any provision for the indulgence asked for by both Humfrey and Corbet for those who cannot be comprehended under its provisions. Barlow appears to have been wrong in asserting a direct relationship between the bill and the press campaign. It seems more likely that the press campaign came first, no doubt with other more personal representations, and the effect was that some puritans in Parliament began to consider bringing in a bill. The bill Barlow described was the one most likely to win enough votes to pass.

In Atkins's draft, the Act of Uniformity's insistence on re-ordination of those ordained by presbyters, about which the Declaration had been silent but Humfrey had put back on the agenda, was explicitly laid aside: those already ordained, whether by bishops or presbyters, may exercise their ministry in any church provided that they 'declare their assent' (omitting the 'consent' and 'approbation' required by the Act of Uniformity) to the doctrinal articles.<sup>49</sup> There were to be no more presbyterian ordinations, however. In addition, the oath imposed by the Five Mile Act would not be required. While no accommodation was proposed in church government, many of the liturgical provisions of the Gracious Declaration were incorporated, in some cases quoting its exact words: kneeling to receive the sacrament, the sign of the cross in baptism, the use of the surplice were all to be optional, and clergy who did not want to

<sup>49</sup> Spurr says that 'consent' was something many non-conformists found easier to give to things that troubled their consciences than 'assent' ('The Church of England, Comprehension, and the Toleration Act of 1689', p 933), and argues that the word 'assent' here must be the copyist's mistake. This is possible, although most non-conformists could make much stronger statements about the doctrinal articles referred to in this text than they could about many things in the Prayer Book, for which 'consent' was the most that could be expected.

use the liturgical forms of the prayer book could arrange for someone else to do so. The bill is actually a single paragraph, and seems more likely to have been a proviso intended to be added to the Act of Uniformity (such as had been proposed by the Lords in 1662) than a separate bill, despite the words of Barlow's correspondent.

The Atkins mentioned by Barlow's correspondent is doubtless Sir Robert Atkins the lawyer and MP. There has been some discussion of who the 'others' were involved in the preparation of the paragraph. Barlow himself has been suggested, which Spurr rightly rejects on the evidence of B.14.15.Linc—'it implies nothing at all about Barlow's approval of these schemes, never mind any involvement on his part'.<sup>50</sup> In any case, Barlow would hardly need to have been sent a copy, with explanatory comments, of something he had helped write.

In one of the Barlow manuscripts there is a fragment of a letter from Gilbert Ironside, bishop of Bristol, to Atkins in September of 1667, which reads '[there] never was such a time for success as this with the remove of the Chancellor assured, and with all his party confused and awed with the triumph of their enemies... if all is breached with moderation... yet with due latitude for the sensibilities of those who... would wish to jyne us, all will crie for it in the Commons and none will dare oppose it in the Lords.'<sup>51</sup> The 'us' implies involvement in the plan, and is presumably why Simon describes Gilbert as a participant in it.<sup>52</sup>

Humfrey and Corbet had struck a chord with the public, with one anonymous writer describing the *Proposition* as 'famous', and those who supported it as 'proposition-men'.<sup>53</sup> Answers to Humfrey soon appeared. Just before Parliament was

<sup>50</sup> ODNB.

<sup>51</sup> Barlow MS II p iv, although Ironside had been a conformist in the 1650s, ODNB.

<sup>52</sup> *Restoration Episcopate* p 162.

<sup>53</sup> *Vnion, or Vndone* (1668) pp 9f, 11.

about to open<sup>54</sup> came *The inconveniencies of toleration, or, An answer to a late book Intituled, A proposition made to the King and Parliament for the safety and happiness of the King and kingdom* (1667) by Thomas Tomkins, ‘one of a stable of pamphleteers whom Gilbert Sheldon, bishop of London and later archbishop of Canterbury, sought to mould popular opinion against any possibility of comprehension within the Church of England or toleration of dissent’.<sup>55</sup> He warned Parliament not to be fooled by its seeming moderation, which was in fact sedition in disguise (‘It is no News for Men to be made the Instruments of a Design, and yet to know nothing of it; to be the great Engines of such businesses, which had they seen thorough Them, They would have dyed, rather than to have any thing to do with’).<sup>56</sup>

Humfrey replied in an appendix to a second edition of the *Proposition*, which came out October 25th. Despite the title, Tomkins had only once referred to ‘inconveniencies’ that might arise from the plan, and Humfrey could simply express disappointment that Tomkins had not named them, since Humfrey had made the point originally that any inconveniences discovered could be taken care of by Parliament and by good management of the broader church that would result from comprehension. He also charged Tomkins to give his reasons for insisting on assent and consent to occasional services by people whose desire was only to use ‘the ordinary daily Service onely of the Common-Prayer’. Humfrey offered to meet Tomkins’s request to name exactly the changes that non-conformists wanted, but only in person to Parliament (which would not have laid him open to prosecution under the Licensing Act), and defused Tomkins’ insinuation of seditious leanings by

<sup>54</sup> 10 October according to Barlow’s note on the cover of his copy, MS I p 19.

<sup>55</sup> ODNB on Tomkins.

<sup>56</sup> *Inconveniencies of toleration* p 3.



his assertion that the terms of the king's Gracious Declaration was what they were asking for—'Who can tell me a way to offer what we would have more solidly and probably than this is?'<sup>57</sup>

Corbet was answered in *A discourse of toleration in answer to a late book intituled A discourse of the religion of England*, published in October. It was written by Richard Perrinchief, whose concern was that comprehension would lead to toleration, which would sooner or later lead to revolution again. He admitted that works in favour of liberty of conscience were finding plenty of readers, and equated the factiousness condemned in scripture with disagreement with the established church.<sup>58</sup> In November John Owen<sup>59</sup> decided to take advantage of the trend noticed by Perrinchief, and published a pamphlet asking for indulgence without reference to comprehension, *A peace-offering in an apology and humble plea for indulgence and liberty of conscience by sundry Protestants differing in some things from the present establishment about the worship of God*. Owen's arguments are simply a denial that any harm can come from it.

Herbert Thorndike also wrote an answer to Corbet, *The true principle of Comprehension*, but it was not published at the time,<sup>60</sup> probably because Corbet did not have the impact that Humfrey had, and will therefore not be discussed here.

The story about what Parliament did, or rather failed to do, about all this has been told,<sup>61</sup> but some things must be added. First is Barlow's evidence that more bishops

<sup>57</sup> *A Proposition for the Safety and Happiness of the King and Kingdom* (1667), second edition; Wing Catalogue No J602, pp 99, 101, 102, 104.

<sup>58</sup> *A discourse of toleration* pp 1, 15, 37–48.

<sup>59</sup> Published anonymously, but Owen's authorship was sufficiently widely known that Perrinchief's reply explicitly named him as such the following year.

<sup>60</sup> Herbert Thorndike *The theological works of Herbert Thorndike* (1844) Vol 5 p 301.

<sup>61</sup> The fullest account is by Roger Thomas, 'Comprehension and Indulgence', in Nuttall and Chadwick, *From Uniformity to Unity 1662–1962* (SPCK 1962) pp 196–206.

were supportive of the plan than is usually thought. There were two sessions of Parliament in which it was hoped that a bill for comprehension would be brought in, one from October to December 1667 and the second beginning in February 1668. Barlow describes a bill prepared by Sir Robert Atkins and others as intended for the first session. The bill would have allowed those whose reason for not conforming was a refusal to be 're-ordained', having been ordained by presbyters 'in the late times' to be allowed back into the church's ministry provided that they assented and subscribed to the doctrinal Articles of Religion, and those whose reason for not conforming was because of the rites and ceremonies could do the same as long as they allowed someone else in their parish to use the Prayer Book service. Kneeling to receive Communion, wearing the surplice, and using the sign of the cross in baptism were all to be optional, and the oath of abjuration of the Solemn League and Covenant was 'laid aside'. This last concession was an important one; there is no doubt that there were many puritan clergy who could have borne all the terms of the Act of Uniformity if only this had not been insisted on.<sup>62</sup> However, the bill was not brought in by the time Parliament adjourned on 19 December. Barlow said that Colonel John Birch had agreed to propose the measure, and that he 'once or twice offered at it' but did not 'dare to bring it in that session'.<sup>63</sup> The suggestion of timidity can hardly be accepted; Birch was an experienced parliamentarian who had introduced many bills. Thomas thinks it more likely that he judged that the mood of the House was against it, and chose not to dim future prospects by too early an insistence on a decision,<sup>64</sup> but it is also possible that Birch had realised that the

<sup>62</sup> Parker, *op cit* (1728) p 23.

<sup>63</sup> Barlow MS I p 6.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas, *op cit* p 198.

various puritans with an interest in the matter were not agreed among themselves as to what bill would satisfy them. Barlow, who appears to have added to his notes as the affair progressed, wrote in January that 'another Bill is framing for the like Toleration, great [meanes] made that it may, and no small hopes that it will succeed. The Bill they intended against the day (Feb 6) was onely the King's Declaration from Breda 1660 which they desired might be put into an act'. In a similar note on another page he added that it was the Breda Declaration 'verbatim'.<sup>65</sup> Humfrey's proposal had been for the Gracious Declaration rather than the Declaration from Breda, and it is possible that Barlow had misunderstood his source; if not, the number of different proposals is increased. In any case the idea was 'disliked by the Contrivers'.<sup>66</sup> By the time Parliament reassembled, there had been discussions of yet more possibilities, and more than one draft bill survives. It is not clear how the different drafts relate to each other; there is a draft transcribed by Baxter, said to be the suggestion of the vicar of St Lawrence Jewry, John Wilkins, and a draft sent to Barlow, said to be the work of Sir Matthew Hale. The two are similar, but differ in some points that we know were matters of dispute among puritans, such as whether the concessions to those ordained by presbyters prior to the restoration could be extended to those who had been so ordained since,<sup>67</sup> and whether the bishop's conferring of ministerial authority on such persons would be worded in such a way as to suggest that he was simply giving them legal authority to minister,<sup>68</sup> or whether any element of re-ordination might still be attached to it. Both versions contain provisions for an indulgence (suspension of

<sup>65</sup> Barlow MS I pp 4, 5.

<sup>66</sup> Barlow MS I pp 8.

<sup>67</sup> A point requested by Baxter, *RB* III p 36. Sykes is therefore wrong to say (in *From Sheldon to Secker* p 77) that presbyterian ordinations were not resumed till after 1672.

<sup>68</sup> Humfrey said later that Wilkins was the origin of this suggestion, distinguishing between an unrepeatable ordination and a renewable legal authority. *King Williams Toleration* (1689) p 18.

penalties) for those who could not come into the church even with such concessions, which was not part of the bill circulated in 1667.

Hale's bill might be thought to be a revision of Wilkins's. Burnet says that after the conferences between Wilkins and the non-conformists were finished, 'Heads were agreed on, some Abatements were to be made, and Explanations were to be accepted of. The particulars of that project being thus concerted, they were brought to the Lord Chief Baron, who put them in form of a Bill, to be presented to the next session of Parliament.'<sup>69</sup> Baxter says that 'because I lived near him, he was pleased to shew me the Copy of his Draught, which was done according to all our Sense',<sup>70</sup> which implies that Hale's work was merely to put it into legal language.

Hale had drafted several bills, and was an obvious person to ask to draft a bill based on the agreed provisions. The question is what relationship Barlow's document has to Hales' draft. Its language is such that it cannot be the draft itself, which has not survived; Hale showed his draft to Baxter, but after the Parliament voted not to consider any such act, Baxter believed that Hale burnt it. But the bill which Barlow entitled 'The Ld Chiefe Baron Hale's Proposals for Comprehension' was not 'done according to all our sense', and cannot be the bill Hale showed Baxter. Either Barlow was wrong to attribute the draft he had to Hale, or Hale revised his own draft. There were also some elements that were not requested by any of the parties involved, so whoever prepared this draft had concerns of his own, particularly about the gown, the singing psalms, the requirement to say the daily offices, and change in common usage of words. The possibility that these three possible bills were the results of

<sup>69</sup> *Life* p 37.

<sup>70</sup> *RB III* p 34.

disagreements among those seeking comprehension cannot be ruled out—especially when we look at the debate on 11 March, when the House was considering the king’s request ‘that you would seriously think of some Course to beget a better Union and Composure in the Minds of My Protestant Subjects in Matters of Religion; whereby they may be induced not only to submit quietly to the Government, but also chearfully give their Assistance to the Support of it.’<sup>71</sup> It is at this point that the failure to introduce a bill becomes surprising. At least three people argued against further discussion of the king’s plan because there appeared to be no agreed proposal. ‘Sir Robert Holt would know what the Non-conformists desire, declared by some body.’ Sir Robert Carr repeated the request. Most telling of all, even Colonel Birch, who according to Barlow was to introduce the bill in this session too,<sup>72</sup> said that ‘though he was much for them, yet did say that until they did declare what it was they did desire there could be no way of proceeding’. Disagreement among the principals seems certain. Manton and ‘sundry persons of divers qualities’ blamed the failure of the plan on independents for not being willing to accept comprehension,<sup>73</sup> but there were disagreements that could not be or at least were not resolved even among those who favoured comprehension.

As a result, debate was put off, to be resumed 8 April, when there were still comments about the lack of a specific proposal. The debate on 8 April was over whether to recommend that the king take advice himself on the subject of Protestant unity, presumably with the intention of deciding himself what to do, but the vote

<sup>71</sup> *LJ* 10 February 1668.

<sup>72</sup> So says Simon, relying on Barlow MS II; *The Restoration Episcopate* p 169, Birch introduced the bill with ‘earnest hesitation’. Until Barlow MS II is found, this cannot be considered hard information. Perhaps a misreading of Simon is the source for Newton Key who cites Simon in his ‘Comprehension and the Breakdown of Consensus’, in Tim Harris, Paul Seaward, and Mark Goldie, eds, *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England* (Blackwell, Oxford 1990), nn 31, 42, 48, 73, 82.

<sup>73</sup> DWL Baxter Correspondence ii f. 273.

went against that, and more debate on the king's request was scheduled for a week later. But the Commons never did resume debate on the king's request; instead, the Conventicle Act was renewed,<sup>74</sup> hammering the wedge still deeper into the wood.

As far as the involvement of bishops in the plan is concerned, William Fuller, who had been appointed Bishop of Lincoln a few months earlier, was one of those meeting with Wilkins, to agree on what would bring comprehension about. At a meeting on 4 January 1668, Fuller wrote, 'Mr Wilkins did introduce us to his design and his ideas as to what might be yielded without damage to the dignitie and spirit of Our Worship to effect an understanding among all moderate Protestants to the peace of the Kingdom. Bishop Croft did modifie certain things included and the others of us did agree, except Bishop Reynolds, who did feel we should include Indulgence to those who did not feel they could complie with this new plan, and all promised to consider it for a future time.'<sup>75</sup> Croft was spending a lot of time at court at this period, serving as dean of the Chapel Royal from February 1667 to March 1669,<sup>76</sup> so it was natural that he would be involved. Croft and Reynolds were not the only bishops supporting the plan. Fuller said that Nicholson (Gloucester) and Blandford (Oxford) were also present at the meeting.

The addition of indulgence to comprehension in 1668 was due to pressure from the king, although public opinion was perhaps made more receptive by Owen's pamphlet already referred to. Baxter named Bridgeman, Clarendon's replacement as the king's chief minister, as the one who 'set on foot' the comprehension plan, a phrase repeated by Burnet when reporting the same 'Proposition... for a

<sup>74</sup> Grey p 110; Caroline Robbins, ed., *The Diary of John Milward* (Cambridge University Press 1938) pp 216f.

<sup>75</sup> Barlow MS II, p xiii.

<sup>76</sup> T. Wotton, *The Baronetage of England*, eds E. Kimber and R. Johnson, (1771) Vol II p 362.

Comprehension of the more moderate Dissenters, and a limited indulgence towards such as could not be brought within the Comprehension'.<sup>77</sup> But since the proposal of 1667 had not made provision for any who could not be comprehended, Bridgeman must not have been involved until 1668. He certainly became involved then; before the end of January Bridgeman was in contact with some of the Presbyterian clergy, and sent the king's physician, Sir John Baber, to get Baxter and Manton involved. Baber, a friend of Manton's, told them that Bridgeman 'had certain proposals to offer us; and that many great Courtiers were our friends in the business, but that to speak plainly, if we would carry it, we must make use of such as were for a Toleration of the Papists also.' Baxter's words suggest that ultimately it was the king that was looking out for the papists: 'we were not so ignorant whom we had to do with, as to expect full satisfaction of our desires, as to Church-Affairs'.<sup>78</sup> It may be that in 1667 there was hope of getting a plan adopted by Parliament without paying the price that royal assistance would require, but having failed in that the puritans may now have felt that only the votes of the growing 'court Party' could help them, which meant that comprehension would have to ride on the back of toleration.

When the meeting took place, the presbyterians said they believed they could come up with a plan that would comprehend not only presbyterians but independents too, and perhaps even some of the more moderate baptists, but Bridgeman made it clear that comprehension without toleration would not be acceptable. The presbyterians agreed to work on the comprehension part, and leave the toleration proposals to others. A few days later, a set of proposals was sent to them, and a

<sup>77</sup> RB II p 430; cf Gilbert Burnet, *The Life and Death of Sir Matthew Hale* p 37, in Hale, *Contemplations Moral and Divine, The Third Part* (1700).

<sup>78</sup> RB III p 23.

committee was set up consisting of Wilkins, who had drawn up the proposals, Bridgewater's chaplain Burton, together with Baxter, Manton and Bates. The non-conformists came with some proposals of their own, but were told that the proposals sent by Bridgeman were the only ones on the table.

There was probably not much discussion when the appointed five met, because Baxter's account makes it clear that the non-conformists took the text away to consider it, and they met later at the Earl of Manchester's house to do so, considering his support essential. At this meeting they changed some things and added others, Manchester himself adding a couple of paragraphs, all of which was put in another proposal, the text of which is in Baxter's account.<sup>79</sup> This counter-offer was sent or given to Wilkins, and after this the group of five (assuming that Burton attended; his name is not mentioned) met again and there was much discussion between Baxter and Wilkins. 'After being assured by Mr Wilkins that the Bishops would take no less'<sup>80</sup>, Baxter, Manton and Bates agreed to such revision of the original proposal as they could get, and the result was forwarded to Sir Matthew Hale, as already described. Later, Baxter remembered that when the details of Hales' bill were being finalised, all went well for the comprehension part, 'But when we came to the other part, the form proposed was for a Toleration of all, not excepting the Papists. I told the Lord Keeper, that we could not meddle in measuring out all other mens Liberty, but only to declare what we desired our selves: Others must be consulted about their own concerns, we were not for severity against any: But it was the King's Work, and we

<sup>79</sup> *RB III* pp 35f (but mispaginated; p 24 is numbered 34 and the mispagination continues from there).

<sup>80</sup> Barlow *MS II* p xxii.



unmeet to be his Counsellors in it. And so all was cast off by the Parliament by that means, and the Act forbidden to be offered'.<sup>81</sup>

Regardless of the divisions between those in favour of comprehension, support of indulgence by puritans as well as those sympathetic to Roman Catholics was a major blow to hopes of comprehension. The published works on the subject show how minds and arguments changed as the tide turned and returned. Sir Charles Wolseley's 1668 titles in support of liberty of conscience, for example, argued first from philosophical reasons, and only in his second work, *Liberty of Conscience the Magistrates Interest*, from grounds of national interest. Complicating the picture still further was the fact that to some supporters of indulgence, comprehension was the challenge to be overcome, and was explicitly opposed, as in the two pamphlets addressed to a member of Parliament by the same anonymous writer, the second of which stated its opposition to comprehension on the title page—*A second letter to a member of this present Parliament against comprehension by the author of the former Letter for liberty of conscience*.<sup>82</sup>

It seems clear that one of the biggest concerns for anti-puritans was still that the country was on the verge of another civil war, proved by the open refusal to conform of so many and the great popular support they were enjoying. Paranoia was the defining experience of the period covered by this thesis, and it is clearly visible in this discussion: on one side the fear that a new drive for anarchy was brewing, on the other that a new drive for popery was brewing, the presbyterians being perceived as the fifth column for the former and the new-style episcopalians as the fifth column for

<sup>81</sup> Baxter, *Against the Revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction* (1691) p 323.

<sup>82</sup> Both dated 1668; the first is *A Letter to a Member of this Present Parliament for Liberty of Conscience*.

the latter. Moderates on both sides thought the other was an unwitting fifth column, the rest thought them all deliberate traitors. The supporters of the comprehension bill knew, of course, that criticism of their proposal would take this form. There is a fragment of a letter from William Nicholson, bishop of Gloucester, undated, but cited by Barlow in the context of this proposal, which says '[the Presbyterians] should be made aware that quiet and humility be of essence, so that the Chancellor's party may not through cries of Tumult be entitled to break all'.<sup>83</sup>

After the failure of this particular campaign, the press went unused by supporters of comprehension for a while, although Humfrey returned to it briefly in his 1669 work *A Case of Conscience*, which included a revisiting of the comprehension and indulgence issues. Humfrey would use and re-use his arguments in this text for the rest of the period, so a brief survey of it will be useful. *A Case of Conscience* was actually the title only of the first of three essays in the published text. The *Case* was a reply to a point made by Simon Patrick in his *Friendly Debate*, the second was a response to Samuel Parker's *Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie*,<sup>84</sup> and the third a response to several recent works on liberty of conscience. It was in the reply to Parker that Humfrey returned to the subject of comprehension and indulgence, using language that he would repeat for at least 20 years. Parker had addressed the subject of liberty of conscience in the fifth chapter of his *Polity*, but instead of commenting, Humfrey referred the reader to 'two Books or two parts, entituled, Liberty of Conscience' and described them as saying all that needs to be said on the subject. Instead, even though there was no longer any pro-comprehension activity in Parliament, Humfrey used the

<sup>83</sup> Barlow MS II p v.

<sup>84</sup> Dated 1670 on the cover and in the bibliographies, but must have been published in 1669, because Humfrey's work of 1669 is clearly a reply.

opportunity provided by Parker to keep the subject in front of people. He referred to the king's expressed desire that Parliament would come up with a bill for 'Union of his Protestant Subjects', and added some more arguments in favour of such a plan to those he had given in the *Proposition for the Safety and Happiness of the Kingdom*. He also continued to assert the need for both comprehension and indulgence. Those who saw the problem were divided between those who wanted comprehension, followed by severe penalties against those who still would not come into the National Church, and those who wanted indulgence and 'abhorred' comprehension as 'more dangerous to them... than all the Acts that yet have passed' because of the increase of severity that would follow. Neither of these was in 'the full Interest of the King and the Kingdom... It is an Act therefore of a mixt Complexion, providing both Comprehension, and Indulgence for the different Parties, must serve our Purpose'. Like those in the *Proposition*, Humfrey's additional arguments in this work fell into two groups, one concerning the interest of the state and the other concerning the interest of the church, or of religion. In the interest of his emphasis on a combination of comprehension and indulgence, he related his arguments to this combination. The interest of religion was for unity in discipline and worship, which called for comprehension, while the interest of the state was 'flourishing of trade', which called for indulgence or toleration (those in trade would not risk money if they could not be sure they would be at liberty to spend it in the future, rather than being imprisoned or otherwise restricted because of their religious practices). If an act with both elements were ever to be passed, 'we need not doubt but time, the Mistress of the Wise and the Unwise, would discover the peaceable issue of such Counsels'.<sup>85</sup> Baxter,

<sup>85</sup> *A Case of Conscience* (1669) pp 12–14.



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however, continued to believe that the desire for indulgence was not helpful to the cause, because he spent the next couple of years trying to persuade the public that a single national church was to be sought above all else, regardless of how imperfect that church might be, as the next chapter will show.

Various explanations have been made as to why comprehension was not achieved at this time. Baxter blamed it on the anti-puritan bishops,<sup>86</sup> Manton on the independents.<sup>87</sup> Among modern scholars, Spurr tends to agree with Baxter,<sup>88</sup> Thomas with Manton,<sup>89</sup> and Simon blamed Wilkins, because in letting his friend Seth Ward know that the plan was in the works he unwittingly gave Sheldon the opportunity to arouse his contacts in Parliament to oppose it.<sup>90</sup> This survey suggests that differences among the supporters of comprehension was as important a factor as any other. The comprehension movement was not something associated with any particular group, who might have been able to get agreement on a particular form of the idea and then work for support of it by king and Parliament, but an idea that commended itself to people of many different parties. This was both its strength, providing a real breadth in practice to the church of the day, and its weakness, rendering it unlikely ever to find expression in the official formularies of that church.

<sup>86</sup> See n 1 of next chapter.

<sup>87</sup> See above, p 109.

<sup>88</sup> Spurr, *The Church of England, Comprehension and the Toleration Act* p 941.

<sup>89</sup> Thomas, *Comprehension and Indulgence* p 204.

<sup>90</sup> *Restoration Episcopate* p 167.

## 5 Comprehension and Separation

Although he had been involved in some of the private discussions about what might be presented to Parliament, Baxter had not contributed any support to the 1667/8 comprehension campaign in print. Baxter later attributed the failure of the Parliament to consider comprehension in 1668 to the influence zealous anti-puritan bishops had over it,<sup>1</sup> but must have also seen the danger that support for indulgence posed, because he began to put his own energy into a published refutation of the separatist tendencies for which indulgence would cater.

Although there is a substantial bibliography of works on Baxter's life and thought,<sup>2</sup> there are surprisingly few works primarily on the subject of his ecclesiology. Many works about Baxter refer to the subject, but the only major works primarily devoted to it are Harold Wood, *Church unity without uniformity: a study of 17th century English church movements and of Richard Baxter's proposals for a comprehensive Church* (Epworth, London 1963) and Paul Chang-Ha Lim, *In pursuit of purity, unity and liberty: Richard Baxter's Puritan ecclesiology in its seventeenth-century context* (Brill, Leiden 2004). William Lamont says that Baxter's ecclesiology as held during the period 1660 to 1676 is the 'most deeply researched' phase of his thought, citing Wood as the place where this is 'fully set out and documented',<sup>3</sup> confirming the view that there is more work to be done on the subject, since Wood's examinations of this period, while adequate to his own purpose, in fact focus on the broad picture rather than the details,

<sup>1</sup> *RB* III p 36.

<sup>2</sup> See N. H. Keeble's list in *Richard Baxter: Puritan Man of Letters* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1982), which can be supplemented by use of the Bibliography of British and Irish History at <http://apps.brepolis.net/LTool/EntranceSteward.aspx?w=3>.

<sup>3</sup> William M. Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium* (Croom Helm, London 1979) p 212, cf n 2.

and neither Wood nor Lim gives much attention to Baxter's efforts on behalf of a broader national church during the years between the comprehension proposals of 1668 and the Declaration of Indulgence of 1672. Baxter's major published contribution to the subject during those years, for instance, *The Cure of Church Divisions*,<sup>4</sup> is hardly noticed: Wood, who is careful to consider Baxter's writings in their contemporary context, does not mention the work at all, and Lim, who mines the work for evidence of Baxter's views on ecclesiology, ignores its setting in the contemporary situation.<sup>5</sup> The re-examination of Baxter's writings of this period in this chapter will attempt to give full attention to the *Cure*, to its historical context, and the public debate over separatism with Edward Bagshaw which followed its publication. No one else has looked at this exchange in any detail, and it will be useful to do so here because the way in which commitment to a single national Protestant church was declining and separation into competing ecclesial bodies was growing was to become an important factor affecting the fortunes of the comprehension movement.

It is true that the *Cure* reveals little that is new in terms of Baxter's position or any of the opposition to it, and also that it was written as a work of practical Christianity rather than of ecclesiology, which may explain the lack of attention given to the work. But when we look not just at the work itself, but at the debate to which it gave rise, we see the emergence into the glare of publicity of a division among non-conformists which began to be an issue during the debate of 1667/68, which the 1672 Declaration

<sup>4</sup> *The Cure of Church Divisions* (1670). Hereafter referred to as *Cure*.

<sup>5</sup> Lamont, *op cit* pp 145–154.

of Indulgence would solidify, and which according to some scholars would ultimately contribute materially to the failure of the comprehension movement.

Following the Act of Uniformity and the associated legislation, Baxter did his best to live in retirement from the parish work of ordained ministry;<sup>6</sup> he could not conform to the new conditions, so he lived as a layman, attending his local parish church in what has recently been called 'partial conformity'.<sup>7</sup> 'I resolved,' wrote Baxter,

'that... if I lived under an able, worthy, or tolerable man, I would joyn with him in publick (constantly if I had not *caeteris paribus* the liberty of better, and sometimes if I had) And I would help him by my private labours as well as I could, and live with him in Unity and Peace. Accordingly I constantly joyned in the publick Prayers and hearing at the Parish Church where I lived (having no better that I could go to) and never Preached to my family, but between the times of publick Worship; and the people that came in to me, went with me to the publick Worship'.

As far as sacramental communion was concerned, Baxter discussed this with others, and

'we concluded at the present to forbear Sacramental Communion with the Parishes: And that was, because it was a time when great severities were threatned against those that could not so far Conform; and most of the Independents and some others were against it; And our brethren verily believed that if we should then Communicate, those that could not yield so far, would be the sharplier used, because they yielded not as far as we. I yielded to them readily, that God will have Mercy and not Sacrifice, and even Gods worship otherwise due, as prayer, or preaching, or sabbath-keeping may be omitted for an act of Mercy, even to pull an Oxe or Ass out of a pitt. And therefore *pro tempore* I would forbear that sacrament... till at last I saw that the Reason seemed to me to cease, and I durst not for I knew not what, go against my judgement: But lest it might possibly have

<sup>6</sup> He resolved 'to live as much as possibly I could out of the World' *RB* II p 440.

<sup>7</sup> See John Ramsbottom, 'Presbyterians and "Partial Conformity" in the Restoration Church of England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol 43 (1992) pp 249–270, where the phrase 'partial conformity' is used to describe the origins of what would be called 'occasional conformity' by the beginning of the 18th century. The phrase was first used in modern times by Anne Whiteman, referring to those 'whose attendance at their parish church tended to fluctuate widely in accordance with the political situation, the degree of manorial control, the vigilance of magistrates and, especially, the popularity or otherwise of the incumbent or his curate as a preacher.' Anne Whiteman and Mary Clapinson, *The Compton Census of 1676: a critical edition* (Oxford University Press for the British Academy, London 1986) p xxxvii.



any such hurtful consequents, I chose a very private Country Parish to Communicate with, where I sometime sojourned, and where there was neither that, nor any other reason to hinder me: But yet after many years further observation, lest men that know not of my practice, should be scandalized or insnared, to think that I forbore Parish Communion as unlawful, and so to do the like themselves, I once chose an Easter day to Communicate in a very populous Church in London, purposely that it might be the further known'.<sup>8</sup>

Baxter considered his writing part of his ministerial work, and continued this work to some extent, although much of his writing during this time was personal and autobiographical rather than the didactic work of a minister. He published far less frequently than had been the case formerly. 1663 was the first year since he began publishing in 1649 that no new work by him appeared in print.<sup>9</sup> Such works as did appear during the next few years were more concerned with 'interior' than 'exterior' spirituality, examining how the individual believer could live a godly life under the present circumstances rather than how the church could or should change. 1666 was a second year with no new work in print, and Baxter was perceived as having retired from the scene. Lamont says that in 1666 Baxter was accused by Kidderminster non-conformist, Francis Wheeler, of 'withdrawal' and 'indifference to the controversies of the time'.<sup>10</sup> 1667 saw some resumption of what might be thought of as work more typical of him with *The Reasons of the Christian Religion*, but again nothing new was published in 1668. This, however, was the year he wrote the *Cure*, which followed the failure of Parliament to discuss comprehension and ended this period of retirement.

Baxter had become increasingly concerned about the tendency among some non-conformists to abandon all hope of a place in the national church. Many in his former congregation in Kidderminster were adopting separatist views, he complained in a

<sup>8</sup> *A Defence of the Principles of Love* (1671) pp 36, 38, 40. Hereafter referred to as the *Defence*. The relationship between the principal works of Baxter cited in this chapter will be described shortly.

<sup>9</sup> *Fair Warning, or XXV Reasons Against Toleration and Indulgence of Popery* (1663), contains only an extract from an earlier work.

<sup>10</sup> Lamont, *op cit* p 219.

letter to a former assistant there. He noticed also the desertion of many non-conformists to Seeker or Quaker groups; ‘and in London where there was one Separatist ten years agoe there is a multitude... even peaceable Ministers, whose concord was wont to be so much of my delight’ are showing signs of ‘the spirit of Separation’.<sup>11</sup> There had already been one exchange in print about it, between the non-conformists Thomas Douglas (writing as Christophilus Antichristomachus) and John Tombes, and Baxter felt obliged to add his own voice against separatism.

The text is dated April 1668,<sup>12</sup> but no one would license the work at that time, so it was not published until 1670, when his bookseller found a more sympathetic licenser, ‘and so unexpectedly it revived’.<sup>13</sup> The preface is dated February 1670, and the work was certainly in print by May 1670.<sup>14</sup> Others had begun to make the same points by this time; Baxter wrote an introduction to John Bryan’s book *Dwelling With God* (1670), which had some passages critical of separatism, in which he repeated some of the points he had made in the still unpublished *Cure*. Before long, Tombes, Bryan and Baxter had become well-known for their refusal to share the drift towards separatism.<sup>15</sup>

In many respects the *Cure* was, like Baxter’s other works during the period after 1662, a work of ‘interior spirituality’, in that it asked the reader to look into his heart and make changes there rather than arguing for changes in the law, or the prayer book, or the policy of conformist or non-conformist. It treated of such things as the difference between mature Christians and babes in Christ (Direction I), the nature of

<sup>11</sup> CCRB II Vol p 87.

<sup>12</sup> *Cure* p 430.

<sup>13</sup> *Defence* p 42.

<sup>14</sup> CCRB Vol II p 87.

<sup>15</sup> CCRB Vol II p 88.

spiritual pride (Direction II), and the difference between the Church Visible and the Church Mystical (Direction VI). It was written ‘to restore Love and Unity among Christians’, which he saw ‘decaying and almost dying through the temptation of our sufferings from some, and our differences with others... And to acquaint Christians with the wiles of Satan, who would kill their Grace, by killing their Love, whilst they think they do but preserve their Purity’.<sup>16</sup>

The book was a follow-up to his earlier *Directions for Weak distempered Christians*, which had as one of its goals the alleviation of ‘the lamentable Effects of their Weaknesses and Distempers’. The increasing tendency to separatism that Baxter was noticing, especially among those joining or coming of age in the non-conformist community, caused him to extend this work by including the spiritual weaknesses that he believed led to separatism. The fact that he addressed the issue this way suggests that what he now hoped for was not a change of view among conformist or non-conformist leaders, but among the people they served, to whom these leaders had given mistaken or insufficient teaching on the subject of church unity. There now existed a wrong set of assumptions about the church, especially on the part of the new members/converts coming into the non-conformist camp, hence this set of reminders of the correct view. In other words, the separatism that Baxter saw growing was un- or at least sub-Christian,<sup>17</sup> and as we shall see he hoped that the clergy would put this situation right.

The *Cure* might have been intended to be another work for the benefit of the individual believer, but because of the way Baxter intended to deal with his subject,

<sup>16</sup> *Defence* p 72.

<sup>17</sup> *Defence*, pp 73, 79f.

he knew that he was re-entering the fray from which he had retired after 1662. After the attempts at comprehension in 1660, 'and some glimmering once and again since vanished, one side having discharged me from speaking to them any more, and God I think discharged me at present, I saw nothing more to be attempted but with the other', and thus he wrote the *Cure*,<sup>18</sup> 'observing how mens minds grew every day more and more exasperated by their sufferings, and whither all this tended, and what was like to be the issue'. Baxter saw the prospects for comprehension deteriorating:

'there is no doubt, but many of each party already think worse of the other commonly, than they are... I saw those Principles growing up apace, in this time of provocation, which will certainly increase or continue our divisions, if they continue and increase. I am sure that our wounds are made by wounding principles of doctrine; And it must be healing doctrines that must heal us: And I know that we cannot be healed, till doctrinal principles be healed'.

He described the present situation in some detail, because he wanted there to be an accurate record for posterity, 'whose historical Information of the truth of matters in this age I much desire'. If the future historian wants to know the character of the separatists, he wrote, they have only to read the *Cure* and remember that they called it 'an evil and mischievous thing, and greatly to be lamented and detested: in so much that some of them say, It had been well if the Author had dyed ten years ago'.<sup>19</sup>

The book was aimed at the man in the pew, but it also urged clergy to remind their people of the things spoken of in the book. 'I write it to remember the Teachers of the Churches, what principles they have to Preach and strengthen, and what principles to confute and to destroy, if ever they mean to save the people from this state of sin, and the Churches from the sad effects', he wrote.<sup>20</sup> Baxter was quite clear

<sup>18</sup> *The Church Told of Mr. Bagshaw's Scandals* (1672) p 4. Hereafter referred to as *CT*. The two 'sides' Baxter is referring to here are not conformist and non-conformist, but clergy and laity, as will become clear below. Having failed to convince clergy on either side to maintain unity, he wrote the *Cure* in an attempt to maintain the cause of unity at the level of the pew.

<sup>19</sup> *Defence* pp 41, 43, 44, 71, 70.

<sup>20</sup> *Cure*, preface.

about how this approach would involve him in the controversy he had been avoiding for the past few years: some of these ministers, he knew,

‘before they have soberly read it over, they will carry about the Sectarian reports of it from hand to hand; And when one hath said it, the rest will affirm it, that I have clawed with one party, and have girded at the other, and have sought to make them odious by bringing them under the reproach of Separation, and of censuring and avoiding the ungodly; and that being lukewarm my self, and a complier with sin, I would have all others do so too’,

he wrote in the preface. Others, he went on, ‘will think that though all this be true, it is unseasonable, and may give advantage to such as love not Reformation’. The *Cure* aroused exactly the reaction Baxter expected, and started a debate between Baxter and Edward Bagshaw that continued until Bagshaw’s untimely death in 1671.

In order to understand Bagshaw’s reaction to the *Cure*, it is necessary to consider the series of pamphlets written by him between 1660 and 1662. They have been upheld by one scholar as an early example of ‘puritanism’s capacity to adjust in the new age’, exhibiting ‘ideas and decisions which would be more general in Puritanism only after years of further frustration’.<sup>21</sup> The adjustment Bagshaw was making, according to this writer, was the development of the idea of religious liberty as it would come to be understood by writers such as John Locke. Bagshaw wrote three works on this subject which between them make a case for separation from the national church. The first was *The Great Question Concerning Things Indifferent in Religious Worship* (1660), the second was *The Second Part of The Great Question Concerning Things Indifferent in Religious Worship* (1661), and the series was concluded by *The Necessity and Use of Heresies, or the Third and Last Part of the Great Question*

<sup>21</sup> J. F. Maclear, ‘Restoration Puritanism and the Idea of Liberty: The Case of Edward Bagshaw’ in *Journal of Religious History*, Vol 16 (1990) p 17.

(1662).<sup>22</sup> The first work argued that it was wrong for the civil law to impose the use of any *adiaphora* on the membership of the church, the second that it was wrong for the membership of the church to submit to such imposition, and the third work argued that the principles in the first two should be followed even if doing so allowed heresies to flourish. The works must have been widely read; the first pamphlet in the series went through three editions in a year, Bagshaw having achieved some notoriety not long before their publication because of his public dispute with the headmaster of the school where he taught.

Bagshaw appears to have known Roger Williams' 1644 treatise on religious liberty—at least he used Williams's famous phrase 'bloody tenet' to refer to the use of compulsion.<sup>23</sup> He may also have been reacting to Baxter's recent defence of such compulsion in his 1659 work, *The Holy Commonwealth*, but an examination of these relationships is beyond the scope of this chapter. In the first of his three works, Bagshaw argued that to impose things indifferent was to become 'Impious to God, by invading his Sovereignty, and lording it over another man's conscience'. It was a form of popery, regardless of how different the things imposed may be from those imposed by Rome: 'It is a more manifest sign of popery to forbid [popish ceremonies], as we do, under Penalties, than to practice them with freedome... whoever doth owne the Doctrine of Imposition, though in the smallest circumstance of Worship, he brings in the Essence, though not the name of Popery'. But whereas Williams' tract had addressed only the issue of whether it was right to impose religious practice, in Bagshaw's second work he addressed the issue from other side, whether it was right to

<sup>22</sup> Hereafter referred to as *Great Question, Second Part*, and *Last Part* respectively.

<sup>23</sup> *Great Question* pp 10, 11, 15.

submit to such imposition, and it is this second work that is worth a closer look here, since although there is no evidence that Baxter had read it, his arguments in the *Cure* diametrically opposed it.

In the *Second Part*, Bagshaw acknowledged that there were ‘many conscientious and sober men’ who ‘conceive, that when such things, as are not expressly forbidden by the Word of God, are Imposed, they may and ought to be practised’. His arguments are addressed to clergy, ‘upon whose Personal Practise all these things are commanded’. Lay people were present when ceremonies were used, but ‘for ought I know’ were not defiled by them. Bagshaw argued that the clergy should not submit to the imposition of *adiaphora* for the following reasons. First, by obeying those who command what God has not commanded, one ‘visibly disowns, and detracts from God’s sovereignty, who is sole Lord of the Conscience, whose honour is then given to another... The Magistrate... sins in enjoyning; must not therefore the inference be, therefore I shall sin in obeying him’. Second, in the light of Scripture passages such as ‘if the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed’, and ‘stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free’, ‘it is not a thing meerly arbitrary, and at our pleasure, whether we will preserve our Christian Liberty or not; but we are strictly commanded to do it’—and since liberty can only be exercised in the use of indifferent things or the avoidance of doubtful ones, necessary things being commanded and liberty not involved, it is precisely in the area of things indifferent that liberty must be preserved. Thirdly, we are commanded not to teach as doctrine the commandments of men, and even though ‘here no Doctrine be mentioned, yet there is a Doctrine couched under it, and that is... that the Magistrate hath power to

impose in religious worship'. Finally, it opens the door to idolatry, both in itself and in the danger of a return to popery:

'wherein lies the true ground of our separation from the Church of Rome, if not in this, because they obtrude such conditions of Communion, which Gods word doth not warrant us to assent to? ... If we answer, that we did it, because every National Church hath power to judge of Ceremonies... will it not inevitably follow, that our Church may when she pleases, bring in all those exploded Rites upon us, and when she doth so, we are bound to submit unto her Authority'.<sup>24</sup>

Following the publication of this series of tracts, Bagshaw made some ill-advised public comments about the king's inclination toward popery, and even questioned the legitimacy of the government by saying that the Long Parliament had not been legally dissolved, and he spent several years in various prisons. He had not been released long when Baxter's *Cure* was published, which (probably without Baxter realising it) directly contradicted the position for which Bagshaw no doubt considered he had suffered.

Baxter, as we have seen, intended to continue his work for unity by addressing the relevant spiritual issues: 'It is UNITY, LOVE and PEACE which I am pleading for: And it is DIVISIONS, HATRED and CONTENTION which I plead against'. But since he went on to point out that this meant

'it is the Hypocrisie of men which I detect,<sup>25</sup> who betray Love, Unity and Peace by a Iudas kiss; and will not, or dare not openly renounce them, and defie them, but kill them with dissembling kindness: who cry them up, while they tread them down and follow peace with all men, that are not of their party, as the Dog followeth the Hare, to tear it in pieces and destroy it: Who fight for LOVE by making others seem odious and unlovely; By evil surmisings, proud under valuing the worth of others, busie and groundless censuring of men, whose case they know not; aggravating frailties; stigmatizing the persons, the actions, the worship and religious performances of dissenters, with such odious terrible names, and Characters, as their pride and faction do suggest; And all this to

<sup>24</sup> *Second Part*, preface, pp 2, 8, 10, 14, 17, 18.

<sup>25</sup> ie expose.



strengthen the interest of their side and party, and to make themselves and their consenters to seem Wise and Good, by making others seem foolish and bad,'

it is hardly surprising that even if primarily aimed at conformists, the work was seen as an attack on at least some non-conformist clergy.<sup>26</sup> The *Cure*

'occasioned a storm of Obloquy among almost all the separating Party of Professors, and filled the City and Country with matters of Discourse... and so it was carried among them from one to one, first that I wrote against private Meetings, and then that I accused them all of Schism, and then that I wrote for Conformity, and lastly, that I conformed; so that before a Line of my Book was known, this was grown the common Fame of the City, and thence of all the Land, and sent as certain into Scotland and Ireland: yea, they named the Text that I preached my Recantation Sermon on before the King, as stirring him up to Cruelty against the Nonconformists'.<sup>27</sup>

Rumours of this sort came to the ears of the Secretary of State for Scotland, who immediately offered Baxter a bishopric there.<sup>28</sup>

What the course of the debate shows is that Baxter's *Cure* was prescribed, or at least administered, too late. The divisions were already too deep for such a cure; Bagshaw's response was a plea for surgery rather than medication, separation rather than continued non-conformity. Bagshaw's works in favour of separation did not so much 'anticipate the waning ideals of catholic unity and national religious profession'<sup>29</sup> as give voice to a movement already in existence and growing rapidly. Bagshaw, whom Baxter had met but described as 'a man that I am not acquainted with',<sup>30</sup> wrote as though Baxter was urging conformity, because he, like so many others, as Baxter's comments in the previous paragraph makes clear, could no longer imagine any alternative to separation. Bagshaw did not refer to those for whom he claimed to be speaking as non-conformists, nor even as those thinking of separating,

<sup>26</sup> *Cure*, preface Sig A3.

<sup>27</sup> *RB* III p 70.

<sup>28</sup> *CCRB* Vol II p 99.

<sup>29</sup> Maclear, *op cit* p 2.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Baxter, *A Second Admonition to Mr Edward Bagshaw* (1671). Hereafter referred to as *SA*.

but as ‘the Separate’, and it is clear that there were large numbers of them. Baxter had spoken in the *Cure* of people ‘crowding after’ separatist preachers, and Bagshaw referred to their audiences as ‘multitudes’. Bagshaw thought Baxter was attacking an established position rather than warning of future danger, as Bagshaw’s whole tenor shows. He spent little time arguing specific points with Baxter, even when Baxter was refuting points made by Bagshaw in the *Great Question* series, and even less time as the debate wore on. He had no interest in debating Baxter; his only concern was to make sure Baxter did not convince anyone, and Bagshaw did all he could to make his work a true ‘antidote’, as the title of his work described it, reducing Baxter’s ability to persuade the uncommitted by arguing, for example, that Baxter was only out to aggrandize himself, or that Baxter changed his views to match those of the ruling powers and could not be trusted.<sup>31</sup> He even referred to Baxter as ‘our Dictator’, ie an imposer himself, a couple of times, and there is evidence that he encouraged others to use the same epithet.<sup>32</sup>

At this point it may be helpful to list the works in which the debate took place. Baxter’s *Cure* began the debate, as we have seen, and Bagshaw’s *Antidote* was the first reply; Baxter then replied to Bagshaw with his *A Defence of the Principles of Love*, to which Bagshaw responded with *A Defence of the Antidote*. Baxter defended himself again with *A Second Admonition to Mr Bagshaw*, provoking Bagshaw’s *Review and Conclusion of the Antidote*<sup>33</sup>—a prophetic title, for although Baxter replied again, with *The church told of Mr. Ed. Bagshaw’s scandals and warned of the dangerous snares of Satan*

<sup>31</sup> Edward Bagshaw, *An Antidote against Mr Baxter’s Palliated Cure of Church Divisions* (1670) pp 2, 4, 11, 14, 16. Hereafter referred to as *Antidote*.

<sup>32</sup> Bagshaw later published an extract from a letter from one of his acquaintances which also used the word, *Defence of the Antidote* (1671; hereafter referred to as *DOTA*) p 27.

<sup>33</sup> 1671; hereafter referred to as *Review*.

*now laid for them in his love-killing principles*, by the time it was released Bagshaw had died, and the debate ended. As anyone familiar with Baxter's works would expect, his contributions were massive, 430 pages, 287 pages, 216 pages and 34 pages respectively, while Bagshaw's were brief, 21 pages, 30 pages and 20 pages. Baxter's arguments, as always, followed scrupulously the rules of debate as they were practised at the time, allowing almost no point raised by Bagshaw to go unchallenged, although he also indulged himself occasionally in personal remarks of the sort Bagshaw used freely. Bagshaw, on the other hand, allowed more and more of Baxter's points to go unchallenged, and concentrated on those which appeared to wound most. It is not clear who won the debate in the mind of their public, although to the modern reader Bagshaw's approach seems more effective, and it is demonstrable that separation eventually took place and comprehension did not. Baxter's resentment at Bagshaw's approach is also clear; again and again he complained that Bagshaw was breaking the rules. 'Both as Affirmer among Logicians, and as Accuser among men of justice, the proof be... incumbent on him', but instead Bagshaw just repeated his 'angry affirmation', Baxter noted.<sup>34</sup> Lim's statement that Bagshaw 'was convinced that if Baxter could but follow the progression of his own logic, he would be an ally of Bagshaw', and that Baxter in return 'encouraged' Bagshaw to read some of the pre-war non-conformists, seems to miss an important dimension of the debate.<sup>35</sup>

Many passages in the *Cure* had challenged Bagshaw's positions on the religious liberty issue as he had set it out in the three works of the *Great Question* series: 'It would make a knowing Christian weep between indignation and compassion, to see...

<sup>34</sup> *Defence*, Pt II p 77.

<sup>35</sup> *Op cit* p 151.

how unlawful [some] account it to pray in their imposed forms: some because they are forms, and some because they are such forms; and some because that Papists have used them, and some because they are imposed!’—which was Bagshaw’s point. Baxter’s statement that ‘Think not that all is unlawful to be obeyed, which is unlawfully commanded,’ directly contradicted Bagshaw’s position, as did ‘Approving and consenting are acts of your own mind: and whether you do so or not, is best known to your self: But it is a Profession of consent that we have now to speak of. And I say that our presence at the prayers of the Church, is no profession of consent to all that is faulty in those prayers’. It is the minister’s fault, he told the layman, ‘if it be a fault, to use those words, and none of yours: Whether he do it willingly as the best, or do it with a half will as of necessity, or whether there be tyranny in the imposing them or not; you are not guilty of any of this, by joyning with a Christian Church that useth them’. Baxter also claimed that those who maintain the sinfulness of worshipping where a form is imposed ‘barely affirm it without any proof... I never heard a word of proof for this bare assertion to this day’. In fact, he goes on, those who make such claims, saying without scriptural authority that something is sinful, are ‘making new parts of religion... and fathering them on God’, and thus practicing ‘true superstition’.<sup>36</sup>

The *Cure* was widely read, going through three editions before the end of the year, and aroused strong reactions among non-conformists. Rivalry between the book’s publisher and another prominent bookseller, who claimed he had refused to print it because Baxter did not practise what was preached in it, no doubt added to the sales,

<sup>36</sup> *Cure* pp 194, 196, 202, 282.

as well as to the indignation among some of its intended readers.<sup>37</sup> In addition, Parliament's revised Conventicle Act, renewed the same month the *Cure* was published, no doubt contributed still more to the wide readership the work enjoyed. But even before it was published 'the City and Countrey had sounded with abundance of untruths about my Book, while it was yet but in the Press'; once on sale it 'made a great noise, as water poured on the flames', Baxter added.<sup>38</sup> Letters of criticism were sent to Baxter in response to the *Cure* during 1670 from John Wilson, ejected from Blackford near Chester, Richard Sargeant, a former assistant in Kidderminster, and from his former Worcestershire colleague Henry Oasland, who stirred the pot by writing to others as well as to Baxter with his criticisms, commenting that 'No man hath so lost himselfe' as the quondam puritan hero.<sup>39</sup>

Bagshaw's reply (although unusually for Bagshaw he published it anonymously) began almost exactly as Baxter had predicted: Bagshaw complained that the publication was made at a most inopportune time (a criticism also made by others<sup>40</sup>), and that it was deliberately designed to make those who 'keep themselves pure from all defilements in False Worship' seem odious. Persecution was obviously a worse sin than separation, he went on, but Baxter had no criticism of that. Many of Bagshaw's criticisms were personal rather than theological; Baxter 'doth very often and needlessly insist upon many things that may tend to advance and heighten his own reputation', and Bagshaw doubted that Baxter was telling the truth in some of the examples he gave.<sup>41</sup> Even setting aside a nature already shown to be somewhat

<sup>37</sup> *RB* III p 70.

<sup>38</sup> *CT* p 6, *SA* p 11.

<sup>39</sup> *CCRB* Vol I p 425, II pp 86, 90, 92, 93, 94, 95.

<sup>40</sup> *CCRB* Vol II p 86.

<sup>41</sup> *Antidote* pp 1, 2, 6, 11, 14.

irascible, it is not entirely surprising that Bagshaw would take things so personally; when drawing his distinction between mature and immature Christians, for instance, Baxter had not shrunk from equating it, in some cases, to the distinction between old and young Christians: ‘they that are under age now think their words to be the wisest, because they are the boldest and the fiercest. The old were wont to bless the young, and now the young deride the old. It is the character of a truculent people Deut. 28. 50. that they regard not the person of the old: that is, They reverence not their age’. He had also referred to these younger Christians as ‘empty-headed’.<sup>42</sup> Bagshaw, fifteen years younger than Baxter, was part of a younger generation of godly clergy which had already found occasion to criticise its elders during the 1660s—see *A Call to Archippus*, the anonymous pamphlet by some younger ministers in 1664 calling on their elders not to be silenced by the Act of Uniformity, but to exercise their preaching ministry whether authorised or not,<sup>43</sup> and Bagshaw was not the one to overlook anything that could be understood as condescension.

Bagshaw also worked to drive a wedge between Baxter and other non-conformists. Bagshaw claimed to speak for a godly community that no longer included Baxter—phrases like ‘it seems to us’ were used in opposition to Baxter frequently. He accused Baxter of describing both presbyterians and congregationalists as no better than Anabaptists or Quakers, trying to ‘make that Character be believed concerning them, which only Papists, and the more carnal sort of the Episcopal party, have ever ventured to give them’, and prayed that God would rebuke him for this. Bagshaw’s hints that Baxter was an Arminian or a crypto-papist served the same purpose:

<sup>42</sup> *Cure* pp 4, 7.

<sup>43</sup> Attributed to Joseph Alleine.

‘we much wonder that any Protestant should be found, though but by the by, equalling of Church History to Scripture<sup>44</sup> as if the uncertain tradition of the one, were to be as much accounted of and followed, as the divine and infallible Revelation of the other... This is a very New and odious Nick-Name, to call the Protestant, by the title of a Sect... Mr Baxter makes us judge that he may in time, be brought to a compliance with them [*sc* papists], of whom he is pleased to write more favourably than the Scripture allows’.

Baxter had been soft on papism by criticising protestants for saying that no papist would be saved, and ‘he hath found out a new cause of separation, and such as we doubt not the Pope will thank him for’ by blaming the imposed-upon rather than the imposers for the present situation.<sup>45</sup>

In what would become one of his major themes, Bagshaw accused Baxter of inconstancy. ‘Mr Baxter is grown so scrupulous and tender that he is offended, if any break jests upon Common Prayer... not many years ago he delighted in such things himself’. Bagshaw can forgive opponents like Samuel Parker and Simon Patrick<sup>46</sup> ‘from whom we had no reason to expect better, when one from our own bowels doth thus seek our life’. Baxter’s comparison of Cromwell to the tyrant Maximus was ‘unbecomingly done in Mr Baxter, who dedicated a flattering book to his son’, just as his criticisms of some of the things done during the interregnum were also ‘most unbecoming’ given his role in the events of that time. Bagshaw says that it is time for Baxter to make clear where he stands: Baxter ‘flies upon all sides that are for order in any kind, without expressing himself whether he is for Papal, Presbyterian or Independent Government in the church’; this is no longer a matter for negotiation and compromise, it is a ‘crime’ to ‘seem unsettled in so necessary a point’. Baxter’s alleged preference for study over prayer as a way of acquiring wisdom, of which

<sup>44</sup> Baxter had said ‘shew me in Scripture, or in Church History’ any authority for the popish view of the church, *Cure* p 83.

<sup>45</sup> *Antidote* pp 5, 6, 7, 14.

<sup>46</sup> ‘The dialogist’—presumably a reference to Simon Patrick, the writer of *A Friendly Debate between a Conformist and a Non-Conformist* (1669).

Christ's waiting until he was thirty before beginning his ministry 'when it had been more easie for Christ to have got all knowledge by two or three earnest prayers than for any of us' was an example, 'becomes very well the Spirit that Mr. Baxter writes with, but not at all that which hitherto he hath pretended to'.<sup>47</sup>

Baxter later belittled Bagshaw's objections, describing the *Antidote* as 'so full of Untruths and Spleen, and so little pertinent to the Cause, as that I never met with a Man that called for an Answer to it',<sup>48</sup> but at the time he cared enough to respond quickly, and to respond again to Bagshaw's response to him. Bagshaw's objections were likely to have considerable impact upon the laity Baxter had been trying to influence in the *Cure*, since 'the people are far more averse to Communion or Concord with the Parish-Churches, than the Nonconforming Ministers are', as Baxter had noted in its preface. Baxter said that Bagshaw was particularly effective in drawing people in London and Northamptonshire away from the non-conformist position, although he mentioned 'other counties' too.<sup>49</sup>

Baxter's reply to the *Antidote* consisted of two works bound together: *A Defence of the Principles of Love* is the first of the two. It was written in January 1671.<sup>50</sup> In this section he did not respond directly to Bagshaw but addressed his readers—'You that take me to be so bad, as the *Antidote* describeth me', and 'those who are of the excepter's mind and are offended'. He described himself as 'one of the mourners for a self-dividing and self-afflicting land' on the title page, harking back to one of the leading ideas that had governed the behaviour of the non-separating non-conformists

<sup>47</sup> *Antidote* pp 9, 10, 15, 18 20.

<sup>48</sup> *RB* III p 73.

<sup>49</sup> *SA* p 23.

<sup>50</sup> *CCRB* Vol II p 104.



since 1662.<sup>51</sup> Baxter assumed Bagshaw represented those who had been saying Baxter himself had conformed, although some said this that never saw his book. ‘The great offence is that I put in the Episcopal, as fit for our Communion; which I suppose is principally because of their manner of worship, in which we must have Communion with them. Which foreseeing, I answered more objections against this than against the rest; which hath occasioned some falsly to affirm, that I write only to draw men to Communion with the Church of England’.<sup>52</sup>

Baxter’s chief aim here appears to have been to focus attention back on the internal spiritual issues he had addressed in the *Cure*. In the preface he was speaking to clergy,<sup>53</sup> but no longer telling them how they should guide their parishioners, instead he addressed their own spiritual needs as revealed in the responses he has received. The controversy was at root a spiritual issue: ‘The hurt and loss is farr more to the excluder than the excluded; to him that loseth his Charity, than to him that loseth but Communion with others’. The virulence of the reaction was counterproductive: ‘what if in all this I be mistaken... should you be so impatient as not to bear with one that in such an opinion differeth from you? ... Why should not you bear with my dissent, as well as I do with yours?’<sup>54</sup>

Baxter rebutted the criticism of being no longer truly part of the godly by saying he was exactly where the New England godly now were, following the adoption of the ‘half-way covenant’ there in 1662: ‘since their Synods late moderation, I know not many Churches in the world, besides the Waldenses of the Bohemian, Polonian and

<sup>51</sup> See the anonymous pamphlet wrongly attributed to Sir John Birkenhead, *A Mystery of Godliness and no Cabala* (1663), in which Bishop Hall’s society for proscribed episcopalians in the 1650s was revived for the benefit of presbyterians.

<sup>52</sup> *Defence* p 8.

<sup>53</sup> ‘Us ministers’, p 12.

<sup>54</sup> *Defence* pp 13, 17.

Hungarian Government, who are neerer to my own judgement, in Order and Discipline than those in New England are, and none that for Piety I prefer before them'.<sup>55</sup>

As to the accusations of crypto-papism, Baxter stressed his opposition to papism by suggesting that the looming divisions would encourage, not prevent, the return of catholicism to England. His defence against Arminianism, though, was less likely to convince, even if true: 'I am confident that there is not one of many hundreds, who are against Communion with them that know what Arminianisme is, and truly understand the difference'.<sup>56</sup>

Baxter referred indirectly to the charge of inconstancy almost immediately, saying 'I hope I shall not be such a changeling in this which is the Great Command of the Gospel, and the fulfilling of the Law, and the very Heart of all Religion, as to turn from it for... a voluminous calumny and reproach. I confess I must change, but I hope it will be, to turn still to more and more Love and Concord, and not to Less'.

Bagshaw's hints about forgiving Patrick and Parker are turned on their head: 'I found in the *Debater*, and *Ecclesiastical Polititian*<sup>57</sup> that the Nonconformists are made ridiculous and odious, as men of erroneous, uncharitable, and ungovernable principles... And I thought that the publication of this book, should leave a testimony to the generations to come, by which they might know whether we were truly accused, and whether our principles were not as much for Love and Peace as theirs'.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>55</sup> *Defence* pp 6f.

<sup>56</sup> *Defence* p 7.

<sup>57</sup> Parker's book was *A discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie* (1670), see above, p 120. The nickname 'Ecclesiastical politician' stuck, was repeated by Marvell in 1672, *The Rehearsal Transpros'd* pp 52 *et al.*

<sup>58</sup> *Defence* pp 4, 63f.

Baxter recounted some details of events in 1660 and 1661 which he thought would help clergy readers understand his situation. The situation he was arguing for now was the same as all had hoped for then: all those involved in the debates over comprehension and Prayer Book revision at that time had shared the opinion that while it may have been wrong for the Prayer Book to be imposed, it was no sin for those imposed upon to use it, however defective it may have been. 'An inconvenient Mode of Worship is a sin in the Imposer, and in the Chooser, and Voluntary user, that may offer God better, and will not: And yet it may not be only lawful, but a duty to him, that by violence is necessitated to offer up that or none. By this you may see what we all thought then of not only hearing, but reading a defective Liturgie in such a case'. After the failure of comprehension, there had been much discussion, apparently, of a common policy and practice for all non-conformists, but Baxter had resisted this:

'I ever shunned all such attempts; 1. Because it is the way that we have blamed so much in others, to make narrow measures for other mens practices, and unnecessary terms of Brotherly Concord... I remembred the saying of Mr. Dod, who thanked God for the Churches sake, that some conformed, and for the Truths sake, that some conformed not... I ever thought therefore that without any combinations, our way is, every man to know the truth as well as he can, and practice accordingly; and live in Love and Peace with those that differ from him in tollerable things. And thus I hope most Non-conformable Ministers do'.

In 1663 several London non-conformist ministers got together, and all were agreed that they could receive communion in the parish church, but would not as long as the Independents felt they could not; some people misunderstood this, and thought they did not receive because they thought it not lawful to be so imposed upon. 'At last in the year 1667, observing how mens minds grew every day more and more exasperated by their sufferings, and whither all this tended, and what was like to be the issue, I

wrote this book called *The Cure of Church-Divisions*... God knoweth to how much worse we are going, if Grace and Wisdom yet prevent it not'.<sup>59</sup>

Clearly Baxter was replying to the 'antidote' rather than discussing the issue of religious liberty, being afraid that division was running riot: 'men that to day condemn Communion with the Parish Churches, and then with the Presbyterians; do shortly fly from Communion with the Independents too'. There was no need for differences to become divisions: independency was not incompatible with a national church, as the 'fathers of independency' show in their own writings against separatism. Independents should work hardest to avoid separation, since they were most likely to be blamed if there was a permanent split. He was convinced that the majority was still not separatist: 'I can assure them, that the most of the Non-conformists [sic] Ministers of my acquaintance, are not a jot more rigorous or farther from them, than the old Nonconformists were'.<sup>60</sup>

It was the emotions involved that were making things difficult, that made people believe that things were different now than they were in the days when the old puritans wrote against separatism, for instance. It was the job of the clergy to help their flock deal with such understandable emotions: 'if after such grievous judgements, as plagues, flames, poverty, reproach, and silencings, and sad confusions, which God hath tryed us with in these times, his Ministers should through passion, policie or sloth, sit still and let Professors run into sinful principles and extreams, it will be our Aggravated sin'. No other minister seemed willing to undertake this task, and Baxter was willing to do the job because he had less to lose than most others.

<sup>59</sup> *Defence* pp 34, 35, 37, 38f, 40. The 1667 date Baxter gives here conflicts with the date given in the *Cure*, p 430.

<sup>60</sup> *Defence* pp 49, 58, 60, 65.

Because it was pastoral work he was doing, opposition to it was naturally demonic: ‘Satan maligning the just vindication of the Non-conformists against these accusations, hath by false suggestions stirred up some, who differ from the rest as well as we, to clamour against this Book’.<sup>61</sup>

It is in the second work, bound up with the *Defence*, which has its own title, *An Answer to the Untrue and unjust Exceptions of the Antidote Against my Treatise for Love and Unity*, and its own pagination, that Baxter addressed Bagshaw’s exceptions specifically, and countered to some extent some of Bagshaw’s implications. In the *Defence* he had almost ‘taken the fifth amendment’ regarding the accusation that he was ‘guilty of the wars’, refusing to answer it until ‘they will procure me License and Indemnity’.<sup>62</sup> In *An Answer to the Untrue and unjust Exceptions of the Antidote* he denied Bagshaw’s charge, but added, ‘if indeed I was as guilty as you mention, why is it in me a most unbecoming practice, to blame that which you think I did occasion? Is this good Divinity, that it is unbecoming a Minister to mention heinous sin with bitterness which we have bin guilty of? How then shall we repent? Or is Repentance an unbecoming thing?’ Bagshaw’s criticism of his comparison of Cromwell to Maximus was also out of order: ‘It is publicly known that I did openly and constantly speak the same things all the time of Cromwell’s Usurpation: Why then is it unbecoming now?’ As for the dedication to Cromwell’s son, ‘hearing that he was disposed to peace, and against such turbulent Church-destroying waies as you here plead for, I thought it my duty then to urge him to do that which was right and just’.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>61</sup> *Defence* pp 61, 65.

<sup>62</sup> *Defence* p 25.

<sup>63</sup> *An Answer to the Untrue and unjust Exceptions of the Antidote* (1671) pp 11, 141, 142.

To the insinuation that his reference to Protestants as a 'sect' was an indication of sympathy for papism, Baxter replied 'I profess that I mean no other party of men at all, but the Dividers of all parties whatsoever... though a man may be a Divider, that is Episcopal, Presbyterian, Independant or Anabaptist, yet as such as their denominations signifie, I mean none of them; for many of all these names are no Dividers (though a Papist is so by the essence of his Religion, un-churching all beside his Sect)'. But to the charge that he was soft on papism by not returning this mass unchurching, Baxter says 'I confess I affect none of the honour of that Orthodoxness, which consisteth in sentencing millions and Kingdoms to Hell, whom I am unacquainted with'. The fact that the Pope might be pleased by something Baxter had said was irrelevant to the truth of it: 'And to pretend that the confession of our own faults is not only an easing of other mens, but even a meriting of the Pope; As if either the Pope must be in the right, or no Christians must be said to be Church-Dividers by their ignorance; Even in a time when our Divisions so shew themselves, that no one can doubt of them: What is this but to perswade men to be Papists?' He denied that he equated church history with scripture; 'Prove such a word if you are able'.<sup>64</sup>

To the charge that he had changed his views in that he who formerly made jests at the Prayer Book now rebuked others for doing so, Baxter insisted first that 'I know nothing in any of those Papers or Treaty [about the Prayer Book], as to the matter that I have changed my judgement in, or repent of', and second, regarding the jest, 'I confess [I was] sarcastical, and I unfeignedly thank you for calling me to review it; and I do unfeignedly repent of it, and desire pardon of God and men, for speaking words of so much derision... Though I then no more perceived my fault, than you do

<sup>64</sup> *Defence* pt II pp 35, 40, 45f, 105.

yours'.<sup>65</sup> But Baxter did not defend as well as Bagshaw attacked; he spent too much time on the substance of the exceptions, and not enough on the passing remarks in them.

The *Antidote* had been published anonymously, but in his *Defence of the Antidote*, Bagshaw put his name on the title page. In his *Defence* Baxter had referred to the author only as 'the Excepter', but it was clear that the author was someone known to him, and Bagshaw began his *Defence of the Antidote* by saying 'I perceive you take it for granted (without any particular enquiring from myself about it) that I wrote those just and weighty exceptions, which were lately published against your (Pretended and Palliated) *Cure of Church Divisions*'.<sup>66</sup> It was in print by May 1671.<sup>67</sup>

Bagshaw said that the *Defence of the Antidote* was a 'review and defence of some of the principal exceptions' made in the *Antidote*, by which he appeared to mean pushing harder at the places where he sensed Baxter had proved vulnerable. To Baxter's denial that the purpose of his book was to make separatists seem odious, Bagshaw replied, 'that is to be esteemed the design of a book, whatever was the secret and unknown intention of the writer, which the words themselves, and the manner of writing (without any streining) do offer unto every serious and inquisitive reader', and that clearly meant that Bagshaw's statement was true, for 'many hundreds of sober, impartial and unbiassed persons, have carefully read your book... and they all make the same judgement of it'. And it had done what Baxter hoped: many people in conversation were telling separatists they had been criticised even by one of their own, and one work against them in print has quoted the *Cure*.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>65</sup> *Defence* pt II p 71.

<sup>66</sup> *DOTA* pp 1f.

<sup>67</sup> *CCRB* Vol II p 114.

<sup>68</sup> *DOTA* pp 2f.

Bagshaw pursued the issue of Baxter's involvement in the wars, making more explicit what he had only hinted at in the *Antidote*, 'since you press me to speak plainly', and quoted Baxter's 1659 work, *The Holy Commonwealth*, to prove Baxter's support for the republican cause. Baxter had admitted in that work that at one time he had thought his engagement in the war 'the greatest outward service that ever I performed to God', and Bagshaw quoted this and similar sentences. Cromwell, Baxter had written, 'did prudently, Piously, faithfully (to his immortal honour)... exercise the government', and Bagshaw now asked, 'could you say all this of him then, and do you think your most partial friends can justify you now, when you compare him to the tyrant Maximus?' Similar quotes from the preface to the book undermined Baxter's rebuttal of the points made about his dedication of the *Five Disputations of Church Government* (1659) to Richard Cromwell in the *Antidote*. Bagshaw concluded this section with another shot at Baxter's inconstancy: 'you that professed yourself to be so Loyal then, cannot in reason be supposed to be conscientiously Loyal now, and the least you can expect is to be neither believed nor trusted'. Bagshaw could only defend himself against Baxter's charge of lying, he wrote, 'by stripping you of your Disguise under which for so many years you have been masked and covered'. Baxter's change, he said, was due to cowardice: 'you find it far easier (in your Notional Divinity) to recant all that formerly you were convinced of, than to bring your heart unto a willingness for martyrdom'.<sup>69</sup>

Bagshaw also turned the hints about Arminianism and crypto-papism into more specific charges. Baxter had appealed to many of the 'old conformists' of pre-war days and their own arguments against the separatists of their day, and Bagshaw replied

<sup>69</sup>DOTA pp 3, 5, 6, 7.



that 'it is a very improper thing for any to seem to magnifie so much the Opinion of those worthy men... in the business of ceremonies and conformity, when they themselves refuse to follow them in their other more sound and substantial doctrines', and proceeded to give Baxter's Arminianism as an example. Baxter's remark about so few understanding what Arminianism was showed that he saw little difference between it and orthodox Christianity, whereas in his *Five Disputations* Baxter had equated the teachings of Arminians and Jesuits—'I hope you do not intend to enlarge your communion so far as to take in the Jesuites also; if you do, pray deal clearly with us, and tell us so'.<sup>70</sup>

Although advised not to,<sup>71</sup> Baxter replied in June 1671,<sup>72</sup> despite saying somewhere in the *Defence* that he would not, in his *A Second Admonition to Mr Edward Bagshaw*. Although said to be written 'to call him to Repentance for many false Doctrines', in a long opening section Baxter also went back to his original policy of speaking to the laity likely to be influenced by Bagshaw, and spoke still from the spiritual point of view, detailing 'twenty causes of that sin' of separation. He stressed again the dangers of spiritual pride, and the need to distinguish between the church visible and the church invisible. It was new converts who were most at risk: 'when persons are newly recovered from ungodliness themselves, they are very much inclined to fly from the company of such, as far as their safety doth require: And by this inclination and their ignorance, they are frequently tempted to go further from them in Church communion, than God alloweth them to do'. They easily forgot 'how

<sup>70</sup> *DOTA* pp 17, 18.

<sup>71</sup> *CCRB* Vol II p 114, letter from William Allen—'Those of the Separation that are more moderate do blame Mr. Bagshaw, and think you need not answer him; and his Temper is to have the last word. If you think otherwise, a calm Answer will be best'. Note how even the moderates now begin to refer to themselves as separatists as easily as non-conformists.

<sup>72</sup> *CCRB* Vol II p 114.

tender Christ is of the weakest of his members, that are sincere, and that he had rather many hypocrites were received, than one true Christian shut out'. Baxter also took the gloves off in his own description of Bagshaw, calling him a false teacher, a criminal libeller, an enemy to peace and even sobriety, and a liar.<sup>73</sup>

Baxter's call for Bagshaw's repentance was an attempt to turn the debate into a public exercise of proper biblical, ie presbyterian, discipline of an erring minister, confronting him with his sins and urging him to repentance. The phrase 'second admonition' in the title makes that clear, referring to Titus 3.10f, 'admonish [a man who is factious] once or twice', the *Defence* having constituted a first admonition. 'I shall consider of your words, and help you better to understand your self'.<sup>74</sup> In his last contribution to the debate, *The Church Told of Mr Ed. Bagshaw's Scandals*, he will turn to the treatment of church quarrels described in Matthew 18.17, 'if he will not listen to them, tell it to the church'—perhaps the 'old non-conformists' that he refers to so often in all his works in the series are intended to be the 'two or three witnesses' of Matthew 18.16.

When he turned in the *Second Admonition* to another defence of himself against Bagshaw's charges, Baxter continued his not very successful approach. Instead of focussing on the charges Bagshaw had made most of, he continued to argue over every arguable statement, and the rebuttals he needed to make most, such as his insistence that he had criticised Cromwell to his face for his usurpation, 'till I made him so angry, that it was time to say no more', were buried in the middle of the many more he did not need to make. When he got to issues arising from the war, he quibbled over

<sup>73</sup> SA pp 2, 7, 14.

<sup>74</sup> SA p 27.

Bagshaw's precise wording rather than speaking to the doubts Bagshaw was raising in people's minds, as in Baxter's statement that he was 'was not so guilty of stirring up, and fomenting the War, as were those that first raised it, and those that were Generals, Commanders or Souldiers'.<sup>75</sup>

Nor did Baxter take advantage of all the opportunities to rebut the point made by Bagshaw that Baxter changed with every wind that blew. He did repent of anything he might have written against the peace of the church, against the authority of the king, that he did not do more to discourage 'the Spirit of pievish quarrelling with Superiours and Church-orders', that he had not consulted with the best lawyers on the royalist side, 'and all the rest of my sin in this business'. He also said 'I profess not to Recant all the doctrine of it, though I revoke all the Book', referring to *The Holy Commonwealth*, a repudiation also made in his *Life of Faith*, published at more or less the same time as the *Cure*. Baxter did, however, successfully ridicule the idea that there was anything in that book he might have been put to death for, so for Bagshaw to say he repudiated it to avoid martyrdom was ludicrous.<sup>76</sup>

Concerning Arminianism and crypto-popery, Baxter's reply was weak. 'Was not Arminius himself against Prelacy and Ceremonies? and many of his followers?' and even weaker, 'True Protestants usually say the same things that I do. Though you may meet with some few like your self that do not... I distinguish of Papists properly so called who practically hold all the Popish errours, and Nominal Papists that call themselves such or are called so by others, who know not or practically hold not the pernicious part of their errours: These latter I refused to undertake to judge to Hell'.<sup>77</sup>

<sup>75</sup> SA pp 37, 42.

<sup>76</sup> SA pp 52, 62f.

<sup>77</sup> SA pp 138, 141, 146.

Baxter also implied that Bagshaw was separating from him as well as from the prelatists: 'If some serve him by killing his servants, no wonder if others do it by slandering them, and perswading all to separate from them', thus giving unwitting support to the assumption that Baxter was about to conform.<sup>78</sup>

In between the writing and publishing of the *Second Admonition*, Bagshaw was again imprisoned for refusing the oath of allegiance, and his final contribution, *The Review and Conclusion of the Antidote*, was written from prison. In it Bagshaw focussed almost entirely on two issues, dismissing the others as 'bymatters, which are nothing to the purpose of our main Controversie'. Presumably the ones he pressed were the ones he felt had given Baxter the most trouble. The two issues were Baxter's varying opinions about the war and the alleged theological inconstancy this showed, and Baxter's Arminianism/crypto-popery, especially as exemplified by his over-rating of human reason, and he attacked these as strongly as he could. I knew you would give me one more chance to go into print, he said, 'your guilt would necessitate you to do it'.<sup>79</sup>

Concerning Baxter's repentance, Bagshaw said that his heart 'was never truly humbled, and consequently that Repentance you take occasion to mention [is] meerly Hypocritical and Pretended', a 'subterfuge' by which to 'disguise and hide' his continued allegiance to the cause, (although 'what may not a little Time, and change of success produce in so variable an understanding'). Bagshaw claimed that in any case it had been his attacks that had forced Baxter to make his recantation,<sup>80</sup> and he continued to quote *The Holy Commonwealth* against Baxter regardless. Baxter's

<sup>78</sup> SA p 163.

<sup>79</sup> Review p 1.

<sup>80</sup> Although in fact Baxter first repudiated his role in the republic shortly before the *Cure* was published.

inconstancy was brought up again and again. He had ‘deserted... the cause of Christ’, he was ‘persuading the World to Conformity’, ‘we stand amazed, how it is possible, you should so soon and so much forget all that you have said... we, that want your easieness and flexibility, are frighted at them’. His closing words were intended to highlight the difference between them in the matter of faithfulness under persecution—‘from my prison by Newgate’.<sup>81</sup>

Baxter had the last word, but in accordance with the scriptural injunction it was addressed to the church, not to Bagshaw, and was in print by December 1671.<sup>82</sup> Bagshaw died (at 41 or so) as it was being published. In it Baxter drew attention to Bagshaw’s method, which he had found so hard to cope with: ‘the Cause it self he shamefully slip’d over; as if his spirit and interest had directed him to no other means, but only to attempt to asperse the person that was against him’, and described Bagshaw’s refusal to engage Baxter’s objections, ‘silently passing them over, as if he had never read them... and yet going on to repeat the same things, which I had confuted,’ and his refusal to repent. The real issue between them at this point was Bagshaw’s ‘libels’ against Baxter, the difference of opinion over separation never having been truly addressed by Bagshaw anyway. Baxter ended by asking the church, in the person of the reader at least, to agree that Bagshaw was unworthy to be a minister, and admonished the church not to be taken in by his ideas.<sup>83</sup>

He also repeated his point that Bagshaw was arguing for separation, not mere non-conformity, and that Bagshaw knew Baxter was arguing for non-conformity, not conformity, even though he (Bagshaw) pretended otherwise. ‘The word [Conformity]

<sup>81</sup> *Review* pp 1, 3, 4ff, 16.

<sup>82</sup> *CCRB* Vol II p 128.

<sup>83</sup> *CT* pp 6, 7, 9, 23, 24, 26.

in its old and usual sense doth signifie, that Conformity by Subscriptions, Oaths, and Ceremonies, which distinguish the people called Non-conformists from the Conformists, who yet were notoriously distinguished from the Separatists. It's true, that it may be called Conformity, if we are baptized, if we profess Christianity, if we read the Scriptures, if we use the common Translation, if we go to hear a Sermon in publick, if we use the Lords Prayer, &c. in all this we do as the Church of England doth. But this is not it that is notified by the common use of this name'.<sup>84</sup> Non-conformity described a place within the national church, however inadequate it might be to those who occupied it, and as such was to be kept, in the hope that a better day would eventually come.

Several points emerge from this survey of the debate that shed light on some of the historical issues debated by modern scholars. In the light of the comments occasionally made about 'occasional conformity' or 'partial conformity', it could be argued that we find in Bagshaw's mind the same sense that Baxter's position was that of one with a foot in both camps. Bagshaw believed that Baxter's position *was* conformity; Baxter and those who shared his views might use the word 'non-conformist' of themselves, but in fact they were conformists, albeit minimal conformists. They would not take the required oaths, but they conformed in that they accepted that this cost them the right to exercise their public ministry, and continued it only in private, at hours when it did not conflict with the ministry exercised in the parish church. To Bagshaw and clearly to many others, true non-conformity *must* mean separation in the end. By the 1680s, it was clear to all that separate churches was

<sup>84</sup> *CT* pp 9, 10.

the reality, hence the objections that begin to be made then<sup>85</sup> to ‘partial conformity’ on the part of an increasing number of conformists—what they were really objecting to by then was Presbyterians or Congregationalists occasionally pretending to be Episcopalians.

The point at which it becomes logical to refer to the existence of separated churches might also emerge as earlier than is often assumed; while such churches may not have acquired their organisational structures for several years to come, in the minds of their members they existed by 1670 in all essential aspects, and the Declaration of Indulgence of 1672, by its requirement that each indulged congregation declare its adherence to a presbyterian, congregational, or independent form of church government, gave the separated churches their names. Ramsbottom’s statement that ‘for many of these moderate puritans the years 1660–1689 were not an interval of preparation for a new existence as members of dissenting churches but rather a period of sincere and sometimes successful accommodation to the varied and changing character of “Anglicanism”<sup>86</sup>’ may need serious qualification, because the evidence of this debate suggests that the number of moderate puritans, or minimal conformists, was shrinking at this time.

The process by which Bagshaw moved from ‘it was unbecoming in you to mention the war with disapproval’ to ‘you were the greatest supporter of it and are now trying to pretend you were not’ should also make us very careful about what we read into statements by anyone, not because we are likely to read too much into them, but because we may read too little. Baxter’s approving remarks about the half-way

<sup>85</sup> Ramsbottom, *op cit*, p 249.

<sup>86</sup> Ramsbottom, *op cit*, p 251.

covenant in New England are interesting in this regard. It would seem from this debate that what Baxter liked about the half-way covenant principle was its insistence that baptism and an outward profession of faith were all that were required for membership in the church; 'Christ hath solemnly and purposely made the Baptismal Covenanting with him, to be the terms and title to Church membership and Communion; And the owning of this same Covenant is the sufficient Title of the adult'.<sup>87</sup> Conformists, even zealous conformists, were entitled to be regarded as true churchmen, and therefore not to be separated from, by the application of that principle. But Lamont thinks Baxter's remarks are a sign of his 'willingness to accommodate both Independents and Baptists in a new Protestant union'.<sup>88</sup> At first sight, when Baxter's statements are read more in the context of the debate with Bagshaw, this seems impossible to accept, but Lamont may be right to see more in this than meets the eye.

The argument between them was widely followed; Baxter mentions the 'many readers' of their debate,<sup>89</sup> and details have already been given of the correspondence he received during the course of the debate. The point of Baxter's huge effort to prevent separatist ideas from spreading was that traditional non-conformity, or minimal conformity, was essential to the success of comprehension, if it were ever to be achieved. Comprehension would still mean minimal conformity, but such conformity might allow a Baxter or an Owen back into parish ministry, if no more. Comprehension was about compromise, and Bagshaw's views removed all possibility of that.

<sup>87</sup> *Cure*, preface.

<sup>88</sup> Lamont, *op cit* p 226; but cf p 231, where Lamont qualifies this statement somewhat, agreeing that Baxter's hopes were for comprehension of some sort even for independents.

<sup>89</sup> SA p 19.



Whether or not Bagshaw's arguments anticipated those of Locke and others the present writer is not qualified to say, but Baxter's approach in this debate is different from others of his day in that he treated separatism and conformity primarily as spiritual issues rather than ecclesiological or theological ones: it was a lack of Christian love that led people to consider separating from their neighbours, and only a fresh commitment to the value of such love could keep the national church together.

In terms of success, Bagshaw's criticisms of Baxter seem far more likely to have encouraged separatists than Baxter's criticisms of Bagshaw to encourage non-conformists. Whether the debate was followed widely enough to justify giving Bagshaw any credit for the growth of separatism in the decade after 1670 cannot be demonstrated, but should not be dismissed.

## 6 Comprehension and Indulgence

That it was generally recognised that there had been growth in support for indulgence rather than comprehension is shown pretty clearly by the steps taken by the government to win the support, or at least neutrality, of non-conformists during a planned attack on a state that non-conformists thought of as a natural ally of Protestant England, the Netherlands.<sup>1</sup> Although the attempts at comprehension of 1667/8 had failed, the administration, if not Parliament, continued to show a fairly relaxed attitude towards non-conformists of all types, and their support for the war was sought not by offering comprehension by Act of Parliament but indulgence by royal decree. The policy was inaugurated by the Declaration of Indulgence of 1672.

As far as the historiography of the Indulgence is concerned, the two most comprehensive works on the subject are those of Frank Bate and G. Lyon Turner. Bate's book-length study *The Declaration of Indulgence 1672: A Study in the Rise of Organised Dissent* was published in 1908, and is a narrative history of the Church of England from the Act of Uniformity to the end of the Declaration of Indulgence, together with a list of licensed persons and places, arranged by county.<sup>2</sup> Turner's work is a three-volume transcription of the 1669 survey of non-conformists and the 1672

<sup>1</sup> For the connection of the policy to the plans for war, see the notes made by Williamson in *CSPD* Vol XI pp 496f, 552–554, 556, 560f, 562f, 568–570, 581, and Vol XII pp 8–10, 14, 27–29, 44–46, and 63, which cover the dates 21 September 1671 to 1 January 1672. Often treated as Williamson's notes to himself on matters of the day, in fact the notes are mostly Williamson's transcription of information given to him by informants in touch with London non-conformists, and range over several subjects, including the gathering of information to determine whether a change of policy towards them would be more useful in the light of the war being planned. While in his notes Williamson does not draw any conclusions from all the reports, given their substance it would be hard to imagine that any policy other than toleration in some fashion would be recommended to the government as a result of these investigations, if there was concern about where non-conformist loyalties might lie. Hutton says (*Charles II* [Clarendon Press, Oxford 1989] p 285) that the Declaration was pressed on a reluctant Charles by, among others, Arlington 'presumably to assert royal power and to reduce a risk of non-conformist plotting'; given Williamson's close relationship with Arlington, it would seem most likely Arlington was doing what he could to ensure support for the attack on the Dutch that must have been under consideration during this period. cf Samuel Parker, *History of His Own Time* (1728) pp 195–200.

<sup>2</sup> University Press of Liverpool.

licence records, more detailed than Bate's, arranged in several different ways for ease of use, with an account of the origin and administration of the Indulgence.<sup>3</sup> Bate's work is still accepted as the standard historical narrative by subsequent writers, and Turner's as the standard source for licence information. More recently, Richard Greaves has taken another look at the events leading to the Declaration in the context of his studies of the radical movements of the time, in his *Enemies Under His Feet*.<sup>4</sup> The Declaration is mentioned in all histories of the period, either for its significance as part of the king's tendency towards arbitrary rule, or for its significance in the early history of the non-conformist churches. Some recent historians have discussed its significance in the history of the Church of England, such as Roger Thomas, who sees it as setting back the cause of comprehension of non-conformists,<sup>5</sup> and John Spurr, who sees it as a threat to the Church (or to Conformist domination of it), to which conformists responded by a more vigorous opposition to popery.<sup>6</sup> This chapter will look at it primarily for the way in which it changed the context of the press debate about comprehension, and show how the comprehension campaign took on new life after the indulgence policy ended. This will raise the question of the role of the Indulgence in the emergence of the denominations. Our examination of the printed material will also lead to the redating of a couple of important pamphlets, and to a review of the significance of Herbert Croft's famous work, *The Naked Truth*.

<sup>3</sup> G. Lyon Turner, *Original Records of Early Nonconformity Under Persecution and Indulgence* 3 Vols (T. Fisher Unwin, London 1911–1914).

<sup>4</sup> Richard L. Greaves, *Enemies Under His Feet: Radicals and Nonconformists in Britain 1664–1677* (Stanford University Press, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> Roger Thomas, 'Comprehension and Indulgence', in Geoffrey Nuttall and Owen Chadwick, eds., *From Uniformity to Unity 1662–1962* (SPCK, London 1962) p 210.

<sup>6</sup> John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646–1689* (Yale University Press, 1991) pp 61–67.

The Indulgence of 1672 was actually a second attempt to dispense with the penalties imposed by the Act of Uniformity. In his speech on the day that the Act was signed in 1662, the Chancellor had said that its enforcement would remain something in which the king would use his discretion. ‘You have done your Parts like good Physicians,’ he told them, ‘made wholesome Prescriptions for the Constitution of your Patients; well knowing, that the Application of these Remedies, the Execution of these sharp Laws, depends upon the Wisdom of the most discerning, generous, and merciful Prince, who, having had more Experience of the Nature and Humour of Mankind, than any Prince living, can best distinguish between the Tenderness of Conscience and the Pride of Conscience, between the real Effects of Conscience and the wicked Pretences to Conscience’.<sup>7</sup>

Given such encouragement, it is not surprising that some puritans immediately went to the king and offered to read all the services according the Prayer Book if he would otherwise continue the policy on ceremonies that had been in effect since the publication of the Gracious Declaration, even if only for three months (which would at least give them another year’s income, paid at Michaelmas, to cushion the blow caused by the loss of their places).<sup>8</sup> The king asked such bishops as were in town to come and talk to him about this, along with the Attorney General, Clarendon and others. Clarendon says in his *Life* that while his initial reaction was to advise against it, once he heard that the king had actually promised some of his petitioners he would do what he could, he changed his mind firstly because ‘the King and his Service would suffer more by the Breach of his Word and Promise, than either could do from

<sup>7</sup> *LJ* 19 May 1662.

<sup>8</sup> *The life of Edward Earl of Clarendon* (1759) Vol II p 301.

doing the Thing desired’, and secondly because ‘it would be a greater Conformity, if the Ministers generally performed what they offered to do, in reading all the Service of the Church, than had been these many Years; and that once having done what was known to be so contrary to their Inclinations, would be an Engagement upon them in a short Time to comply with the rest of their Obligations’. It was also, he admitted, something he had ‘good reason to think [the king] was resolved to do, whatever he was advised to the contrary.’<sup>9</sup> Despite this, when the king heard the lawyers’ opinions that no declaration of his could stop patrons presenting ministers to the livings of those who would not conform, he decided not to press the matter. Sheldon argued passionately against the proposal, and appears to have claimed the credit for the king’s decision not to proceed, possibly supplying material for publication in the pages of the *Mercurius Publicus* in order to do so.<sup>10</sup> Bosher takes the *Mercurius* account as reliable, and even describes Sheldon as reminiscent of Langton and Becket in his ‘readiness to defy the royal will’.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, a few months later the king issued what is usually referred to as the Declaration of Indulgence of 1662. *His Majestie’s Declaration to All His Loving Subjects*, as it was titled, was issued 26 December, by the advice of the Privy Council according to the title page. In the Declaration the king reaffirmed Breda and the ‘several Declarations since, of ease and liberty to tender Consciencs’, rebuked Parliament for not offering him a bill confirming this liberty, and asked them to get busy about it now: ‘Since that Parliament, to which those Promises were made in relation to an Act, never thought fit to offer Us any to that purpose... we renew unto all Our

<sup>9</sup> *Life* Vol II pp 302ff.

<sup>10</sup> R. Latham and W. Matthews, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys* Vol 3 (1970) p 186 n 2.

<sup>11</sup> Bosher *op cit* pp 262 n 2, 264.

Subjects concerned in those Promises of Indulgence by a true tenderness of conscience, this assurance: ...we shall make it Our especial Care... to incline [Parliament's] Wisdom at this next approaching Sessions, to concur with Us in the making some such Act for that purpose, as may enable Us to exercise with a more universal satisfaction, that Power of Dispensing, which We conceive to be inherent in Us'.<sup>12</sup>

Like the Gracious Declaration, the Declaration to all his Loving Subjects was issued while Parliament was adjourned, although it was far less authoritative in tone than the former. It did not actually claim to give indulgence in the way this term would be used during the course of the comprehension debate, in which it usually referred to the exemption from the penalties imposed by the Act of Uniformity and related acts. In the 1662 Declaration, instead of giving 'some Determination Ourself to the matter, the king promised to ask Parliament to prepare a bill in which they would agree to let him give such exemption as was necessary to allow all non-conformists 'living peaceably' to 'perform their devotions in their own way'.<sup>13</sup> Numerous people, he said, had complained to him about the Act of Uniformity,<sup>14</sup> saying that instead of giving liberty to tender consciences it 'added streighter fetters then ever, and new rocks of scandal to the scrupulous'. However, a more significant difference between the 1662 and 1660 declarations was that the 1662 declaration included Catholics in its intentions.

As in the case of the Gracious Declaration, it was *Mercurius Politicus*, edited by the anti-puritan Roger L'Estrange, which showed first how unpopular the Declaration to

<sup>12</sup> *His Majesties declaration to all his loving subjects, December 26, 1662* (1662) p 8.

<sup>13</sup> *Declaration* p 8.

<sup>14</sup> Paul Seaward, *The Cavalier Parliament and the Reconstruction of the Old Regime 1661-1667* (Cambridge University Press 1988) p 181.

all his Loving Subjects was likely to be among supporters of the Act of Uniformity: its publication got a passing mention only, a week late, with the comment '[the Declaration] being now published will best answer for itself'.<sup>15</sup> The presbyterians were also cautious in their response to it, although the independents welcomed it enthusiastically, publishing their thanksgiving to the king after delivering it in person. Some of them were recruited to encourage presbyterians to support the indulgence, but apparently without success. 'All were averse to have any thing to do with the Indulgence or Toleration of the Papists, thinking it at least unfit for them', even if they might be willing to see indulgence given to the independents.<sup>16</sup>

The king had said in the new declaration that he would 'enlarge' on his intentions in his speech at the opening of the next Parliament, but when Parliament reconvened in February 1663, his speech was short and brusque in comparison to its predecessors. In it the king was more demanding and insistent than in the text of the declaration: after referring to rumours of serious discontent, he pointed out that

'to cure the Distempers and compose the differing Minds that are yet among us, I set forth my Declaration of the Six and Twentieth of December, in which you may see I am willing to set Bounds to the Hopes of some, and to the Fears of others... I hope you have all so good an Opinion of My Zeal for the Protestant Religion, as I need not tell you, I will not yield to any therein, not to the Bishops themselves, nor in My Liking the Uniformity of it as it is now established; which, being the Standard of our Religion, must be kept pure and uncorrupted, free from all other Mixtures: And yet, if the Dissenters will demean themselves peaceably and modestly under the Government, I could heartily wish I had such a Power of Indulgence, to use upon Occasions, as might not needlessly force them out of the Kingdom, or, staying here, give them Cause to conspire against the Peace of it... If you consider well what is best for us all, I dare say, we shall not disagree. I have no more to say to you at present.'<sup>17</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Mercurius Politicus* No 1, 1–8 Jan 1662 (= 1663), p 4.

<sup>16</sup> *RB* II p 430.

<sup>17</sup> *LJ* 18 February 1663.

Even the recorder's comment, 'Which being ended, His Majesty departed the House', is not what was usually noted at the end of the king's speech. The pugnacious attitude of the speech, and its move from comprehension to indulgence, caused public comment: 'the king's speech... is very short, and not very obliging; but only telling them his desire to have a power of indulging tender consciences, not that he will yield to have any mixture in the uniformity of the Church's discipline,' wrote Pepys.<sup>18</sup>

A few days later on 23 February, the 'Bill concerning the King's Power in Ecclesiastical Affairs', in response to the proposed indulgence, was read in the Lords. The bill did not mention Breda or the Gracious Declaration, but was as closely related to them as it was to the new declaration. In essence, it was the bill that the declaration from Breda assumed Parliament would offer to the king, and which the king had said Parliament 'never thought fit to offer': it gave the king authority to dispense from any laws or statutes concerning uniformity in religion or requiring oaths and subscriptions and from the penalties imposed by such laws, and authority to license Protestants (only) 'to enjoy the use and exercise of their religion and worship'. In committee, the Lords expressed a desire to see all the acts to which a dispensing power might relate, and all acts touching the king's authority in ecclesiastical affairs; the list was brought on 5 March and appears in the Journal for that day. The Corporation Act is not among those listed, but it seems clear that it would be covered since it required oaths, and similar acts like those providing that 'No Person shall be capable of any Employment relating to the Excise, till he take the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy, and a particular Oath mentioned in the said Act', or 'That no Person shall be capable of being Post-master, or any Employment relating to that Office, till

<sup>18</sup> Latham and Matthews, *op cit* Vol 4 (1971) p 50.



he have taken the Oath of Allegiance and Supremacy', were specifically mentioned. After looking the list over the Lords decided to limit the proposed dispensation to the Act of Uniformity alone; but after a few more committee meetings, nothing more was heard of it. The Commons advised the king against dispensing from the Act of Uniformity on 25 February, by 269 votes to 30, suggesting that many presbyterians had voted against the king, presumably because of the new declaration's generosity to Catholics. On 27 February they approved a response to his speech, explaining why they could not agree to give him any dispensing power. On 16 March, the king replied that they had misunderstood his speech, but would not press the matter further. Nevertheless, it was said that he was 'highly incensed' by their inaction this time.<sup>19</sup>

Unlike the Declaration of 1662, the 1672 Indulgence was not an appeal to Parliament to support the king's policy, but the execution of the king's policy without regard to Parliament, which was kept from sitting for almost two years. The Declaration provided that those who wished to worship without conforming to the established liturgy could obtain a licence from the secretary of state to do so in a particular building under stated conditions, and those willing to lead such congregations could receive a similar licence for that purpose. The Declaration said nothing at all about comprehension, and was seen as a hindrance to comprehension by some, although even those non-conformists who believed in a single national church most strongly, like Baxter and Humfrey, could not resist the opportunity to get back in the pulpit.

In Humfrey's case, at least, this did not mean that he was changing his mind about the need for both comprehension and indulgence, and after the Indulgence was

<sup>19</sup> Latham and Matthews, *op cit* Vol 4 (1971) p 65.

proclaimed he published a work designed to keep the subject of comprehension on the agenda and counteract any tendency that the Indulgence might have to undermine the possibility of it. The work was entitled *The authority of the magistrate about religion discussed in a rebuke to the prefacer of a late book of Bishop Bramhalls* although Humfrey usually referred to it as the *Rebuke to the Prefacer*, stressing its relationship to the preface Samuel Parker, author of the *Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie*,<sup>20</sup> had written to a new edition of Bishop Bramhall's *Vindication Of Himself And The Episcopal Clergy, From The Presbyterian Charge Of Popery*. In the preface, which had been widely read and much discussed, Parker accused supporters of indulgence of conspiring to 'bring in a more refined and a more cunning Popery'.<sup>21</sup> Humfrey's reply repudiated the charge and said it was the new-style episcopalians who were the crypto-papists, and that comprehension was the key to preventing any encroachment by papists on the English church: 'that Popery and Fanaticism are to be resisted by comprehension is day light', ie an obvious truth. 'There are two parts of that Parliamentary Grace which is necessary to this Kingdoms better establishment...' which were indulgence and comprehension working together. The king 'hath granted' indulgence, and because there was no Parliament in session to give comprehension, he asked the bishops to complete the good work the king has begun: 'this is the Bishops interest, but their party will not see it'. The bishops can do this by simply not requiring the subscriptions and declarations in the Act of Uniformity. The rules that currently apply to the laity should be applied to the clergy:

'If a person Baptized will come to Church and hear Common Prayer, and receive the Sacrament, and does nothing to be excommunicated for it, he may, and must

<sup>20</sup> See above, p 120.

<sup>21</sup> John Bramhall, *Vindication Of Himself And The Episcopal Clergy, From The Presbyterian Charge Of Popery* (1672) preface, np no sig [p ix].

be received as a Parochial member: In like manner if a Minister first ordained (and so approved in his abilities for that function) will but read the Book of the Liturgy, and administer the Sacraments according to it, and does nothing deserving suspension, why should not this suffice’.

The minister (except in a cathedral) may be allowed to use or omit the cross in baptism, the surplice and so on as he is so inclined. Humfrey claimed that presbyterians had no further desire for a reduced episcopacy; the only other thing needed to make comprehension work was the abolition of pluralities. Humfrey also began to make an argument that would become increasingly important for him over the next fifteen years: in the discussion of 1667/68, indulgence was assumed to be something given to those outside the National Church, but the King’s declaration showed, Humfrey thought, that even in their independence they can be considered as part of it. The king had direct absolute authority over ecclesiastical matters, and it was his authority, not that of a bishop, that made any local church part of the National Church. Separation was no longer schism, no more than there is schism when a parish church divides into two parishes because of population growth. The king could even appoint a bishop to supervise the indulged churches if he felt the need. ‘I have been a man professed still against Separation: but this Declaration does seem to me to take away the very sore itself that was in our separate Meetings’. Only those who denied that any part of the national establishment was a true church could be accused of schism, and this presumably would apply to over-zealous conformists as well as over-zealous non-conformists.<sup>22</sup> This was a point Baxter had hinted at in his debate with Bagshaw,<sup>23</sup> but the implications of which had not been followed up because of the welter of other controversy in that debate. Something similar seems to

<sup>22</sup> John Humfrey, *The authority of magistrate about religion discussed in a rebuke to the preface of a late book of Bishop Bramhalls* (1672) pp 10–12, 15, 16f, 24f, 22f, 25.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Baxter, *A Defence of the Principles of Love* (1671) p 58.

have been in the mind of whoever wrote out by hand a summary of 'the present state of the non-conformists' for the king, and said 'His Majesties Indulgence putt[s] [the Anabaptists] and some of the Independent Churches, into as good a Condition, as to their Consciences, and in some other regards, as they were in before his Majesties restoration.'<sup>24</sup>

Humfrey was not the only one keeping comprehension on the agenda. An anonymous conformist, in a work called *The grounds of unity in religion* pointed out that presbyterians had already given up their insistence on an eldership, although they still hoped for a moderate episcopacy, a hope which the writer apparently shared. He did not elaborate on this hope, but made it clear that this issue had not gone away, even if there had not been much written about it since the early 1660s. According to Baxter, Bishop Reynolds, still bishop of Norwich, had 'openly declared that he Ordained Presbyters into the same Order with Bishops, who were but the prime Presbyters'.<sup>25</sup> *The grounds of unity* was not addressed to anyone in particular, but assumed that only Parliament could bring its provisions about, and that the episcopal and presbyterian parties, 'which parties are at least nine parts in ten of the nation', could be comprehended in the same church 'by a little regulation'. The plan suggested was to dispense with the surplice, omit part of the oath in the Act of Uniformity (he did not specify which part), leave the cross in baptism and kneeling to receive the sacrament optional, and to end pluralities. 'I am confident... these few things will do the work... As for other dissenters, they may have some connivance,

<sup>24</sup> BL Stowe MS 185, fol. 175.

<sup>25</sup> Richard Baxter, *Against the Revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction* (1691) p 271.

but no legal liberty.<sup>26</sup> This work and Humfrey's, in other words, offer virtually identical approaches, and although it is impossible to be sure that the two were working together, the only significant difference was that the non-conformist left it to the conformist to suggest a moderated form of the episcopate.

Meanwhile, the Indulgence went into effect. It is not clear that the indulgence policy in itself created the support hoped for. The Venetian ambassador described public 'excitement' at the publication of the Declaration,<sup>27</sup> but there is not much evidence of it in other sources. Williamson's correspondents after the Declaration was issued wrote almost exclusively about the Dutch and the outbreak of war; one correspondent mentioned the Indulgence on 18 March, Sir Robert Carr, Arlington's brother-in-law, who told Williamson that 'stories' about the war had been 'given out by the fanatics maliciously enough, but none considerable or that I could get well proved. I pray God they make no ill return for this gracious declaration of his Majesty'. The first notice of applications for licences received was not until 22 March (ie almost two weeks after they were available). Not until 2 April is there another reference to the Indulgence from outside Williamson's office, a report about a person who owed fines for non-attendance at church and claimed that the Declaration freed him from that. From 2 April applications were noted and licences issued and Williamson's office was busy with the Declaration, but there was still not a lot of comment from beyond the office walls. During the first month one person expressed reservations about the policy to Williamson, and one said it was seen by the public as

<sup>26</sup> *The grounds of unity in religion, or, An expedient for a general conformity and pacification* (1672) pp 5, 6. That the writer is a conformist appears from his hope that his suggestions would leave presbyterians 'as much or more for Episcopacy then we ourselves', p 6.

<sup>27</sup> Maurice Lee, *The Cabal* (University of Illinois Press, Urbana 1965) p 189.

positive.<sup>28</sup> It all seemed pretty quiet and uncontroversial; perhaps the gravity of the war preparations, which were serious enough, pushed other concerns out of people's minds. Evelyn noticed the Declaration with a single comment, that 'there might be some relaxations without the least prejudice to the present Establishment, discreetly limited, but to let go the reins in this manner, & then to imagine they could take them up againe as easily, was a false politique'. He blamed the bishops for bringing it about by being 'covetous after advantages of another kind', but did not explain what he meant by this. That was his only comment on the subject at all during the life of the Indulgence.<sup>29</sup> Josselin, the clerical diarist of Essex, showed even less interest—a single sentence mentioning the Declaration without comment, and nothing more.<sup>30</sup> Neither of them noted the end of the policy when it came. Even Baxter did not appear to think it worth more than a passing mention and a few ruminations on toleration *versus* comprehension, and the way that differences over that had complicated the presbyterian response to the declaration.<sup>31</sup> And while many non-conformists took immediate advantage of the opportunity afforded by the declaration, half of all the licences issued were not even applied for till the third month of the policy.<sup>32</sup> There were even a dozen licences still in Williamson's office, never picked up by the licensees, at the end of it all.<sup>33</sup>

Whether the Declaration had the significance for the emergence of the denominations often described is a question on which the press debate sheds some light. While there were pamphlets written against the Indulgence by anti-puritans,

<sup>28</sup> CSPD Vol XII pp 203–342.

<sup>29</sup> E. S. de Beer, *The Diary of John Evelyn* (Oxford University Press 1959) Vol III pp 608,9.

<sup>30</sup> Alan Macfarlane, *The Diary of Ralph Josselin* (Oxford University Press 1991) p 562.

<sup>31</sup> RB III pp 99–103.

<sup>32</sup> G. Lyon Turner, *Original Records of Early Nonconformity Under Persecution and Indulgence* 3 Vols (T. Fisher Unwin, London 1911–1914), 'Diary of Licences', Vol III facing p 711.

<sup>33</sup> Turner *op cit* Vol III p 685.

they found it difficult to express the direct opposition to the king that the case would seem to them to require. The most energetic opposing of the Indulgence was done by the conformist, Francis Fullwood, and the debate he began reveals much about the heart-searching going on among presbyterians still reluctant to participate in anything that looked like separation from the national church. Fullwood had functioned within the presbyterian system during the 1650s but was content to continue under episcopal authority when Charles restored the episcopate in 1660, and was made Archdeacon of Totnes. Although called a 'turncoat' by some at the time, in fact he had not changed his ecclesiology, and remained sympathetic to further reform at least until the 1680s.<sup>34</sup> He published a total of three books on the Indulgence in 1672 and a fourth early in 1673, and an examination of them and the replies they provoked shows that many presbyterians who took advantage of the Indulgence remained hopeful of comprehension eventually.

Fullwood began the debate with his *Toleration not to be abused, or, A serious question soberly debated*, which, because so many presbyterians were so uncertain as to how to respond to the indulgence, argued that regardless of what advantage of the indulgence independents or baptists might feel justified in taking, presbyterians were required by their own principles to give it a miss. Presbyterians had generally remained members of their parish churches; even those clergy who had chosen not to continue in ministry had, for the most part, remained in the church as laymen because they believed in a national church, and acknowledged that even though improperly governed the episcopal church was a true church. To consider 'setting up for themselves' would be to abolish all the differences between themselves and the

<sup>34</sup> Baxter *RB* III pp 102, 109.

independents. The very covenant which so many of them had refused to repudiate, with its promise to extirpate schism, required them to refuse any indulgence or toleration, as the London ministers had determined in 1645. Since the Indulgence only allowed them to meet for worship, Fullwood also argued, they would not be able to exercise presbyterian discipline except by the consent of their congregations, and this would make them no different from independents. Presbyterian uncertainty and slowness in responding to the indulgence had meant that those most eager to worship outside the parochial system had already gone to the independents anyway.<sup>35</sup>

Fullwood's argument was published in Exeter, but soon gained a wider readership, and ran into a second edition. The degree of influence it had can be judged by the fact that no less than four different replies to it were published.<sup>36</sup> *Short reflections upon a pamphlet entituled Toleration not to be abused in a letter to a friend*, is by an unnamed author, railing at Fullwood more in anger than in sorrow. He denied that presbyterians had the same doctrine as the episcopalians, who believe that

'original Depravation is rather our misfortune than our sin, that we have nothing but our own righteousness to trust to for our salvation, that as soon may a sick man look to recover by another's health as one unrighteous can expect to be made righteous by another's Righteousness... that all Infants baptised are Justified, Regenerated & c... deny the divine Election of Grace, assert a Free-will in man to that which is spiritually good, and a resistibility of Grace, and deny Perseverance... doctrines in which the Presbyterians are very far from agreeing with them'.

The presbyterians do indeed 'stick to the Church of England in the matters of Faith declared in the 39 Articles' whereas 'some of their Brethren... have separated to the posterity of Arminius, whose Doctrines were condemned by King James, the supream Head of the Church of England, by the Parliaments (the principal Members

<sup>35</sup> Fullwood, *Toleration Not to be Abused* pp 1, 30, 4, 23, 20, 27.

<sup>36</sup> Fullwood also wrote a version of his work aimed at Independents, but it was not as widely read and provoked no replies.



surely of that Church) and by the only Protestant, Plaegentile,<sup>37</sup> Synod which ever was'. The magistrates may have the authority to forbid Christ's ministers to do their work in public buildings (the parish church), but had no authority to forbid them doing His work at all, and therefore even presbyterian clergy should 'fulfill their Ministry to their people in such places as His Majesty will please to allow'. This was not separating from anyone, or gathering one church out of another, 'if there be any gathering of Churches out of Churches in the case, it is not they do it who stick to their old people, but those who have entred into their places'. As for the question of presbyterians becoming more like independents,

'it would be inquired, upon what grounds we are now so much in the Authors favour, to be distinguished from Sectaries, who all along for these ten years, both in their Pulpits and in their Books have been represented to the World, not only as Sectaries, but as the worst and vilest of them, and accordingly have been treated; was not Mr Calamy, Mr Baxter, Dr Manton, and many others in their Gaols, as well as Independents and Quakers? yea, what Presbyterian of any note hath not been thus treated by them?... we take Arminians to be Sectaries, and those who deny Original sin, and the imputation of Christ's righteousness, and other great points, directly contrary to what hath ever been thought to be the doctrine of the Church of England'.

Nor is the fact that presbyterians acknowledge the Church of England to be a true church a point out of which episcopalians have any right to make much: 'the Church of Rome [hath] been asserted a true Church by... some of their most principal Fathers... If they may separate from a Church which they yet own as true, and it may be their duty to do so, then surely we may do so to'. Nor is the judgement of the London Ministers against toleration in 1645 relevant, since that was against a proposed general toleration, extending much farther than anything allowed by the Declaration. Finally, there is no difference between what the presbyterians were

<sup>37</sup> Not in the OED, or the Oxford Latin Dictionary, and there are no dictionary definitions associated with the prefix. Seems from the context to mean something like 'of all nations'.

doing now and what many episcopalians had done in the 1650s: 'if they could satisfie their conscience, in making use of the liberty granted by Oliver, surely we may satisfie ours in making use of what is indulged us by our Lawful Sovereign'.<sup>38</sup>

A third response was from someone less enthusiastic, calling himself Philaletheseirenes<sup>39</sup> for the purpose of his reply, which was published as *Indulgence not to be refused: comprehension humbly desired: the Church's peace earnestly endeavoured*. The writer believed that indulgence was only the first step towards the restoration of presbyterians to a place in the national church, and that presbyterians were right to accept it as such: the king had been working for 'a Legal and fitting indulgence for them; and now done something preparatory thereunto in his late Declaration'. Presbyterians had already debated the questions raised by Fullwood 'with all respect and tenderness to the Church of England', and 'desire to comport themselves as they have hitherto done to their Mother the Church of England, with all duty and good manners'. 'Those persons which you call Presbyterians' are members of the Church of England, and have only resorted to gatherings not sanctioned by the church in those places where there is no church, or where the minister is scandalous, and 'therefore are not altogether unfit to be comprehended in any Act, Statute, License or Indulgence, which may further the settlement and tranquillity of the Church... especially considering these Presbyterians are still so ready to stick by her, living and dying, notwithstanding all their discouragements and disappointments'. Episcopalians already practise a policy of indulgence in regard to ceremonies, allowing a very different style of worship in parish churches than in cathedrals, for

<sup>38</sup> Pp 7, 11, 8, 14, 21, 23, 24, 29.

<sup>39</sup> Greek for 'One that loves truth and peace', which was how Fullwood had styled himself in English on his cover-page.

instance. Presbyterian clergy laid aside their ministry when commanded to, and now accepted the indulgence in order 'to be at the employment which they are appointed and ordained to'. There is nothing in this contrary to presbyterian principles, since the only real difference between presbyterians and episcopalians is that for the former 'a Bishop is not an higher Order or Degree of Ministry in the Church than the Priesthood... How such a point should... be inconsistent with the acceptance of a kindness offered them by His Majesty, is not to be conceived'. As for the argument that presbyterians did not indulge others when they had the power, the situation now was different from 1645 in some important ways: when errors and heresies first appeared, there was a possibility that firm action could stamp them out, 'but since they have grown now so far, other means must be used... besides many of those that declared against such a Toleration, if not all of them, are dead and gone'.

Nevertheless, the indulgence must be treated with great caution, so that 'those that are of the same Church may not seem by any means to fall from it', or do anything that might suggest that they 'intend to proceed upon a new Church-state'. It was comprehension that was the church's great need, 'considering her danger from Papists and Phanaticks, which offer to swallow up all, the one by an Infallible Supremacy, the other by an Infallible Spirit; and both vain and counterfeit'.

Toleration was merely a matter of statecraft 'for the Kingdomes peace'.<sup>40</sup>

The fourth work provoked by Fullwood's was by Richard Baxter in *Sacrilegious desertion of the holy ministry rebuked, and tolerated preaching of the gospel vindicated*, although (most unusually) he did not put his name to it. It was presented as a reply to Fullwood, but was really more of what Bagshaw had called an antidote, aimed as

<sup>40</sup> Pp 1, 3, 4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 14, 23.

much at his fellow non-conformists, and sympathetic conformists, as at Fullwood. Baxter said that he was not speaking for the presbyterians, and was in fact puzzled as to why Fullwood ‘passeth by the Episcopal Nonconformists, as if he were so ignorant of the present State of England, as not to know that there are many such’—in fact in 1660 ‘it was Bishop Usher’s form of Episcopal Government which they all offered for Concord, who were employed in that work’. The use of the word ‘presbyterian’ could only confuse the issue, since

‘of late, a Presbyterian is like the Puritan of old: a word which hath as many and as bad significations, as speakers have diversity of designs or intents. In one mans mouth a Presbyterian is an Episcopal Protestant of the soberest sort... in another mans mouth a Presbyterian is one that is resolute against Popery... in another mans mouth a Presbyterian is one that is against Bishops... and in other mens mouthes a Presbyterian is one that is of Bishop Reynolds, and Dr Stillingfleets judgment, that no Form of Government (besides the meer Pastoral Office, and Church Assemblies) is prescribed in the Word of God’.

Baxter spoke, as he would eventually<sup>41</sup> be licensed, ‘only as a Nonconformist’, and he defended the right of all non-conformists to use the Indulgence. Many of his arguments are, *mutatis mutandis*, those already seen in the other works just described, but sometimes with additional information or insight or passion that makes the argument more pointed. ‘The Nonconformists hold that the Ministerial office is not to be taken up on tryal, or for a time, but *durante vita cum capacitate*; and that it is no less than 1. Horrid Sacrilege; 2. Perfidious Covenant-breaking; 3. Disobedience to God; 4. Cruelty to Souls; 5. And unthankfulness for great mercies, if any of us shall desert our undertaken Offices... Therefore Preach and Officiate while we can, we must’. The church’s need for more ministry is clear: ‘some places, of many years past, have had no Ministers at all’, and in London ‘the burning of Churches, the greatness

<sup>41</sup> The book came out in August or September 1672, he was licensed in October, *RB* III p 102, paras 220 and 226.

of Parishes, and the paucity of Ministers... is such, that the tenth person in several Parishes cannot come to Church if they would'. Fullwood was wrong to think that presbyterians and independents were still in the same opposition to each other that had characterised their relationships in the late 1640s: 'the most Nonconformable Ministers of my acquaintance, whose judgment I ever asked of that matter, do seem to think as I my self do, that the Episcopal, Presbyterians, Independents and Erastians have each of them some Truth and Good'. Many of those using the Indulgence did so as what would today be called para-church ministry, or as in a chapel, still communicating with the parish church from time to time. He urged his readers to keep doing this as much as possible. The indulged ministry was in some cases little more than a home bible study. In some passages Baxter can be seen moving in the direction of a wider toleration than he had previously been willing to grant: 'Is it in the power of Anabaptists to bring all their judgments to yours[?] And till they can, must they be quite cast off[?] ... I see not what great hurt it would do any, for Anabaptists, Seperatists, &c. that cannot joyn with the Parish-Churches, to have leave to meet among themselves, and worship God together in peace'. Towards the end of the book he admitted and deplored the fact that there was now an element in non-conformity that did not consider a united national church of any value. Non-conformists had 'our young passionate persons' who despised all episcopalians, even those who supported comprehension, and the indulged would-be-comprehended were distinguished from indulged separatists. It was the women and the young, he said, who were most anxious to separate, especially in London. He ended the book with an appeal to conformists, both those called latitudinarian, 'men of reason and sober

conversation, though they are not so tender and scrupulous as the Nonconformists', and the Godly, sober, unwilling conformists, to 'be not too angry with those that censure you as sinners' and not to resent those who 'diminish your reputation and honour'. No matter how obnoxious they were, they were doing work which benefited the Church. 'A parish of a thousand (much more of many thousand) families hath work enough for many [of] the most able and diligent Ministers in the Land: Yea a parish of a hundred families, needeth more help than any one Minister is able to afford them.' Finally, he begged Fullwood and all sympathetic conformists to use their offices to bring about a comprehension, so that indulgence might no longer be necessary: 'Petition for us, or rather for the Church of Christ, that... we may be, if possible, taken in to the established Ministry, if not, yet tolerated as lecturers under you in such Churches, where the Ministers desire us.'<sup>42</sup>

Humfrey also contradicted Fullwood in the 1672 document already mentioned, *The authority of the magistrate about religion discussed in a rebuke to the preface*, in which he denied that presbyterian principles required them to ignore the Indulgence, because their principles were for a National Church, and the fact that the Declaration was issued by the governor of the church had given them a way to be part of it.<sup>43</sup>

This press debate (Fullwood responded to these replies, but the debate cannot be followed further here) shows that while it may be correct in regard to Congregationalists and Baptists to say that the Indulgence marked the effective beginning of their separate denominations, as far as Presbyterians are concerned the statement is an over-simplification. Silenced clergy returned to active ministries in

<sup>42</sup> *Sacrilegious desertion of the holy ministry rebuked* (1672) pp 4, 5, 11f, 25, 29, 15, 16, 91, 93, 14, 23, 90, 101, 105, 102, 119f, 122, 128f, 137. Fullwood wrote to Baxter and told him he would do what he could to bring about comprehension, *RB III* p 102.

<sup>43</sup> Humfrey *op cit* pp 26ff.

1672, but many found in this a reason for renewed hope for an eventual comprehension. Many, if not most presbyterians were cautious in their use of the Indulgence, returned without complaint to the *status quo* when it was withdrawn, continued to consider themselves part of the national church, and continued to work for a place within it, as will be seen in succeeding chapters.

As is well-known, when Parliament was reconvened in 1673 after its long break, the Commons refused to grant the king any more money until he promised to stop issuing licences. Charles resented this—‘I shall take it very, very ill, to receive Contradiction in what I have done: And I will deal plainly with you, I am resolved to stick to my Declaration’, he had told them when the session opened. An embargo on new licences was to some extent an empty gesture; those who wanted licences had already received them, and for the next two years, they continued to take advantage of them. By now the Commons’ principal concern was to prevent further indulgence for Papists and to rein in Charles’ perceived drift towards arbitrary government, and they appeared willing to work with the new situation brought about by the Indulgence for dissenting Protestants. ‘Having seen how little good force will do, it may be, the reason of the thing will oblige us in a fair legal way of doing what the King has been designing these twelve years,’ admitted Sir Thomas Meres in the debate following the king’s announcement, and four days later the Commons unanimously agreed to begin work on a Bill for Ease of Protestant Dissenters. If the purpose was to give the king no excuse for giving ease to anyone else, few said so directly, although Meres made the situation clear: ‘What is it that makes us now so zealous in this Question, but our fears of Popery? And he hoped never to have occasion to speak to it here—Let us take

care that, whilst we dispute the indulging the Protestant subjects, the third dog does not take the bone from us both'. The Bill was intended to be at least partly a Parliamentary rather than a Royal Indulgence: 'Protestant Subjects' who 'subscribe the Articles of the Doctrine of the Church of England, and shall take the Oaths of Allegiance and Supremacy' were to be 'eased from all Pains and Penalties, for not coming to Church... [and] for meeting together, for the Performance of any Religious Exercises'. Those who taught at such meetings were to be licensed by the Quarter Sessions, having given notice of where the meetings would take place and having made their subscription before the Court. The doors of the place of the meeting were to remain open while the meeting was going on. The Bill was to continue in effect only during the present session of Parliament.<sup>44</sup> Apart from the expiration date, it was very similar to the 1672 Declaration.

There would be movement toward comprehension in the bill too. There was a clause in the bill that provided that 'the Clause in the late Act of Uniformity, for declaring the Assent and Consent, be taken away by the Bill.' There were in fact three such clauses in the Act of Uniformity; they required assent and consent to 'to all, and every thing contained, and prescribed in, and by the Book intituled, The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments, and other Rites, and Ceremonies of the Church' by those currently enjoying any Ecclesiastical Benefice, those who might be presented to a benefice in the future, and those appointed to the presidency of any college or hall in the two universities. The use of the singular 'clause' in the plans for the Bill presumably refers to all instances where assent and

<sup>44</sup> 'Debates in 1673: February (14th–20th)', *Grey's Debates of the House of Commons*: Vol 2 (1769), pp. 26–48. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=40958>. Date accessed: 11 February 2008; 'House of Commons Journal Volume 9: 27 February 1673', *Journal of the House of Commons*: Vol 9: 1667–1687 (1802), pp. 258–259. URL: [http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=27358&strquery=Religious Exercises](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=27358&strquery=Religious+Exercises). Date accessed: 11 February 2008.



consent was required, which meant that once the Bill was passed, those who could not assent to the Prayer Book would still be eligible for ordained ministry in a parish church. This would not only allow many more non-conformists to conform, but relieve the consciences of many who already had.

As before, the introduction of this bill into the House was accompanied by press support. Humfrey wrote a pamphlet encouraging Parliament to pass the Bill, entitled *Comprehension Promoted*. The printed copies of this document have no date on them, and there has been uncertainty over the date. Most libraries date their copy 1704, following the Bodleian, whose copy is bound with other documents of that date. Wing lists it as 1673, but with a question mark. Durham University follows Wing, adding the comment ‘ESTC and BL both give a date of 1704 for this item. However Wing<sup>45</sup> suggests 1673, which corresponds with the dates of other pamphlets bound with it in the Routh collection’. An examination of other evidence, external and internal, confirms the 1673 date. Baxter reported that in ‘the former Sessions of Parliament [Humfrey] printed a sheet for Concord’,<sup>46</sup> having just been talking about the January–February 1674 session, which would support the identification of the pamphlet with the 1673 session. Baxter did not give the work’s title, but *Comprehension promoted* fits the 1673 Bill perfectly, speaking of the ‘kind implications of the House toward Union in their voting away the Declaration of Assent and Consent’. In addition, the word ‘ease’ in the work’s sub-title (‘Whether there be not as much reason, in regard to the ease of the most sober consciences, to take away the

<sup>45</sup> Wing number H3675.

<sup>46</sup> *RB* III p 143.

subscription in the Act of Uniformity, as well as the declaration of assent and consent?') also supports the identification with the Bill proposed in 1673.

In the work, Humfrey urged Parliament to consider, in addition to dropping the 'assent and consent' clauses in the Act of Uniformity, also dropping the requirement for subscription to the oath in that Act and the very similar oath in the Five Mile Act. The arguments he used were mostly those that were used by many at the time of the two Acts: no government was so perfect it does not need alteration, and we alter the government every time we elect a new Parliament, so why ask people to swear they do not intend to alter the government; there were many historical examples of situations in which any reasonable person would think it right to take up arms against a king—Tyrannus etc; many clergy had not sufficient education to 'swear' that anything is unlawful; and that many might agree that taking up arms against the king was wrong and not to be done but could not truly say they abhorred it. Humfrey made this last point memorably: 'there is never a Gentleman in the land, but may swear truly, that he believes it unlawful to company with any other Woman, as his own wife, but if each one were put to swear he *abhors* it, I suppose some very good Sons of the Church, as well as Brethren, would be found willing to be Non-conformists to such an Oath'.<sup>47</sup>

Parliament spent most of March 1673 negotiating the details of the Bill, first in the Commons and then in the Lords, who hung onto it until the day before the king had announced he would prorogue Parliament,<sup>48</sup> and also added some amendments watering down the bill and giving the king the right to exempt people from it by

<sup>47</sup> *Comprehension Promoted* p 4. This first appears in *Defence of the Proposition* p 28.

<sup>48</sup> The Test Act ('An act for preventing dangers which may happen from popish recusants') had been passed, and since he had received his supply, he apparently decided to return to personal rule before any more damage could be done to the Catholic cause.

proclamation. This would have made it pointless from the Commons' point of view, and debate continued in the Commons that day and into the last day of the session; some were willing to have the bill at this price, and some not. As evening of the last day of the session came on, a call was made for candles, so that the debate might continue. Those calling for candles were trying to continue the debate until Black Rod summoned them for the prorogation, as a way of killing the bill; candles were denied, forcing a vote, but someone must have sent a message to Black Rod to hurry, because his knock at the door was heard just as the first amendment was being put, and the session ended without the bill becoming law.<sup>49</sup>

It must have been just at this time that Humfrey hurriedly assembled another work urging Parliament to keep provision for indulgence in the bill, since Baxter makes it clear that it was published during this session of Parliament, and in the work Humfrey refers to a bill 'at present' in the House 'upon this present Prorogation', which means he must have put it together in between the time that the king's intention to prorogue Parliament had become known and the time that Black Rod actually knocked on the door. Such overnight printings were not uncommon. Entitled *Comprehension with Indulgence*,<sup>50</sup> it has no date on the printed text, and was tentatively dated 1689 by Wing. Baxter, however, is quite clear about dating it to March 1673. He tells us that Humfrey 'put it into the hands of many Parliament men', and Humfrey's hope was that the bill 'may be cast into this Model', the one he was arguing for, by Parliament, and repeated the arguments he had made in *A Case of*

<sup>49</sup> 'Debates in 1673: February (4th–10th, 14th–20th)', Grey's Debates of the House of Commons: Vol 2 (1769), pp 1–48. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=40958>. Date accessed: 07 January 2008. For details of the negotiations between the Commons and the Lords, see D. T. Witcombe, *Charles II and the Cavalier House of Commons* (Manchester University Press, 1966) pp 137–140, and Roger Thomas, 'Comprehension and Indulgence' pp 212–3.

<sup>50</sup> Wing number H3675A. Published anonymously, but Baxter is explicit that it is Humfrey's and, gives its full text in the *Reliquiae* [RB III p 143].

*Conscience* five years earlier, arguing that neither comprehension without indulgence nor indulgence without comprehension is truly in the interest of the king or the kingdom, pasting large chunks of the *Case* into the document with almost no alteration. Parts of *The authority of the magistrate about religion discussed in a rebuke to the prefacer* were also inserted. To these were added some new material which Humfrey would quote again and again in the coming years. He explained that

‘The summ of what is necessary to... our Ease... is, that Bishop Laud be confined to his Cathedrals: and... that Chancellour Hide be totally expelled our Acts of Parliament. By the first, I mean, that the Ceremonies in the ordinary Parish Churches be left to the Liberty of the Minister, to use, or use them not, according to his Conscience, and Prudence toward his own Congregation: And by the latter, that all these new devised Oaths, Subscriptions and Declarations together with the Canonical Oath, and the Subscription in the Canons be suspended for the time to come. If that be too much I shall content my self with a modester motion, that whatsoever these Declarations be, that are required to be made, subscribed or sworn, they may be imposed only as to the Matter and End, leaving the Takers but free to the use of their own Expressions.’

Humfrey argued that clergy had been free to subscribe in their own words throughout the Elizabethan period, and there was no reason not to restore that freedom now. If Parliament was reluctant to amend the Act of Uniformity, let it pass an Act which explained it in the terms he had suggested (such explanatory acts had been passed routinely before in regard to several other laws since 1660). He also included his plea for an end to pluralities. He changed his approach to what made a church part of the national establishment, however, saying that Parliamentary as opposed to Royal indulgence, to which he had appealed in 1672, would make the indulged part of the National Church, repeating his arguments about separation without schism. As Baxter noted, Humfrey’s last minute intervention was ‘frustrate by the Prorogation of the House’.<sup>51</sup> But hurried as it was, this compilation became the foundation for a

<sup>51</sup> *RB III* pp 142, 143; *Comprehension with indulgence* p 2.

whole series of later works in which Humfrey established himself as the most devoted and prolific of all press campaigners for comprehension.

The licences already given remained as valid as they had ever been, and non-conformist meetings continued. Parliament was reconvened briefly in October, but a few days later was prorogued until January 1674, when it met again for about six weeks. During this session Baxter says that 'some Great Men of the House of Commons' took up the matter again, but abandoned indulgence in favour of comprehension: their plan was to introduce a bill to 'take off' all the required oaths, subscriptions and declarations, except the oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance, and a subscription to the thirty-six doctrinal articles of religion, which would have allowed many presbyterians to return to their ministry in the parish church. Baxter says they showed the proposal to Morley, who persuaded them to drop the plan in favour of one he said he would propose in the House of Lords. Six other bishops were ready to join Morley in supporting the bill.<sup>52</sup> Morley's bill, 'for composing Differences in Religion, and inviting sober and peaceably-minded Dissenters into the Service of the Church', turned out not to be so accommodating as the one proposed by the MPs, or even the bill considered in 1673; according to Baxter, it would do no more than 'to take off[f] Assent and Consent, and the Renunciation of the Government'. The bill was introduced on 13 February, read a second time on the 19th, and scheduled to be considered by a committee of the whole on the 25th. But on the 24th the king suddenly prorogued Parliament till November, while assuring them that he would 'do

<sup>52</sup> Andrew Swatland *House of Lords in the Reign of Charles II* (Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp 157ff.

His Endeavour to satisfy the World of His Stedfastness to the Protestant Religion as it is now established'.<sup>53</sup>

Parliament took no further action against the indulged congregations, however, and most of those who had taken advantage of the Indulgence continued to do so. Some, like the large one in Yarmouth, returned to the parish church when the issuing of licences first stopped, but then resumed meeting in their licensed premises when it was clear that in most places magistrates were willing to assume that the existing licences continued to shield them.<sup>54</sup> The press campaign in support of comprehension continued, however. An anonymous non-conformist addressed the subject, somewhat obliquely, with *A Plea for the Nonconformists*, in which he argued (among other things) that the Act of Uniformity did not really require an interpretation that would prevent presbyterian clergy, at least, from exercising a ministry in the parish church, so some comprehension might be achieved without any new legislation; 'whether the Act will necessitate any such sense, may deserve the second thoughts of our superiors.'<sup>55</sup> He also echoed Humfrey's theme of a national church as one in which both mixed and gathered congregations co-existed.

The king's growing indifference to the non-conformists as a party whose support could help him, and his use of anti-puritans like Danby, led to the end of these years of *de facto* toleration. In October 1674 the king turned to the bishops for advice, and by January 1675 the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishops of Durham,

<sup>53</sup> RB III p 140, 'House of Lords Journal Volume 12: 7 Jan–24 February 1674', Journal of the House of Lords: Vol 12: 1666–1675, pp 594–649. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=12885>. Date accessed: 09 January 2008. Cf HMC 9th report, Vol II, House of Lords papers p 44 (no. 170).

<sup>54</sup> CSPD November 1674. Frank Bate gives some other examples, *The Declaration of Indulgence 1672* (University Press, Liverpool 1908) p 131.

<sup>55</sup> *A Plea for the Nonconformists* (1674) pp 2, 14, 21. This work is attributed to Humfrey by Wing (H3703A), but the only part of it that is his is the second of the two works of which the volume consists, called *An Account of the Non-Conformists Meetings for Divine Worship*. The subtitle specifically says this is 'by another hand' than the writer of the *Plea*. The author of the *Plea* cannot be identified.



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meetings were of such a character as to require financial accounts or lists of “members”.<sup>58</sup> Bate says that presbyterian ordinations, ‘not held since the Restoration’, began again after 1675,<sup>59</sup> but this is not correct; presbyterian ordinations had taken place sporadically throughout the 1660s.<sup>60</sup> No doubt there were more at this time, but the continuance of them cannot be evidence for a new sense of identity after the Declaration of Indulgence.

The next session of Parliament did not take place until April 1675. Attempts were made in the Lords by the Dukes of Buckingham and York to work up an indulgence of some sort, but nothing remains on the record of the House.<sup>61</sup> There was also a plan reported by Baxter in which he and Stillingfleet and Tillotson were involved, which may be what gave rise to Andrew Marvell’s report to his constituents that a Bill of Ease was again being talked about;<sup>62</sup> but nothing came before either house. The most interesting feature of the plan described by Baxter was the alleged involvement of several bishops, as in 1668, but the plan contained nothing that made it likely to succeed where other plans had failed. The proposal would eliminate oaths or subscriptions for ministers or officers in corporations except those of allegiance to the crown and conformity to the doctrinal articles, and provided that as long as someone in the parish read the required liturgy, others could omit it; that parents may present children for baptism; that the cross in baptism, the wearing of the surplice, kneeling to receive and apocryphal readings would all be optional; that the minister may leave out the words in the burial service which implied that the salvation of the deceased

<sup>58</sup> John Ramsbottom, ‘Presbyterians and “Partial Conformity” in the Restoration Church of England’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol 43 (1992) p 257.

<sup>59</sup> Bate *op cit* p 142.

<sup>60</sup> Baxter refers in 1668 to ‘all that were Ordained by Presbyters since the king came in’, *RB* III p 36.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas, ‘Comprehension and Indulgence’, pp 221ff.

<sup>62</sup> Alexander Grosart, *The Complete Prose Works of Andrew Marvell* (AMS Press, New York 1966) Vol 2 p 436.



was certain if he had reason to doubt the truth of that; that a minister need not read a sentence of excommunication if he were not convinced of its appropriateness (although it would still be in force); that those ordained by presbyterians ‘heretofore’ would be licensed by a written certificate of the ‘take thou authority’ kind by the bishop; that it was acceptable for more than four persons not members of the same family to be present at worship in a home if took place under the authority (‘inspection’) of the minister of the parish; and that others who hold the essentials of Christianity may be indulged in whatever way the king and Parliament should decide was best. The bishops supporting this attempt were Ward and Morley, although Baxter was extremely sceptical about the latter. After showing the plan to a couple of other bishops, Tillotson told Baxter the plan was unworkable and he did not want to be further associated with it, in case it should prejudice his ability to give effective support on some future, more propitious occasion.<sup>63</sup>

Another suggestion made to Parliament involved a quite distinct approach: this was the anonymous work by Herbert Croft,<sup>64</sup> bishop of Hereford, *The Naked Truth, or The True State of the Primitive Church*. This was an examination of the primitive church that exposed great differences between it and the English church of the 17th century. When Parliament reconvened in 1675, Croft decided to publish his work as an appeal to Parliament for a major re-structuring of the Church of England along what he argued were truly primitive lines.

Croft’s purpose was not to commend a particular plan for comprehension, but was an attempt to get the bishops to agree to the principle of a broader-based church, after

<sup>63</sup> Thomas *op cit* pp 219ff, *RB* III pp 156–160.

<sup>64</sup> See Newton Key, ‘Comprehension and the Breakdown of Consensus in Restoration Herefordshire’, in Tim Harris, Paul Seaward, and Mark Goldie, eds, *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England* (Blackwell, Oxford 1990) pp 194ff for Croft and his support for comprehension.

which working out the details would be an easier matter. In the work Croft went through the doctrine, ceremonies, liturgy, preaching, ministry, and discipline of the Church of England, comparing them unfavourably to that of the church in the sub- and post-apostolic periods, and called again and again on the bishops, as ‘fathers and governors of the church’, to return to the primitive standard, adding an occasional appeal to the civil government to protect this fully restored church. Croft started out with a chapter investigating the doctrinal teaching of the primitive church, and arguing that its doctrinal standards were minimal by the standards of later centuries, and that most of the problems in the church since apostolic times have been caused by adding to that apostolic deposit. ‘The Primitive Church received [the Apostles’ Creed] as the sum total of Faith necessary to salvation; Why not now? Is the state of Salvation altered?’ There was no specific request in this section to reform the church, since in the 36 doctrinal Articles of Religion, at least, the Church of England was regarded by conformist and non-conformist alike as the closest to the primitive of all churches, and only Catholics and Quakers felt imposed upon by its doctrinal statements. Nevertheless, Croft took the opportunity to point out the folly of imposing the non-doctrinal articles on those who saw no scriptural necessity for accepting them: ‘Nothing hath caused more mischief in the Church than the establishing new and many Articles of Faith, and requiring all to assent unto them. I am willing to believe that zealous men endeavoured this with pious intentions to promote that which they conceived Truth; but by imposing it on the Dissenters, caused furious Warrs, and lamentable Blood-shed among Christians, Brother Fighting against Brother, and Murthering each other.’ He reminded the civil power

that it had the duty to ensure that nothing beyond scripture teachings in scripture language was to be imposed. The magistrate must 'suffer no new Doctrine to be set on foot... [and] is to countenance and protect the Pastor preaching the Gospel of Christ, to silence, oppose, punish all that Preach any thing contrary, or not cleerly contained in the Gospel.' Croft had no interest in any formal action to make ceremonies optional:

'all Subjects are bound in conscience to conform to the established Ceremonies of that Church, whereof they are Members... I desire what is established may be generally observed, and not a liberty left (as some do propose) to add or detract Ceremonies or Prayers according to the various opinions and humours of men: for certainly this would cause great faction and division; those that are for Ceremonies would run from their own Church to others where they were used; others to some fine fancied Prayers of such as they approve of; and thus some Churches would be thronged, others deserted'.<sup>65</sup>

Croft was perhaps influenced by Morley of Winchester at this point, who had said a couple of years earlier that 'I was so farr from being of [the] opinion, that all of the ceremonies ought to be left indifferent in the use of them, to bring in any of the dissenting brethren, that I had rather give my vote to the altering [?] or abolishing of them all, than to the leaving any one of them arbitrary or indifferent as to the using or not using of it'.<sup>66</sup> Nevertheless, Croft urged his fellow-bishops to turn a blind eye to clergy that did not obey the ceremonial rubrics: 'let us leave it to women and Children to contend about Ceremonies, let it be indifferent to us whether this, or that, or no Ceremony, whether kneel, or not kneel, bow or not bow, Surplice, or not Surplice, Cross or no Cross, Ring or not Ring, let us give glory to God in all, and no offence to our Brethren in any thing'.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>65</sup> *The Naked Truth* (1675; hereafter *TNT*) pp 21, 17, 64, 15, 23; Francis Turner, *Animadversions upon a late pamphlet entituled The naked truth* (1676) p 31.

<sup>66</sup> Bodleian MS Tanner 42, fol 7.

<sup>67</sup> *TNT* p 20.

Croft also proposed some changes in church government. Several pages were devoted to an argument that the power of excommunication be taken away from lay Chancellors, by whom alone it was now lawfully exercised. Long a matter that had scandalised the godly, Croft found it inexcusable:

‘if there be any thing in the Office of a Bishop to be stood upon and challenged peculiar to themselves, certainly it should be this; yet this is in a manner quite relinquished unto their Chancellors, Lay-men, who have no more capacity to sentence or absolve a sinner, then to dissolve the heavens and earth, and make a new heaven and a new earth, and this pretended power of Chancellors is sometimes purchased with a sum of Money, their Money perish with them. Good God! what a horrid abuse is this of the Divine Authority... Oh my Great and Reverend Fathers of the Church the Bishops, whom Christ hath cleaved to his high dignity, whom he hath made Kings and Princes, whom he hath called to sit with him on his Throne, there to give sentence of eternal life or eternal death, can you so tamely part with this prime flower of your Crown, yea the very Apex of it, and suffer the Lay-members of the Church to usurp this divine authority?’

This was one of the few parts of the book where the suggestions for the magistrate were addressed specifically to Parliament: ‘Where are you Parliament men you great Sons of the Church so zealous for Episcopal Government, yet suffer this principal part of it to be thus alienated and usurped by Lay-men?’ Other proposed changes in government were the reduction of the size of dioceses and the abolition of exempt jurisdictions.<sup>68</sup>

The main body of the work ended with a plea for the bishops to commend these proposals to Parliament: ‘I humbly conceive the Bishops, with the rest of the Clergy are bound in conscience to implore the Assistance of both Houses of Parliament to Petition His Majesty for the redress of these abuses by Pious Laws’. He was not optimistic, however—‘I have no great hopes that they will hearken to me’—and he

<sup>68</sup> *TNT* pp 58f, 63.

added a 'charitable admonition to all Nonconformists' asking them to conform even if no comprehension were offered, mostly for the sake of a united front against popery.<sup>69</sup>

Such sweeping reform seems unrealistic, and certainly nothing came of it, but there is other evidence that some of the measures Croft was proposing were under discussion. The Venetian minister, Girolamo Alberti, devoted many of his reports to the efforts to bring the various church parties together, and he noted in February 1675, as Parliament was preparing to reassemble, that 'the negotiations<sup>70</sup> have ended by their offering to abandon the entire ceremonial of the church, the chief point of difference with the Presbyterians, a concession greater than was ever expected'. Not long after he noted, unsurprisingly, that 'many of the bishops do not agree to the renunciation of ceremonial'.<sup>71</sup> We shall see that the idea of the abolition of all disputed ceremonial would be brought up again.

Croft's argument turned the traditional view of conformity on its head. So often zealous conformists had urged conformity on others because of scriptural principles like 'submit to every ordinance of man'; now Croft suggests taking advantage of the conformity to which they have declared themselves so passionately committed, by imposing things easier for non-conformists to accept, and let the zealous conformists demonstrate the submission on which they have placed such a high value: 'This is no Obedience to conform to such Ordinances of their Superiors as they have a passion for; the Superiors in this conform rather to them, than they to their Superiors: Try

<sup>69</sup> *TNT* pp 64.

<sup>70</sup> Between Danby, Lauderdale, and the bishops on one side and the presbyterians on the other.

<sup>71</sup> *Calendar of State Papers and manuscripts relating to English affairs, existing in the Archives and collections of Venice, and in other libraries of Northern Italy*, ed. by Rawdon Brown [and others], Vol 38 1673–1675 pp 363, 376.

their Obedience if they will submit to the taking of these things away, and then you may have more reason to gratify them'.<sup>72</sup>

Croft's proposals seem like the longest of long shots, but that was not how they were seen by everyone at the time. The furore surrounding the work's publication suggests that the government was concerned that the work might achieve something, whether in Parliament or out of it. It went through two more printings before the end of 1675, and a year after its publication Burnet referred to it as 'that Discourse that has of late made so much noise... a Book that has had the luck to be much read, and by some no less commended', and referred to 'the great Partiality many have for that Discourse'. John Evelyn referred to it as 'a famous & popular Treatise', and one of the replies to it begins 'of all the rarities which of late have been the discourse of the town... nothing has been more talkt of, than a certain Pamphlet call'd *The Naked Truth*'. One scholar believes that the proclamation for the closure of all coffee houses—where 'divers False, Malitious and Scandalous Reports are devised and spread abroad'—of December 1675 was made specifically in order to stop the discussion which Croft had started. There is no doubt that strenuous efforts were made to discover the author's identity; Roger L'Estrange was ordered to 'make strict search in all suspected places for unlicensed pamphlets or books called "A Letter from a Person of Quality", and "Two Seasonable Discourses" and "The Naked Truth", and for the authors, printers or publishers of the same... and to seize them and bring them in safe custody before himself or a Justice of the Peace'.<sup>73</sup> Andrew Marvell, MP

<sup>72</sup> TNT p 16.

<sup>73</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *A Modest Survey Of the most considerable things in a Discourse Lately Published* (1676) p 1; E. S. de Beer, *The Diary of John Evelyn* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1955) Vol IV p 83; Francis Turner, *Animadversions upon a late pamphlet entituled The naked truth* (1676) np, no sig, p i; Annabel Patterson in her introduction to her edition of *Mr Smirke in The Prose Works of Andrew Marvell* (Yale University Press, 2003) Vol II p 11. 'Charles II: March 1676', *Calendar of State Papers Domestic: Charles II, 1676-7* (1909), pp. 1-55, 29 March. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=57346>. Date accessed: 05 February 2008.

for Hull, implied that Croft originally aimed his work at Parliament exclusively; he tells us he was

‘credibly informed that the Author caused four hundred [copies] and no more to be Printed against the last Session but one of Parliament [ie April–June 1675]. For nothing is more usual then to Print and present to them Proposals of Revenue, Matters of Trade, or any thing of Publick Convenience; and sometimes Cases and Petitions, and this... is his humble Petition to the Lords and Commons assembled in Parliament: And understanding the Parliament inclined to a Temper<sup>74</sup> in Religion, he prepar’d these for the Speakers of both Houses and as many of the Members as those could furnish. But that, the Parliament rising just as the Book was delivering out and before it could be presented, the Author gave speedy order to suppress it till another Session’.<sup>75</sup>

The printing history of the 1675 editions of the work, however, is consistent with Marvell’s account only if none of the surviving copies is from the 400 copies printed for Parliament, because all surviving copies contain an address ‘to the reader’ in which Croft says ‘all I say is truth, and... may be useful to the Publique, in this present conjuncture of affairs’. The offering of the document to the public at large is inconsistent with a private printing for Members of Parliament, and it is unlikely that Marvell’s alleged private edition would have been published with an address to the Reader in such terms.<sup>76</sup> On the whole it seems more likely that Marvell was trying to dispel the perception that Croft had deliberately stirred up a hornet’s nest than that he was giving a strictly accurate account of the work’s publication. The work was primarily intended to influence Croft’s fellow-bishops, and shows only minimal signs of being revised in order to address Parliament, the main appeal to which is made in the preface rather than the work itself. Nevertheless, Croft seems to have held genuine

<sup>74</sup> *is to be temperate.*

<sup>75</sup> Andrew Marvell, *Mr Smirke, or, The Divine in Mode* (1676) p 9. John Spurr (*The Restoration Church of England 1646–1689* pp 70ff) says that Croft ‘intended his anonymous pamphlet... for distribution among MPs, probably in the autumn session’, but Marvell’s ‘last Session but one’ in May 1676 can only refer to the April–June session of 1675, there having been a brief session in October 1675.

<sup>76</sup> *The Naked Truth... reprinted with an Introduction by Herbert Hensley Henson...* (Chatto and Windus, London 1919) describes the three surviving printings, pp xxv–xxvii.

hopes that it would at least be read by the Members—he was afraid the non-appearance of one expected reply was because it was being saved for the next session of Parliament, and would be published by surprise at that time, so that he would not have time for a rejoinder.<sup>77</sup> Parliament in fact was involved in a struggle over a proposal to impose the oaths of the Five Mile Act and the Corporation Act on MPs, and the Lords and Commons got so bogged down in conflict over this that the king was able to make that his stated reason for proroguing it after less than three months.<sup>78</sup> It is therefore impossible to say now what effect Croft's proposal might have had, if it was truly intended for Parliament. It was far more effective, or dangerous, depending on one's point of view, as a work aimed at the public at large, in the hopes of generating a different understanding of the church altogether. Croft's was the first work to urge the latitudinarian ideal as a positive religious principle which deserved the state's support, and shared much in its attitude to religion and the state with some of the works of thirty and forty years later associated with the term latitudinarianism.<sup>79</sup> It was reprinted in 1680 and 1689, the next two occasions when comprehension came back on Parliament's agenda. W. M. Spellman's characterisation of Croft's booklet as 'an outspoken appeal for comprehension', and Spurr's as an appeal for 'moderation, church reforms and even comprehension'<sup>80</sup> do not begin to plumb the real depths of Croft's work, which was a much broader re-examination of the church whose effects would be felt long after comprehension was no longer a

<sup>77</sup> *Works of Andrew Marvell, Esq. poetical, controversial, and political, containing many original letters, poems, and tracts, never before printed* (1776) Vol I p xxxii. The expected reply was the printed version of the sermon by Peter Gunning.

<sup>78</sup> D. R. Lacey *Dissent and Parliamentary Politics in England 1661–1689* (Rutgers University Press, New Jersey 1969) pp 77ff.

<sup>79</sup> According to J. N. Figgis, Benjamin Hoadly's famous sermon, printed as *The Nature of the Kingdom, or Church, of Christ* (1717) wanted 'a Christian Church-State, with all power in the hands of the magistrates, and all creeds and formularies abolished as distinctive tests'. Cited by Andrew Starkie in *The Church of England and the Bangorian Controversy 1716–1721* (Boydell Press, Woodbridge 2007) p 7.

<sup>80</sup> W. M. Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England 1660–1700* (University of Georgia Press, Athens 1993) pp 48. 178 n 42; John Spurr *Restoration Church of England* p 71.



serious possibility. The storm it raised in 1675, however, faded when the fear of popery that has been a sub-theme of the comprehension story became the fully fledged paranoia of the Popish Plot.

## 7 Comprehension and Popery

Suspicion of a secret intent by Charles to reintroduce popery had been a factor in non-conformist perceptions since very soon after his return from exile. Baxter described the long silence at Worcester House when Clarendon informed those present of the king's proposed addition to the Gracious Declaration, 'That others also be permitted to meet for Religious Worship, so be it, they do it not to the disturbance of the Peace'. According to Baxter, 'all perceived, as soon as they heard it, that it would secure the Liberty of the Papists'.<sup>1</sup> The public perception that there was a secret policy at the highest level of government to restore England to Roman Catholicism grew stronger, especially as a result of Charles's policy of indulgence. While historians have given due attention to proposals for comprehension in 1680 and 1681, when the issue came once again before Parliament, there has been no study of the proposals made in print during the years immediately preceding and following. Comprehension was a live issue in public debate from 1678 to 1683, a period during which even the most zealous anti-puritans were ready to consider, for safety's sake, bringing the non-conforming ministers and their public back into the church, and a review of the published texts shows an increasing number of conformists supporting comprehension during this period. There are two studies of the progress (such as it was) of a Comprehension Bill through the so-called 'Second Exclusion Parliament': the section in Roger Thomas's article 'Comprehension and Indulgence', already

<sup>1</sup> *RB II* p 277.

referred to,<sup>2</sup> and a more detailed study by H. Horwitz.<sup>3</sup> Neither account considers the parliamentary debate in the context of the ongoing campaign in the press, and this chapter will supply that omission.

John Humfrey's central role as a press campaigner for comprehension continued to expand during this period, a fact to which little recognition has been given in historical studies of the period. As we have seen, he had published works in favour of comprehension in 1667, 1669, 1671, 1672, 1673 and 1674, and his output grew during the period under consideration in this chapter. A close examination of his work will lead to the identification of Humfrey as the hitherto unknown author of a printed comprehension proposal, and a more accurate dating of that work and another, as well as a better appreciation of his role in the campaign.

In 1675 some anonymous dissenting colleagues of Humfrey tried to keep comprehension in the public mind by publishing an expanded version of his *Comprehension with Indulgence* of the previous year<sup>4</sup>. Entitled *The peaceable design*, it suggested a 'way of accomodation in the matter of religion, humbly proposed to publick consideration by some ministers of London against the sitting of Parliament in the year 1675'. Presumably the 'ministers' referred to were supporters of Humfrey's approach, who either reprinted his work themselves or asked him to do it with their support.<sup>5</sup> According to a note on the title page of the Bodleian's copy, made by

<sup>2</sup> Roger Thomas, 'Comprehension and Indulgence' in Geoffrey Nuttall and Owen Chadwick, *From Uniformity to Unity 1662–1962* (SPCK, London 1962) pp 222–231.

<sup>3</sup> H. Horwitz, 'Protestant Reconciliation in the Exclusion Crisis', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* Vol 15 (1964) pp 201–217. Spurr refers his readers to Horwitz in his paragraph on this period, *The Church of England, Comprehension and the Toleration Act* p 936.

<sup>4</sup> See above, p 183 n 50.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Lobb may be one of them, if not the chief of them, since some writers attribute the work to Humfrey and Lobb jointly, as does E. C. Vernon in his *ODNB* article on Humfrey, and Martin Sutherland in *Peace, Toleration and Decay: The Ecclesiology of Later Stuart Dissent* (Paternoster Press, Carlisle 2003) p 85. Neither writer defends the attribution. A 1682 work will include contributions from both Humfrey and Lobb and a third, unnamed, writer, see below p 226.

Thomas Barlow,<sup>6</sup> the book was timed to coincide with the second parliamentary session of 1675, which began on 13 October. Protesting their full submission to the authority of the government, the ministers said they nevertheless made this appeal for a change in the law because of ‘our Consecration to God in the Gospel of his dear Son engraven on us at our Ordination’, and hoped for the support of the bishops and their conforming fellow-presbyters, ‘our judicious, learned and serious Fathers and Brethren in the Service of the Gospel’. After a lengthy explanation of the reasons for their non-conformity, the texts of *Comprehension with Indulgence* and *Comprehension Promoted*, with minor amendments, were reproduced. One addition was made to the plan offered in *Comprehension with Indulgence*, which was to let Catholics be treated like others who cannot conform even if changes to the terms of conformity were made, in other words let them not be punished merely for their belief, although there was no suggestion that they should have freedom of worship. This additional proposal was clearly an attempt to elicit royal support rather than a change of heart by Humfrey, because the driving force behind the addressing the issue of comprehension was still the threat of popery: ‘we see the Jaws of the Jesuite, and the Sectary opening upon us; if the sober Protestant Interest be not united, we perish’.<sup>7</sup> Humfrey defended this aspect of the scheme in a letter to Richard Baxter, being worried that ‘it is easy for any to say, this man is for Uniting with the Papists, & so bring a prejudice on what is said before consideration’. His plan would unite with Papists only insofar as all would be under the same government: ‘I distinguish between a Union for

<sup>6</sup> 80 C 513[1] Linc. Barlow notes Humfrey as the author, hence (presumably) the attribution made by Wing and generally accepted. The title statement that the proposal is from some Ministers of London should be probably be accepted at face value, however, especially in view of the fulsome praise of the writer of *Comprehension with Indulgence* made in the Epistle to the Reader. For Humfrey to praise himself in such terms seems inconsistent with his other work and with Baxter’s description of his character in *RB III* p 143.

<sup>7</sup> *Peaceable design* Epis. np no sig [pp iii, pp 55, 56, 58, 63f, 71ff, 75].

Worship, and a Union for Government... It were madness to think of Uniting the separatists and Conformists for Worship, and it is want of consideration also not to think that all that can owne the Head & swear allegiance may not be United for Government, and on that account make one Body.<sup>8</sup>

The proposals had an impact. Barlow took them very seriously, making detailed notes in the margin of his copy, and making remarks from time to time about how likely or not to convince Parliament the work was. They must also have had an impact on some conformist churchmen; George Hickes, at this time rector of St Ebbe's Oxford, in a pamphlet replying to the Ministers' renewal of Humfrey's proposals, wrote of his amazement that so many otherwise loyal and intelligent churchmen should countenance them, 'out of a vain compliance with some People, and thereby to obtain the Title of Moderate Men'. Hickes himself had earlier written that 'as for the Bill of Comprehension,<sup>9</sup> (if such a thing can be) I heartily wish it had passed into an Act; for I think it would have been much to the advantage, and nothing at all to the dishonour of the Church of England, to change or take away those few Ceremonies, which her self in the 34th Article confesseth may be altered, or removed, according to the exigency of times',<sup>10</sup> so it is not clear what it is about the revised 'design' that he refused to countenance. Perhaps it was the addition of the indulgence to Catholics that now prompted him to opposition; in works he wrote in 1674 and 1676 he was insistent that continued non-conformity encouraged papists to hope for a change in religion in England.

<sup>8</sup> *CCRB* Vol II p 303, letter 1204. Keeble and Nuttall date this letter to 1690, assuming that it refers to *The Healing Attempt* (1689), but there is no reference to any indulgence of Catholics in that work, which will be discussed in the next chapter; see below p 246 n 47. The letter only makes sense in the context of *The Peaceable Design* or one of the later documents in which it was restated.

<sup>9</sup> Presumably a reference to the Bill of Ease, since he is writing in 1674.

<sup>10</sup> George Hickes, *A seasonable discourse against comprehension. Occasioned by a late pamphlet intituled The peaceable design* (1676) pp 3, *A letter sent from beyond the seas to one of the chief ministers of the non-conforming party* (1674) pp 20f.

The renewed push for Humfrey's proposals did not meet with success. The Commons did nothing concerning comprehension in the brief (13 October to 22 November) second session of 1675. Shaftesbury, who was emerging as the parliamentary leader of supporters of comprehension at this time, published an anonymous document entitled *A letter from a Parliament man to his friend, concerning the proceedings of the House of Commons this last sessions, begun the 13th of October, 1675* (1675) which gives some insight into the problems Parliament faced in doing anything regarding comprehension during this session. He felt that Parliament was simply exhausted by the effort to get anything accomplished in this area: 'Church-Work' is the task 'which we have been so often put upon and tired with these many Sessions'.<sup>11</sup>

After November 1675, Parliament did not meet again until February 1677. The intervening time saw a steadily increasing fear of popery; this was the period in which Shaftesbury's *Letter from a Person of Quality* and Andrew Marvell's *Growth of Popery and Arbitrary Government* caused such a stir. The 1677 Parliament's activities reflected this fear very clearly, considering a bill for educating the children of any royal family as Protestants, and abolishing the statute *De haeretice comburendo* just in case such education failed to achieve its purpose and a papist with old-fashioned views about the extirpation of Protestantism one day came to the throne. The Commons dealt also with subjects under the headings of suppressing popery, preventing popery, preventing papists from sitting in Parliament, dealing with popish recusants, curbing the growth of popery, and dealing with the danger from popery. There were no

<sup>11</sup> *A Letter from a Parliament Man to his Friend* (1675) pp 6, 2. See Douglas Lacey, *Dissent and Parliamentary Politics in England 1661-1689* (Rutgers University Press, New Jersey 1969) p 81 for Shaftesbury's role.

proposals for comprehension in the press in 1676 or 1677, which may have been why a Parliament so obviously concerned with defending Protestantism did not consider any bill to unite English Protestants. Not until October 1678, when Titus Oates' description of a popish plot to end all plots multiplied the existing fear to the point of distraction from almost all other business did both press and Parliament return to the comprehension issue.

The next proposal in print came in 1678, and was again from Humfrey, who prepared it to coincide with the October 1678 session of Parliament.<sup>12</sup> Contained in a work entitled *The Healing Paper*, it bore many similarities to the proposal in *The Peaceable Design*, but differed from it in significant ways. He dedicated the work to the Speaker of the House of Commons, and told the reader that 'the Designe of this Paper is to chalk out the way for the Parliament... to open the Door of the Church for us'. But in case the 'Publick Physicians' (Parliament) decided not to respond, he also expressed a willingness to turn to 'lesser and private remedies'. If Parliament would not open the door, his book showed a way 'to Draw the Latch, and come in our selves'. He even appears, surprisingly, to have had more hope in an appeal to the bishops than an appeal to Parliament: 'our eyes have almost failed us in looking out after every Session of Parliament to do something for Union, and they do it not. It is another course then must be sought; The bishops alone and we must resolve to do the business ourselves'. The way to do the business is for both bishop and non-conformist to yield what they can, and bear with the other for the rest. 'That which we cannot get done by a relaxation of the Laws, may be obtained by little and little, by a Relaxation of our stiffness on both sides.' Most non-conformists were ready to agree to the

<sup>12</sup> *Healing Paper* p 40.

Articles of Religion as far as the Elizabethan statute required ('whiche only concerne the confession of the true christian faithe and the doctryne of the Sacramentes') and while some, like Humfrey himself, had some further exceptions to make, their exceptions were shared by many conforming puritans, therefore 'I doubt not but they will be allowed me to make'. Many bishops had omitted the parts of the ordination service that were omitted for Humfrey at his own reordination, and he was confident that 'what hath bin done in former time out of favour, will be done now out of conscience'. The assent and consent required by the Act of Uniformity could be given by reading before the congregation the services the Minister intended to use, then declaring before the wardens his assent and consent to what has been read. The Bishop could probably connive at this since the declaration was not required to be made to him but to the congregation. The subscription, which was to be taken before the bishop, could be made as so many conformists had already made it, by understanding the words in a sense other than the one put on them by anti-puritans. Many pages were devoted to Humfrey's explanation of the sense he would put on them if the opportunity were given him, and he made a similar explanation in regard to the sense in which he subscribed to the Articles of Religion, with which he had some difficulties which were peculiar to himself. As far as the objections some had to reordination, they could be dealt with by understanding reordination along the lines suggested by John Wilkins in 1667, not as a call from God into the ministry, but a call to exercise in the national church a ministry already given. He even renounced his own renunciation of his reordination: 'I was too extream (I doubt<sup>13</sup>) in my renunciation, or in the way of my renunciation', and added—in face-saving Latin!—a

<sup>13</sup> = 'I suspect'.



statement that he personally accepted his reordination to have been legitimate when understood this way.<sup>14</sup>

He knew that it was unlikely that many of these proposals would commend themselves to the bishops and be put into practice, and having made them he turned his attention back to Parliament. 'This Scrupulosity, and rigour of my mind for avoiding everything of a Solemne lie (though never so small) does make me wish for... the allowance of a greater authority, by some Act of Parliament.' He expanded on his proposal in *Comprehension with Indulgence* for an Explanatory Act, spelling out what explanations would make it possible for some at least of the non-conformists to abide by the Act of Uniformity. The declaration of assent and consent could be explained as being 'to the use of the book in the Ordinary dayly Lords-day service, or that we may make it with a license of Exception against any matter... which the Bishop shall think meet to be dispensed with upon Convincing reason'. The Act could also explain that the ceremonies can be left 'to the Consciences and prudence of Ministers and People', except in the Cathedrals, and explain the subscription in the terms he had already described. The part of the Act that concerned the Solemn League and Covenant, which was to lapse in 1682 anyway, could be dispensed with now. The oath in the Five-mile Act could either be explained in the way that he himself was willing to take it, as he had described in *A Case of Conscience*, or replaced by an alternative not subject to the objections made against the existing oath. Episcopal ordination of those previously ordained by presbyters could be explained as admission to the exercise of the office rather than to the office itself. The canonical oath of obedience could be 'exauthorized', the requirements of the Elizabethan

<sup>14</sup> *Healing Paper* (1678) To the Reader, pp 1, 4, 5, 6, 24, 27ff.

legislation being sufficient. Explanations could also be provided that would allow Ministers to decline to read a sentence of excommunication on someone if he did not think the crime deserving of such a punishment; instead the bishop would provide one of his staff to do it. No Minister would be required to give the sacrament to someone he believed not capable of worthy reception of it. A subscription to the Thirty Nine Articles could be interpreted as a subscription to their doctrinal aspects only (Humfrey calls this provision the one thing ‘peculiar in this Paper’; presumably this would allow non-conformists to subscribe to all 39 articles instead of being excused three of them). Given these ‘Explanations, Alleviations, Declarations, Lenitives, or Cautions’, most Dissenters would be able to submit to the established discipline and government of the church. Those who could not should be given an indulgence allowing them to worship as gathered churches as long as they agreed to the doctrine established by law and accepted the authority of the bishop as a magistrate in legal matters, ‘keeping the several Congregations in their Precincts to that Gospel-Order which themselves allow, and for supervising their Constitutions in things indifferent’. No one was to be punished for any past violations of the (unexplained) Act of Uniformity. Finally, all those holding a plurality of benefices were to give them up so that they might be distributed among the newly comprehended, and patrons should be required to take the oath against simony required of clergy at their institution into a benefice by Canon 40.<sup>15</sup> John Corbet, who

<sup>15</sup> There appears to have been considerable public support on the issue of pluralities; a petition had been delivered to Parliament in February 1678 seeking an end to them. See *A seasonable treatise on the scholars reasonable addresses, that were delivered in a petition to the honourable members of both Houses in Parliament assembled, Feb. 1677/8 (1678)*.

had been silent in print since 1668 but was still a name to be reckoned with,<sup>16</sup> wrote a letter of support for Humfrey's proposal, printed at the end of the work.<sup>17, 18</sup>

The Parliament on which Humfrey had his eye met just after the allegations by Oates became known (hence, no doubt, his omission of his earlier suggestion of giving some indulgence to Catholics), but neither Parliament nor people could think of anything during those months but the imminent danger of a popish *coup d'état*. No bishop seems to have responded to Humfrey's overtures in any way, and even the usual savage replies by the zealous to such printed proposals were not made. There were no other proposals in the press during 1678, but the following year there were many.

When Charles' long Parliament was finally dissolved on 24 January 1679, there was 'a General Ferment in all parts of the country. It was generally esteem'd the Common Concern in the next Election to choose firm Protestants, who should heartily apply themselves to make Provision for the Common Security'.<sup>19</sup> This election seemed to many likely to provide a new opportunity for comprehension. Humfrey's voice was no longer the only one, and during 1679 and 1680 several proposals were put forward in the press. Some even hoped that Ussher's reduced episcopacy could be put back on the agenda: someone reprinted his plan under the title *Episcopal and Presbyterial government conjoyned proposed as an expedient for the compromising [sic] of the differences, and preventing of those troubles about the matter of*

<sup>16</sup> S. T. *The Presbyterians unmask'd, or, Animadversions upon a nonconformist book, called The interest of England in the matter of religion* (1676), sig A3ff.

<sup>17</sup> *Healing Paper* (1678) pp 29, 30, 31, 32, 33.

<sup>18</sup> There is an interesting clue in this pamphlet to Humfrey's approach to his work, in that he makes clear in an 'advertisement' on the last page that he has been compiling the material in it 'ever since the ejecting act', and that Bishop Wilkins, who died in 1672, had seen much of the material now published as *The Healing Paper*. Clearly his practice of incorporating earlier work is not limited to earlier published work; he had built up a substantial body of material before embarking on his long press campaign.

<sup>19</sup> Calamy, *Abridgement of Mr Baxter's History* (1713) Vol I p 349.

*Church-Government* (1679). It was given a preface commending it as a way 'to advance the peace of the church, and preserve the nation'. The preface cited Hammond and Baxter as supporters of a moderate episcopacy, and even claimed the support of Charles I, or at least the *Eikon Basilike*, where Charles said (or was said to have said) 'a little moderation might have prevented great mischiefs; I am firme to Primitive Episcopacy, not to have it extirpated, (if I can hinder it.) Discretion without passion might easily reforme, whatever the rust of times, or indulgence of Laws, or corruption of manners have brought upon it... I was willing to grant, or restore to Presbitery, what with Reason or Discretion it can pretend to, in a conjuncture with Episcopacy'.<sup>20</sup> The revival of Ussher's proposal came at a time of widespread resentment against the bishops. In April 1679, John Swynfen reminded the Commons that 'there are, by the informations, three hundred and sixty Jesuits in England. They have their several Provinces and Dioceses; within the Dioceses of the Bishops, they hold Synods; and all this has gone under the Bishops noses; and I wonder that, in their Visitations, not one of them should be found out, nor at the Assizes, nor Sessions. Thus has this Plot grown up.'<sup>21</sup> Simon Patrick also admitted that 'all the blame is now laid at the door of the Rulers of this Church.'<sup>22</sup> The idea of a reduced episcopacy did not appear to find new supporters, however, and most specific comprehension proposals were silent on the subject, although some general works on episcopacy kept the subject before the public, as we shall see.

<sup>20</sup> *Eikon Basilike* (1648) pp 157, 183—thoughts that fit neatly with the theory of Gauden's authorship of this work.

<sup>21</sup> *Grey* 27 April 1679.

<sup>22</sup> *Christ's Counsel to His Church* (1681) p 108, reprinting a sermon preached in 1680. See also Mark Goldie, 'Danby, the Bishops and the Whigs', in Tim Harris, ed., *The Politics of Religion in Restoration England* (Blackwell, Oxford 1990) pp 80ff for more on the unpopularity of the bishops.

Another attempt was made to enlist the support of a respected divine of a former age, although one more distant than Ussher's, by building a pamphlet around a reprinting of a paragraph of Edwyn Sandys, Archbishop of York from 1577 to 1588. The pamphlet was addressed to Parliament, and individual MPs were given copies by the anonymous promoter of the scheme, according to Archdeacon of Suffolk Lawrence Womock.<sup>23</sup> Sandys was quoted as saying that that the rites and ceremonies of the Prayer Book 'be not so expedient for this church now... they may better be disused by little and little'. No particular application of Sandys's remarks was made other than to ask that nothing be imposed but what is in Scripture, but the document stressed the great opportunity that was now before Parliament: 'and is not this the time for it? Is not this *the* time? there is a cementing, healing spirit to be found among many, very many in the Nation', the writer said, quoting a recent sermon by Tillotson (then Dean of Canterbury) to prove it.<sup>24</sup> Womock published a reply saying that Sandys was the only one of the Elizabethans to consider such a thing, and all that he actually suggested was that some ceremonies might be 'disused by little and little' and this had in fact already happened.<sup>25</sup>

The pamphlet by a conformist, first published anonymously in 1672, *The Grounds of Unity in Religion*,<sup>26</sup> was reprinted twice as part of the 1679 press campaign, one edition being attributed to 'a gentleman of the Middle Temple', the other being attributed to 'George Ent of the Middle Temple'. The only George Ent known to ODNB is a physician, and all other writings known to be his are on medical subjects.

<sup>23</sup> Mark Knights, *Politics and Opinion in Crisis* (Cambridge University Press, 1994) p 200.

<sup>24</sup> *A proposal of union amongst Protestants, from the last-will of the most Reverend Doctor Sands sometime Archbishop of York (as the sentiment of the first reformers) humbly presented to the Parliament* (1679) pp 2, 3. The Tillotson quote (on p 4) is from *A sermon preached at the first general meeting of the gentlemen, and others in and near London, who were born within the county of York* (1679).

<sup>25</sup> *The late proposal of union among Protestants, review'd and rectifi'd being a vindication of the most reverend father in God, Edwin, Lord Arch-Bishop of York* (1679) p 11.

<sup>26</sup> See above, p 168.

Perhaps the attribution is the printer's mistaken reading of a hand-written note on the original edition saying it was by 'a gent of the Middle Temple', correctly read for the other edition.

In addition to the works offering specific proposals, there was a large number of works arguing or sometimes pleading for some moderation of the attitudes of the zealous towards others, and for a church broad enough to accommodate at least the presbyterians. These included works by Baxter and Corbet, and by several conformists, although as usual they identified themselves only by such sobriquets as 'One conforming minister', 'Moderate conformist', 'The Protestant conformist', 'True lover of monarchy and the Anglicane-Church'<sup>27</sup>, and 'Queen Elizabeth Protestant'. A reduced episcopate continued to interest some, and Baxter returned to the subject in his *Treatise of Episcopacy*. This work is prefaced by a 'History of the Production of This Treatise', in which three times he mentions that the current form of diocesan episcopacy is one of the reasons why so many cannot conform, and he repeats this point twice in the first chapter.<sup>28</sup> He had dealt with the subject of episcopacy in his earlier *Church-History of the Government of Bishops and Their Councils* (1680) but that was written when the Licensing Act was still in force, and nothing was said in it about the relationship of episcopacy to conformity.<sup>29</sup> The *Treatise of Episcopacy* is a portrayal of primitive episcopacy that goes far beyond Ussher's *Reduction*, presenting the original biblical episcopate in very presbyterian terms.

<sup>27</sup> This is the first time the word 'Anglican' appears in the title of any published work, and the sentiments expressed make it clear why the word will mislead if used of conformists generally: 'It is apparent to all unprejudiced Minds, that the consolidating of Conformists and Non-conformists would thoroughly root out Popery from amongst us', p 28. It is ironic that the word's first appearance in a title is in a work in support of comprehension, when so many historians use the word to refer to a zealous conformity.

<sup>28</sup> *Treatise of Episcopacy* (1681) np no sig [pp iv, v, x, 1, 4].

<sup>29</sup> In *RB III* p 181 Baxter describes it in the middle of works written in 1677, although it was not published till 1680. The Licensing Act expired May 1679 (see Mark Knights, *Politics and Opinion in Crisis* [Cambridge University Press 1994] p 156 n 15 for a discussion of the exact date) and was renewed in 1681.

There was also a rush to reply to Edward Stillingfleet, dean of St Paul's and a perceived supporter of comprehension for many years,<sup>30</sup> following his apparent change of heart in a 1680 sermon, published as *The Mischief of Separation*. Stillingfleet had preached the sermon at the Guildhall after the third in the series of six prorogations that were preventing Parliament doing anything about the perceived danger from popery. In his sermon he said he wanted to 'find out a certain foundation for a lasting Union among ourselves', ie among the divided Protestants, but he argued that the problem was caused by the refusal of so many to conform to the Church of England in its present condition. The 'Evil and Danger of the present Separation' is the fact that it is carried on by principles which would lead to the disintegration of any church that acknowledged them. It was not just a scandal, but sin on the part of those who would not conform. 'If once the people be brought to understand and practice their duty as to Communion with our churches, other Difficulties which obstruct our Union will more easily be resolved'.<sup>31</sup> The sermon had given rise to a huge press debate—the first printing of it sold out the day it was published.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps this was the bishops' reply to Humfrey—Stillingfleet would be charged with being a mouthpiece for his superiors, as we shall see.<sup>33</sup> Pamphlets opposing Stillingfleet's newly discovered hostility and urging continued moderation in the matter were written by several well-known and less well-known non-conformists, but no conformists, even anonymously.<sup>34</sup> Humfrey persisted with his suggestion of an explanatory act, adding a slightly edited version of it as an appendix

<sup>30</sup> See above p 188, and below p 240.

<sup>31</sup> Stillingfleet, *Mischief of Separation a sermon preached at Guild-Hall Chappel, May 11, MDCLXXX* (1680) Epistle Dedicatory np no sig [rp ii, iii], p 25.

<sup>32</sup> Knights *op cit* p 183.

<sup>33</sup> See below, p 220.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas's comment (*op cit* p 230) that non-conformists showed 'complete indifference' to comprehension at this period can only refer to non-conformists in Parliament, see below p 216.

to his *A peaceable resolution of conscience touching our present impositions* of 1680, a work to which we shall return.

A brief pamphlet by William Hughes is addressed to anyone who will listen—‘a Parliament, or a Convocation, or some Reverend Fathers; at least some eminent Doctor’, and suggests four principles which ought to bring in most dissenters: let the bishops refrain from any act of ordination or jurisdiction without assent from a council of presbyters, let the ceremonies be optional, let the only required declaration be the one used in the reign of Elizabeth which required assent to the doctrinal articles only, and let those ordained ‘when bishops were removed’ be licensed rather than re-ordained. It’s not clear whether it is written by a conformist or not, but the writer appeals to both Humfrey and Croft as examples of ‘Doctors of the church’ who have expressed their support for accommodation.<sup>35</sup> Croft’s *The Naked Truth* was reprinted this year, adding more weight to Hughes’s appeal.

Comprehension proposals came before Parliament in November 1680, during what is known as the second ‘exclusion’ Parliament. The fear of popery had reached a pitch that can only be understood by 21st century readers by comparing it to the fear of terrorists that has driven so much of western policy since 2001.<sup>36</sup> There was not only a general sense that Protestants, under such direct attack from Catholics as now seemed to be the case, would be wise to settle their differences and work together if there were to be any hope of keeping England protestant, but a fear can be detected

<sup>35</sup> William Hughes, *An endeavor for peace among Protestants earnestly recommended and humbly submitted to Christian consideration* (1680) pp 16, 17, 18, 25, 29.

<sup>36</sup> When the Commons began to debate the Popish Plot again in this Parliament, having been forbidden to meet for over a year, Roger Morrice commented ‘the Commons entered into the Grand business of the Kingdom, And indeed the Grandest that hath ever been debated in that house (may God appear)’, Morrice Vol II p 242. In his opening speech, Lord Russell said ‘either this Parliament must suppress the power and growth of popery, or else that popery will soon destroy, not only Parliaments, but all that is near and dear to us,’ *A Collection of the Parliamentary Debates in England from the year M,DC,LXVIII. to the present time* (1739-42) Vol II p 313.



among some conformists that the Catholics had made some headway in persuading non-conformists that they would be better off under a papist regime than the one currently established, and that the Protestant establishment should make them a better offer as soon as possible. During the debates in Parliament about the proposals by Sir Edward Dering, one speaker said ‘the Papists have offered them [the Dissenters] larger Terms than this’, and urged that Parliament do something to ease their lot for that reason.<sup>37</sup>

The matter was referred without opposition to a committee whose task was to ‘prepare and bring in’ the bill. Dering appeared to have shared Humfrey’s assumption that the bishops were at least approachable, saying that the bill ‘may be... penned, without offence to the Reverend Fathers of the Church, the Bishops’. While it was waiting for the Committee to report, the House discussed other bills for the relief of the dissenting community, and its eagerness for a comprehensive church was expressed repeatedly. Excitement about the bill among non-conformists spread quickly beyond Parliament: ejected Minister Roger Morrice wrote in his diary this same day that the bill was likely to be ‘wonderfully good’.<sup>38</sup> Within two weeks of its first sitting, the committee had the outline of a bill that not only undid enough of the Act of Uniformity to make a substantial comprehension of puritans possible, but offered some indulgence to those for whom the changes would not be enough.

A draft bill presented in November contained much the same provisions as the 1675 proposal discussed by Baxter and Tillotson, except that instead of making the surplice optional, it abolished the use of it altogether except in cathedrals and the

<sup>37</sup> Grey 24 December 1680. See below, n 58, for Dering’s proposals.

<sup>38</sup> Morrice, Roger, *The entring book of Roger Morrice (1677-1691)*, edited by Mark Goldie, John Spurr, Tim Harris, Stephen Taylor, Mark Knights, Jason McElligott. (Boydell Press, Woodbridge 2007) Vol 4, Q 274.

king's chapel; in addition to making it optional to receive the sacrament kneeling, receiving while still seated in the pew was provided for; and an indulgence was to be provided to all those who made a declaration to be agreed on as long as they continued to pay tithes; those who would not make the declaration would have to bring in two witnesses to certify that they were Protestants. In addition, the requirement of assent and consent was not limited to certain parts of the Prayer Book but dropped entirely.<sup>39</sup>

Apart from the issue of pluralities, and the now politically impossible suggestion of extending even the lightest indulgence to papists, the proposals were what Humfrey had been campaigning for since 1669: an act of 'mixt complexion' giving both comprehension and indulgence, making the most resented ceremonies optional, taking away the oaths added by the Act of Uniformity and the Five Mile Act, and removing penalties for those who still cannot conform.

While the bill was in committee, on 9 November, Richard Baxter wrote a letter to MP Sir Edward Harley, a presbyterian conformist and a keen supporter of comprehension, giving his input to the discussion. He was concerned that Parliament might give a higher priority to indulgence than to comprehension: 'those that are too far alienated into unlawful Separations; whose talk is earnest against that which is called a Comprehension... had rather the things which we cannot there consent to, were continued unreformed, that so the best People might be still alinated from them, and driven all into their Tolerated Churches', a policy which would lead to such confusion (which he describes at length) that 'the next Parliament having Experience of these Confusions will recall and abrogate all their Tolerations'. What Baxter argued

<sup>39</sup> Calamy, *Abridgement* (1713) Vol 1 pp 350ff.

for instead was what he called 'parish reformation', which would include not only the usual provisions for making the ceremonies optional, but provisions for a 'comprehended independency' similar to those Humfrey had been exploring.<sup>40</sup> No Minister would be imposed on a parish without the assent of the congregation, clergy were to be disciplined by the law of the land rather than canon law or the judgement of the bishop, those who could not accept the ministry of the local parish would be allowed to assemble under a teacher of their own choosing provided he had taken the oaths and subscriptions mentioned and provided that they continue to pay tithes to the parish church, and no one was to be punished for not receiving any sacrament as long as they attended a church. Primitive episcopacy would be best of all, he reminded Harley, but reformation to this extent would be good enough.<sup>41</sup>

While Baxter was adding his input to the bill before the Commons, John Howe, minister of a presbyterian congregation which met at Haberdashers' Hall, became involved in discussions of a similar nature before the Lords, being invited to dinner by the newly appointed bishop of St Asaph, William Lloyd, who had made a name for himself campaigning against popery following the murder of his parishioner Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey and was now one of those trying to get the Lords to consider the subject.<sup>42</sup> Lloyd wanted to know what provisions a bill would need in order to bring most non-conformists in. Howe followed the same line as Baxter had with Harley, saying that if the law could be changed so that presbyterian clergy could pursue real reformation in their own parishes, without depending on the bishop or a

<sup>40</sup> Humfrey, *The Peaceable Design* (1675) pp 66–71.

<sup>41</sup> *RB Appendix* pp 130, 127–129.

<sup>42</sup> 'Oh! that we had hearts to consider it! that we would do what we can to unite our selves! Surely we can, if we will: we could, if we had but a real mind to it. We will, and must very speedily do it; or else, if we do not unite, do what we will otherwise, we shall let in Popery, even by the ways that we take to keep out Popery', he had said in a sermon to the House of Lords (*A sermon preached before the House of Lords, on November 5 (1680)* p 38.

diocesan chancellor for the authority to do so, most of them would probably find a way to conform. For some reason Lloyd did not pursue the matter, however, and neither a Comprehension Bill nor an Indulgence Bill made it onto the Lords' agenda in this Parliament.<sup>43</sup>

Harley suggested to the committee the addition of two more provisions to those already made, one responding to Baxter's suggestion about ordination by validating presbyterian ordinations between 1644 and 1660 and the other responding not only to Baxter but also to Humfrey's suggestion eliminating the requirement to take the canonical oath of obedience (which says 'the Book of Common-Prayer, and of Ordering of Bishops, Priests and Deacons, containeth in it nothing contrary to the Word of God, and that it may lawfully so be used, and that he himself will use the Form in the said Book prescribed in Publick Prayer, and Administration of the Sacraments, and none other'). The rest of Baxter's suggestions Harley apparently left alone. It was about this time, and perhaps because of the multiplication of provisions being suggested, that the committee decided to ask the House for permission to divide the bill into two, one for comprehension and one for indulgence.

The Bill for Indulgence was expanded in scope to include Baptists, who would be allowed to omit subscription to Article XXVII, which said that 'the Baptism of young Children is to be retained in the Church'. On the other hand, those who denied the doctrine of the Trinity were not to have any benefit from the act (another of Sir Edward Harley's suggestions), and permission to keep the doors of dissenting meeting houses shut while Holy Communion was administered was eliminated. After considerable debate, and the appointment of a subcommittee to consider the matter,

<sup>43</sup> Edmund Calamy, *Memoirs of the life of the late Revd. Mr. John Howe* (1724) pp 72f.

Quakers too were to be included, and provision was made for them to profess and testify rather than swear the oaths referred to.<sup>44</sup> Even the zealous conformist Sir Christopher Musgrave attended the committee meeting to speak in favour of this addition, to the surprise of one of the Quakers also present.<sup>45</sup>

Two bills came out of the committee, the Comprehension Bill retaining the original title and the Indulgence Bill wearing the title 'A Bill for exempting his Majesty Protestant Subjects, dissenting from the Church of England, from the Penalties of certain Laws'. Both bills were read first on 16 December, apparently with no debate, and the Comprehension Bill a second time on 21 December, when there was a substantial debate on it. Sir Francis Winnington, whose speech is one of only a handful recorded by Grey on the 21st, observed that there was little opposition to it either in the Commons—'there are not above two in the House against this Bill', or in the church at large—'I never met with a Parson, whose Living was under a hundred pounds a year, but would let them [who seek comprehension] in; but those of a thousand pounds a year, dignified men, are against it: They think the alms are better distributed'. Henry Powle was in complete sympathy with the aims of the bill, but thought it could be done equally well by Humfrey's method of 'explaining' the Act of Uniformity: 'though I am a friend to our Liturgy, yet, I think, some expressions in it may be mended; and though I join in it, yet I wish it were put under a better explanation'. Winnington wished to add language about pluralities (another point

<sup>44</sup> Horwitz *op cit* p 210.

<sup>45</sup> George Whitehead, *The christian progress of that ancient servant and minister of Jesus Christ, George Whitehead* (1725) p 496.

that had been made strongly by Humfrey), but refrained from asking for it because ‘it will stick so hard with the Lords’.<sup>46</sup> The bill was sent back to committee.<sup>47</sup>

The press continued to bring other opinions into the mix: ‘on the eve of the second reading debate’, in mid-December, Stillingfleet published his *Unreasonableness of Separation*, expanding his arguments in *The Mischief of Separation* in response to the pile of pamphlets responding both to his original sermon and to its printed text.<sup>48</sup> In it he made specific references to the provisions of the two bills. The timing of his intervention may have been fortuitous—the debate over *Mischief* had been going on since 11 May. But it seems more likely that Stillingfleet chose his time knowingly: he admits that many had pointed out to him the damage that such a continuation of the debate might do to the movement now under way. ‘The Time of Publishing this Treatise... some do seem to think, to be very unseasonable; when there is so much talk of Union among Protestants, and there appears a more General Inclination to it than formerly. And what, say they, can the laying open the Weakness of Dissenters tend to, but to Provoke and Exasperate them, and consequently to obstruct the Union so much desired?’ Nevertheless, because his purpose is in fact to make union possible, he feels justified in offering his own opinion ‘freely and impartially’ on the matters currently being discussed.<sup>49</sup>

After arguing that indulgence was bound to bring in popery sooner or later, and that comprehension was unnecessary,<sup>50</sup> he stated that he was nevertheless willing to support both of them under certain conditions. As far as comprehension was

<sup>46</sup> Grey 21 December 1680.

<sup>47</sup> ‘House of Commons Journal Volume 9: 21 December 1680’, *Journal of the House of Commons: volume 9: 1667–1687* (1802), pp. 686–687. URL: <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/report.aspx?compid=27847>.

<sup>48</sup> Thomas, *op cit* p 228.

<sup>49</sup> Stillingfleet, *Unreasonableness of Separation* (1681) pp lxxviif, lxxviii, lxxxii.

<sup>50</sup> *Unreasonableness*, pp lxxix–lxxxii, lxxxiiif.

concerned, his suggestions were quite similar to those under consideration by the committee, the only substantial difference being the change in wording regarding the subscription to the thirty six articles, ruling out taking them in any but the literal sense, and the lack of permission for the administration of the sacrament to those remaining seated in the pew.<sup>51</sup> The proposal for a revision of the Prayer Book gave presbyterians in particular even more than the bill envisaged, and more than they had asked for in some years. The obligation to renounce the Solemn League and Covenant was not addressed, but since that was due to expire in two years anyway, Stillingfleet's remarks would have been seen as support for something like the bill under consideration.

His conditions for indulgence, however, were noticeably stricter than those being considered by Parliament: no provision for Baptists or Quakers, no protection from ecclesiastical courts, no exemption from service as a parish officer, no indulgence for schoolteachers or tutors, no exemption from the payment of tithes, and the fine for non-attendance at church to be paid. The indulged should be licensed as in 1672, with names and meeting places recorded. The indulgence should only be permitted to those willing to declare that they thought communion with the church as established by law to be against God's commandments, and there should be severe penalties for anyone writing or speaking in 'bitter or reproachful words' against the established church. Indulged congregations should accept the authority of bishops 'as Visitors appointed by law' even if of no spiritual authority, and the rules of worship and discipline of each congregation, as well as a complete list of their members, should be submitted to the bishop. No indulged person should be allowed to teach in schools or

<sup>51</sup> *Unreasonableness* pp lxxxii–xciv.

the universities.<sup>52</sup> Stillingfleet was widely thought to be speaking for the bishops—‘prevail’d on as is suppos’d by some great Persons’<sup>53</sup>—but there was no time for his work or any of the replies to it to affect the present Parliament, as we shall see.

Another copy of Humfrey’s proposed bill was printed and circulated to MPs during this Parliament under the title *A specimen of a bill for uniting the Protestants*, although it has not previously been recognised as Humfrey’s work. There is no printed date on the work, and Wing gives a date of 1679 for it, but internal evidence shows that it was printed for the second exclusion Parliament: a marginal note on page 1 says that all this material was presented to the Parliament that passed the Act of Uniformity, ‘but now we have a new Parliament, and that after another also Dissolved’, which can only mean the second Parliament of 1680. The pamphlet reprinted the proposals made in *The Peaceable Design* with insignificant variations of wording.<sup>54</sup> Henry Powle may have been influenced by Humfrey’s specimen bill when he made the comments described above.

The Indulgence Bill came for its second reading on 24 December, and the debate makes it clear that the House was ready to pass it. Baxter was apparently not the only one to be concerned that indulgence might become a higher priority than comprehension, however; Sir Christopher Musgrave warned that an Indulgence Bill would ‘interfere’ with the Comprehension Bill. Sir William Jones denied this, but in terms that made it clear that passage of an Indulgence Bill did not guarantee subsequent passage of the Comprehension Bill: ‘I take it, this Bill does not interfere with the former. That opens the door to spiritual Promotions to Dissenters, as well as

<sup>52</sup> *Unreasonableness* pp lxxxvi–lxxxviii.

<sup>53</sup> Calamy, *Abridgement of Mr Baxter’s History* (1713) Vol I p 353.

<sup>54</sup> John Humfrey, *A specimen of a bill for uniting the Protestants being a rough draught of such terms, as seem equal for the conformist to grant, and the non-conformist to yield to, for peace sake* (1679) Wing number S4843.



others, under such and such qualifications. This goes not so high'. Sir Thomas Meres also showed how easily an Indulgence Bill could render a Comprehension Bill moot, when he said 'I do not doubt but, when this Bill is passed, most of the Dissenters will come in to the Church with that moderate Party [ie that is already present in the church], especially seeing that it is their interest: They will gain them by preaching and moderation'. Humfrey had made the same point in *The Peaceable Design*: 'when the Countenance of Authority, and all State Emoluments are cast into one Scale, and others let alone to come on , without persecution to inflame them, or preferment to encourage them [they] may find it really better to them to be a Priest to a Tribe than a Levite to a Family we need not doubt but Time, the Mistress of the wise and the unwise, will discover the peaceable Issue of such Counsels'.<sup>55</sup>

In January the Comprehension Bill was changed to allow parents to present their children for baptism instead of godparents, to require Ministers to wear gowns according to their degree, and to allow those covered by the bill to graduate from the two universities as well as to seek ordination. Another change was made in the part of the bill described in Calamy's text only by the words 'No Minister to be oblig'd to renounce the Covenant'. Apparently this was understood to mean that that part of the Declaration in the Act of Uniformity which said 'I do declare that I do hold there lies no obligation on me or any other person from the Oath comonly called the Solemne League and Covenant etc etc' would be omitted, but in the final session of the Committee language was added which excepts the rest of the declaration, which

<sup>55</sup> *The Peaceable Design* p 59.

includes the words 'I will conforme to the Liturgie of the Church of England as it is now by law established.'<sup>56</sup>

Neither bill made it back on the floor in time for passage into law. Parliament was prorogued just a few days after the Committee's last meeting, and dissolved shortly after that. Horwitz suggests that the leaders of those pursuing exclusion of the Duke of York from the succession deliberately avoided bringing the bill to the floor once the Lords had refused to consider such an exclusion, in order to keep Dissenters discontented and secure their support on some future occasion.<sup>57</sup> However, no evidence is offered for this, and since work on both bills had gone on for several weeks after the Lords had voted against exclusion, it seems unlikely. Sir Edward Dering thought it was the determination of the house to pass an exclusion bill that scuppered all the other business, but simply by taking up time and energy.<sup>58</sup> What seems most likely is that indulgence was increasingly seen by Parliament as all that was really necessary, as Baxter had feared. Morrice's words are often quoted: 'opinions about these bills are various, all that I have heard of who desire Comprehension, desire Indulgence also for others, though multitudes desire indulgence that fervently oppose comprehension, this begett's great misunderstandings'.<sup>59</sup> Some observers noted that there was much more lobbying for indulgence than for comprehension; 'to the amazement of all people, [the presbyterian] party in the House did not seem concerned to promote it: on the contrary, they neglected it'.<sup>60</sup> Polhill made a similar comment: 'the Bill for Indulgence, was carefully attended by some concerned in it,

<sup>56</sup> Edward Polhill, *The Samaritan* (1682) p 115.

<sup>57</sup> Horwitz *op cit* p 213.

<sup>58</sup> Maurice F. Bond, ed., *The diaries and papers of Sir Edward Dering, second Baronet, 1644 to 1684* (Her Majesty's Stationery Office, London 1976) p 120.

<sup>59</sup> Morrice Vol II p 259.

<sup>60</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *History of my own time* (1725) Vol II p 859.

and was therefore brought to Perfection: The Other Bill, that for Comprehension, was looked after very sorrily; and if it had Passed as it was Drawn up, would have brought in, no Body'.<sup>61</sup> But even if passed it might never have become law: the 'Bill to repeal the Statute of the 35th Year of Queen Eliz.', and so prevent Protestant dissenters from being punished by a statute aimed at Catholics, eventually passed, but was not submitted to the king for his signature by the Commons' clerk, apparently at the king's order, and thus never became law.

The same Comprehension Bill was intended to be brought back onto the floor of Parliament in the Oxford Parliament of 1681. 'A bill about uniting of Protestants, and severall other such like Bills as they had last time before them' was to be 'brought in upon Munday', Morrice noted,<sup>62</sup> and the manuscript copy of the 1680 committee's final version has a March 1681 date. Humfrey was indefatigable as always, and during this session of Parliament he published in Oxford a pamphlet called *Materials for Union*.

Humfrey had previously used the phrase 'materials for union' to refer to his explanatory act, but in this new pamphlet he brought to its fullest form the idea he had first discussed in 1675,<sup>63</sup> and urged consideration of an act which would define the Church of England in such a way that even independent or congregational churches, incapable of comprehension by the approach of 1680, would be as much a part of it as any parish church. Gauden had made a proposal along the same lines in 1660, as we have seen.<sup>64</sup> Arguing about the church 'as Particular' had achieved nothing, wrote Humfrey, and particular churches must now be left 'to their own

<sup>61</sup> *The Samaritan* p 114.

<sup>62</sup> Morrice Vol II p 274.

<sup>63</sup> Humfrey, *The Peaceable Design* (1675) pp 66-71.

<sup>64</sup> See above, p 44.

Perswasion'; the only foundation for union left involved a different view of the church 'as National', and Parliament, when it met, should bring in a bill 'for declaring the Constitution of our Church of England'. The constitution of the Church should be described as an 'Independent National Church Political', and defined as of human institution; this should be agreeable to all 'for it is manifestly a thing Accidental to the Church of Christ, that the Supreme Magistrate, and the whole Body of a Nation, are Christian.' This national church consisted of 'the King as the head, and all the several Assemblies of the Protestants as the Body'. Whatever assemblies Parliament agreed were tolerable would be 'made legal by such an Act, and thereby parts of the National Church'. Bishops would be described as officers of the state, but with authority only in ecclesiastical affairs, under the king, and acting only by virtue of his commission to them. They would be 'the substitutes of his Majesty, and Execute his Jurisdiction.' Given this understanding, no non-conformist could refuse a bishopric if appointed to one by the king, and Owen and Baxter should be appointed to the next two vacant sees.<sup>65</sup> Bishops would supervise all the churches in their diocese, whether episcopal, presbyterian or congregational, ensuring that each 'Walk[ed] according to their own Order'. In Convocation, a third representative from each diocese, elected from among the non-conformists, would be added to the two already elected from the conformist clergy. York and Canterbury would be combined into a single province, 'one National Church', and the new Convocation would then change the canons in whatever way gave the most general satisfaction. This new

<sup>65</sup> There had been rumours of an episcopate for Baxter and Owen as long ago as 1669. After much speculating on the reasons for the prorogation of Parliament till October 1669, Barlow had written that 'Dr Wilkins (who married ye Protector's sister) is (by my Ld. D. of Buckingham's assistance) Bishop of Chester, Dr. Owen (they? tell us) has Kiss'd the Kings hand, and they say (how truly I know not) that he or Mr. Baxter is to be the next Bishop; and soe the Protector's consanguinity, and Non-Conformity are (not impediments but rather) good dispositions to a Bishopricque... I am glad they accept, and are made Bishops, it may be a means to preserve and continue that Apostolicall Order and the Sacred Patrimony of the Church', Bodleian MS Eng. Lett. C. 328, fol. 509, Barlow to Frances Parry, cited by Swatland, *op cit* p 277 n 1.

proposal was neither comprehension nor indulgence, but a true ‘Act of a mixt complexion’, with neither element easily separable from the other—thus avoiding what had had happened in 1680, when indulgence undermined comprehension. The plan was outlined very briefly in this edition, and ‘something more’ was promised in a forthcoming work.<sup>66</sup> The Oxford Parliament had no more time for this plan than for the two bills from the 1680 Parliament, but Humfrey’s proposal started much discussion,<sup>67</sup> and he continued to work on the idea. It became the subject of additional works later, as we shall see.<sup>68</sup>

On 26 March it seemed that both bills would be given a second chance, when the Commons asked for ‘a Bill or Bills be brought in, for the better Uniting of all his Majesty Protestant Subjects’. But the very next day the Parliament was dissolved, and by the time another Parliament was called, the long-feared popish successor would be on the throne.

The failure of the 1680/81 Comprehension Bill was a serious disappointment, but it certainly did not end either the hope of or the campaign for comprehension. At the time the failure of the Indulgence Bill seemed more serious to many, since harassment of dissenters grew much more severe (of which John Humfrey had seen signs even while the Indulgence Bill seemed to be sailing through Parliament in 1680<sup>69</sup>), but the cause of a comprehensive church continued to find promoters during what is sometimes called ‘the Tory reaction’.<sup>70</sup> Humfrey continued to press his points, but there was also an increasing number of conformists who became more outspoken

<sup>66</sup> Humfrey, *Materials for Union* (1681) pp 3, 4, 5, 6, 7.

<sup>67</sup> A Conformist Minister in the Country, *Reflections on Dr. Stillingfleet’s book of the unreasonableness of separation* (1681) p 35.

<sup>68</sup> See below, pp 246ff.

<sup>69</sup> *Peaceable Resolution* (1680) Epistle to the Reader [p i].

<sup>70</sup> Ronald Hutton, *Charles II* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1989) p 404.

in expressing their support (even if often anonymously) even while others became more outspoken in opposition.

Edward Wettenhall, for example, a former Exeter minister who had become bishop of Cork and Ross in Ireland but was still widely read in England, his devotional work *Enter Into Thy Closet* having gone through several editions during the 1670s, urged the expedient of partial conformity, and an equally partial comprehension to go with it. In *The Protestant Peacemaker* (1682) Wettenhall expressed his own willingness to support some revision of the services to which Dissenters could not subscribe, 'the Alteration of an Expression, or perhaps here and there, of a whole Prayer, or two, by Law, or the dispensing (still by Law) with some Ceremony',<sup>71</sup> but even though that was not possible at present, something might still be done if those who had made proposals toward comprehension were willing to demonstrate the sincerity of their desire for it.

Wettenhall took up Humfrey's proposal, citing his works specifically, and proposed that the next Parliament, which was expected some time during 1682, pass a version of Humfrey's 'explanatory act'. Wettenhall's Act accepted exactly that much conformity as Humfrey was willing to subscribe to in his 1680 work, *The Peaceable Resolution*.<sup>72</sup> 'Let it... be allowed,' Wettenhall wrote, 'by a favourable Interpretation

<sup>71</sup> P 118.

<sup>72</sup> The last in a series of works, of which *The Healing Paper* was part, preparing a response should no bill be passed. The series began with *The nonconformists relief prepared against the sessions of the next justices in London or in the country* and continued with *The Healing Paper*, both published in 1678 when there appeared little hope of any relief, and from them a longer and more detailed work was compiled in 1680, perhaps foreseeing the failure of the bills then in Parliament. This third work was entitled *A peaceable resolution of conscience touching our present impositions*. We have already seen how in *The Healing Paper* Humfrey had spelled out (among other things) a way of understanding the oaths and subscriptions relief from which did not seem to be forthcoming, and which would provide those serious about union with the national church a way of taking them without giving up the principles which had led so many to non-conformity. This was a development of the first in the series, in which Humfrey not only described a way of understanding the Oxford Oath, but took it himself in print, hence his somewhat unusual step of putting his full name at the end of the work, instead of either his initials or using a sobriquet. In *Peaceable Resolution* he expanded the idea still further, and added a slightly edited version of the suggestion for an explanatory act that he had made in *The Healing Paper*.

from the Legislative Power, that such a qualified or mitigated... Conformity to the Liturgy, shall be judged sufficient for some purposes'. Where he could not go along with Humfrey, however, was in the description of the purposes for which such conformity would be sufficient. Humfrey's proposal had suggested it qualify the conforming person for 'any Ecclesiastical preferment', but Wettenhall thought it would have to be much more limited than that, arguing that the preferment would have to be consistent with the conformity subscribed. Humfrey had distinguished Cathedral worship from Parish worship, and the 'constant Lords day service' (referred to as the 'ordinary dayly Lords Day service' in his *Healing Paper*) to which he was willing to conform was that of the parish, with its limited ceremonial; someone unwilling to conform to the ceremonial of a Cathedral, Wettenhall argued, could not be qualified to hold office in one. But even in a parish church, a conformity as limited as that suggested by Humfrey would rule out appointment as the incumbent, 'to whom the Charge of Souls is immediately, according to law, committed'. Since Humfrey and his colleagues had proposed conformity only to the ordinary Sunday service, and not to occasional offices such as Holy Communion or Baptism, the best they could expect would be to be admitted 'to preach publicly as Assistants to such Incumbents, who would imploy or accept them'. They would also need to promise not to preach against those usages to which they could not conform.<sup>73</sup>

To show that they really were serious about achieving a reunion with the established church, Wettenhall called on 'the soberest of the Dissenters' to 'actually do, and teach their Followers to do, what [of the Establisht Order] they in Conscience judge lawful. If these points might be obtained, certainly in a very short time a

<sup>73</sup> Pp 123, 125, 126, 127.

Consultation of things would be resumed'. Let those Dissenters who have no problem subscribing to the use of the 'ordinary Lords Day service' begin immediately to use it. Any time they preach, and 'that they still frequently preach, I no whit question', let them read Morning or Evening Prayer, 'and by their practice thus teach the People the lawfulness of so much Conformity'. This would 'not only be an Argument, that they talk about Accommodation in good earnest, but certainly prevail with the Bishops to use their interest, and address to his Majesty in Parliament, for some such relaxation... as is desired'.<sup>74</sup>

Not long after Wettenhall's book was published,<sup>75</sup> Edward Polhill, a lawyer and conformist layman sympathetic to Dissenters,<sup>76</sup> wrote a book called *The Samaritan*, designed to 'bind up the nation's wounds', in which he proposed an attitude to religious differences more in keeping with Croft's latitudinarianism in *The Naked Truth* than the more recent literature, but commended the bills of 1680/81 as 'a good Interim'. He too thought Humfrey had pointed the best way forward, and that Humfrey's suggestions had been much better than either of the bills considered by Parliament: if the bills 'serve for excellent Scaffolds to stand upon, while the Work is in hand, the Fabrick itself should be formed out of such materials as... *Materials for Union*', which Humfrey had proposed to the Oxford Parliament in 1681. 'Should it but please the King... and a Parliament to consider the Contents only of what Mr H. hath there proposed... it would unite us and heal us.' Polhill also suggested to the publisher that he append the text of the two bills to his work, which allowed the anonymous bookseller to illustrate the point by revising the bills before appending

<sup>74</sup> Pp 33, 130.

<sup>75</sup> Polhill refers to Wettenhall's work on p 113.

<sup>76</sup> J. W. Black's article in *ODNB* says 'Polhill apparently remained a conforming member of the Church of England', although he is sometimes described as a Dissenter, eg by W. E. Burns in his *ODNB* article on William Sherlock.



them. The bookseller may have got this additional material from Humfrey himself. Humfrey may even have been the publisher; we know from his statement in the preface 'To the Booksellers' of *Two Points of Great Moment* in 1672, that he had some involvement then in publishing activities, such as holding back from sale certain quires of a printed work so they could be bound together with another work later and so on, and similarly in *An Account of the Non-Conformists Meetings for Divine Worship* in 1674.<sup>77</sup> Wherever it came from, the additional material criticised the supporters of comprehension in 1680 for not 'perfecting' their bill as much as those supporting indulgence had done, and its writer then proceeded to fine tune the bill himself. In a brief introduction to his changes, he gives his reasons for making three of them,<sup>78</sup> but there are seven changes in the bill altogether.

In the clause requiring assent and consent to the Thirty Nine Articles (except the 34th, 35th, 36th and part of the 20th), text was added which allowed the one assenting to do so according to his own understanding of what they mean, provided that his diocesan bishop, or two other bishops, agreed that his understanding was orthodox. The provision for two other bishops to substitute for the diocesan was provided for cases where the diocesan might be thought to be prejudiced against the subscriber or his understanding of the articles. This was similar to a suggestion made in *The Healing Paper* regarding assent and consent to the contents of the Prayer Book (which was not required at all in the proposed bill), in which Humfrey had suggested that assent and consent could be made 'with a license of Exception against any matter... which the Bishop shall think meet to be dispensed with upon Convincing reason'.<sup>79</sup>

<sup>77</sup> This work was appended to *A Plea for the Nonconformists* and is not listed separately in the bibliographies. It has its own pagination, however, and the passage in question is on p 32.

<sup>78</sup> Edward Polhill, *The Samaritan* (1682) pp 102, 115.

<sup>79</sup> Polhill pp 117, 120; *The Healing Paper* (1678) p 30.

Only by this means could the Articles avoid becoming ‘instruments of Torment’. The clause about recognising ordinations without bishops between 1644 and 1660 was amended to include such ordinations right up to 1680, with those ordained by presbyters since 1660 required only to have the hands of the bishop laid on them ‘to recommend [them] to the grace of God for the work’, and the bishop should use words consistent with that purpose. Sir Edward Harley had tried to add this article to the Comprehension Bill in 1680. A new clause was added at the end of the bill, agreeing that a Minister must use the Prayer Book Liturgy for the ‘Ordinary Lords Day Service’ as written, but may have ‘liberty... in any Matter, or Words, which himself esteems unlawful (and so to him it is sin) in the By-Offices, Occasional Service, the Rubricks, and otherwise’. This language was also drawn from *The Healing Paper*. The comments of the ‘bookseller’ claimed that with this change, the bill is ‘what we may call Perfect, that is perfect in its kind’, but he nevertheless made other changes which he did not mention in his explanation. In the clause dispensing with the Subscription required by the Canons, language was added saying that there was no need for a bishop to license anyone to preach, ordination being enough. The requirement that a Minister wear a black gown while reading the service was omitted, and in the section dealing with the administration of Holy Communion the Minister was allowed to give the elements to the worshipper using any ‘decent gesture of ordinary use in the Reformed Churches’, and may also withhold communion from those he thinks notoriously unworthy. Permission was also given to delay reading a sentence of excommunication ‘until he be satisfied in the Case, that his crime deserves it’. The Bookseller’s bill, it was claimed, would ‘bring in All of the Willing,

and Many of the Unwilling, that go under the Name of the Presbyterian Perswasion'.<sup>80</sup>

Another reply to Wettenhall was by Stephen Lobb, *The Harmony between the Old and Present Non-Conformists* (1682). Lobb dedicated the work to Wettenhall, expressing his hope for the comprehension of 'all Sound Protestants', and if that could not be achieved, at least the comprehension of some and indulgence for the rest. The body of the book is a description of dissenters' objections, and he ends with a repeat of his hope for comprehension or indulgence, but there is no comment on any of Wettenhall's proposals, and Lobb refers to no particular comprehension proposal.<sup>81</sup>

An anonymous document by a conformist,<sup>82</sup> *Reasons for an union between the Church and the dissenters*, may also come from this period. There is no printed date on it, and while Wing tentatively dates it 1687,<sup>83</sup> the fact that it urges a policy on Parliament, and the absence of Parliamentary activity other than prorogations during 1687, suggests that other dates are equally likely. The failure of the 1680 Parliament to achieve comprehension, and the prospect of another Parliament ready to consider the matter again in 1681, as well as references in the document to the popish plot, make this period a possibility. The writer says that bishops are afraid of a primitive episcopate, and will not cooperate in the abatement of the ceremonies, therefore Parliament must act. Even if they do no more than end pluralities, they will bring many non-conformists into the church, especially clergy.<sup>84</sup>

<sup>80</sup> Polhill pp 118, 119, 123, 124, Horwitz *op cit* p 209, *The Healing Paper* p 30. According to Mark Goldie (Morrice Vol I p 235), Humfrey refers to a proposal for a 'Comprehension scheme' in 1682 on p 9 of his *King William's Toleration*, published in 1689. There is no such reference on p 9, but on p 5 there is a reference to Polhill's *The Samaritan* as such a scheme, and it is presumably this to which Goldie was referring.

<sup>81</sup> Stephen Lobb, *The Harmony between the Old and Present Non-Conformists* (1682), epistle dedicatory, p 87.

<sup>82</sup> See the use of 'we' and 'us' on pp 2ff.

<sup>83</sup> Wing number R486D.

<sup>84</sup> Pp 4ff.

Humfrey's 1681 *Materials for Union* became the foundation of three additional works during 1681 and 1682. The first of these was not by Humfrey, but came in a contribution to a related press debate that had been proceeding vigorously for some time, started by Stillingfleet's *The Mischief of Separation* in 1680, and aroused to a more passionate level by his *The Unreasonableness of Separation* in 1681. The pamphlet in question was by a conformist who, as was almost always felt to be necessary by conformists speaking for comprehension or indulgence, wrote anonymously, referring to himself only as 'A Conformist Minister in the Country'. His primary purpose was to defend Baxter from some of Stillingfleet's criticisms, but he also took up Humfrey's new approach, summarising the plan and commending it to the consideration of all who seek the peace of the church.<sup>85</sup> His book was widely read, earning praise from Baxter and criticism from Sherlock for being so 'mightily taken with Mr. Humphrey's Project'.<sup>86</sup> Country Conformist, as Sherlock called him, must have written his work as a deliberate part of Humfrey's campaign, because he referred readers who wanted more information about the plan not to *Materials for Union* but to another work written for the campaign but not yet published, entitled *A reply to the defence of Dr. Stillingfleet*, to which Country Conformist himself contributed. This work came out in 1682 (although the preface was dated September 1681), and was a joint effort by Stephen Lobb,<sup>87</sup> John Humfrey and Country Conformist. The writers described themselves as a conformist, a non-conformist and the third 'of a Uniting Spirit in the middle between... both', the one in the middle being Humfrey, of course. The work was described as 'a Counter Plot for Union between the Protestants, in opposition to

<sup>85</sup> A Conformist Minister in the Country, *op cit* pp 33–36.

<sup>86</sup> Baxter, see William Sherlock, *Discourse on Church Unity* (1681) p vi; Sherlock, *op cit* pp i–xxv, viii.

<sup>87</sup> Licensed as a presbyterian in 1672 but ordained as an independent in 1681, *ODNB*.

the Project of others for Conjunction with the Church of Rome.’ Lobb put his name to the preface and wrote the first section of the body of the work,<sup>88</sup> with Country Conformist contributing the second section. Each of them defended their own recent work, as well as Baxter’s, against Sherlock’s criticisms, and made general arguments in favour of the basic principle behind Humfrey’s plan. Humfrey’s contribution, despite the fact that the work is attributed to him alone in Wing, was only the preface, to which he put his name, a letter to Lobb and a revised version of *Materials for Union*, both of which were printed at the end of the work. The letter mostly dealt with the part of Sherlock’s *Discourse* in which he engaged with Baxter over the nature of the national church, although Humfrey also accused Sherlock of desiring union with papists rather than Protestants, even if his was a conciliar popery.<sup>89</sup>

The book’s main support for Humfrey’s plan, however, was in Lobb’s Preface and Humfrey’s revision of *Materials for Union*. Lobb noted that ‘the hearts of most men at this present juncture (or at least their faces) are still set upon Union of the Protestants’. The way to achieve this was not by arguing over differences, as had been tried so many times, but by Humfrey’s plan of returning to the ancient constitution of the church—which would also lead to a moderation of the episcopate, Lobb pointed out. The ancient constitution of the English church could be seen in the book *The Necessary Doctrine and Erudition of a Christian Man*, written by several bishops in Henry VIII’s time. According to this book, Lobb said, the government of the church was *jure divino*, but bishop and presbyter were two different words for the same office, and therefore the government of one bishop/presbyter over another, an idea not found

<sup>88</sup> Since Humfrey and Country Conformist both identify their contributions to this work, I conclude that the body of the work as well as the preface is by Lobb. The author identifies himself as the writer of the *Modest and Peaceable Enquiry* (1681), a work attributed by Wing to Humfrey, but whose author is named on the cover as ‘N. B.’, the final initials of Lobb’s name.  
<sup>89</sup> *A Reply to the defence of Dr. Stillingfleet* (1682), preface, np no sig [p xviii, pp 1, 140].

in scripture, was *jure humano* and could therefore be altered as times change. Lobb cited several more examples from history to show this had been the understanding in England since time immemorial. Because this was the true understanding of a national church, the national government could easily recognise the different traditions as falling equally under its authority. 'Particular Parochial... Churches may be United in One God, One Faith, One Doctrine of Christ and his Sacraments, even where there is some difference between them in lesser matters. What though in one Parish there is a Liturgy, in another a Directory, shall this hinder Union? ... What more common than to observe little differences in Civil Corporations, even where they are all United in one head'. And so he commended Humfrey's system in particular to Stillingfleet and Sherlock for further consideration, and of course to His Majesty and his officers.<sup>90</sup>

The revision of *Materials for Union* itself for this publication was mostly fine tuning. The suggestion that certain non-conformists be made bishops was still included, along with the statement that no non-conformist could refuse such an appointment under these circumstances, but the names of Owen and Baxter as the first to be 'commanded' were dropped. Also dropped was a sentence about how episcopal oversight would help independent clergy deal with the problems they had with discipline in their congregations. Two paragraphs were added to the section proposing the addition of a third diocesan representative to Convocation, in which it was suggested that Convocation make provision for ensuring that there be good relationships between the church bodies, even to the extent of regulating the transfer of membership between them, while also encouraging some interchange between

<sup>90</sup> *A Reply to the defence of Dr. Stillingfleet* (1682), preface, np no sig [p i, pp ii, iii, iv, vff, viii, cf xviii, xiv, xvii, xviii].

them. The paragraph about the canons was modified to suggest the inclusion of these 'and other things of such a nature as these' in the canons. A paragraph was added defending the whole scheme from the charge of being 'too Erastian', on the grounds that the state would have no spiritual authority over any of the constituent churches, but would 'protect and maintain' the authority given to them by Christ.<sup>91</sup>

The press campaign of which the foregoing documents were part was capped by the publication of the 'something more' promised at the end of both versions of *Materials for Union*. This was entitled *An answer to Dr. Stillingfleet's book of The unreasonableness of separation so far as it concerns The peaceable designe*, and it Humfrey first set his proposal in the context of the debate between Stillingfleet and Baxter about the nature of the national church, a debate which was being widely followed, and then gave reasons for particular parts of the plan. One of the things about which Stillingfleet and Baxter had been exchanging strong opinions was the exact relationship between the king and the church. Stillingfleet argued that the real ruling part of the church was Convocation, 'the Archbishops, Bishops, and Presbyters being summoned by the King's Writ' who 'advise and declare their Iudgments in matters of Religion'. The king's role was more honorary than real, Stillingfleet implied, since the decisions of Convocation were merely 'received, allowed and enacted by the King and three Estates of the Kingdom.'<sup>92</sup> Humfrey responded to this by asserting that while this may be what conformist churchmen hoped was the case, the law was unequivocal in giving the king real authority over the church, that 'the Church of England is so far Erastian, that She will not admit of Two Co-ordinate Powers with

<sup>91</sup> *A Reply to the defence of Dr. Stillingfleet* (1682), p 147–151, cf *Materials for Union* pp 3–7.

<sup>92</sup> Edward Stillingfleet, *The Unreasonableness of Separation* (1681) p 302.

respect to the Church and the State of this Nation'. The fact that the king really is supreme governor of the church opened the door to union of the kind described in *Materials for Union*, Humfrey proceeded to argue. He filled out the plan by urging in addition a reduced episcopacy, and the revision of the Prayer Book by putting it into language found in Scripture, which would 'go near to put an end' to the divisions in the church. The 1680/81 bills were only an 'interim' (the same word Polhill had used) until 'this Higher concord, and Union of the Bishop with his Presbyters' could be achieved. The bringing of independent churches into the National Church would make them legal, rather than simply spare them the penalties of an illegal conventicle. Since the independents already acknowledged the authority of the king in matters ecclesiastical as well as civil, they could and would acknowledge the bishops as his officers even if not as Christ's. In his arguments for a third representative in convocation, he spoke of them as being elected by the congregationalists alone, whereas the two versions of the plan so far printed had said only that they would be elected from among the non-conformists. Perhaps Humfrey was thinking that if changes in the episcopate and the liturgy were made along the lines he was suggesting, the independents would be the only non-conformists left. Humfrey ended the book by saying that Stillingfleet had no need to present his own more complicated proposal for comprehension in *The Unreasonableness of Separation*; it may well be the fact that so respected a conformist as Stillingfleet was proposing a comprehension plan that encouraged Humfrey to come up with this alternative to the bills he had supported two years earlier.<sup>93</sup>

<sup>93</sup> John Humfrey, *An answer to Dr. Stillingfleet's book of The unreasonableness of separation so far as it concerns The peaceable designe* (1682) pp 28, 29, 30, 31, 37.



Stillingfleet made no response to Humfrey's proposal despite the effort put into the campaign for it, but there was a response by Thomas Long, an Exeter cleric who had written several titles accusing dissenters of past and present sedition. In *A continuation and vindication oe [sic] the Defence of Dr. Stillingfleet... together with a brief examination of Mr. Humphrey's materials for union*, he addressed not only Humfrey's published plan but Lobb's preface described above. His basic objection was that the plan used the word 'bishop' but in fact destroyed episcopacy. But he did not sound very confident that Humfrey's plan would not be tried: 'if Princes and Parliament think fit to make the Experiment, I cannot help it. But I will venture to turn Prophet for once, and foretel, that they will soon find Reason to repent the Experiment.'<sup>94</sup> Without a Parliament being called, Long had little to fear, but there was still some hope of a Parliament in 1682, and enough conformists were expressing support for enlargement of the church that it is impossible to be sure how things might have gone. In addition to Stillingfleet's grudging concessions, there was the series of four anonymous works by Edward Pearse, Rector of Cottesbrooke, Northants, entitled *Conformists plea for the nonconformists*. In the second of them, which was published this year, he pointed out that 'there are many in the Church of England, that wish an Union, they with us, and we with them'.<sup>95</sup>

Humfrey's plan was not tried, but continued to generate discussion for a year or two. Thomas Tenison described the unlikelihood of the idea ever winning acceptance, although without referring directly to *Materials for Union*, in his 1683 work *An argument for union taken from the true interest of those dissenters in England who*

<sup>94</sup> Thomas Long, *A continuation and vindication oe [sic] the Defence of Dr. Stillingfleet* (1682) pp 445, 464. For 'help' rather than 'keep', see *Errata* facing p 1.

<sup>95</sup> Edward Pearse, *Conformists second plea for the nonconformists* (1682) p 1. The first in the series had gone through three editions.

*profess and call themselves Protestants*: ‘there seemeth to be both Reason, and Experience, against their hopes of Establishing themselves as a National Church... such a Party not maintaining Episcopal Government, which hath obtained here from the Times of the Brittaines (who in the Apostolical Age, received the Christian Religion) and which is so agreeable to the Scheme of the Monarchy; It is not probable that they shall easily procure an exchange of it for a newer Model, by the general consent of Church or State.’<sup>96</sup> William Atwood, a conformist layman who wrote works arguing for a more inclusive church, must have been thinking of Humfrey’s proposal when he wrote in 1683 ‘that there should be several Religious Assemblies living by different Customs and Rules, and yet continuing Members of the National Church, is not more inconsistent than that particular Places should have their particular Customs and By-Laws differing from the Common Law of the Land, without making a distinct Government.’<sup>97</sup>

1682 saw one change in the terms of conformity that made it possible for some non-conformists to return to the Church of England. This was the expiration of the requirement in the Act of Uniformity that anyone who had taken the Solemn League and Covenant formally renounce its obligation on themselves or anyone else who had taken it. Humfrey tells us that this expiration gave ‘some rise to the Nonconformist for new thoughts about their returning to the Vineyard’, and he himself applied to the bishop in whose diocese he lived (presumably London, where he had lived from 1662) for a license to preach. He repeated the procedure he had used in *The nonconformists relief* in 1678 and explored more fully in the two subsequent works on the same

<sup>96</sup> Thomas Tenison, *An argument for union taken from the true interest of those dissenters in England who profess and call themselves Protestants* (1683) p 5.

<sup>97</sup> William Atwood, *Three letters to Dr. Sherlock concerning church-communion* (1683) ‘To the reader’ np no sig [p i].

subject,<sup>98</sup> setting out in print the sense in which he understood the other declarations he would have to make. It made for a rather unorthodox application procedure: he wrote a paper for the bishop explaining on what terms he was making the application, published it in book form, and then sent a copy of the book to the bishop with a note that he would call on him after he had had time to read the book.<sup>99</sup> The first time he called, the bishop had still not read the book, and when he called again on a later occasion, the bishop was too busy to see him. His plan had been to write against his name in the register in which he would subscribe the words ‘According to a Paper delivered in to the Bishop, I subscribe’. The bishop having failed to signify his acceptance of the paper, Humfrey then reasoned that it would be enough if the bishop were known to have read it, and if he were allowed to subscribe thereafter he could simply assume that his explication had been accepted and subscribe without any comment at all.<sup>100</sup> He therefore published his understanding in another work, *The third step of a nonconformist*, and sought again the opportunity to subscribe. He was still seeking it the following year, but the plan apparently never led to his being licensed.<sup>101</sup>

Another conformist who wrote on behalf of comprehension during this period was Daniel Whitby, a prebendary of Salisbury Cathedral. In 1683 Whitby published *The Protestant reconciler humbly pleading for condescension to dissenting brethren, in things indifferent and unnecessary*, in which he quoted all the big names that had been in favour of accommodation over the course of the century, as well as conformist

<sup>98</sup> See n 100 below.

<sup>99</sup> No separate printing of this book seems to have survived, if it was published. The text of it is in *The two Steps of a Nonconformist* (1684).

<sup>100</sup> Humfrey, *The third step of a nonconformist, for the recovery of the use of his ministry* (1684) pp 1f, 31.

<sup>101</sup> Humfrey, *The axe laid to the root of separation* (1685) episc ded np no sig [pp ivf]. This book is dedicated to Sancroft, and in the dedication he suggests that he ‘Revive a late Motion made to Your Grace, That You will hearken to those Papers of mine, Entituled, *Three Steps...*’ implying that Sancroft might have been the bishop applied to.

contemporaries like Taylor, Wilkins, Hackett, Wettenhall, Tillotson, Stillingfleet, and admitted that ‘many things under the Title of Innovations... are now practised in our Cathedral Churches’.<sup>102</sup> He argued strenuously for an accommodation but without making any particular proposal, although the implication of his last section, a history of the changing use of ceremonies in the various Prayer Books is that another revision would make sense.<sup>103</sup> His work was widely read, and provoked several rejoinders from what he called the superconformists, as well as some personal difficulties with his bishop, to whom he had to apologise for the work. It was still being quoted with approval as late as 1688. He wrote another book almost immediately urging non-conformists to conform without waiting for accommodation, although many years later he denied that this represented a real change of mind.<sup>104</sup>

Samuel Bolde should also be mentioned as a conformist urging accommodation at this time, although he did no more than quote Stillingfleet’s general principle:

‘ Amongst the many Methods and Expedients found out for effecting a firm and lasting Union amongst Protestants, I think Dr. Stillingfleet in his early years did hit on a very clear and infallible one, if it might be universally attended to, and countenanced by those in power. “Were we so happy but to take off things granted unnecessary by all, and suspected by many; and judged unlawful by some; and to make nothing the bounds of our Communion, but what Christ hath done, viz. on Faith, one Baptism, &c. allowing a liberty for matters of Indifferency, and bearing for the weakness of those, who cannot bear things which others account lawful, we might indeed be restored to a true primitive lustre, far sooner than by furbishing up some antiquated Ceremonies, which can derive their Pedigree no higher than from some ancient Custom and Tradition”’.<sup>105</sup>

<sup>102</sup> The anonymous conformist who wrote *Reasons for an Union between the Church and the Dissenters* also drew attention on p 2 to the fact that zealous anti-puritans were ‘daily reassuming several things that the first Reformers had cast away’.

<sup>103</sup> *The Protestant reconciler humbly pleading for condescension to dissenting brethren, in things indifferent and unnecessary* (1683) pp 1, 21, 210, 345ff. The work was published anonymously, but that Whitby was widely believed to be the author is shown by the comment in *The Protestant union* (1689) p 6.

<sup>104</sup> *The Protestant reconciler earnestly perswading the dissenting laity to joyn in full communion with The Church of England* (1683); John Shower, *Exhortation to Repentance and Union among Protestants* (1688) p 49; ODNB.

<sup>105</sup> *A plea for moderation towards dissenters occasioned by the grand-juries presenting the Sermon against persecution at the last assizes holden at Sherburn in Dorset-shire : to which is added An answer to the objections commonly made aganist that sermon* (1682) pp 6f.

By 1683, however, the prospects for enlargement of the church seemed dim, and there were very few further suggestions for comprehension of any sort during the next five years. At least, not of the sort being considered in this thesis; there were some proposals published during the reign of James II that suggested the Church of England could be 'comprehended' within the Church of Rome.<sup>106</sup> Not until 1687 do we find comprehension under discussion again in a serious way, and this will be the subject of the next chapter, and the last campaign for comprehension with which this thesis will deal.

<sup>106</sup> Such as Anon., *A remonstrance by way of address from the Church of England to both houses of Parliament upon the account of religion* (1685), Lover of peace, *An essay to ecclesiastical reconciliation humbly offered to the consideration of all peaceable and good Christians* (1686), and Anon., *A Second remonstrance by way of address from the Church of England to both Houses of Parliament* (1686).

## 8 Comprehension and Revolution

The situation that gave rise to new proposals for comprehension in 1687–1689 is well known. The attempts of James II to grant indulgence to all those not conforming to the Act of Uniformity, including Roman Catholics, drove the superconformist, the puritan conformist and the non-conformist briefly into each other's arms, and led to (among other things) another round of discussions aimed at comprehension, and under a new king to the actual achievement of a parliamentary indulgence (although hardly the toleration with which it is often associated). The discussions have been examined in the studies already referred to,<sup>1</sup> but the press debate that accompanied them has some qualities of its own to which these studies have generally not drawn attention, and which will be treated in this chapter. Many of the printed documents are well-known, although it has not always been understood, or at least explained, how their publication at this time related to efforts on behalf of comprehension. A careful examination of them confirms what some historians have deduced from other evidence,<sup>2</sup> that some non-conformists who had been supporters of comprehension in the past did not seem so eager at this period, and suggests a reason for that.

Other documents have not been fully investigated by historians of the period. As in the period covered in the previous chapter, Humfrey's role has been under-rated, and a careful examination of the published material reveals him as the author of two documents hitherto unattributable, clears up the uncertainty about another document attributed variously to him and others, and shows one of his works being reprinted by

<sup>1</sup> But in addition to Roger Thomas, 'Comprehension and Indulgence', and John Spurr, 'The Church of England, Comprehension and the Toleration Act of 1689', see Timothy Fawcett, *The Liturgy of Comprehension 1689* (Mayhew-McCrimmon, Southend-on-Sea 1973).

<sup>2</sup> Eg Thomas *op cit* p 244.

another contributor to the press campaign. A re-examination even of this well-studied period, therefore, will repay the effort.

Like the Indulgence of 1672, the Indulgence of 1687 was declared while Parliament was not sitting, solely on the authority of the king, but it differed from the earlier indulgence in that it was unaccompanied by licensing or other restrictions. Rather it was a promise to all of 'the free Exercise of their Religion for the Time to come'. There was to be complete freedom for all to 'Meet and Serve God after their own Way and manner, be it in private Houses, or places purposely hired or built for that use'. The only provisos were that nothing be taught that would 'Alienate the Hearts of Our People from Us or Our Government', that the gatherings be 'peaceably, openly and publickly held, and all persons freely admitted to them', and that the places used for such gatherings be made known to the Justices of the Peace. The oaths of Supremacy and Allegiance, and the 'Tests and Declarations mentioned in the Acts of Parliament made in the 25th and 30th years of the Reign of our late Royal Brother' were no longer to be imposed on anyone.<sup>3</sup> No one was to be denied the benefit of this Indulgence; Quakers and of course Papists were free to take advantage of its provisions.<sup>4</sup>

The fear of popery, which had been the driving force behind comprehension for so long, dominated the press reaction among those still inclined to accommodation. The Marquess of Halifax's famous pamphlet, out by September 1687, in which he appealed to non-conformists not to be taken in by the Indulgence's apparent usefulness to

<sup>3</sup> *His Majesties gracious declaration to all his loving subjects for liberty of conscience* (1687) pp 1, 2.

<sup>4</sup> See Richard Boyer, *English Declarations of Indulgence 1687 and 1688* (Mouton, The Hague 1968).

them, made the connection with popery plain: ‘The Church of Rome doth not only dislike the allowing Liberty, but by its Principles it cannot do it. Wine is not more expressly forbidden to the Mahometans, then giving Hereticks Liberty is to Papists: They are no more able to make good their Vows to you, then Men married before, and their Wife alive, can confirm their Contract with another. The continuance of their kindness, would be a habit of Sin, of which they are to repent, and their Absolution is to be had upon no other terms, than their Promise to destroy you. You are therefore to be hugged now, onely that you may be the better squeezed at another time.’<sup>5</sup>

As far as comprehension was concerned, Halifax assured the puritans that there was a new willingness on the part of the bishops to make concessions: ‘all the former Haughtiness towards you is for ever extinguished, and that... hath turned the Spirit of Persecution, into a Spirit of Peace, Charity, and Condescention... You Act very unskilfully against your visible Interest, if you throw away the advantages, of which you can hardly fail in the next probable Revolution. Things tend naturally to what you would have, if you would let them alone, and not by an unseasonable Activity lose the Influences of your good Star, which promiseth you every thing that is prosperous.’<sup>6</sup> These hints of comprehension did not lead to any immediate result, but when James published a new edition of his declaration in April 1688, and ordered the bishops to have it read out by the clergy at Sunday services in May and June, several bishops who refused to order their clergy to read it also referred to this willingness in their statement to the king. Their refusal, they said, was not due to ‘any want of due tenderness to Dissenters; in relation to whom they are willing to come to such a

<sup>5</sup> *A letter to a dissenter, upon occasion of His Majesties late gracious declaration of indulgence* (1687) p 3. This pamphlet appeared in September 1687 (*ODNB* on Halifax) and is said to have sold 20,000 copies in three months (Boyer, *op cit* p 75).

<sup>6</sup> *A letter to a dissenter, upon occasion of His Majesties late gracious declaration of indulgence* (1687) pp 10, 15.



temper, as shall be thought fit, when that matter shall be considered and settled in Parliament and Convocation'.<sup>7</sup> The bishops involved were sent to the Tower for their disobedience to the king's declaration, and during their incarceration and afterwards there were discussions between them and some non-conformists who wanted to take advantage of this apparent opportunity 'to agree such points of ceremonies as are indifferent between them, and to take such measures for what is to be proposed about religion in the next parliament',<sup>8</sup> which had been called for November.

The participants in these 1688 discussions and the subjects discussed cannot be identified with any certainty from the two contemporary reports known.<sup>9</sup> However, later accounts suggest that what was being discussed was comprehension, and that it was being supported at the highest level. According to William Wake, speaking as Bishop of Lincoln twenty years later, these discussions were the personal project of the Archbishop of Canterbury, William Sancroft. Wake's account is usually thought to refer only to the revision of the Prayer Book which was being worked on as early as 1688,<sup>10</sup> but he says that other changes were also being considered. 'The Design was, in short, this: To improve, and if possible, to inforce our Discipline; to Review, and enlarge, our Liturgy; and... leaving some few Ceremonies... not to be necessarily Observed by those who made a Scruple of them'. Some new canons were discussed, 'for the reformation of manners'. This was the plan which William and Mary encouraged, and was to be brought to Parliament after being reviewed by a commission of bishops and others, and then by Convocation.<sup>11</sup> One contemporary

<sup>7</sup> Boyer, *op cit* pp 106ff, 116.

<sup>8</sup> Ellis Correspondence, cited by Fawcett, *op cit* p 181 n 27.

<sup>9</sup> Ellis Correspondence, see n 6 above; Reresby Memoirs, cited by Fawcett, *op cit* p 181 n 26.

<sup>10</sup> *eg* Fawcett *op cit* p 19.

<sup>11</sup> *A compleat history of the whole proceedings of the Parliament of Great Briain against Dr. Henry Sacheverell* (1710) p 213, 214.

cites Stillingfleet as naming the Bishop of St Asaph, William Lloyd, as one of the bishops in favour of 'deserting that narrow foundation that was laid in Church and State in 1660'.<sup>12</sup>

George Every seems to have identified a report summarising the discussions between Sancroft and others in the *Memoirs of the Life of Mr John Kettlewell*, written by Francis Lee and published in 1718. Lee dates this report 'not long after the new consecrations', which Lee assumed meant 1691,<sup>13</sup> but Every demonstrates that the report must pre-date the Toleration Act of May 1689, and argues that the discussions of 1688 provide the most likely setting for it.<sup>14</sup> The report lists 21 articles 'drawn up for the better Securing and Strengthening of the Protestant Interest and Religion, and for making the Church of England the head of that interest', and between them they provide for Humfrey's 'mixt Act' of comprehension and indulgence, although there is no reference to Parliament in them. The articles that dealt with comprehension provided for the possibility of enlarging the terms of communion, but only in general terms: 'the terms of Communion in the Established Religion, be as large as is consistent with the Constitution of a National Church; Episcopacy, a Liturgy, and Articles of Religion, in Substance at least, the same with those by Law already Established'. The current oaths and subscriptions would also be replaced by 'One Subscription instead of all, to this purpose: I A. B. do approve the Articles and Liturgy, And Government, of the Church of England as by Law Established; and will conform myself thereto'. The Prayer Book would be reviewed, 'and such Alterations and Abatements of Communion made, as may probably bring in Dissenters into the

<sup>12</sup> Morrice IV p 475.

<sup>13</sup> There were new consecrations in 1689 that could have been those referred to by Lee, but Every's argument holds in either case.

<sup>14</sup> George Every, *The High Church Party 1688–1718* (SPCK, London 1956) pp 41f.

Publick Establishment.’ There were firmer plans in the area of church government, which shows that puritan concerns about the episcopate had been listened to in some detail: dioceses would be reduced in size so that they would no larger than one man could take care of, bishops would be removable from office by Parliament, there would be higher standards for ordinands and only as many would be ordained as there were places for. There would also be a stronger law against simony, the abolition of tenths and first fruits, the augmentation of poor livings, more churches would be built in the London suburbs, a revision of the canons would be undertaken, there would be easier deprivation of scandalous ministers, laws against clandestine marriage and to require the catechising of young people, an end to pluralities, and there would be regulation of the Ecclesiastical Courts. There would be an indulgence for those who could not join this ‘Publick Establishment’.<sup>15</sup> The biggest difference between this and previous plans was the inclusion of a moderation of the episcopate, which we have seen gaining more and more interest in the 1680s.<sup>16</sup> This seems especially interesting in view of the involvement of Sancroft and the bishops, but there seems no way of exploring their attitude to this further.

Despite the discussions between Sancroft and whoever else was involved, the dramatic twists and turns of 1688 did not lend themselves to any concrete proposals in published works, although calls for Protestant unity in a general way continued to be made. One of these commended Stillingfleet’s plan in *The Unreasonableness of Separation* as an example of how it might be done.<sup>17</sup> What is more visible from the press at this period is a general rapprochement of conformists and non-conformists,

<sup>15</sup> Every, *op cit*, pp 22f, 41f.

<sup>16</sup> See above, pp 207f, 210, 215, 235.

<sup>17</sup> Samuel Johnson, *The way to peace amongst all Protestants* (1688); John Shower, *Exhortation to Repentance and Union among Protestants* (1688) pp 51ff.

with several non-conformists acknowledging they had been wrong about the popery of the conformists, and calling on other non-conformists to do nothing that might weaken the conformist witness at this crucial time.<sup>18</sup>

In any case, the plan that was under discussion during 1688 was not the foundation of the bills that were discussed in Parliament once James was gone and the new king had secured his government. There is not space here for a full examination of the evidence for the various bills and modifications of bills for comprehension before Parliament during 1689, but the following outline will provide the necessary context for the published texts to be described later in this chapter.

There were two bills for comprehension in 1689, one that began in the Lords and another that began in the Commons. A bill was submitted by the Earl of Nottingham, as Daniel Finch had become in 1682, to the Lords on 27 February 1689, with the title 'An Act for Uniting Their Majesties Protestant Subjects'. It was the 1680/81 bill, except for the following: instead of a subscription to the Articles of Religion that concerned doctrine, the following declaration was required: 'I A. B. do approve of the doctrine and worship and Government of the Church of England by Law Established as containing all things necessary to salvation, and I promise in the exercise of my ministry to preach and practice according thereunto.' Instead of admitting those with presbyterian ordination without further conditions, the bishop was to authorise them for ministry in the established church by imposition of hands with the formula 'Take thou authority to preach the word of God and administer the Sacraments, and to perform all other ministerial offices in the Church of England'. Instead of outlawing

<sup>18</sup> Such as Beverley, *The Late Great Revolution* (1689), which refers to a time when 'Form and Ceremony are dropping off from us, at least so far, as it hath been matter of distinction, and most of all of difference, and division' p 12; and Humfrey's statement in *King William's Toleration* (1689; see below, pp 259f) that 'the whole People are for Uniting the Protestants' p 9.

the surplice (except in royal chapels and cathedrals), its use was left to the discretion of the minister. The other features of the bill, such as to procure another minister to make the sign of the cross if parents required it, to allow parents to present their children for baptism instead of finding godparents, and to administer communion to those not kneeling, are in virtually the same words as in 1680/81. The bill also asked the king to appoint an ecclesiastical commission to recommend to Parliament changes to the canons and to the liturgy. The bill received a third reading, after much watering down, on 8 April, and was then sent to the Commons.<sup>19</sup>

The Commons, meanwhile, had come up with a bill of their own, also based on the bill of 1680/81, but with changes closer to the desires of the non-conformists. The bill provided that clergy need only subscribe to the doctrinal Articles of Religion, instead of also declaring their 'assent, consent and approbation of them'; that ordination 'according to the course used in any Reformed Churches' would be acceptable for ministry in the Church of England, which would not only legitimise presbyterian ordinations prior to 1689, but allow them to continue in the future; that the surplice would be banned even in royal chapels and the Cathedrals; and that the incumbent would not be required to read common prayer if he had an assistant to do it for him.<sup>20</sup> The Commons Committee was appointed on 1 April, probably because some were unhappy at what was happening to the bill in the Lords. The bill came out of committee the same day the Lords' bill was sent down, and both bills were

<sup>19</sup> Thomas, 'Comprehension and Indulgence' p 245; the text of the bill is in *HMC*, 12th report, Appendix, Pt 6, House of Lords, 1689-90 (1889), pp 49-52 (no. 32). Burnet says that at one point in the discussion it was proposed that the provision for receiving communion without kneeling and being baptised without the sign of the cross could only be used by those who 'after Conference upon those Heads, should solemnly protest, they were not satisfied as to the Lawfulness of them' (*History of His Own Time* [1753] Vol IV p 19). Morrice says that a clause was discussed specifying that anyone who received Communion in the parish church and thereafter attended a conventicle would be as ineligible to hold office as if he had not received (Morrice vol I p 349).

<sup>20</sup> Text of the Commons Bill is printed in Goldie's *Morrice* Vol I pp 349 ff.

scheduled for debate a couple of weeks later, but the debate never took place. By then, both Commons and Lords had agreed to ask the king to summon Convocation, saying that in the meantime Parliament would proceed only with the matter of toleration. Convocation met in late 1689 but had done nothing by the time it was dissolved with Parliament early in 1690, and that was the last opportunity for discussion of comprehension in the period covered by this thesis.<sup>21</sup>

However, our main concern is the print campaign in support of the possibility of comprehension by Parliament. The principal element in this campaign was *A letter to a member of Parliament, in favour of the bill for uniting Protestants* issued in April 1689. According to William Wake's testimony several years later when he was Bishop of Lincoln, this work was the 'official' public commendation of Sancroft's plan, 'a treatise purposely written to recommend the Design when it was brought before the two Houses of Parliament'.<sup>22</sup> A conformist tract of this year commended the *Letter* as proof that conformists had not only 'willingness' but 'zeal' for the plan in the Lords.<sup>23</sup> Clearly it was the plan introduced into the Lords to which Wake was referring, and the connection between the *Letter* and the bill in the Lords is shown by the comment in the *Letter* that the bill is not designed to undercut the authority of 'ecclesiastical power', as the 'last words of the bill' show—unlike the bill in the Commons, the bill in the Lords concluded with an appeal to bring a proposal to Convocation. This work was aimed at high churchmen, those of 'highly commendable tenderness to Ecclesiastical power'. The proposed comprehension had 'suffer'd very much among

<sup>21</sup> Thomas p 250; Henry Horwitz, *Parliament, Policy and Politics in the Reign of William III* (Manchester University Press 1977) pp 18-26; Keith Feiling, *A History of the Tory Party* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1924) pp 263-266. See Henry Horwitz, 'Comprehension in the later seventeenth century: a postscript' *Church History* Vol 34 (1965) pp 342-348 for discussion of comprehension efforts after this period.

<sup>22</sup> *A compleat history of the whole proceedings of the Parliament of Great Britain against Dr. Henry Sacheverell* (1710), ii p 213.

<sup>23</sup> *Reflections on Mr. Baxter's Last Book* (1689) p 23. For more on this work, see below, pp 253f.

the zealous', and the writer hoped to bring about a 'more favourable entertainment' of it in the lower house. The *Letter* referred to the concessions promised to non-conformists by the imprisoned bishops in 1688, and twice appealed to the inviolability of such promises. The writer suggested that the zealous were bound to keep the promises made by the church, even though some who had pressed for comprehension in the past were now working against it, as the publication of the Clarkson books<sup>24</sup> showed. The writer also implied that it was the wealthier non-conformist ministers who were behind this sudden reluctance to accept comprehension, since they made more money serving their gathered churches than they would have as a parish priest. Even those conformists who had been opposed to dissent hitherto now approved this bill, the writer claimed; he himself did not know one who opposed it.<sup>25</sup>

The *Letter* was answered by someone writing as the Member of Parliament addressed by the *Letter*, a conformist who was willing to make some accommodation, but who was not impressed by the proposal in the Lords. *A letter from the member of Parliament in answer to the letter of the divine concerning the bill for uniting Protestants* (1689) makes it clear that the first *Letter* was known to represent the episcopal position on comprehension, having been written by a cleric on behalf of the clergy—in addition to the word in its title, the text of the reply addresses 'you Divines'. It was written while the only bill was in the Lords, as is clear from its description of the bill's main features, and says it 'has not yet come to us'. The writer was willing to consider comprehension, but had much more sympathy for non-

<sup>24</sup> See below, pp 253f.

<sup>25</sup> M. M., *A letter to a member of Parliament, in favour of the bill for uniting Protestants* (1689) pp 3, 1, 2, 4, 6.

conforming laity than clergy, who would benefit most by the Lords' bill. He would grant freedom in ceremonial matters to the laity, because 'they have taken up Prejudices from the wrong information of those, who pretending to instruct, were bound to know better'. The clergy must conform—the choice over the use or not of the cross in baptism, for instance, should be the parishioner's, and the minister must simply do as he is asked. He must give communion to those who want it kneeling and to those who want it standing, and wear or forbear the surplice according to the desire of his parish. 'I am ready to give all the desired satisfaction to the Lay; but as to the Ministers, I do not see how they can be left to their choice, without more Disorder and Confusion, than is fit to be suffered for their sakes.' The writer would rather have the surplice outlawed altogether, as in the 1680 proposal, than leave it up to each minister, which would only give occasion for disputes about it in the parish, as would leaving the minister to determine what posture should be used by those receiving communion. This is 'a matter so weighty, that it ought not to be determined, but by the Body of the Church'. Not even an Ecclesiastical Commission would do: such decisions should not be taken 'by a few hands, and on their own heads'.<sup>26</sup> The writer was frank in his hope that the Commons would resist some of the Lords' proposals. The fact that some Dissenters were now resisting comprehension should not push anyone into offering them terms other than 'are best for [God's] service and the edification of the People'.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>26</sup> A point made by some in the Lords when the majority agreed to ask the king to appoint a Commission composed only of clergy: 'Because... the Liturgy and Ceremonies of the Church of England, which had their Establishment from King, Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, assembled in Parliament, there can be no Reason why the Commissioners for altering any Thing in that Civil Constitution should consist only of Men of One Sort of them', *LJ* Vol XIV p 168.

<sup>27</sup> *A letter from the member of Parliament in answer to the letter of the divine concerning the bill for uniting Protestants* (1689) pp 6, 7, 2, 4, 3, 5.



According to one commentator, the non-conformist campaign for something more ambitious than the Lords' bill opened with four works, including one by Baxter. In this anonymous commentator's *Reflections on Mr Baxter's Last Book, Entitled The English Non-conformity*, he said that the campaign consisted of four works published consecutively in the first three months of 1689: a reprint of David Clarkson's *Primitive episcopacy*; a previously unpublished work by Clarkson, *A discourse concerning liturgies*; Gilbert Rule's *A rational defence of non-conformity... and the way to union among Protestants*; and Baxter's *The English Nonconformity*. The writer of the *Reflections* spoke of them as though they were the only significant contributions to the debate following the revolution (apart from 'a fry of little Pamphlets thrown about'), and said that they were orchestrated by Baxter to undermine rather than encourage comprehension: 'can... anything be so likely to breed further mischief, and to prevent all Accommodation as Mr. Baxter's starting the Controversie so unseasonably... I hope in God... neither the bishops will mind Mr. Baxter or his Book, nor the Clergy be provoked by it to lay aside their Dispositions to Peace and Accommodation'. The *Letter to a Member of Parliament*, already cited, had also reported that some non-conformists who previously 'seemed so impatiently to desire' comprehension were now publishing books 'levell'd both against Liturgy and Episcopacy'.<sup>28</sup> The Reflector said that the book contained only 'the bare repetition of his old Arguments and Reasons for Non-Conformity', but that was not strictly true; Baxter inserted what in one place he referred to as the *ipsissima verba* of a comprehension bill for Parliament to

<sup>28</sup> *Letter to a Member of Parliament*, p 4.

consider, and had given a free copy of his book to every MP and several London clergy in an attempt to get it on the Parliamentary agenda.<sup>29</sup>

The writer of the *Reflections* cannot be blamed for his suspicions: if these books were part of a co-ordinated non-conformist campaign, it was not a very energetic one, despite the huge effort being made by the new regime to portray itself as committed to completion of the English Reformation.<sup>30</sup> All four books were wholly recycled material except for the prefaces added to two of them, and the part of Baxter's book just referred to. Clarkson had written his books, and published one of them, before he died in 1686, and Rule wrote his, he tells us in his preface, at the time James assumed the throne, after which discussion of differences between Protestants seemed inappropriate for publication, but 'now after the state of the Nation hath been unhinged, and is in a hopeful way to be settled, it may seem allowable, if not necessary, that each Party should put in their claim, and give the best reasons they can for their pretensions... And having so done, that they should leave it to them who ought to judge, what is fittest to be chosen.'<sup>31</sup> Isaac Chauncy's preface to Clarkson's *Primitive Episcopacy* was the only other matter in any of the four that is actually dated 1689. The preface to Baxter's book is dated 1683, and most of the other material in it must have been written around the same time. The suggested bill was buried in the middle of its 304 pages, and few MPs are likely to have hunted for it even if someone told them it was there. It may not even have been noticed by the writer of *The Protestant union*, one of the 'fry of little pamphlets' addressed to Parliament as it considered its response to the king's speech of March 16, although he urged them to consider the

<sup>29</sup> Anon., *Reflections upon Mr. Baxter's Last Book* (1689) pp 24ff, 27, 6, 27. Baxter's *ipssissima verba* are on pp 239–243 of *The English Nonconformity*, and are considered in more detail below, p 238.

<sup>30</sup> See Tony Claydon, *William III and the godly revolution* (Cambridge University Press, 1996) pp 30–63.

<sup>31</sup> Gilbert Rule, *A rational defence of non-conformity... and the way to union among Protestants* (1689) Preface np no sig [p viii].

fifty questions with which Baxter's book ended.<sup>32</sup> Burnet may have been thinking of these writings as well as parliamentarians when he wrote that comprehension failed in 1689 because it was 'zealously opposed, and but faintly promoted'.<sup>33</sup>

One reason for this apparent luke-warmness for comprehension may have been that some presbyterians had decided to accept indulgence, and had discussed ways of overcoming their differences with independents and working together in a united non-conformist church. According to a history of such discussions published in 1698, *A history of the union between the Presbyterian and Congregational ministers in and about London; and the causes of the breach of it*, some discussions had taken place but 'a stop was put to their Pious and Peaceable Undertaking, by the Persecution raised against them in the year 1682'. These discussions had led to a formal statement of agreement, although it is not known by whom it was produced or whether it had found favour beyond the group that produced it. The same agreement was discussed during the reign of James II, but no action was taken on it because 'it was Suggested to them, That the Work would not be grateful to King James's Court'. The proposal was being discussed again in 1688, when Giles Firmin saw a copy of it. He attributed it to some London clergy, although not men he knew personally. Some who had earlier been supporters of comprehension may have been less enthusiastic because of the possibility that all non-conformists could come together in a single church.<sup>34</sup>

Baxter's lukewarmness could perhaps have grown as Humfrey became more and more the chief advocate of the comprehension cause. Humfrey had been known since

<sup>32</sup> Anon., *The Protestant union, or, Principles wherein English Protestants are agreed* (1689). The king's speech had asked Parliament to 'leave room for the admission of all Protestants that are willing and able to serve', and to pass 'a bill of ease or indulgence'.

<sup>33</sup> *History of His Own Time* (1753) Vol IV p 21.

<sup>34</sup> Richard Taylor, *A history of the union between the Presbyterian and Congregational ministers in and about London; and the causes of the breach of it* (1698) p 1; Giles Firmin, *Weighty Questions* (1692) np no sig [p I]; for the text of the proposal, see Roger Thomas, *An Essay of Accommodation* (Dr Williams's Library Occasional Paper No 6, London 1957).

the 1650s as an advocate of free access to Holy Communion, and this was something of which Baxter never approved, and had written against it as recently as 1686. His past correspondence with Humfrey had not been without strain; in 1669 he had written to Humfrey implying that his proposals for taking the Oxford Oath by putting meanings to the words of it ‘against all common use of speech’ would be seen as a sign of a ‘slippery conscience’.<sup>35</sup>

It is also curious that despite the words ‘the way to union among Protestants’ in Rule’s title, no suggestions for such a union were made, unless he expected the entire non-conformist agenda to be adopted once his book was circulated. That he thought such a thing is in fact a real possibility, and it is quite possible that the Reflector was right when he said these books were written purposely to undermine efforts at comprehension: they may have been written to undermine the bill in the Lords, and encourage the Commons to do something much more ambitious than had been possible under previous governments.

Baxter’s proposal for Parliament, however, had some elements that were not as far as we know under discussion in 1680–1681, and appear to have been new material added for the 1689 printing.<sup>36</sup> His proposal was not actually in the form of a bill, despite his description of it as the ‘*ipsissima verba* which [we] would wish in a healing law’, but consisted of a ‘profession’ for clergy, to replace the current oaths and subscription, followed by ten points on church government which any successful comprehension bill would need to incorporate. The profession appeared to have drawn on some of the points made in the debate on the constitution of the national

<sup>35</sup> William Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millenium* (Croom Helm, London 1979) p 261, *CCRB Vol II* p 766.

<sup>36</sup> The proposal appears immediately after a ‘Breviate of the Ten Articles desired by such NonConformists as treated for Concord, 1660 and 1661’, and the chapter following the profession and the ten additional points is a discussion of the points of the breviate, not the added points, to which there is no further reference.

church that had been going in the early 1680s: 'I do own, and honour the Church of England; that is, this Christian Reformed Kingdom'. A note following assumed something like Humfrey's proposed constitution, referred to in the previous chapter:<sup>37</sup> 'The Ministers being of three sorts. 1. The Maintained or Promoted. 2. The Licensed to Preach as Candidates, or Lecturers without the Publick Maintenance, or Helpers to Incumbents who desire them... 3. The Tolerated, that have only a Grant of Protection and Peace, without either Maintenance or Approving Licence. I leave it to Superiours how much of the aforesaid Profession shall be required of the two latter'. This beginning is conventional enough, but the ten points that follow were more ambitious than anything hitherto proposed, and could be thought of as going beyond comprehension to a new settlement of the church. The first of the ten points is a statement that 'parish churches be acknowledged as true churches', ie with those in charge of them being acknowledged as *Episcopi Gregis*, and appropriately called 'bishop', a point he had stressed in his *Treatise of Episcopacy* (1681). The other points called for an end to excommunication by lay-Chancellors, a revision of the canons, an end to the automatic addition of the writ *de Excommunicatio capiendo* to excommunication, the addition of presbyters as judges in consistory courts, the reduction of dioceses in size and the limitation of the bishop's authority over a parish priest to cases to which his attention is drawn by appeal, the use of the bishop's authority to ensure better preaching by all clergy, the election of the bishop by a diocesan synod, and for the membership of the cathedral chapter to be drawn from the leading presbyters of the city. The tenth point suggested the enactment of either the Gracious Declaration of 1660 or Ussher's *Reduction*. Both the *Reduction* and the

<sup>37</sup> See above, pp 223f.

Gracious Declaration were reprinted in 1689, no doubt in support of this opening round in the press campaign.<sup>38</sup> There appears to have been no relationship between this proposal and either of the bills before Parliament, and in any case none of it was support for comprehension as Baxter and others had once been willing to accept it. Between conformist opposition to comprehension by ecclesiastical commission and non-conformist belief that they could now get more than their conformist supporters had previously been willing to grant, 1689 turns out to be far from the perfect opportunity for a more comprehensive church it could have been.

Thomas Long's reply to Baxter, *The Case of Persecution, Charg'd on the Church of England* also mentioned the two works by Clarkson and Baxter's *English Nonconformity* as part of the current campaign, but instead of naming Rule's work as the fourth, he listed Edmund Hickerlingill's *The Ceremony-Monger, his Character*, which is addressed to Parliament on its title page. But Hickerlingill's work is merely a condemnation of ceremonies and the idea of imposing them rather than a work in support of any particular proposal.

Humfrey, as may be expected, added his voice to the campaign in a variety of different ways, and without any of the diminished enthusiasm visible in other writers, although he continued to publish his works anonymously. In a work not hitherto recognised as Humfrey's, he revived his *Materials for Union* from several years earlier, publishing an expanded version on a single sheet (perhaps part of the Reflector's 'fry of pamphlets'),<sup>39</sup> 'humbly presented to the consideration of Parliament' and presumably also for distribution to MPs. The expansion was mostly a matter of

<sup>38</sup> Baxter, *The English Nonconformity* (1689) pp 234, 239, 240, 242.

<sup>39</sup> *The Amicable reconciliation of the dissenters to the Church of England being a model or draught for the universal accommodation in the case of religion and the bringing in all parties to her communion* (1689), Wing number A3011.

explanation and commendation rather than the addition of new elements, but there were a couple: taking advantage of William's assumed sympathy, in the suggestion that a proportion of the bench of bishops be drawn from the non-conformists, he suggested that the king keep adding non-conformist bishops until conformist and non-conformist bishops were roughly equal in number. He also added a proposal for the abolition of pluralities, and suggested that the third member of convocation<sup>40</sup> be chosen from among non-conformists 'with indifferent respects to all sorts of them', ie without regard to the particular sort of non-conformist they were. He also added some new arguments in favour of the plan. One was the inclusion of Lobb's reference to *The Necessary Doctrine and Erudition of a Christian Man* from the 1682 *Reply to the Defence*; another suggested that others besides congregationalists might be glad of a king's officer to discipline any 'potent, turbulent and refractory members'.

In April of 1689, while bills for both comprehension and toleration were going through Parliament, he published a work that has been noticed and quoted by several commentators,<sup>41</sup> but whose connection with Humfrey has not always been stated. The work is entitled *King William's Toleration*, which according to the title page was licensed on March 25th 1689, and is closely related to several other works whose connection with Humfrey is indisputable. He began by drawing on William's own declaration that a 'good agreement' between conformists and dissenters, and the ending of persecution of those living peaceably, were the chief reasons for his coming, observing that this can mean nothing but comprehension and indulgence respectively. The work continued with Humfrey's *Comprehension with indulgence of*

<sup>40</sup> See above, p 224.

<sup>41</sup> Eg Horwitz *Protestant Reconciliation* p 208 n 4, Thomas p 229 n 2, Spurr, *The Church of England, Comprehension and the Toleration Act of 1689* p 937 n 2. Only Mark Goldie attributes the work correctly, in *Morrice I* p 348.

1674, *mutatis mutandis*, in a manner identical to the use Humfrey made of it (as *The Peaceable Design*) in *The Answer to Dr Stillingfleet's Book* of 1680.<sup>42</sup> There is a strong case, therefore, for attributing *King William's Toleration* to Humfrey. Only at the point at which *Comprehension with indulgence* and *The Answer* began to refer to the Parliament of their days was new material added, a single paragraph introducing the text of a bill which he commended to the new king and queen and the present Parliament.

The bill which followed was taken, Humfrey said, from the 1682 publication attributed to Edward Polhill, *The Samaritan*. That bill, it will be recalled, was a modification of the 1680/1 bill to make it more likely to win parliamentary approval next time it was offered; the bill proposed in *King William's Toleration* is further modified.<sup>43</sup> The modifications increased the liberty given to those with reservations about the Act of Uniformity, but not by much: the liberty of a bishop to ignore the fact that the man before him was subscribing according to an 'orthodox' interpretation of the subscription was removed, and the alternative provision for acceptance of the interpretation by two other bishops dropped as therefore unnecessary; and the freedom to amend the Prayer Book liturgy in matters of conscience was extended from the occasional offices and rubrics to the 'Ordinary Lords Day Service' as well.<sup>44</sup> The proposed bill was followed by a series of explanations of its clauses that expand the explanations added by the bookseller to Polhill's *Samaritan*, most of which it repeats word for word, which tends to confirm the suspicion that the material added to *Samaritan* might also have come from

<sup>42</sup> See above, pp 235f.

<sup>43</sup> Spurr's description of it in 'The Church of England, Comprehension and the Toleration Act of 1689' p 937 n 2 as a reprint from *Samaritan* is only partially correct.

<sup>44</sup> *King William's Toleration* p 8.



Humfrey. Humfrey wrote *King William's Toleration* before he had seen the bill Parliament was actually considering, and his primary purpose in writing appears to have been to slow the Parliamentary process, which he was afraid would result in something non-conformists would not accept—a fear for which, as has been shown, there were good reasons. He proposed his version of the 1680/81 bill as an ‘Interim of Pacification, until a tryal of the Comprehended; some consults of the Comprehended and Indulged; a Convocation of the Conformists, with part of the Comprehended chosen into that Convocation; a Revisal of the Churches Liturgy, their Book of Orders, thir Articles, their Homilies, their Canons... a more compleat Act, and better Establishment, than can be expected at this season’—in other words, something more along the lines of *Materials for Union*.<sup>45</sup>

However, he added a postscript after seeing the bill in the Lords, and pointed out two issues which could prevent the comprehension in the bill being accepted by the non-conformists. The first problem was that the proposed subscription, ‘I A. B. do approve of the Doctrine, Worship, and Government of the Church of England, as by Law Established’, still asked more than was intended by the compilers of the Articles of Religion: a person may agree with the Article that says the Prayer Book contains ‘nothing superstitious and ungodly’, and be willing to use it, but still not approve of all that is in it. Humfrey proposed that the wording be changed to read ‘I A. B. do heartily approve of the reformation made by the Church of England, in her Doctrine and Worship: I shall submit to her Government, so far as I can with a good conscience: And I receive her Articles, as conducive to Concord, and containing in them all things necessary to Salvation.’ Whether influenced by Humfrey or for other

<sup>45</sup> *King William's Toleration* pp 17, 16.

reasons, the Lords did amend the offending text, but so that it read 'I A. B. do submit to the present Constitution of the Church of England; I acknowledge that the doctrine of it contains in it all things necessary to salvation, and I will conform myself to the worship and government thereof as established by law'. The second problem was the bill's requirement that those 'already ordained by the laying on of hands by the Presbytery' be admitted to ministry in the Church of England by the laying on of hands by the bishop with the words 'Take thou authority to preach the word of God and administer the Sacraments and to perform all other Ministerial office in the Church of England... and enjoy any ecclesiastical benefice or promotion as if he had been ordained according to the form of making and ordaining priests and deacons in the Church of England'. Humfrey confessed himself 'partial' to this idea, because it came from Bishop Wilkins, 'and I know from whence, and upon what account, he receiv'd it',<sup>46</sup> but nevertheless advised that the words to be used by the bishop be changed to 'Receive thou admittance... to the exercise' of the ministry, in order to remove any suggestion that the person so admitted did not yet have 'Ministerial Authority'. He also advised that this 'device' not be referred to as re-ordination. Without such changes, he was afraid that the proposed comprehension 'was like to stick' with non-conformist clergy. Again, whether influenced by Humfrey or not, the Lords ended up dropping entirely the proposal for an additional laying on of hands by the bishop.<sup>47</sup>

According to Wing, Humfrey reprinted his *Comprehension with indulgence*<sup>48</sup> during 1689, and if that is correct, it was no doubt printed as an element in the campaign in

<sup>46</sup> Humfrey may be hinting that he himself gave Wilkins the idea; see above, p 207 n 18.

<sup>47</sup> *King William's Toleration* pp 17-20, HMC 12th report, Appendix, Pt 6, House of Lords, 1689-90 (1889) pp 49f.

<sup>48</sup> Wing Number H3675A.

which we see Humfrey engaged. But the printed copies are not dated, and there seems no compelling reason to give them this date. On the other hand, a republication of *Comprehension with indulgence* is not unlikely, especially when he had quoted the 1674 work as extensively as he did in *King William's Toleration*.

After the bills in Parliament had been left to Convocation to deal with, Humfrey published a work entitled *The Healing Attempt*, in which he returned to the ingredient of comprehension that he had long left alone, the reform of the episcopate. The work was addressed to the Ecclesiastical Commission appointed by William to 'prepare such Alterations of the Liturgie and Canons, and such Proposals for the Reformation of Ecclesiastical Courts, and to consider of such other Matters as in your Judgments may most conduce to... the Reconciling, as much as is possible, of all Differences among Our Good Subjects, and to take away all Occasions of the like for the future', which began its work on 10 October 1689.<sup>49</sup> The Commission is best known for its involvement with a planned revision of the liturgy,<sup>50</sup> but Humfrey saw a reformed episcopate as a matter conducive to reconciliation, and called on the Commissioners to take advantage of this opportunity to undertake it. Now that liturgy and ceremony were about to be revised in such a way as to allow the non-conformists back into the church, all that remained to complete the process was 'the Ordering, and Declaring the Government of the Church to be now no other, but what it was held, and intended to be by the first Reformers'. It was 'the very next step to be taken towards the settling a Comprehension'. The forces of popery had prevented this until now, he wrote, but the Protestantism of the new government presented a golden opportunity to deal with

<sup>49</sup> Thomas Tenison, *A discourse concerning the Ecclesiastical Commission* (1689) p 14.

<sup>50</sup> See Fawcett, *op cit* pp 26–32.

the matter not only for its own sake, but because it is the best way to settle the vexed issue of reordination. He then spent three chapters, with extensive quotations from Tyndale, Lambert, Barnes, Cranmer, Ponet, Jewel, Whitgift, Bancroft, Hooker, Bilson and a host of less well known names, showing that the episcopate established and exercised under Henry, Edward and Elizabeth was a difference in rank, not in order, and of human rather than divine institution, and that there was therefore no reason except expediency to restrict the right of ordination to the episcopate, and therefore no reason to reordain those ordained by presbyters only. In fact, he said, the belief that the episcopate was a separate order was then considered a hallmark of popery. He then added an annotated version of Ussher's *Reduction*, and argued that its establishment as the form of church government would ease the burdens on the present bishops, bring the non-conformists back into the church, honour the first reformers, support rather than undermine the authority of the king, restore relationships with the Protestant churches abroad, and allow those non-conformists who cannot use even a revised liturgy to consider themselves part of the national church nevertheless—thus achieving the goal for which *Materials for union* had been designed.<sup>51</sup> Humfrey's work was countered by Thomas Long, who accused him of trying to 'impose' upon the Commissioners material Humfrey had already published several years earlier.<sup>52</sup> Long repeated his objections to that work, and denied that either comprehension or indulgence would make the nation more secure, because 'Experience hath taught the contrary'—a reference to the church before 1660, if experience of comprehension is to be understood specifically.<sup>53</sup>

<sup>51</sup> *The Healing Attempt* (1689) pp 4, 5, sig A2, pp 28, 57–84.

<sup>52</sup> In *Reply to the Defence of Dr Stillingfleet*, although Humfrey's contribution to this was minimal and did not concern reform of the episcopate. See above, p 232f.

<sup>53</sup> *The healing attempt examined and submitted to the Parliament and convocation* (1689) p 4.

Another of Humfrey's works was revived this year when a revised edition of a 1688 work called *The Ill Effects of Animosities Among Protestants*<sup>54</sup> was published under the title *The Mystery of Iniquity Working in the Dividing of Protestants*, to which was appended a copy of Humfrey's *A specimen of a bill for uniting the Protestants*, first published in 1679. The revised version of the anonymous text acknowledged the change in affairs by changing present tense to past when talking about the king's determination to introduce popery, and adding one reference to the Prince of Orange having intervened. His pleas to the non-conformists not to accept any indulgence were also changed to the past tense, but not otherwise revised. Presumably it was to indicate that it was now safe to consider comprehension and indulgence that the author appended Humfrey's specimen bill. No change was made in the proposed bill, although two sentences implying that those governing the national church hated the non-conformists and were out to crush them rather than win them over were dropped from one of the marginal annotations. Whether Humfrey himself had anything to do with this republication, or whether it implies that he had some role in the composition or publication of *Ill Effects*, must remain an open question. Interestingly, one of the marginal notes says that if Parliament wanted to pass the indulgence clause in the bill separately, and then negotiate comprehension at greater leisure, 'we consent with all our Hearts, and like the Method best'.<sup>55</sup> In the event Parliament did pass an indulgence first, but the negotiations over comprehension came to nothing, and Humfrey may perhaps have regretted his twice-repeated 'consent'.

<sup>54</sup> Dated 1688, but circulating in May 1687, ie within a month of the publication of the indulgence, according to Morrice Vol IV p 46 n 1. Wing attributes this pamphlet to Gilbert Burnet, but Burnet's biographer lists it among the *spuria* (T. E. S. Clarke, *Life of Gilbert Burnet* [Cambridge University Press 1907] p 555). The confusion may have arisen because the later edition of this pamphlet was published with the title *The Mystery of Iniquity*, the title of a different work by Burnet in 1672.

<sup>55</sup> *Mystery of Iniquity* (1689) p 46.

Humfrey's specimen bill was also reprinted in another publication this year, entitled *Proposals tender'd to the consideration of both Houses of Parliament for uniting the Protestant interest*. Attributed by Wing to Stillingfleet, it is in fact a collection of proposals, including the one from Stillingfleet's *The Unreasonableness of Separation*. Stillingfleet's 'contribution' is mentioned on the title page as 'long since published by the Reverend Dean of S. Pauls', hence the attribution. The author, a conformist, had proposals of his own, which were that all ceremonies should be optional, and that clergy should subscribe to no more than was suggested by Stillingfleet in the passage appended. Parliament should grant an indulgence to those Protestants for whom that will not be enough. He also had proposals for preventing such divisions arising again, which can be summed up as teaching the clergy much more about the early church, especially its original doctrine, and about the growth of heresies. In addition to Humfrey's and Stillingfleet's proposals, he also appended a copy of the Gracious Declaration, including its proposals for a modification of church government. The copy of Humfrey's bill was the same as in its two other printings except without the marginal notes.<sup>56</sup>

Another conformist who supported some accommodation was the anonymous cleric who wrote *Several arguments for concessions and alterations in order to a comprehension*, which went through two editions. It was addressed to the 'Governours of the Church that are Lawfully called, and have Authority to appoint and alter matters of this nature', and quoted a host of writers from Elizabeth's time to his own to argue for a very broad set of concessions. It was clearly aimed at revision of the Prayer Book rather than a revision of the Act of Uniformity, and may well have been

<sup>56</sup> *Proposals tender'd to the consideration of both Houses of Parliament* (1689) pp 6, 9, 10f.

published during the period in which work on a revised Prayer Book was being undertaken. It was an argument for the loosest interpretation of uniformity, and suggested that such an interpretation had been widespread in many quarters for years anyway.<sup>57</sup>

William Wake made his own argument in favour of comprehension in a sermon preached to the new King and Queen at Hampton Court in May, although by then it was Convocation who would have to be persuaded. It was published under the title *An exhortation to mutual charity and union among Protestants* (1689). The sermon appealed for puritans to yield a bit to the anti-puritans, casting zealous conformists as the Judaizers ('converted to the Christian faith, yet still continued zealous for the Law' who 'not only carefully observed themselves all the Rites and Ceremonies of it, but would also by any means impose upon all others also, the observance of them'), and the puritans as the Gentiles ('upon whom the Apostles did not think fit to lay any such burden', and who 'so far stood fast in that liberty, wherewith Christ had made them free, as not only to despise the weakness and ignorance of the others, but to be ready almost, even to cut them off from their communion', and who had 'the truer notion of their Christian Liberty as to this matter'). His text was Romans 15.5–7, and Wake referred to the divided Romans as 'dissenting Christians', ie disagreeing Christians, a choice of phrase which seems to reinforce the appeal to puritans to take the lead in bearing with the weak. It was the duty of all Christians, 'especially of those who are strong in Faith' by which he meant the conformists, not only to pray for union, but to 'endeavour after it'.

<sup>57</sup> *Several arguments for concessions and alterations in order to a comprehension* (1689) pp 1, 60.

‘Since men’s Scruples are unaccountable... We then that are strong in the faith, ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please our selves. I cannot but think it a Reflection becoming every good Christian among us, but in a more especial manner, worthy the Consideration of such an Auditory as this, Whether somewhat may not yet be done for the sake of Peace, and to bring things to such a TEMPER, that both Order and Decency may still be preserved, and yet our Unity no longer broken’.

In case the reference to the words of the Bishops in the Tower was missed, a marginal note made it clear that Wake was referring to them at this point. ‘Never, certainly, was there a time, since our Divisions first began, in which we had a greater reason to consider of such a Union; or, I hope, a fairer opportunity to promise ourselves an Accomplishment of it’.<sup>58</sup> Nevertheless, the opportunity turned out to be illusory. No comprehension was approved by Convocation.

Why comprehension was not supported more effectively by a king who was unequivocally Protestant, and whose religious policy was clearly aimed at greater unity among Protestants, is a question that can hardly be answered by an examination of a press campaign, but also cannot be avoided after a survey of this kind. Sykes argues that William was never given the chance to press this part of his agenda, and that this was entirely the church’s fault, pointing out that the absence of Sancroft’s support when the ecclesiastical commission met took away one of the most powerful forces in favour of comprehension<sup>59</sup>—although according to Burnet the only reason Sancroft and the other ‘Jacobites’ supported revision of the Prayer Book was so that they could argue that the non-Jurors, who would adhere to the unrevised book, were the true representatives of the Church of England.<sup>60</sup> This seems likely to have been a level of machiavellianism beyond Sancroft’s inclinations, however. Every argues that

<sup>58</sup> William Wake, *An exhortation to mutual charity and union among Protestants* (1689) pp 1, 2; 5 cf pp 17, 22, 31; 21f; 28f; 31.

<sup>59</sup> Norman Sykes, *Sheldon to Secker* (Cambridge University Press 1959) p 88, cf p 89.

<sup>60</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *History of His Own Time* (1753) Vol IV p 63.



the proposed Prayer Book of 1689 scared off some conformists who would have been willing to allow the ceremonies of the existing one to be made optional,<sup>61</sup> and the plan to revise the book may well be an example of the overconfidence of the pro-comprehension faction referred to above.

It is also possible that the withdrawal of Sancroft from participation in ecclesiastical affairs under William's authority affected things in deeper ways than Sykes describes: it raised the spectre of a second layer of doubtful legality. There was disagreement for several months over whether William was really king, which for a while cast a shadow over everything done under his authority, and as far as religious matters were concerned the shadow grew deeper still when there was doubt about the legality of the government of the Church too. Such doubt arose not only because of the confusions over who was its supreme governor, but also because the 'ecclesiastical commission' (as those opposed to its work liked to call it, invoking the hostility against the Commission summoned earlier by James) and later the Convocation met without the authority even of the Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>62</sup> In times of doubtful legality, usually only those things are done that must be done, legal or not, and once the Toleration Act was passed, comprehension no longer fell into the category of things that absolutely must be done.

Tony Claydon says that William had initially supported or at least accepted comprehension, but changed his mind after seeing the depth of anger aroused among parliamentary episcopalians by his request to Parliament<sup>63</sup> that the Test Act be amended to change the oath required of those taking office in such a way as to 'leave

<sup>61</sup> Every, *op cit* pp 58f.

<sup>62</sup> cf Every, *op cit* p 46.

<sup>63</sup> March 16th 1689, published as *His Majesties Most Gracious Speech to Both Houses of Parliament on Saturday the 16th of March 1688* (1689). See p 4.

Room for the Admission of all Protestants that are able and willing to Serve'. This was contrary to previous statements that he supported the sacramental Test, and the Devils Tavern meeting of 150 MPs opposed to such a change took place the same night.<sup>64</sup> The opposition of such a block of MPs persuaded William not only to abandon any pressure on Parliament to support comprehension but also to add 'as by law established' to the coronation oath's support for the church. This was consistent with his policy in Holland, which had definitely been tolerationist, and where comprehension had never been an issue. Claydon says William had seen how opposition to toleration divided society, and he must have had doubts as to how easy toleration would be if comprehension were followed. In the final analysis William was more concerned about keeping his anti-French alliance together than religious issues.<sup>65</sup> So, perhaps reluctantly, he allowed Convocation to make the final decision rather than reserving it to himself. Even Burnet had argued that involving Convocation would reduce the number of those unwilling to take the new oath of allegiance.<sup>66</sup> Burnet says William felt 'great content' over the Toleration Act: 'his Experience in Holland made him look on Toleration, as one of the wisest Measures of Government'.<sup>67</sup> Burnet also pointed out that 'the Mildness of the King's Temper, and the Gentleness of his Government' made opponents of the king's policies more willing to challenge them openly, and while this may not refer directly to the opponents of comprehension it cannot have but encouraged Convocation in its opposition.

<sup>64</sup> ODNB on Mary II, Claydon *William III* (Longman, London 2002) pp 102, 100.

<sup>65</sup> Claydon *op cit* p 99, citing Jonathan Israel, *The Dutch Republic* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1988) pp 839, 857.

<sup>66</sup> Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution* (Cambridge University Press 1996) p 165.

<sup>67</sup> Burnet, *History of his own time* (1753) Vol IV p 21.

Once Convocation had been put in charge of the process, comprehension seemed less likely than ever. Events in Scotland must have encouraged many even among the moderate to resist further concessions to dissenters for fear of how far the non-conformists might go if given any encouragement. From the moment James VII left for France, parishes in Scotland whose ministers had supported him rose up against those ministers and drove them out, inviting back, where possible, the presbyterian ministers ejected in 1662. By April 1689, a Convention of the Estates had voted to declare presbyterianism part of the fundamental laws of the Scottish kingdom, and one of their first acts after William had declared them a Parliament was to abolish episcopacy, which they did by an act of July 22nd 1689, although presbyterianism was not finally established in its place until 7 June 1690.<sup>68</sup> William apparently accepted the abolition of episcopacy with no hesitation, no doubt influenced by the fact that the Scottish bishops had already told him that none of them could accept him as king because of their oaths to James VII.<sup>69</sup> These events in Scotland were ‘published up and down England’, according to Burnet, who adds that ‘the King... could not hinder the Change of the Government of that Church, without putting all his Affairs in great Disorder’. Many in England must have believed that the king was equally willing for events to go this way in England. If this gave non-conformists hope of a broader church, it raised fears among most episcopalians that made them even more determined to resist any amendment to the current establishment. ‘These things concurred to give the Clergy such ill Impressions of the King that we had little

<sup>68</sup> *The History of the Affaires of Scotland... with a full Account of the Settling of the Church Government there* (1690) pp 170, 252.

<sup>69</sup> William Mathieson, *Politics and Religion in Scotland 1550–1695* (Maclehose, Glasgow 1902) pp 345–353; *The History of the Affaires of Scotland... with a full Account of the Settling of the Church Government there* (1690) pp 170–173; cf *A Brief and True Account of the Sufferings of the Church of Scotland Occasioned by the Episcopalians* (1690) pp 20–26, and Jeffrey Stephen, *Scottish Presbyterians and the Act of Union 1707* (Edinburgh University Press 2007) pp 1–3.

Reason to look for Success in a Design that was then preparing for the Convocation', ie the comprehension proposal, Burnet wrote. With only a small number of Bishops in attendance, and no Archbishop, the supporters of comprehension knew they could not 'set Things forward; therefore [the bishops] advised the king to suffer the Session to be discontinued'.<sup>70</sup>

The attempts at a more comprehensive Church of England in 1688/9 were not the last, and Humfrey continued to publish proposals for several more years, but there is not space to pursue the matter further here. All that remains is to sum up what this survey of thirty years of printed campaigns for comprehension has shown.

<sup>70</sup> *History of His Own Time* (1753) Vol IV pp 48, 53f, 56, 61f.

## 9 Conclusion

This survey of the printed literature in support of comprehension suggests several things. First, it sheds more light on the reasons why the campaign for comprehension did not succeed during this period. The reason that has been most vigorously asserted in recent historiography is that of John Spurr, in the *English Historical Review* article already cited several times. His main purpose in this article was 'to show what was at stake in calls for comprehension and to explain, in particular, the unyielding attitude of the Church of England'. This explanation is necessary because, Spurr argued, it was the Church of England's 'intransigence, rather than the divisions within the Non-conformist camp, which had done most to thwart comprehension'. He offers 'a more detailed account of comprehension negotiations than was possible in the only other serious modern studies of the subject' (Sykes and Thomas). He says the Church of England rejected comprehension with 'unanimity'. This study of the press campaign in support of comprehension, however, has shown that unanimity against comprehension was by no means the case among conformists. In fact, more of the printed material in support of comprehension came from conformists than non-conformists. Spurr refers to the 'forbearance and tolerance of Restoration Anglicans', and says that this 'has been misinterpreted as evidence of support for toleration or comprehension... it was almost unheard of for an Anglican cleric to champion comprehension',<sup>1</sup> but it is hard to see why the explicit statements in print urging some degree or other of comprehension by conformists, lay and ordained, that we have seen in every chapter of this thesis, should count as forbearance rather than

<sup>1</sup> Spurr 'The Church of England, Comprehension and the Toleration Act of 1689' in *English Historical Review* Vol 104 (1989) p 943.

support. The various ‘negotiations’ that took place between individuals are only part of the evidence, and the equivalent ‘negotiations’ in the press as both sides competed for public support are equally valid evidence of where conformists stood, and more weight needs to be given to this material. Spurr’s conclusion that ‘the Restoration Church of England had set her face against comprehension’<sup>2</sup> seems questionable in view of the evidence presented in the foregoing chapters; the Church of England was never of one mind on the subject, and large parts of it were always moderately and sometimes zealously supportive of a broader churchmanship—including a moderate episcopacy, sympathy for which was expressed in 25% of the 20 writings by conformists examined in these pages. There is no doubt that there was always an intransigent party in the church opposed to any accommodation with those unhappy with the settlement of 1662, but the fact that comprehension was never achieved does not mean that their intransigence can be attributed to the church as a whole. The anti-comprehension party carried on their own press campaigns, which we have alluded to but not had space to explore, precisely because many of their fellow-conformists were not intransigent, and were sometimes downright eager to see a more comprehensive church.

The intransigence of the anti-comprehension episcopalians was undoubtedly an important factor in the failure of the church to keep within it a broader spectrum of its puritan members, but the examination of the evidence made in this thesis shows several other factors that undermined the campaign for comprehension. One thing that emerges from the evidence looked at here is how few non-conformists were sufficiently interested in comprehension to publish material in support of it. The

<sup>2</sup> Spurr *op cit* p 944.

debate over the revision of the Prayer Book between 1660 and 1662 produced a good number of pamphlets by presbyterians expressing willingness to accept a 'stinted' liturgy if it catered sufficiently to their concerns, but once the Act of Uniformity established a book that many of them would not use, attempts to revise the Act found fewer champions. Among those who did not conform, only Richard Lytler, John Corbet, Richard Baxter, John Humfrey and the pseudonymous Philaletheseirenes contributed to the press campaign for comprehension, and only Humfrey seems to have been as determined at the end of the period under review as he had been at the beginning, perhaps even more so. Lytler and the unknown writer contributed to the campaign only once each, Baxter contributed almost nothing after 1662, and Corbet contributed nothing after 1668.<sup>3</sup> Significantly more conformists spoke up in print for comprehension than non-conformists: Fullwood, Croft, Hickes, Stillingfleet, Wettenhall, Polhill, Pearse, Whitby, and Wake (writing on behalf of Sancroft) all contributed at some point during the period, and no less than eleven writers wrote anonymously in support of specific proposals. In fact it is as true to say that the Church of England reached out to dissenters and non-conformists as to say that it set its face against them, and it was the failure of the best-known non-conformists to embrace these offers publicly that leaves the impression of intransigence.

Baxter's silence, especially, must have cost the campaign a substantial amount of support. No one was more avidly read during this period; his works 'enjoyed an unprecedented popularity, many titles... going through repeated printings... there had never been a literary career like this, either in scale or in success: Baxter was the

<sup>3</sup> Corbet's *The Kingdom of God Among Men* of 1679 contains some general remarks in support of the idea of comprehension, but did not recommend any particular approach. He died in 1680.

first author of a string of best-sellers in British literary history'.<sup>4</sup> A frontal assault by him in the press would have made a huge difference, especially to the Dissenters whose support for comprehension was so luke-warm; as it was, even the contributions he did make were asides in works written for other purposes, as the titles show.<sup>5</sup> His silence must have seemed as strong an argument against comprehension as anything written by the zealous conformists, and the complaints in his autobiography about the opposition to comprehension proposals should be read in the light of this.

In much the same way, Baxter's refusal of the bishopric of Hereford in 1660 undermined the campaign for a moderate episcopate. The Gracious Declaration had been intended as a means of moderating episcopacy along the lines suggested by so many different people, episcopalian and presbyterian, during the previous twenty years. The reason why it did not achieve this purpose was only partly due to the dominance of episcopalians in the Commons. Green shows<sup>6</sup> how keen Charles was to appoint presbyterian bishops, and how good Baxter's list of seventeen possible candidates was; but Baxter was the key to that plan—without him there would be no point in appointing the others, since the presbyterians' most widely-accepted leader would still be outside the tent, and most presbyterians with him, and the problem of division would not have gone away. Presbyterians in the Commons cooperated in, or at least did not obstruct the return of bishops to the Lords, according to Clarendon, who also tells us that the restoration of the episcopate was 'looked upon as the most sovereign Remedy, to cure, reform or extinguish all those Maladies', ie the disputes about religion.<sup>7</sup> How different the discussions on liturgy at the Savoy Conference

<sup>4</sup> N. H. Keeble in *ODNB*.

<sup>5</sup> See Appendix II, p.

<sup>6</sup> Green *Op cit* pp 84–98.

<sup>7</sup> *Life* v II pp 278, 262.



might have been if all those participating had been bishops. The strategy of the bishops at the Conference appears to have been based on the idea that the discussions were between proposing presbyters and disposing bishops, whereas the presbyterians thought the talks were what the Gracious Declaration had suggested, two equal groups sitting down to discuss what each side could give up—and this could have been reality if Baxter and his colleagues had taken the opportunity given them to meet on equal terms those opposed to liturgical change. One can also speculate that if Baxter and some of the others suggested by him had accepted appointments, they would presumably have exercised a moderate episcopate, in accordance with the provisions of the Declaration, and if more bishops had done this, it might have made it harder for less moderate bishops to ignore the Declaration's provisions in that respect, even without it being embodied in an Act of Parliament.

This speculation gains some support from the fact that this study has shown that one of the reasons why more non-conformists did not campaign more enthusiastically, a reason not usually referred to in the historiography, was that a moderated episcopacy and an effective parish discipline remained essential to those seeking to be comprehended. While they may have said little about it during the times when comprehension seemed a forlorn hope, whenever it became a realistic possibility, we have seen that the subject of church government came back on to the agenda. Humfrey made it clear in 1689 that one of the most disappointing changes made to the Prayer Book in 1662 had been the change in the relationship between bishop and priest, and the establishment of episcopacy as a separate order:

'The Name and Office of a Pastor is taken from the Presbyter, and transferr'd over to the Diocesan, who alone hath the power... of Governing or Ruling the

church... so that as there is a vast Difference between Queen Elizabeth's Bishops and Charles the Second's, so between Queen Elizabeth's Law, and King Charles's... To know what the Government of the Church of England is, that is by Archbishops, Bishops; and what is the Office of a Presbyter, what that of a Bishop, is a matter of extraordinary importance.<sup>8</sup>

And because of this importance, of course, even the bishops who were willing to make concessions on liturgical and disciplinary matters were not necessarily willing to participate in such a reduction of their power that these things were no longer theirs to concede or not. The continued references to forms of moderate episcopacy during the years of this study<sup>9</sup> make it clear how deep a stumbling block the failure to reform the episcopate was. It was illegal to question the form of government of the church for much of the period, so the relative silence on the subject of episcopacy in comparison to the frequency with which, say, the surplice was discussed, should not blind us to its role in making comprehension unattractive to so many dissenters.

The preference for indulgence by some non-conformists undermined much of the argument for comprehension, as Manton and Baxter complained; but there were more differences than this among the non-conformists, as we saw in Chapter 4, and again in Chapter 8,<sup>10</sup> where we saw reason for believing that by 1688 non-conformists were no longer willing to accept the limited comprehension that might have once brought many of their number to conform. The arrival of a solidly Protestant monarch in 1688–9 appears to have resulted in a complacency among those who would have benefited from it that caused them to over-reach themselves. This change of heart may have been building for some time: the writer of the *Reflections* referred to in Chapter 8 noted that the thirty reasons for non-conformity given by Baxter in 1679

<sup>8</sup> Humfrey, *The Healing Attempt* (1689) pp 57–59.

<sup>9</sup> See above, pp 168f, 207f, 210, 215, 235, 247, 253, 263. The Smectymnuus tract had been reprinted in 1680.

<sup>10</sup> See above pp 113, 255f, 258.

had increased to forty by 1683.<sup>11</sup> We saw in an earlier chapter<sup>12</sup> that comments were made at the time that those in favour of comprehension in 1680–1681 had not worked as hard for their goal as had those who wanted indulgence. Likewise Burnet pointed out that the comprehension bill in the Commons in 1689 was not spoken for even ‘by those who seemed most favourable to the Dissenters’. Some were aware that the passage of the Toleration Act was no guarantee of long-term security: ‘They also thought that the Toleration would be best maintained, when great Numbers should need it, and be concerned to preserve it. So this good Design being zealously opposed, and but faintly promoted, it fell to the Ground’.<sup>13</sup> As has been said, only Humfrey appears to have been as enthusiastic and as politic in 1688 as he had always been, and indeed increased his own output of pro-comprehension texts while others were silent, publishing six different titles in 1688–89.<sup>14</sup>

Sadly, perhaps, one cannot ignore the references in the literature to non-conformist clergy making better money than they could make as conformists by 1689, and the fact is that only indulgence would continue that income. As we saw in the previous chapter,<sup>15</sup> the writer of *A letter to a member of Parliament, in favour of the bill for uniting Protestants* (1689), which had a semi-official status according to the *Reflections* already referred to, suspected that some of the wealthier non-conformist congregations were behind the publication of the Clarkson reprints, and referred

<sup>11</sup> *Reflections on Mr. Baxter's Last Book* (1689), p 7; see above pp 240ff.

<sup>12</sup> See above, p 222.

<sup>13</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *History of his own time* (1753) Vol IV pp 20f.

<sup>14</sup> In addition to making the suggestion to Parliament buried in *The English Nonconformity*, Baxter took part in some conversations about comprehension at this time. Morrice describes how Bates, Baxter and Howe met on January 11th 1689 ‘and agreed in their notions of what was fit to be offered about Church matters for themselves and those of their persuasion, and other dissenting Protestants. They thought many particulars in the Uxbridge Treaty [which would certainly have included an amended episcopacy] fit to be offered and approved of Mr Baxters papers for the substance of them, though some expressions are to be varied, and others to be explained &c so that I hope we shall not be unprepared when there shall be any occasion, though there is likely to be none’ (Morrice Vol IV pp 474f).

<sup>15</sup> See above, p 251.

specifically to the fact that the clergy of such congregations made more money there than they could as a parish priest, and linked this with them suddenly opposing comprehension after supporting it for so long.<sup>16</sup>

The failure of non-conformists to meet Wettehall's challenge to 'actually do, and teach their Followers to do, what [of the Establishd Order] they in Conscience judge lawful', must also have undermined the case they made for comprehension. His statement that 'if these points might be obtained, certainly in a very short time a Consultation of things would be resumed... [and would] certainly prevail with the Bishops to use their interest, and address to his Majesty in Parliament, for some such relaxation... as is desired' search 08 on quote could easily have been tested, but we know of no one publicly associated with the cause of comprehension who was willing to take him up on it. Large numbers of puritans had done exactly this in 1662, and many of them, like Ralph Josselin, had found that in practice a blind eye was turned to their continuing evasion of conformity in the areas where conscience still chafed, like wearing the surplice or using the sign of the cross in baptism. One cannot help suspecting an ungodly pride being at work in some cases, as well as financial self-interest.

It is a relief to be able to turn away from such possibilities to the fact that the texts examined in this thesis confirm and even amplify the case frequently made that the relationship between comprehension and popery was profound throughout the years under review. It was illegal to discuss the possibility of a papist agenda at court most of the period, and dangerous the whole of the period, but the pamphlets like those published by Marvell and others between 1677 and 1681 and the larger number

<sup>16</sup> *Op cit* pp 23, 4.

published after the arrival of William, detailing the history of a popish plot from the beginning of the restoration, like Baxter's *Against the revolt to a foreign jurisdiction, which would be to England its perjury, church-ruine, and slavery* (1691), show that belief in such a plot was characteristic of the whole period, whether it found expression in print or not. When the fear of a popish fifth column in the royal household disappeared, so evidently did much of the perceived need for comprehension, certainly among the less sympathetic conformists, and perhaps among the less enthusiastic non-conformists. The texts examined also explain why popery could so sincerely be attributed to those who so sincerely denied it; there were two understandings of popery at work. To many puritans, the imposition of *adiaphora* was popery, and so was any desire for an ecclesiastical government independent of civil government, even if it was conciliar rather than papal, and some conformist bishops had written in favour of a new conciliar movement.<sup>17</sup> Bagshaw wrote that 'whoever doth owne the Doctrine of Imposition, though in the smallest circumstance of Worship, he brings in the Essence, though not the name of Popery'.<sup>18</sup> Baxter wrote that 'a pretended Universal Humane Sovereignty or Legislative and Judicial Power over the whole Church on Earth, is the Grand Usurpation of Christs Prerogative; which no Mortal Men are capable of: And if this be not Popery, there is no such thing as Popery'.<sup>19</sup> Puritans also believed that it was the nature of Popery to support the

<sup>17</sup> Baxter, *Against the revolt to a foreign jurisdiction* (1691) *passim*.

<sup>18</sup> *The Great Question Concerning Things Indifferent in Religious Worship* (1660).

<sup>19</sup> Baxter, *Against the Revolt to a Foreign Jurisdiction* (1691) p 337. Cf Baxter's accusations of popery, in *An apology for the nonconformists ministry* (1681), in the introductory letter to Bishops Compton, Barlow, Crofts, Rainbow, Thomas, and Lloyd, all of whom he says are known to be moderate. There is a 'party of men among us, Archbishops, Bishops and Doctors, that have made it their office and interest to set up as for Christ, 1. A Catholick Church, formed by a vicarious Universal Government, viz. A General Council, or a feigned Universal Colledge of Bishops; 2. And the Patriarchal power, which was in the Roman Empire; 3. And the Pope as the President, or Principium unitatis Catholicae; 4. And the same Pope as our Western-Patriarch; and the six or eight first General Councils as the Laws or Rule of Government; and so would bring us under a foreign Jurisdiction, and turn the orders of a Catholick Empire into those of the Catholick Church through the World. 6. And that pretend that the Papists Churches have an uninterrupted valid succession, and therefore are true Churches; and that the Protestant Churches, that have no uninterrupted, Canonical, Episcopal succession, are no true Churches, nor have valid Sacraments, or any ordinary title to salvation; I say, as for this party of men (whose Writings and Names I need not tell you of), we profess that we have no hope that ever they will be reconciled to us; because it will not stand with their desired

right of a 'single person' such as a king to arbitrary government, imposing his will just because it was his will, and incapable of being called to account by anyone. Sir Henry Capel wrote 'lay popery flat, and there is an end to arbitrary government'.<sup>20</sup> William Harbord said in Parliament in December 1681 that 'popery and arbitrary governmentt are so near of kin, as cannot be separated; and therefore if we destroy the one, we need not fear the destruction of the other'.<sup>21</sup> This was one of the reasons why episcopacy remained a problem for non-conformists even at times when they thought it wise to avoid the subject in print—the episcopate as exercised by new-style episcopalians was popish because it was the arbitrary government of a diocese by a single person.<sup>22</sup> The fact that the zealous conformists attacked popery while openly supporting such a government only proved their mendacity; 'Who knows, but the Author of these Positions may be some Jesuit in Disguise, who under a Feign'd Show of defeating Popery, designs nothing more than to promote it?' was how one suspicious dissenter responded to conformist overtures.<sup>23</sup>

To others, however, the fact that conformists had become the most outspoken opponents of popery in the 1680s, a fact which was widely noticed, reduced the urgency of any comprehension proposals. Thomas Sprat, Bishop of Rochester, wrote that the conformist clergy did

'confute and triumph over the Popish Cause; as they entirely did in their admirable Writings, to the Glory and Establishment of the Church of England... I know it was formerly a popular Objection of divers misguided Dissenters from the Church of England, that our Principles were too Monarchical, and that we carried the Doctrine of Obedience farther than might be consistent with the safety of a Protestant Church, or the Privileges of a free-born People, But it is now to be

reconciliation (described by themselves) with a more powerful and numerous party which they prefer before us', np no sig [pp ivf].  
<sup>20</sup> Jonathan Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the Restoration Crisis 1677–1683* (Cambridge University Press 1991), p 33, citing *An Answer to the second letter from Legorn* (1679/80) p 14.

<sup>21</sup> *A Collection of the Parliamentary Debates in England from the year M,DC,LXVIII. to the present time* (1739-42) Vol I p 439.

<sup>22</sup> Cf the comments by Humfrey, see above, p 105.

<sup>23</sup> *A Letter from a dissenter to the divines of the Church of England in order to a union* (1687) p 4.

hoped, that the strongest Argument of all others, which is Experience from undoubted Matter of Fact, has put this Objection for ever out of Countenance. Since it is undeniable, that during that whole time, when our Civil and Spiritual Liberties were in so much Danger, the greatest, and most considerable stop, that was here put to the Arts of Rome, and Intrigues of France, was Put by the stiddy Resolution of the true Sons of the Church of England'.<sup>24</sup>

Sprat's work also gives a good picture of just how fearful the bishops were that a popish takeover was imminent. The writer of the *Reflections on Mr Baxter's Last Book, Entitled The English Non-conformity* (1689) excoriated non-conformists for not participating in the press defence of the Church of England against the attacks by papists in James' reign, pointing out that they 'amidst all the furious and numerous attacks of our Protestant Religion from the Popish Priests stood looking on, as if they had been unconcerned Spectators, and were as mute as fishes, excepting only two Persons among them, who when the Controversie was almost at an end, writ two small Tracts... the Church of England wanted not of her Sons to Encounter and Triumph over Popery when it was in its greatest Power'.<sup>25</sup> This perceived resurgent Protestantism of the established church was bringing some conformist laymen, at least, back to it; presbyterians 'began to conform to the Church of England' in increasing numbers around 1687, according to Sir John Reresby's *Memoirs*,<sup>26</sup> although Francis Lee says that those moved to conform were 'but few in Comparison of the rest'.<sup>27</sup>

The word 'campaign' has been used often in this thesis to describe the various printed texts published in support of comprehension, and it will not be out of place here to say a bit more about the 'campaign' aspect of these texts. By 'campaign' I mean

<sup>24</sup> Sprat, Thomas, *The Bishop of Rochester's second letter to the Right Honourable the Earl of Dorset and Middlesex Lord Chamberlain of His Majesty's household* (1689) pp 15, 53ff.

<sup>25</sup> *Reflections* p 24.

<sup>26</sup> George Every p 19, quoting Sir John Reresby's *Memoirs* (1734) pp 242-3.

<sup>27</sup> Francis Lee, *Life of Mr John Kettlewell* (1718) p 59.

the deliberate and planned use of the press to stir up public support for comprehension and put pressure on various arms of government to bring it about. Contemporaries recognised this aspect of the production and distribution of the documents we have examined. We have seen that Thomas Barlow believed that Humfrey's work was the opening of a coordinated campaign: 'The presbyterians having some intelligence and hopes (by their friends at court) that his majesty when the Parliament met [which was to be 10 October 1667] would be willing to grant them some indulgences and a Toleration; to make way for it, caused a little book to be writ and printed', he wrote, and then named *A proposition for the safety and happiness of the King and kingdom*. Search on his text when ready to add page references. Humfrey and Corbet had a working relationship as well as similar attitudes to comprehension, as the Corbet letter for Humfrey's *The Healing Paper* of 1678 shows [07 search on 'printed at the end of the work' for page no], which makes it likely that they were co-ordinating their efforts in their 1667 publications. We have also seen that in 1689 two campaigns were noticed. William Wake testified to a co-ordinated campaign by Sancroft in association with other bishops, the chief element of which was *A letter to a member of Parliament, in favour of the bill for uniting Protestants* (1689), saying that it 'was known to represent the episcopal position on comprehension', the official public commendation of Sancroft's plan, 'a treatise purposely written to recommend the Design when it was brought before the two Houses of Parliament' 08 search on quote for page no. The non-conformist campaign was described by the anonymous author of *Reflections on Mr Baxter's Last Book, Entitled The English Non-conformity*, who said that the campaign consisted of four major works and a 'fry' of lesser ones. Search 08 on



'consisted of four works' likewise. Not every document examined in this thesis can be thought of as part of a co-ordinated campaign, because once a co-ordinated campaign was under way anyone was free to join in and many did, but that some of the documents were co-ordinated in such a way as to constitute a campaign in print seems clear.

There was more than one such campaign, as a look at the chronological table of publications in Appendix II shows. The table there shows a substantial press debate, although perhaps not rising to the status of a co-ordinated campaign, arising from the policies set out in the Gracious Declaration and the Act of Uniformity between 1660 and 1662, followed by the first thought-out campaign when Parliament seemed ready to consider the subject again in 1667. The table shows another debate in print when the king brought the issue back into the open between 1672 and 1675, and another at the onset of the 'popish plot' which turned into a campaign as the Exclusion Parliaments met. And finally it shows a two-pronged campaign, as we have seen, in the context of what seemed a new opportunity in 1689. There are only two extended silences to be seen in the table. The first of these is from 1663–1667, during most of which Parliament was busy passing the rest of the 'Clarendon Code' in its effort to enforce uniformity, and there seemed no trace of sympathy to which to appeal, while the king had since 1663 been known as powerless to stop them.<sup>28</sup> The fire of 1666 also hit the publishing world very hard, melting type and destroying both bookshops and warehouses, adding to the difficulty of getting new texts in front of the public. The second silence came twenty years later, from 1683–1687, during most of which time

<sup>28</sup> Paul Seaward, *The Cavalier Parliament and the Reconstruction of the Old Regime 1661–1667* (Cambridge University Press 1988) pp 186–195, Ronald Hutton, *Charles II* (Clarendon Press, Oxford 1989) pp 201f.

there was no Parliament to whose sympathy appeal might be made, and the kings of the period were either equating sympathy for non-conformists with plotting rebellion or offering non-conformists a liberty designed only to allow the return of forces which would crush both them and the church in which they hoped to be comprehended.<sup>29</sup> Both periods only increased the perceived need for comprehension when circumstances made a revival of the campaign possible.

This study also sheds light on the role of John Humfrey, which is clearly more significant than hitherto recognised. His public support for comprehension did not begin in 1672, as his *ODNB* biography states, but from the first attempt to reintroduce the idea of comprehension in 1667 onwards he was indefatigable in writing and publishing easily read arguments, constantly revising them according to the tide of public opinion and of official concerns. No one wrote as often or as consistently on the subject, and at times he was the only one publishing anything on the subject.<sup>30</sup> We have seen that two documents previously without attribution or variously attributed can be confidently assigned to him.<sup>31</sup> A third may be mentioned here: the work entitled *The Ill Effects of Animosities Among Protestants in England Detected*, referred to in Chapter 8, may be Humfrey's. It was written at a time when there was no possibility of comprehension,<sup>32</sup> and like Baxter's *The Cure of Church Divisions* it addressed the deeper issue of why the divisions over government and ceremonies was harmful and how important it was to avoid to strive for 'an union of

<sup>29</sup> Hutton, *op cit* pp 423–429, John Spurr, *The Post-Reformation 1603–1714* (Pearson Longman, Harlow 2006) pp 173–179.

<sup>30</sup> See Appendix II.

<sup>31</sup> *A specimen of a bill for uniting the Protestants being a rough draught of such terms, as seem equal for the conformist to grant, and the non-conformist to yield to, for peace sake* (1679); *King William's Toleration* (1689). A document formerly attributed to Humfrey is shown to be by Stephen Lobb in Chapter 7, see above, p 233 n 88. See Appendix I for a bibliography of works by Humfrey.

<sup>32</sup> Dated 1688, but circulating in May 1687, ie within a month of the publication of the indulgence, according to Morrice Vol IV p 46 n 1.

Counsels and Endeavours' even when no other union was possible.<sup>33</sup> The writer refers to both conformist and non-conformist mostly in the third person, which is consistent with Humfrey's understanding of himself as a conformist layman and a non-conformist minister,<sup>34</sup> although in one or two places the writer's identification with non-conformists is evident.<sup>35</sup> Its sympathetic description of both conformist and non-conformist positions is also consistent with Humfrey's long-held commitment to a middle way. Some of the phrases used have echoes in some of Humfrey's other writings, and the use of a Latin tag at the end of the work (in the reprint) is also a frequent practice of Humfrey's.<sup>36</sup> Most convincing, however, is the fact that after James' departure, when there was once again a Parliament to appeal to, the work was reprinted under the title *The Mystery of Iniquity Working in the Dividing of Protestants*, with the text of *Materials for Union* added now that there was again a Parliament that could consider it. We noted in Chapter 6<sup>37</sup> that the *Comprehension Promoted* of 1704 refers to the bill before Parliament in 1673, and also that *A Plea for the Non-Conformists* (1674), attributed entirely to Humfrey by Wing, is in fact two works in one volume, and only one of them, the second of the two works of which the volume consists, called *An Account of the Non-Conformists Meetings for Divine Worship* is by Humfrey.<sup>38</sup>

As mentioned earlier, Humfrey joined the campaign in 1667. Given the enthusiasm he showed for it from that point on, the reader may wonder why he did not get involved earlier. He served as Vicar of Frome in Somerset from 1654 to 1662,

<sup>33</sup> *Ill Effects* p 23.

<sup>34</sup> *An Account of the Non-Conformists Meetings for Divine Worship* (see below, p 254), p 12.

<sup>35</sup> *Ill Effects* pp 16, 17.

<sup>36</sup> *The Axe laid to the Root of Separation, An Answer to Dr Stillingsfleet's Book, The Peaceable Resolution, A Plea for the Nonconformists et al.*

<sup>37</sup> See above, p 181.

<sup>38</sup> See above, p 186 n 55.

and was thus not well-placed for interaction with other supporters of comprehension. In addition, although, like Baxter, he appears to have resigned his ministry before the Act of Uniformity came into force, unlike Baxter Humfrey continued his ministry in premises not far from the parish church until required to move by the Five Mile Act of 1665. After this he moved to London, and by 1667 was ready to address Parliament with his first publication on comprehension, *A proposition for the safety and happiness of the King and kingdom*.<sup>39</sup>

There is much potential for future work concerning Humfrey, especially in the area of how much influence he had on the bills that were before Parliament—we have seen on several occasions that the bills under consideration reflected positions commended by him. There is little easily available information about whose ear he might have had among those in power; he never dedicated his works to anyone, except in a single case, and the text of that dedication makes it clear that there was no personal relationship between Humfrey and the dedicatee. There were people at court willing to give him preferment, and he was close enough to John Wilkins to send him the manuscript of *The question of re-ordination*, even while he was still in Frome.<sup>40</sup> Humfrey said in 1668 that he had a Member of Parliament as a ‘courteous friend’, but in print at least he gave few other clues about his connections.<sup>41</sup> As far as the financing of his works is concerned, he followed some of his works closely through the press, and kept unbound quires of some works that did not sell in order to bind them with future works, which may suggest that he financed his own publications,

<sup>39</sup> Anthony Wood says only that he ‘left his Cure upon the coming out of the Act of Uniformity’, *Athenae Oxonienses* (1721) col 1107, and the Secretary of Rook Lane Congregational Church in Frome, James Parsons, told the author in 2010 that the tradition received in the church was that Humfrey had not been ejected, but had resigned, and preached in premises in Rook Lane until 1665.

<sup>40</sup> Calamy, *The nonconformist's memorial* (1775) vol II p 361.

<sup>41</sup> *A defence of the proposition* (1668) p 96.

while others contained advertisements that surprised him, which suggests that they were financed either by patrons or by the bookseller because of their commercial value.<sup>42</sup> Clearly there is work on Humfrey still to be done, for in terms of generating public support for a broader church, he was a more important figure than Richard Baxter, and if this thesis is useful to future students of Humfrey's life and work, the writer will be content.

<sup>42</sup> *Two points of great moment* (1672) np sig A2; and on p 1 of his *Account of the Non-Conformists Meetings for Divine Worship* (1674) says that when he received his copies of his *Mediocritia* he 'found' an ad for Francis Fullwood's *Humble advice to the conforming and non-conforming ministers and people* (1673) in it, and that is what prompted him to write his reply.

## Appendix I: Bibliographical Survey of Works Attributed to John Humfrey

This is a first attempt at a complete Humfrey bibliography, and is a work still in progress. The documents by Humfrey that were published before and after the period covered by this thesis have not all been read by the writer of this thesis, and further research may well shed more light on some of the questions raised in this bibliography.

*An humble vindication of a free admission unto the Lords-Supper published for the ease, support, and satisfaction of tender consciences (otherwise remediles) in our mixt congregations / as it was delivered at two sermons upon the occasion of this solemnity in the weekly labours of John Humfrey.*

(1651) Wing numbers: H3681; H3682 (1652), H3683 (1653)

*The foure wishes of Mr. John Humphrey in conclusion of his sermons printed 1653. Intituled An humble admission unto the Lord's Supper, &c.*

No date, but annotated by Thomason: November 28 1654. Wing number: H3677; Thomason / 669.f.19[42]

(1654) A single sheet containing the last paragraphs of *An Humble Vindication*, see above

*A rejoinder to Mr. Drake or a reply unto his book entituled, A boundary to the holy Mount. VVhich being approach'd, is found so dreadfull, that the people do exceedingly quake and fear, lest they be consumed. By John Humfrey Master of Arts, and minister of Froome in Somerset-shire.*

(1654) Wing number: H3705; Thomason / E.1466[2]

*A second vindication of a disciplinary, anti-Erastian, orthodox free-admission to the Lords-Supper or, The state of this controversie revised and proposed: for the fuller understanding of the most, as to the grounds whereon it stands; and more especially for the ease, and clearer proceeding of those, that shall write about it, whether for it, or against it.*

(1656) Wing number: H3710; Thomason / E.1641[2]

*A Brief receipt moral & Christian, against the passion of the heart, or sore of the mind incident to most, and very grievous to many, in the trouble of enemies.*

(1658) Wing number: H3672 ; Thomason / E.1895[1]

*The question of re-ordination whether, and how a minister ordained by the Presbytery, may take ordination also by the Bishop?*

(1661) Wing number: H3704

Dated Feb. 1660 on the final page, presumably old-style.

*A second discourse about re-ordination being an answer to two or three books come out against this subject, in behalf of the many concern'd at this season, who for the sake of their*

*ministry, and upon necessity, do yield to it, in defence of their submission*  
(1662) Wing number: H3709

*A proposition for the safety and happiness of the King and kingdom both in church and state, and prevention of the common enemy tendered to the consideration of His Majesty and the Parliament against the tenth of October by a lover of sincerity and peace.*

(1667) Wing numbers: J601, J602, both 1667

EEBO's full record says 'Attributed falsely by Wing to David Jenkins, and possibly correctly attributed to John Humfrey by NUC pre-1956 imprints.' Jenkins died in 1663 according to ODNB so cannot be the author. Humfrey's authorship is established by *A defence of the Proposition*, below.

*A defence of the proposition or, some reasons rendred why the nonconformist-minister who comes to his parish-church and common-prayer, cannot yet yeeld to other things that are enjoyned, without some moderation. Being a full reply to the book which is a pretended answer thereunto. By the same author.*

(1668) Wing number: H3676

Biographical information establishes Humfrey's authorship, see pp 77ff. The cover says it is by the author of *A Proposition for the Safety and Happiness of the King and Kingdom*. In an appendix is a Latin work also apparently by Humfrey, headed *Reverendis, pietate & eruditione praestantibus, Ecclesiae Anglicanae Ministris, praecipue vero iis quos haec potissimum spectant, Patribus, Fratribus, & Commilitonibus, sub Christo Duce merentibus, longe charissimis, salutem plurimam.*

*A case of conscience whether a nonconformist, who hath not taken the Oxford Oath, may come to live at London, or at any corporate town, or within five miles of it, and yet be a good Christian : stated briefly, and published in reference to what is offered to the contrary, in a book intituled, A friendly debate betwixt a confirmist and a nonconformist : together with animadversions on a new book, entituled, Ecclesiastical polity, the general heads and substance whereof are taken under consideration : as also a peaceable dissertation, by way of composition with some late papers, entituled, Liberty of conscience, in order to the determining the magistrates power in matters of religion*

(1669) Wing number: H3673

*The obligation of human laws discussed*

(1671) Wing number: H3696

*The authority of the magistrate about religion discussed in a rebuke to the prefacer of a late book of Bishop Bramhalls, being a confutation of that mishapen tenent, of the magistrates authority over the conscience in the matters of religion, and better asserting of his authority ecclesiastical, by dividing aright between the use of his sword about religious affairs, and tenderness towards mens consciences : and also for vindication of the grateful receivers of His Majesties late gracious declaration, against his and others aspersion*

(1672) Wing number: H3669

Often referred to by Humfrey in subsequent works as the *Rebuke to the Prefacer*.

*Two points of great moment, the obligation of humane laws, and the authority of the magistrate about religion, discussed together with the case which gave occasion to the first point : in opposition to the two authors, of the Friendly debate, and of the Preface to a late book of Bishop Bramhalls*

(1672) Wing number: H3713

Reprints almost all of section one of the *Case of Conscience* (1669).

*The middle-way in one paper of justification with indifferency between Protestant and papist*

(1672) Wing number: H3691

*The middle-way in one paper of election & redemption with indifferency between the Arminian & Calvinist*

(1673) Wing number: H3689; H3693, 3689A (1674)

*Comprehension promoted. Whether there be not as much reason, in regard to the ease of the most sober consciences, to take away the subscription in the Act of Uniformity, as well as the declaration of assent and consent?*

(1673) Wing number: H3675

The printed copies of this document have no date on them. EEBO dates it 1704, following the Bodleian, whose copy is bound with other documents of that date. Wing lists it as 1673, but with a question mark. Durham University follows Wing, adding the comment 'ESTC and BL both give a date of 1704 for this item. However Wing suggests 1673, which corresponds with the dates of other pamphlets bound with it in the Routh collection'. An examination of other evidence, external and internal, confirms the 1673 date.

*Comprehension with indulgence*

(1673) Wing number: H3675A

Dated '1689?' by Wing, but there is no date on the printed text, nor is there any attribution of authorship. Baxter, however, is explicit that it is Humfrey's and, gives its full text in the *Reliquiae* [RB III p 143]. He is also quite clear about dating it to 1673: the words 'this session' at that point in Baxter's account (referring to Parliament) can only refer to the Feb-March 1673 session.

*Mediocria or, The most natural and plainest apprehensions which the Scripture offers concerning the great doctrines of the Christian religion of election, redemption, justification, the covenants, the law and Gospel / by a lover of all that are sincere in their hearts and in their lives, of whatsoever sort or sect of religion.*

(1674) Wing number: H3686; H3687, 3688 (1695)

Includes H3691 above, 1672 and H3689 above, 1673. Each section (Election and Redemption; Justification; Covenants, Law and Gospel; Perfection) has its own pagination.



*The middle-way of perfection with indifferency between the orthodox and the Quaker by J.H.*

(1674) Wing number: H3692

A separate printing of the fourth section of *Mediocria*.

*A plea for the non-conformists tending to justify them against the clamorous charge of schisme. By a Dr. of Divinity. With two sheets on the same subject by another Hand and Judgement.*

(1674) Wing number: H3703A

The 'two sheets on the same subject' is entitled *An Account of the Non-Conformists Meetings for Divine Worship by Mr J. H.* and has its own pagination, and appears to be the only part of this book by Humfrey: the writer of this *Account* is the writer of *Mediocria* p 1. The *Plea for the Nonconformists* shows no signs of being by Humfrey, who describes himself as an M. A. not a D. D. (see *Materials for Union* 1681), and is stated to be by 'another Hand' than the work with which it is joined.

*The peaceable design being a modest account of the non-conformist's meetings : with some of their reasons for nonconformity, and the way of accomodation in the matter of religion, humbly proposed to publick consideration by some ministers of London against the sitting of Parliament in the year 1675.*

(1675) Wing number: H3701

Contains edited versions of his *Comprehension Promoted* (1673) and *Comprehension with Indulgence* (1674)

*The nonconformists relief prepared against the sessions of the next justices in London or in the country by a follower of peace, and lover of sincerity.*

(1678) Wing number: H3695

*The healing paper or, A Catholick receipt for union between the moderate bishop & sober non-conformist, maugre all the aversation of the unpeaceable by a follower of peace, and lover of sincerity.*

(1678) Wing number: H3680

*Peaceable disquisitions which treat of the natural and spiritual man, preaching with the demonstration of the Spirit, praying by the Spirit, assurance, the Arminian grace, possibility of heathens salvation, the reconciliation of Paul and James, the imputation of Christ's righteousness, with other incident matters : in some animadversions on a discourse writ against Dr. Owen's Book of the Holy Spirit*

(1678) Wing number: H3702

*A specimen of a bill for uniting the Protestants being a rough draught of such terms, as seem equal for the conformist to grant, and the non-conformist to yield to, for peace sake; provided a good while, and published thus by it self, on purpose only for the farther, better and more easy consideration of the Parliament.*

(1679) Wing number: S4843.

A flier setting out an edited version of the plan mentioned in Humfrey's *The Healing Paper* (1678 H3680). Reprinted in 1689 as an appendix to *The Mystery of Iniquity*

*Working in the Dividing of Protestants*, M3186. No date on the 1st page [no cover], and a marginal note says all this material was presented to the long Parliament that passed the Act of Uniformity, but now we have a new one, following another brief new one, so it must be dated 1680, not 1679. A comment at the end of the work says 'this sheet is one of a dozen, Entitled *A peaceable resolution of conscience, touching our present impositions.*' *A peaceable resolution* is also dated 1680.

*An answer to Dr. Stillingsfleet's sermon by some nonconformists, being the peaceable design renewed wherein the imputation of schism wherewith the doctor hath charged the nonconformists meetings, is removed, their nonconformity justified, and materials for union drawn up together, which will heal both parties.*

(1680) Wing number: H3668.

Said to be co-authored by Stephen Lobb by Richard Greaves in *ODNB*, but without presenting any evidence for Lobb's involvement. This work is what the title says, Humfrey's *The Peaceable Design* (1675) renewed, actually repeated almost word for word. According to *An Answer to Dr. Stillingsfleet's Book* (1682) p 5, this book is Humfrey's own work despite the title: 'drawn up by One man (though put out by Others)'.

*A peaceable resolution of conscience touching our present impositions. Wherein loyalty & obedience are proposed, and settled upon their true foundation in Scripture, reason, and the constitution of this kingdom, against all resistance of the present powers: and for compliance with the laws, so far as may be in order to union. With a draught, or speciment of a bill for accomodation.*

(1680) Wing number: H3703.

Much of this appears to be a reprinting or precis of *The Nonconformists Relief* (1678) and *The Healing Paper* (1678).

*Materials for union proposed to publick consideration, with indifferency to all parties by M.A. Pem. Col. Oxon.*

(1681) Wing number: H3685.

*A reply to the defence of Dr. Stillingsfleet being a counter plot for union between the Protestants, in opposition to the project of others for conjunction with the Church of Rome / by the authors of the Modest and peaceable inquiry, of the Reflections, (i.e.) the Country confor., of the Peaceable designe.*

(1681) Wing number: H3706, 3707 (1682 edition)

A joint effort by Stephen Lobb, John Humfrey and an unknown Country Conformist. Humfrey's contribution, despite the fact that the work is attributed to him in Wing, is only a letter to Lobb and a revised version of *Materials for Union*, both of which are printed at the end of the work.

*An answer to Dr. Stillingsfleet's book of The unreasonableness of separation so far as it concerns The peaceable designe : with some animadversions upon the debate between him and Mr. Baxter concerning the national church and the head of it.*

(1682) Wing number: H3667

*A private psalter or manual of devotion composed by a minister, under the apprehension of the stone ; which may serve also for all Christians, with the omission of any such petition, which is peculiar, or not suitable, and the addition of others, as are suitable to every ones proper condition.*

(1683) Wing number: H3703B

'A Johanne Humfrido exarati', last page.

*The two steps of a nonconformist minister made by him, in order to the obtaining his liberty of preaching in publick : together with an appendix about coming to church in respect to the people / published for a testimony in his generation by a lover of sincerity and peace.*

(1684) Wing number: H3714

*The third step of a nonconformist for the recovery of the use of his ministry with some occasional notice taken of the judgment and decree of the University of Oxford, past in their convocation, July 21, 1683*

(1684) Wing number: H3712

*The axe laid to the root of separation or, The churches cause against it by the author who wrote in the late Times for free admission to the Lord's Supper.*

(1685) Wing number: H3670

*Advice before it be too late: or, A breviat for the convention humbly presented to the Lords and Commons of England.*

(1688) Wing Number: H3665

*The Amicable reconciliation of the dissenters to the Church of England being a model or draught for the universal accommodation in the case of religion and the bringing in all parties to her communion...*

(1689) Wing number: A3011

An expanded version of *Materials for Union* on a single sheet, 'humbly presented to the consideration of Parliament' and presumably for distribution to MPs

*The healing attempt being a representation of the government of the Church of England, according to the judgment of her bishops unto the end of Q. Elizabeths reign, humbly tendred to the consideration of the thirty commissioned for a consult about ecclesiastical affairs in order to a comprehension, and published in hopes of such a moderation of episcopacy, that the power be kept within the line of our first reformers, and the excercise of it reduced to the model of Arch-Bishop Usher.*

(1689) Wing number: H3679

Thomas Long's reply to the above, entitled *The healing attempt examined and submitted to the Parliament and convocation*, (1689) confirms Humfrey's authorship

*The Mystery of Iniquity Working in the Dividing of Protestants*

(1689) Wing number: M3186.

Includes a slightly amended version of *A specimen of a bill for uniting the Protestants*

***King William's Toleration***

(1689) Wing number: K580

Unattributed by Wing, attributed to William himself by the Bodleian. Closely related to several other works whose connection with Humfrey is indisputable. Contains Humfrey's *Comprehension with indulgence* of 1674, *mutatis mutandis*, in a manner identical to the use Humfrey made of it in *The Answer to Dr Stillingfleet's Book* of 1680.<sup>1</sup> There is a strong case, therefore, for attributing *King William's Toleration* to Humfrey. Contains a revised version of the bill proposed in *The Samaritan*.

*Union pursued, in a letter to Mr. Baxter, concerning his late book of national churches published for a fuller disquisition about this subject, by the sober and composed of all sides, in order to comprehension which hath been forming, and a larger constitution of the church to be formed, when that Day of Concord comes, which the gentle aspect of Heaven in God's appointment (and the King's) of so many choice moderate bishops together at this time does presage to the nation, that the Presbyterians and Independants, that have united within themselves, may both be united also with the Church of England*

(1691) Wing number: H3716

*Peace at Pinnars-Hall wish'd, and attempted in a pacifick paper touching the universality of redemption, the conditionality of the covenant of grace, and our freedom from the law of works upon occasion of a sermon ... by a lover of truth and accommodation.*

(1692) Wing number: H3700

*One sheet (or second letter) concerning the difference in some points which is between our united brethren, in order to accommodation*

(1695) Wing number: H3696A

*Mediocria or, The middle way between Protestant and Papist: in a Paper of Justification by John Humfrey, the Second edition, with additions, and a letter to Mr Williams*

(1695) Wing number: H3687, 3688

Not a true second edition of *Mediocria* (1674) but of its chapter on justification, together with extracts of passages from two of its other chapters that are also about justification, and a similar extract from *Peaceable Disquisitions* (1678). H3688 has a slightly different title page, and adds a letter 'To the Non-conformist Ministers assembled for Concord about some Matters of Opinion, in the year 1694'. The cover says it also contains 'the Letters between the Author and Mr. Clark, for the Finishing their Doctrine in the Middle Way they go, upon that Subject', but they do not appear in the EEBO facsimile.

*Half a sheet of Mr. Humfrey's, in pursuance of pacification*

(1696) Wing number: H3678A

*Pacification touching the doctrinal dissent among our united brethren in London being an answer to Mr. Williams and Mr. Lobb both, who have appealed in one point (collected for an error) to this author, for his determination about it : together with some other more necessary*

<sup>1</sup> See above pp 236f.

*points falling in, as also that case of non-resistance, which hath always been a case of that grand concern to the state, and now more especially, in regard to our loyalty to King William, and association to him, resolved, on that occasion*  
(1696) Wing number: H3697

*The association for K. William, or, an entire loyalty to His present Majesty, by satisfaction given to the Jacobites, in regard to their most conscientious scruple, and scandal taken, promoted.*  
(1696) Wing number: H3668A

*The righteousness of God revealed in Gospel, or, An impartial enquiry into the genuine doctrine of St. Paul in the great, but much controverted article of justification*  
(1697) Wing number: H3708

*A case which concerns ministers about the quarterly poll-act*  
(1698) Wing number: H3673A

*The friendly interposer, between the authors of those papers, the one called a report, the other, a rebuke of that report in order to a sound reconciliation between the Presbyterians and Independents in doctrinals, by the proposal of a third way, when both of them in their own, are out*  
(1698) Wing number: H3678

*Ultimas manus being letters between Mr. John Humphrey, and Mr. Samuel Clark, in reference to the point of justification : written upon the occasion of Mr. Clark's printing his book upon that subject, after Mr. Humfrey's book entituled *The righteousness of God*, and published for vindication of that doctrine wherein they agree, as found, by shewing the difference of it from that of the Papist, and the mistakes of our common Protestant : in order to an impartial and more full understanding of that great article, by the improvement of that whereto they have attained, or correction of any thing wherein they err, by better judgments : together with animadversions on some late papers between Presbyterian and Independent, in order to reconcile the difference, and fix the Doctrine of Christ's satisfaction.*  
(1698) Wing number: H3715

*Animadversions, being the two last books of my reverend brother Mr. Williams the one entituled *A postscript to Gospel-truth*, the other *An end of discord* : conscientiously examined, in order to a free entertainment of the truth, in some momentous points in divinity, controverted among the nonconformist brethen, occasionally here determined, for the sake of those honest among us that seek it, without trick or partiality*  
(1699) Wing number: H3666

*A letter to George Keith concerning the salvability of the heathen together with a testimony to the same doctrine, as long held and not newly taken up, out of several former books of him that writ it*  
(1700) Wing number: H3684

*A paper to William Penn, at the departure of that gentleman to his territory, for his perusal, in Pensilvania Wherein two points are proposed to him concerning the Quakers religion, that he may receive himself conviction, or render to others that are conscientious about them Christian satisfaction: the one is their belief of an infallible guidance: the other is their disuse of the two holy and blessed sacraments. With an occasional dissertation concerning predestination, or God's decree about saving man, in reference to the doctrine of others, and not the Quakers onely.*

(1700) Wing number: H3698

*Letters to Parliament-men, In reference to some proceedings in the House of Commons, daring the last session, continuing to the latter part of June, 1701. Being one, concerning the redress of grievances: another, concerning the bill for prevention of bribery in corporations: a [fourd], concerning the dissenters conformity upon occasion of an office. A fourth, concerning the bill about the uccession: a fifth, concerning comprehension*

(1701) ESTC Citation Number: T38553

*The free state of the people of England maintained: in the renewed determination of three cases: the first, concerning the oath (the Non-Resistance and Passive Obedience Oath) imposed in the Reign of K. Charles II. The second, concerning the association required under King William. The third, concerning the succession. Being a letter to a Member of Parliament when that Bill was in Agitation, before it was passed; with a Post-Script since it Passed into an Act, and the Sitting of a New Parliament (writ while King William was Living, but the Conclusion when Dead) added to it. By one that desires the Peace, the Union, and the Publick Good, of England and Scotland both, as One Nation, and Kingdom of Great Britain.*

(1702) ESTC Number: T138335

*A caveat against high church, with respect both to that which hath been past, and may be to come: being, the free state of the people of England maintain'd, in the renewed determination of three cases: ... By one that desires the peace, the union, and the publick good of England and Scotland both as one nation, and kingdom of Great Britain.*

(1702) ESTC Online Citation Number: N44110

*A seasonable caution to the members of this new Parliament, written and put out against their sitting, October 20th, 1702. By one that holds communion with the church.*

(1703) ESTC Number: T102282

*After-consideration for some members of the Parliament, upon the Occasional Bill Dismiss'd. Being a proposal By Another, To do that business better. With a colloquy Tending thereunto. By One that Holds Communion with that Church, which is, and will let no Other be called, the Church of England.*

(1704) ESTC Number: T021104

*Lord's-Day entertainment for families; Being seven sermons to be read at home, after the service of God in publick. By that aged Minister John Humfrey.*

(1704) ESTC Citation Number: T170835

*A draught for a national church accommodation: whereby the subjects of England and Scotland, however different in their judgments concerning episcopacy and presbytery, may yet be united, in regard to the Queen's headship over both, in One Church and Kingdom of Great Britain.*

(1705) ESTC Number: T077298

*De justificatione: being a letter to a friend, upon a passage in one of the printed sermons of His Grace, the present Archbishop of York. Set forth for the putting a Conclusion to the several Books and Papers written upon this great Controverted Article.*

(1706) ESTC Number: N028524

*Veritas in semente: or, a moderate discourse concerning the principles and practices of the Quakers. With Some Thoughts on the Salvability of the Heathens and on two Points wherein Satisfaction is requir'd of the Quakers. The second edition. To which are prefix'd, two letters to a bishop, on the salvation of the heathen, in defence of the Author's Thoughts on that Subject.*

(1707) ESTC Number: T098615

*De justificatione Baxteriana coronis: being a letter to the author of a late small book, intituled, A caveat against High-Church, but wrote against the doctrine of justification, as maintained by Mr. Baxter*

(1707) ESTC Online Citation No. N52138

*An account of the French prophets, and their pretended inspirations, in three letters sent to John Lacy, Esq; by one that is concern'd for his friend: a lover of truth, and a hater of persecution.*

(1708) ESTC Number: T018816

*A farther account of our late prophets, in two letters to Sir Richard Buckley, which may be added to the three sent to Mr. Lacy.*

(1708) ESTC Number: T098614

*A draught for a national church accommodation; whereby the subjects of North and South-Britain, However Different in Their Judgments concerning Episcopacy and Presbytery, May yet be United.*

(1709) ESTC Number: T017534 (Edinburgh), T017535 (London)

Note change of sub-title

*A sermon for beginning the morning-lecture, Octob. 17. 1709*

(1709) ESTC Citation Number: T207129

*Free thoughts upon these heads. Of predestination, redemption, the salvability of the heathen, The Judaical Covenant, Justification, The Judge of Faith and the Scripture, Venial Sin, Of Liturgical and Conceived Prayer, Demonstrative Preaching, The Authority of the Laws of Men, The Power of the Magistrate about Religion, subjection to our present Queen.*

(1710) ESTC Number: T040189

*A plain, honest, easy, and brief determination of the late controversy concerning that non-resistance of the higher powers, which is required by the Apostle in his Epistle to the Romans: humbly submitted to the judgement of both Houses before they rose, and to the country, now risen, after this flaming stir about it. [London], [1710].*

(1710) ESTC Number: T042368

*Wisdom toward the wicked; or the Christian-Man's Wisdom, in the care of his conversation and behaviour toward the ungodly in the world. Set forth in the good ends he proposes to himself therein, and the Means to obtain them, in order to their Conversion, and his own Salvation.*

(1710) ESTC Number: T224465

*Peace in divinity: being some modest determinations upon these points: of free electing grace. Of this grace its irresistibility. Of God's Will, Decree, and Providence, in regard to Sin. Of Faith and Works. Of the Believer's Union with Christ. Of Justifying Righteousness. Of the Thirteenth to the Romans. London, 1711.*

(1711) ESTC Number: T067317

*A seasonable suggestion arising from the grateful reflexion upon His Majesties resolution, the Lords agreement, and the Commons determination on it, to let the dissenters quietly enjoy that indulgence which the law hath allowed them to improve our union. Set forth, that the Concern so Momentous should come into the Consideration of the Legislature, when Business gives Leisure, and Time serves it, in this Present, or another Future Session of Parliament.*

(1711) ESTC Number: T099870

*Of subjection to King George. Being a brief essay for reconciling Whigs and Torys, and abolishing all distinctions. London, 1714.*

(1714) ESTC Number: N020519

*Concord under King George, in respect both of church and commonwealth. Humbly proposed to consideration of Parliament.*

(1715?) ESTC Online Citation Number: N26668

## Corrigenda

*The bios panton heideotos, or, [Hebrew] or the vision of eternity*

(1657) Wing Number: H3671

Attributed by Wing to Humfrey, by EEBO to John Humphreys. EEBO is correct, see title page.

*Animadversions and considerations upon a sheet, printed for Francis Smith containing a confession of the faith of several catapaedobaptists, whose names are thereunto subscribed. As also the absurdities of the doctrine of arminianism, free-will, and general redemption; and that it is a popish doctrine; and their objections briefly answered.*

(1679) Wing number: H3666A



Preface signed by Joh. Humphrys, not Humfrey as he always spells his own name (except for his second publication). It should be attributed to John Humphreys , b. 1637.

*The middle way of predetermination asserted. Between the Dominicans and Jesuites, Calvinists and Arminians, or, A scriptural enquiry into the influence and causation of God in and unto humane actions; especially [sic EEBO full report, the actual cover page is not in the facsimile] such as are sinfull.*

(1679) Wing number: H3692A

Attributed to Humfrey by Wing, naturally enough given the title (see the 'Middle Way' series listed above), but the document is signed 'W. M.', and there is no 'J. H.' on the cover as in the case of the other books. Nor is it included in the 1695 reprints of what were then described as Humfrey's 'four' Middle Way papers, Election and Redemption; Justification; Covenants, Law and Gospel; and Perfection. This work has a preface by Baxter, who says the author is an independent whom he has never met, and the natural interpretation of *RB* III p 157 is that Baxter had met Humfrey. The attribution must therefore be questioned.

*Paulus redivivus: or, Speculum speculativum euaggeliou. Or, The two covenants of works and grace and the three administrations of the covenant of grace, the Old Testament, and the New Testament, or the Kingdom of the Stone: and the third administration of grace, being the kingdom and reign of Christ with saints a 1000 years on earth, being the administration of grace under the mountain: or, the new world or state before the final glory. Being the true and apostolical belief, in opposition to the antichristian, papistical, and socinian gospel; wherein the whole doctrine of the covenant of free grace, with a scheam of the false gospel, is summarily declared, and evinced in a few sheets. With a short discourse about infant baptism ... With a narrative of the new world, with its king and kingdom.*

(1680) Wing Number: H3699

The cover says the author is John Humphreys, ie John Humphreys , b. 1637.

*Symbole, sive Conflictus cum antichristo: or, Reflections upon, and an answer to Mr. No-bodies dialogue feigned between an old Q Elizabeth Protestant, and his neighbour, as far as the writings and person of John Humphries, are therein abused and calumniated through the malice of a second Bo-peep author. Wherein falsely and maliciously he is made a papist by Mr. Momus that lies hid in the belly of the Trojan horse; with a parallel of the principles of a papist and a true Protestant, and a brief confession of the faith of the author.*

(1681) Wing Number: H3711

Signed Jo. Humphryes. It should be attributed to John Humphreys , b. 1637.

*A modest and peaceable inquiry into the design and nature of some of those historical mistakes that are found in Dr. Stillingleet's preface to his Unreasonableness of separation wherein the innocency of Protestant dissenters is cleared up and vindicated from the indecent censures of the doctor*

(1681) Wing number: H3694

Said to be by Humfrey and Stephen Lobb in EEBO's full record, and by Richard Greaves's article in ODNB. However, the cover gives the author as N. B., Lobb's final

initials, and Lobb writes as though he were the only author of it in *A Reply to the Defence of Dr Stillingfleet* p 1. It should probably be attributed to Stephen Lobb.

*Catalogus librorum bibliothecae Joannis Humphry Nuper de rowell in comitatu Northamtoniensi, cum aliis eruditorum virorum libris. Horum auctio habebitur Londini 4to die Decembris, 1682. AEdibus Jonathanis Miles, vulgo dicto Jonathan's Coffee-House in Exchange-Alley Cornhill, over against he Royal-Exchange. With French and Italian Books. And many curious manuscripts in vellam, &c. By William Cooper.*

(1682) Wing Number: H3674

Attributed to Humfrey by Wing, William Cooper by EEBO. The cover attributes it to Cooper, and Wing's attribution is incorrect. Humfrey is unlikely to be the owner of the library being auctioned, having no known connection with Rowell in Northants, and being unlikely to sell his books at a time when he was writing actively.

**Appendix II: Chronological Table of Comprehension Proposals  
Described in this Thesis**

1656	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ussher, <i>Reduction of Episcopacie Unto the Form of Synodical Government</i> (Gauden's edition, Wing U216)</li> <li>2. Ussher, <i>Reduction of Episcopacie Unto the Form of Synodical Government</i> (Bernard's edition, Wing U217)</li> </ol>
1657	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ussher, <i>Reduction of Episcopacie Unto the Form of Synodical Government</i> (in Bernard's <i>The Judgement of the late Arch-bishop of Armagh, and Primate of Ireland</i> [Wing U187])</li> </ol>
1658	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ussher, <i>Reduction of Episcopacie Unto the Form of Synodical Government</i> (in Bernard's <i>The Judgement of the late Arch-bishop of Armagh, and Primate of Ireland</i> [2nd edition Wing U188])</li> </ol>
1659	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. E. F., <i>Englands Deplorable Condition. and its Remedy</i> (Wing F18)</li> <li>2. Udall, Ephraim <i>The Bishop of Armaghe's direction, concerning the liturgy, and episcopall government. Being thereunto requested by the honourable, the House of Commons</i> (Reprint of 1642 edition, Wing U5)</li> </ol>
1660	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gauden, John <i>A sermon preached in the Temple-chappel, at the funeral of the Right Reverend Father in God, Dr. Brounrig</i> (Wing G371)</li> <li>2. ———— <i>A sermon preached in St. Pauls Church London ... February 28, 1659 being a day of solemn thanksgiving unto God for restoring of the excluded members of Parliament to the House of Commons</i> (Wing G370)</li> <li>3. ———— <i>Kakourgoi sive medicastri: Slight healers of public hurts</i> (Reprint of No 2 with different title, Wing G361)</li> <li>4. ———— <i>Megaleia theou, Gods great demonstrations and demands of iustice, mercy, and humility set forth in a sermon preached before the Honourable House of Commons, at their solemn fast, before their first suting, April 30, 1660</i> (Wing G364)</li> <li>5. Morice, Sir William, <i>Coena quasi koinh: or, The common right to the Lords Supper asserted wherein that question is fully stated. The second edition enlarged</i> (Wing M2763)</li> <li>6. Anon, <i>The Army's Declaration: Being a True Alarum in Answer to a False and Fiery One...</i> (Wing A3712A)</li> <li>7. Anon, <i>Expedients for publique peace. Shewing the necessity of a national union and the way to it in this time of danger</i> (Wing E3887)</li> <li>8. Philalathes, Salem <i>The moderate Independent proposing a word in season to the gathered churches, the Episcopal and Presbyterian parties tending to their humiliation for what is past, to be reconciled to each other for the time to come, and joyntly to acquiesse in the determinations of this present Parliament, as to the government of church &amp; state</i> (Wing M2325)</li> <li>9. Anon <i>Councill humbly propounded for the speedy settlement of these long disturbed nations. Wherein is offered such a King, such a church-government, such liberty for tender consciences, as that the royalist, Presbyterian, and persons of different judgements (the three great interests of our nations) may acquiesse in</i> (Wing C6515)</li> <li>10. Person of quality and of a publick spirit, <i>Three letters of publick concernment as to the present affairs</i> (Wing T1097)</li> </ol> <p align="center">1660 CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE</p>

<p>1660 Cont.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. Ussher, James <i>The reduction of episcopacie unto the form of synodical government received in the ancient church proposed as an expedient for the compremising of the now differences and the preventing of such troubles that may arise about the matter of church government</i> (Reprint of Gauden's 1656 edition, Wing U220)</li> <li>12. Udall, Ephraim <i>The Bishop of Armagh's direction, concerning the lyurgy, and episcopall government Being thereunto requested by the Honourable, the House of Commons</i> (Another reprint of 1642 edition, Wing U5A)</li> <li>13. ————— <i>The Bishop of Armagh's direction, concerning the lyurgy, and episcopall government Being thereunto requested by the Honourable, the House of Commons</i> (Another reprint of 1642 edition, Wing U5B)</li> <li>14. Lawson, George <i>Politica sacra &amp; civilis: or, A modell of civil and ecclesiasticall government... The first part</i> (Wing L710)</li> <li>15. Prynne, William <i>The unbishoping of Timothy and Titus, and of the angel of the church of Ephesus, or, A brief elaborate discourse, proving Timothy and the angel to be no first, sole, or diocesan bishop of Ephesus, nor Titus of Crete and that the power of ordination, or imposition of hands, belongs jure divino to prebyters, as well as to bishops, and not to bishops only</i> (Enlarged edition of 1636 title, Wing P4119)</li> <li>16. Stuart, Charles III <i>His Majesties declaration to all his loving subjects of his kingdom of England and dominion of Wales concerning ecclesiastical affairs</i> (Wing C2997)</li> <li>17. ————— <i>A Declaration to all his majesties loving subjects, for the settling of church-government, and his gracious resolution touching the liberty of tender consciences, the signing of infants with the Sign of the Crofs; the bowing to the Name of Jesus; the use of the surplice; and none to suffer in the least degree for wearing or not wearing it Also, that no bishop shall ordain, or exercise any part of jurisdiction, which appertains to the censures of the church, without the advice and assistance of the Presbyters</i> (Unofficial reprint of No 15, Wing C3002A)</li> </ol>
<p>1661</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prynne, William <i>The unbishoping of Timothy and Titus, and of the angel of the church of Ephesus, or, A brief elaborate discourse, proving Timothy and the angel to be no first, sole, or diocesan bishop of Ephesus, nor Titus of Crete and that the power of ordination, or imposition of hands, belongs jure divino to prebyters, as well as to bishops, and not to bishops only</i> (Second edition of 1660 edition, Wing P4120)</li> <li>2. ————— <i>A short sober pacific examination of some exuberances in, and ceremonial appurtenances to the Common prayer</i> (Wing P4081)</li> <li>3. Countrey minister <i>Terms of accomodation, between those of the Episcopall, and their brethren of the Presbyterian perswasions... humbly presented to the consideration of His Majesty, and both Houses of Parliament</i> (Wing T756)<sup>1</sup></li> <li>4. Baxter, Richard <i>An accompt of all the proceedings of the Commissioners of both perswasions, appointed by his sacred Majesty, according to letters patents, for the reveiw [sic] of The book of common prayer</i> (Wing B1176)</li> <li>5. ————— <i>An accompt of all the proceedings of the commissioners of both perswasions appointed by His Sacred Majesty, according to letters patent, for the review of the Book of common prayer</i> Second edition of No 3 above, with corrected title and prefaced by a letter to the King (Wing B1177)</li> </ol> <p style="text-align: center;">1661 CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE</p>

<sup>1</sup> This title came to my attention too late to be discussed in the text, but is listed here for the sake of completeness. It is wholly concerned with moderation of episcopacy, and endeavours to show that the plan in the Gracious Declaration is not contrary to the principles of either episcopalians or presbyterians.

1661 Cont	<p>6. ————— <i>The grand debate between the most reverend bishops and the Presbyterian divines appointed by His Sacred Majesty as commissioners for the review and alteration of the Book of common prayer, &amp;c. : being an exact account of their whole proceedings : the most perfect copy (Wing B1278A Reel 370:11b)</i></p> <p>7. ————— <i>The grand debate between the most reverend bishops and the Presbyterian divines appointed by His Sacred Majesty as commissioners for the review and alteration of the Book of common prayer, &amp;c. : being an exact account of their whole proceedings : the most perfect copy (Different printing, Wing B1278A Reel 416:11)</i></p> <p>8. ————— <i>The grand debate between the most reverend bishops and the Presbyterian divines appointed by His Sacred Majesty as commissioners for the review and alteration of the Book of common prayer, &amp;c. : being an exact account of their whole proceedings : the most perfect copy (Different printing, Wing B1278A Reel 1518:08)</i></p> <p>9. ————— <i>A petition for peace with the reformation of the liturgy. As it was presented to the right reverend bishops, by the divines appointed by His Majesties commission to treat with them about the alteration of it (Wing B1342)</i></p> <p>10. ————— <i>A petition for peace with the reformation of the liturgy. As it was presented to the right reverend bishops, by the divines appointed by His Majesties commission to treat with them about the alteration of it (Second edition, Wing B1343)</i></p> <p>11. Anon <i>The Due account and humble petition of the ministers of the Gospel, lately commissioned for the review and alteration of the liturgy to His Majesty (Wing D2440)</i></p> <p>12. Anon <i>To the Kings most excellent Majesty. The due account, and humble petition of the ministers of the Gospel, lately commissioned for the review &amp; alteration of the liturgy (Wing T1498A, Second edition T1499A)</i></p>
1662	1. Lytler, Richard <i>The Reformed Presbyterian (Wing L3573)</i>
1663	
1664	
1665	
1666	
1667	<p>1. Humfrey, John <i>A proposition for the safety and happiness of the King and kingdom both in church and state, and prevention of the common enemy tendered to the consideration of His Majesty and the Parliament against the tenth of October by a lover of sincerity and peace (Wing J601)</i></p> <p>2. ————— <i>A proposition for the safety and happiness of the King and kingdom both in church and state, and prevention of the common enemy tendered to the consideration of His Majesty and the Parliament against the tenth of October by a lover of sincerity and peace (Second edition Wing J602)</i></p> <p>3. ————— <i>A defence of the proposition or, some reasons rendred why the nonconformist-minister who comes to his parish-church and common-prayer, cannot yet yeeld to other things that are enjoyned, without some moderation (Wing H3676)</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;">1667 CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE</p>

1667 Cont.	4. Corbet, John <i>A discourse of the religion of England asserting, that reformed Christianity settled in its due latitude, is the stability and advancement of this kingdom</i> (Wing C6252)
1668	
1669	1. Humfrey, John <i>A case of conscience... also a peaceable dissertation, by way of composition with some late papers, entituled, Liberty of conscience, in order to the determining the magistrates power in matters of religion</i> (Wing H3673)
1670	
1671	
1672	<p>1. Humfrey, John <i>The authority of the magistrate about religion discussed in a rebuke to the preface of a late book of Bishop Bramhalls, being a confutation of that mishapen tenent, of the magistrates authority over the conscience in the matters of religion, and better asserting of his authority ecclesiastical, by dividing aright between the use of his sword about religious affairs, and tenderness towards mens consciences : and also for vindication of the grateful receivers of His Majesties late gracious declaration, against his and others aspersion</i> (Wing H3669)</p> <p>2. Anon <i>The grounds of unity in religion</i> (Wing G2144)</p> <p>3. Philaletheseirenes <i>Indulgence not to be refused, comprehension humbly desired, the churche's peace earnestly endeavoured</i> (Wing I154)</p> <p>4. Baxter, Richard <i>Sacrilegious desertion of the holy ministry rebuked, and tolerated preaching of the gospel vindicated, against the reasonings of a confident questionist, in a book called Toleration not abused</i> (Wing B1380)</p>
1673	<p>1. Philaletheseirenes <i>Indulgence not to be refused, comprehension humbly desired, the churche's peace earnestly endeavoured</i> (Second edition, Wing I155)</p> <p>2. Humfrey, John <i>Comprehension promoted. Whether there be not as much reason, in regard to the ease of the most sober consciences, to take away the subscription in the Act of Uniformity, as well as the declaration of assent and consent?</i> (Wing H3675)</p> <p>3. ————— <i>Comprehension with indulgence</i> (Wing H3675A)</p>
1674	1. Anon <i>A plea for the non-conformists tending to justify them against the clamorous charge of schisme. By a Dr. of Divinity. With two sheets on the same subject by another Hand and Judgement</i> (Wing H3703A)
1675	<p>1. Croft, Herbert <i>The naked truth, or, The true state of the primitive church by an humble moderator</i> (Wing C6970)</p> <p>2. Humfrey, John <i>The peaceable design being a modest account of the non-conformist's meetings : with some of their reasons for nonconformity, and the way of accomodation in the matter of religion, humbly proposed to publick consideration by some ministers of London against the sitting of Parliament in the year 1675</i> (Wing H3701; contains edited versions of Nos 3 and 4 below)</p> <p>3. ————— <i>Comprehension Promoted</i> (Wing H3701)</p> <p>4. ————— <i>Comprehension with Indulgence</i> (Wing H3701)</p>
1676	
1677	

1678	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Humfrey, John <i>The healing paper or, A Catholick receipt for union between the moderate bishop &amp; sober non-conformist, maugre all the aversation of the unpeaceable by a follower of peace, and lover of sincerity</i> (Wing H3680)</li> <li>2. ————— <i>The nonconformists relief prepared against the sessions of the next justices in London or in the country by a follower of peace, and lover of sincerity</i> (Wing H3695)</li> </ol>
1679	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ussher, James <i>Episcopal and Presbyterial government conjoyned proposed as an expedient for the compremising of the differences, and preventing of those troubles about the matter of Church-Government</i> (Reprint of 1660 edition, Wing U175)</li> <li>2. Ent, George <i>The grounds of unity in religion</i> (Wing E3137)</li> <li>3. Gentleman of the Middle Temple <i>The grounds of unity in religion</i> (Wing G2145)</li> <li>4. Anon <i>A proposal of union amongst Protestants, from the last-will of the most Reverend Doctor Sands sometime Archbishop of York (as the sentiment of the first reformers) humbly presented to the Parliament</i> (Wing P3709A)</li> </ol>
1680	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Croft, Herbert <i>Naked truth, the first part, or, The true state of the primitive church by an humble moderator</i> (Reprint of 1675 edition, Wing C6971)</li> <li>2. Hughes, William <i>An endeavor for peace among Protestants earnestly recommended and humbly submitted to Christian consideration</i> (Wing H3341)</li> <li>3. Humfrey, John <i>A specimen of a bill for uniting the Protestants being a rough draught of such terms, as seem equal for the conformist to grant, and the non-conformist to yield to, for peace sake; provided a good while, and published thus by it self, on purpose only for the farther, better and more easy consideration of the Parliament</i> (Wing S4843)</li> <li>4. ————— <i>A peaceable resolution of conscience touching our present impositions... and for compliance with the laws, so far as may be in order to union. With a draught, or speciment of a bill for accomodation</i> (Wing H3703)</li> </ol>
1681	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stillingfleet, Edward <i>The unreasonableness of separation</i> (Wing S5675)</li> <li>2. ————— <i>The unreasonableness of separation</i> (Second edition, Wing S5676)</li> <li>3. Humfrey, John <i>Materials for union proposed to publick consideration, with indifferency to all parties</i> (Wing H3685); also found in</li> <li>4. Lobb, Stephen et al <i>A reply to the defence of Dr. Stillingfleet being a counter plot for union between the Protestants</i> (Wing H3706)</li> <li>5. Conformist minister in the country <i>Reflections on Dr. Stillingfleet's book of the unreasonableness of separation by a conformist minister in the country, in order to peace</i> (Wing R696)</li> </ol>
1682	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Stillingfleet, Edward <i>The unreasonableness of separation</i> (Third edition, Wing S5677)</li> <li>2. Humfrey, John <i>An answer to Dr. Stillingfleet's book of The unreasonableness of separation so far as it concerns The peaceable designe</i> (Wing H3667)</li> <li>3. Lobb, Stephen et al <i>A reply to the defence of Dr. Stillingfleet being a counter plot for union between the Protestants</i> (Second edition, Wing H3707)</li> <li>4. Polhill, Edward <i>The Samaritan shewing that many and unnecessary impositions are not the oyl that must heal the church together with the way or means to do it</i> (Wing P2756)</li> <li>5. Wettenhall, Edward <i>The Protestant Peace-maker</i> (Wing W1513)</li> </ol>

1683	
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1688	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Johnson, Samuel <i>The way to peace amongst all Protestants</i> (Wing J847A)</li> <li>2. Shower, John <i>Exhortation to Repentance and Union among Protestants</i> (Wing S3663)</li> </ol>
1689	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. M. M. <i>A letter from the member of Parliament in answer to the letter of the divine concerning the bill for uniting Protestants</i> (Wing M56)</li> <li>2. Clarkson, David <i>Primitive episcopacy, evincing from scripture and ancient records that a bishop in the Apostles times, and for the space of the first three centuries of the Gospel-Church, was no more than a pastor to one single church or congregation</i> (Wing C4577)</li> <li>3. ———— <i>A discourse concerning liturgies</i> (Wing C4572)</li> <li>4. Rule, Gilbert <i>A rational defence of non-conformity... and the way to union among Protestants</i> (Wing R2224)</li> <li>5. Baxter, Richard <i>The English Nonconformity, as under King Charles II and King James II truly stated and argued</i> (Wing B1259)</li> <li>6. Ussher, James <i>The reduction of episcopacie unto the form of synodical government received in the ancient church proposed as an expedient for the compromising of the now differences and the preventing of such troubles that may arise about the matter of church government</i> (Wing U220)</li> <li>7. Croft, Herbert <i>The naked truth, or, The true state of the primitive church... said to be the Right Reverend Father in God Herbert, Lord Bishop of Hereford</i> (Wing C6972)</li> <li>8. Anon <i>Proposals tender'd to the consideration of both Houses of Parliament for uniting the Protestant interest</i> (Wing S5621; Contains Nos 9 and 10 below)</li> <li>9. Stuart, Charles III <i>His Majesties declaration to all his loving subjects of his kingdom of England and dominion of Wales concerning ecclesiastical affairs</i> (Reprint of 1660 edition, Wing S5621)</li> <li>10. Humfrey, John <i>A specimen of a bill for uniting the Protestants</i> (Reprint of 1680 edition, Wing S5621)</li> <li>11. ———— <i>The Amicable reconciliation of the dissenters to the Church of England being a model or draught for the universal accommodation in the case of religion and the bringing in all parties to her communion...</i> (Wing A3011)</li> <li>12. ———— <i>The healing attempt being a representation of the government of the Church of England, according to the judgment of her bishops unto the end of Q. Elizabeths reign, humbly tendred to the consideration of the thirty commissioned for a consult about ecclesiastical affairs in order to a comprehension, and published in hopes of such a moderation of episcopacy, that the power be kept within the line of our first reformers, and the exercise of it reduced to the model of Arch-Bishop Usher</i> (Wing H3679)</li> </ol>

1689 CONTINUES ON NEXT PAGE



1689 Cont.	<p>13. Humfrey, John <i>The Mystery of Iniquity Working in the Dividing of Protestants</i> (Wing M3186, contains No 14 below)</p> <p>14. ————— <i>A specimen of a bill for uniting the Protestants</i> (Reprint of 1680 edition, Wing M3186)</p> <p>15. ————— <i>King William's Toleration</i> (Wing K580)</p> <p>16. Minister of the Church of England <i>Several arguments for concessions and alterations in the common prayer, and in the rites and ceremonies of the Church of England in order to a comprehension</i> (Wing S2752)</p> <p>17. Wake, William <i>An exhortation to mutual charity and union among Protestants</i> (Wing W242)</p>
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