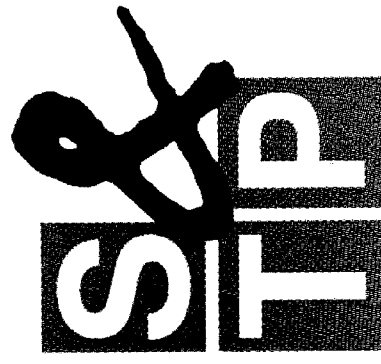
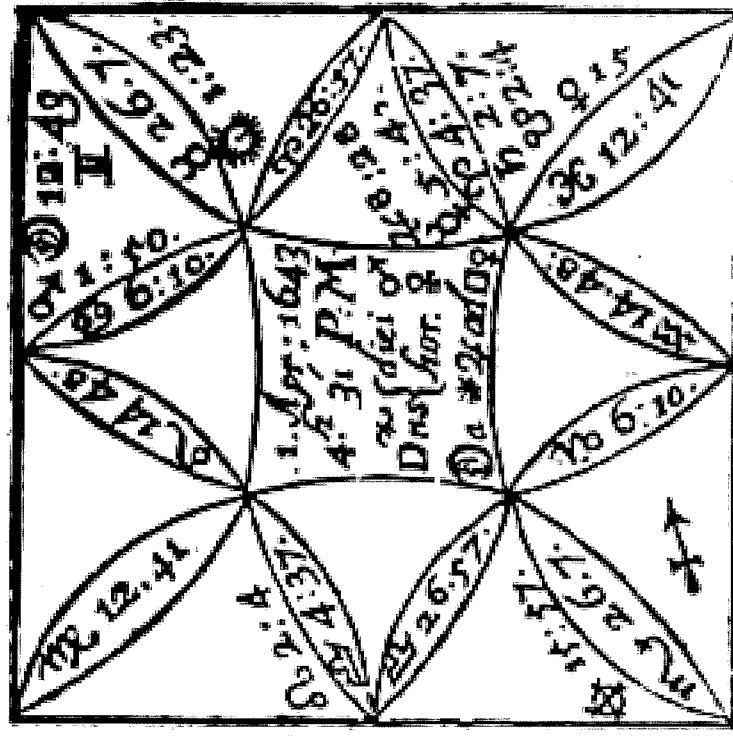


Sciences et Techniques  
en Perspective  
II<sup>e</sup> série, vol. 16, fascicule 2, 2014



Vittoria FEOLA (Editor)

*Antiquarianism and Science in  
Early Modern Urban Networks*



*Erfindung der Landschaft. Kosmografie und Landschaftskunst im Zeitalter Bruegels*, Göttingen, Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 2000, 128.

<sup>66</sup>Bakker J.A., "Lucas de Heere's Stonehenge", *Antiquity*, 53, 1979, 107-11.

<sup>67</sup>*Beschryvinghe*, fol. 36r : 'Zoo Icke selve ter plaetsen uut gheteckent hebbe'.

<sup>68</sup>M. Pitts, 'Stonehenge', in *Making History*, 2007, 227-34.

<sup>69</sup>On Stonehenge and its reception see also Hutton R., *The Druids*, Hambledon, Continuum, 2008.

<sup>70</sup>*Beschryvinghe*, fol. 36v : "Dese voorgaende steenen zyn ruyd onghelouwen, van herde quade stoffen : grau van verwen. Zy zyn meest al ontrent 18. oft 20 voeten hooghe ende ontrent 8 voeten breed, overall vier syden (want zy zyn viercant. Zy staen twee en twee, hebben elcke koppel een dwerse steen, als een ghalghe welcken steen hopen heeft, vatende twee steenen pinnen van de twee rechtop-staende steenen. Daer schynen dry rancken van deze steenen gheweest t'hebbende, waer af de grootste ontrent dry hondert voeten int ronde begrypt. Dan zy zyn meestal vervallen. Men vindt hier ontrent veel cleyn heuvelkins oft berghelkins, waer onder men somtyts vindt ruesen beenen (daer af ick een hebbe waer uut men lichtelick spueren kan dat den Reuse wel Xij voeten hooghe was ghelycker ooc te Londen ende elders zyn die grooter syn [sic] ende oude stucken van harnasch van capiteynen die daer hebben begraven gheweest. Daer is oock by te siene een aerden bolwerck ghemaect voortyds by de Romaynen op haer manniere".

<sup>71</sup>Bakker J.A., *Antiquity*, "Lucas de Heere's Stonehenge", *Antiquity*, 53, 1979, 107-11; Kendrick T.D., *British Antiquity*, London, Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1950, VII.

<sup>72</sup>Denhaene G., "Un témoignage de l'intérêt des humanistes flamands pour les gravures italiennes : une lettre de Philippe van Winghe à Abraham Ortelius", *Bulletin de l'Institut Historique Belge de Rome*, 62, 1992, 69-137. Meganck T.L., *Erudite Eyes. Artists and Antiquarians in the Circle of Abraham Ortelius (1527-1598)*, PhD Dissertation, Princeton University, 2003, 90-4.

<sup>73</sup>Codex Nouv. Acq. Lat. 2343, fols. 28-29; Schuddeboom C., *Philips van Winghe (1560-1592) en het Ontstaan van de Christelijke Archeologie*, PhD Dissertation, Leiden University, 1996, 73-85.

<sup>74</sup>Sorgeloos, "Wenceslas Cobergher, Théodore Galle, une reliure turque : l'album amicorum de Denis de Villers (d. 1620), chanoine de Tournai" in *E. Codicibus Impressisque*. Opstellen over het boek in de Lage landen voor Elly Cockx-Indestege, Band III : Papier. Verzamelaars en Verzamelingen, Leuven : Peeters, 2004, 199-216.

<sup>75</sup>Epistulae Ortelianae, 215. On the discussion of fossil bones in England and the Low Countries, see Harkness D.E., *The Jewel House. Elisabethan London and the Scientific Revolution*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2007, 41.

<sup>76</sup>Schuddeboom C., *Philips van Winghe (1560-1592) en het Ontstaan van de Christelijke Archeologie*, PhD Dissertation, Leiden University, 1996, 73-85.

<sup>77</sup>Camden, 1600, 219.

<sup>78</sup>Schuddeboom, 1996, 86-99.

<sup>79</sup>Schuddeboom, 1996, 66-70.

<sup>80</sup>Miller P.N., "The Antiquary's Art of Comparison : Peiresc and Abraxas", R. Häfner (ed.), *Philologie und Erkenntnis. Beiträge zu begriff und Problem frühzeitlicher 'Philologie'*, Tübingen, Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2001, 57-94.

<sup>81</sup>Swan M., *Curiosities and Texts : the Culture of Collecting in Early Modern England*, Philadelphia, The University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001.

## THE RANTERS AND THEIR SOURCES : THE QUESTION OF JACOB BOEHME'S SUPPOSED INFLUENCE

Ariel Hessayon\*

In *Fear, Myth and History. The Ranters and the historians* J.C. Davis claimed that 'the Ranters did not exist either as a small group of like-minded individuals, as a sect, or as a large-scale, middle-scale or small movement'. Indeed, he insisted that there was 'no Ranter movement, no Ranter sect, no Ranter theology'<sup>1</sup>. It is unfortunate that the Ranters have generally been better served by literary critics than by their historians<sup>2</sup>. But this is not the place for a belated rejoinder to what was in retrospect a fierce if inconclusive debate that generated a great deal more heat than light<sup>3</sup>. All the same, it must be acknowledged that its most enduring legacy was destructive rather than constructive : concerns, given the problematic nature of the evidence, that it may prove impossible to establish the Ranters' existence to everyone's satisfaction. Yet for all its faults, in the furore generated by his book it has mostly been ignored by Davis's critics that parts of his argument are persuasive, and that some of what he said is correct. Davis was right, for example, to warn against taking Lawrence Clarkson's autobiography *The lost sheep found* (1660) or polemics by Baptists, Quakers and Muggletonians at face value. Likewise, several pamphlet and newsbook accounts of 'Ranters' were either completely fictional or mostly invented<sup>4</sup>. The majority, however, mention names that can be corroborated from court records and seem to accurately reflect charges brought against the accused. The term Ranter should therefore be used cautiously to indicate hostile yet shifting contemporary attitudes towards

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\*\* I am deeply grateful to the Panacea Society for generously funding my research. Earlier versions of this paper were read – either in whole or as part of a broader survey of Boehme's reception during the English Revolution – at conferences held at Cambridge and Oxford University, as well as at an Institute of Historical Research seminar. I would like to thank the participants for their helpful comments and suggestions. In addition, I have profited from the advice of David Finnegan, Diego Lucci and Leigh Penman. Place of publication, where known and unless otherwise stated, is London. The year is taken to begin on 1 January and English dates are 'old style'. I alone am responsible for any mistakes or shortcomings.

individuals who normally knew each other (usually through conventicles, Baptist congregations or as members of spiritual communities); believed themselves to have been liberated from, or passed beyond, the outward observance of gospel ordinances; maintained that all things sprang from God and that God was in all living things; espoused similar theological notions that were regarded as blasphemous, especially that sin was imaginary and that to the pure all things are pure; justified transgressive sexual behaviour, drunkenness and cursing through scriptural precedents and perverse interpretations; demanded that Christians fulfil their charitable obligations by giving to the poor, sick and hungry; and enacted shocking gestures as prophetic warnings of the impending Day of Judgement. While none of this was exclusive to the Ranters, and while there was no Ranter archetype that conformed precisely to all aspects of this characterisation, collectively it embodies the central features of their perceived ideas, outward conduct and self-fashioned identities.

To rant means to talk or declaim in an extravagant or hyperbolic manner; or to speak furiously. During the Parliamentary campaign in Ireland, Oliver Cromwell referred in a letter of 14 November 1649 to 'great ranters' among the enemy between Dublin and Wexford, which his nineteenth-century editor Thomas Carlyle took to mean braggarts. This usage, though unusual, indicates that the noun *ranter* then described a way of speaking<sup>5</sup>. In early 1650 the Digger leader Gerrard Winstanley warned women to beware of the '*ranting crew*', refuting the accusation that 'the Digging practises, leads to the *Ranting* principles'. Significantly, his pamphlets contain the earliest known use of the words 'Ranter' and 'Ranting' in the sense of a sect and their activities<sup>6</sup>. Afterwards, 'Ranters', together with its variants 'Raunters', 'Rantors' and 'Rantipoler', appears in several newsbooks and other sources from late June 1650,<sup>7</sup> while 'ranting' occurs in newsbooks and sermons from early August<sup>8</sup>. In addition, 'Rantism' was used from 1653,<sup>9</sup> as was 'Ranterism'<sup>10</sup>. As for those called Ranters by their contemporaries, and of whose existence we can be confident, it must be stressed that there are noticeable discrepancies in how this pejorative label was employed and no consensus as to its exact meaning. On the one hand there was, to borrow from J.H. Hexter's memorable critique of Christopher Hill, lumping: uninformed polemicists tended to invent, exaggerate and conflate for self-serving ends. On the other, an impulse for splitting: former co-religionists and opponents within the same milieu were anxious to disassociate themselves from the Ranters by accentuating doctrinal and behavioural differences. Indeed, by imputing a set of odious characteristics onto those designated Ranters, the person adopting the term often unwittingly revealed something about his – or very occasionally her – own anxieties. Nevertheless, the Leicester shoemaker Jacob Bothumley (1613-1692)<sup>11</sup>,

the preacher, polemicist and sectary Lawrence Clarkson (c.1615-1667?)<sup>12</sup>, the Presbyterian preacher turned notorious Baptist Abiezer Coppe (1619-1672?)<sup>13</sup>, the former army chaplain Joseph Salmon (fl.1647-fl.1656)<sup>14</sup>, the minister Thomas Webbe (c.1625-fl.1651)<sup>15</sup>, the preacher Andrew Wyke (fl.1645-fl.1663)<sup>16</sup>, and the anonymous author of *A Justification of the Mad Crew* (1650) were all considered Ranters during particular phases of their lives<sup>17</sup>. Coppe, Clarkson and, to a lesser extent, Salmon and Bothumley, were acknowledged by polemicists and subsequently several Quakers as their ringleaders.

Although the surviving evidence is uneven, the most plausible explanation for the Ranters' origins is to conceive of it as polygenetic rather than monogenetic; that is, they had multiple instead of singular beginnings<sup>18</sup>. Those who became prominent Ranters came from different parts of the country, were of low social status, either relatively poor or of modest means and, with the exception of Coppe, autodidacts. What they shared in common was their religious background, which tended to be marked by the zealous devotion characteristic of puritanism. When these men became Ranters their skilled preaching attracted crowds, thereby enabling them to gather what was most likely a handful of committed disciples<sup>19</sup>. Among their hearers were probably Independents and Baptists who had left their congregations questioning the legitimacy of church fellowship and the validity of outward ordinances such as baptism; those whom heresiographers categorised as a new sect of 'Seekers' eagerly awaiting a return to the primitive Christianity of the Apostles. This process, which may have been reinforced through the publication and distribution of their writings, partially accounts for the rapid emergence of the Ranters at a moment of heightened apocalyptic speculation. It also resembles, albeit in miniature, traditional versions of Quaker origins which emphasise how George Fox and other pioneer evangelists harvested support for their message from pre-existing communities of Independents, Baptists and so-called Seekers. Marked variations notwithstanding, it is therefore probably best to conceptualise the Ranters as an assortment of spiritual and temporal communities, sometimes overlapping and given added cohesion by their adversaries.

Just as the Ranters have received a great deal of scholarly attention so too has another important question: the extent of continental influences on English puritanism and religious radicalism in particular. Hence the German Lutheran mystic Jacob Boehme (1575-1624), also known as 'Teutonicus Philosophus' among his admirers, has occasionally been seen as a notable forerunner of Quakerism. Between 1645 and 1662 most of Boehme's treatises and the majority of his letters were printed in English translation at London. Moreover, two shorter pieces were rendered from English into Welsh by Morgan Llwyd of Gwynedd in 1655.<sup>20</sup> Boeh-

me's followers maintained that Charles I had initially been the main patron of this venture and that after the Restoration the remaining works of the Teutonic Philosopher were brought out under the auspices of Philip Herbert, fifth Earl of Pembroke. In their eyes this tradition of royal and aristocratic support gave the undertaking prestige. Yet it also simplifies developments, obscuring the involvement of a number of people with common aims. Actually there were three overlapping phases<sup>21</sup>. Initially several individuals with knowledge of Latin or German received abstracts of Boehme's teachings or selected treatises from their associates in Amsterdam. Then manuscript translations were made from German and Latin versions of works published at Amsterdam, as well as from copies of the original texts. These circulated privately in much the same way as had the writings of the German-Dutch mystic Hendrik Niclaes (1502?-c.1580) and other prominent members of his heretical sect known as the Family of Love. Finally there was an organized scheme for publishing the extant corpus. While some of the cost was met by the translators themselves, it is clear that Samuel Hartlib, a Prussian émigré resident in London since 1628, and members of his circle acted as intermediaries by using agents to purchase books, subsequently shipping them to England.

As is well known, Hartlib's circle promoted reconciliation between the Protestant churches and planned to establish a University in London with a College for Oriental studies to assist with the conversion of the Jews. They also advocated educational and medical reform as well as disseminating the Moravian exile Johannes Amos Comenius's theories concerning universal knowledge (pansophy) and the importance of translation as a first step towards establishing communication through a common tongue<sup>22</sup>. Although it had gone unheeded by many of his compatriots, Boehme's announcement of the dawn of a new reformation thus chimed with their vision of universal reformation. Similarly, Boehme's principal English translator, the barrister and linguist John Sparrow (1615-1670), had hoped his public-spirited efforts would be rewarded with the settlement of religious controversies and the disappearance of sects and heresies. It was, however, to prove a vain hope for instead of the promised 'Day of Pentecost', when the 'true sense and meaning of all Languages' would be united into one tongue, there was a new Babel<sup>23</sup>. Indeed, Boehme's readers responded in largely unforeseen ways: sometimes with enthusiasm but on other occasions with exasperation, ambivalence and even revulsion. A handful were convicted of blasphemy, others formed spiritual communities, while others still fulminated against what they regarded as Boehme's incomprehensible nonsense and vile falsehoods.

All the same, as I am in the process of suggesting elsewhere, engagement with Boehme's teachings was more extensive at this crucial moment in English history

than has usually been recognised<sup>24</sup>. The contribution of various intermediaries, patrons, translators, biographers, printers, publishers and booksellers was crucial in facilitating the project through which his texts were copied, rendered into English, issued and transmitted. Furthermore, uncovering the translators' social networks has disclosed their ties through kinship and friendship, as well as shared professional and commercial interests. Indeed, these extensive connections, which included sympathetic publishers, largely explains why Boehme's works were acquired so readily in printed English translations and later selectively rendered into Welsh.

Taken together, evidence from law suits, advertisements, auction catalogues and commonplace books gives some indication of the sale price of Boehme's books, while marketability is indicated by their inclusion in *A Catalogue of The most vendible Books in England* (1658) under 'Divinity'<sup>25</sup>. Although it is not possible to determine every buyer, titles by Boehme are recorded in the libraries of a number of Englishmen. Among the most prominent were the antiquary Elias Ashmole; the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth; George Digby, second Earl of Bristol; Benjamin Furly, Quaker merchant of Rotterdam; Samuel Jeake, nonconformist, lawyer and political activist of Rye; Adam Littleton, chaplain to Charles II and headmaster of Westminster school; Henry Oldenburg, secretary of the Royal Society; John Owen, Cromwell's chaplain and afterwards Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University; the diarist Samuel Pepys; the English jurist and Oriental scholar John Selden; the Cambridge Platonist Peter Sterry; the educational reformer John Webster; the Irish alchemist and physician Benjamin Worsley; and John Worthington, Master of Jesus College, Cambridge. Moreover, correspondence, autograph inscriptions and a variety of other sources enable us to add more names – including a handful of women – to the list of people who owned printed works by Boehme in English. Ownership of course is not synonymous with readership, and in the case of some scholars and aristocrats who possessed thousands of books having one or two Boehme titles listed in the auction catalogues of their libraries tells us very little. Nonetheless, more than one hundred seventeenth-century owners and readers have now been identified, ranging from the Civil War army officer John Lambert to the Cambridge Platonist Henry More<sup>26</sup>.

In addition, according to a plausible story related after the Restoration by John Sparrow, it seems that Charles I was given an edition of Boehme's *XL Questions Concerning the Soule* during the period of his confinement by the army in 1647. When asked what he thought of it, the king supposedly replied :



that the Publisher in English seemed to say of the Author, that he was no Scholar, and if he were not, he did believe that the Holy Ghost was now in Men, but if he were a Scholar, it was one of the best Inventions that ever he read<sup>27</sup>.

If true this was just one of a variety of responses, for as noted earlier, Boehme's readers reacted in a range of ways: from passionate engagement to being in two minds; and from frustration to aversion. One important association was the linkage between the Boehme, that 'Father of Nonsense', with the Rosicrucians because like them he was perceived to conceal his unintelligible meaning behind new-fangled barbarous expressions. Significantly, Boehme was also studied by alchemists such as Sir Kenelm Digby and physicians eager to discover the secrets of nature and medicine. As the translator John Ellistone explained in his preface to *The Epistles of Jacob Behmen*, true knowledge of the 'Three Principles' and the 'Threefold' life in man:

must needs advance all Arts and Sciences, and conduces to the attainment of the Universall Tincture, and signature; whereby the different secret qualities, and vertues, that are hid in all visible and corporeall things, as Mettals, Minerals, Plants, and Hearbes, &c. may be drawne forth and applied to their right naturall use for the curing, and healing of corrupt and decayed nature<sup>28</sup>.

Among medical practitioners Boehme appealed to advocates of iatrochemistry – that is physicians who favoured cures manufactured in laboratories over those extracted from naturally occurring substances. They promoted the teachings of physician Paracelsus (1493–1541), often in conjunction with Hermetic philosophy and innovative modifications by Jean Baptiste van Helmont (1577–1644), as a challenge to traditional Galenic medicine. It is also noteworthy that Boehme's publications were promoted in almanacs and read by the famous astrologer William Lilly, who was presented with a copy of Boehme's *The High and Deepe Searching out of The Threefold Life of Man* (1650) by his publisher Humphrey Blunden<sup>29</sup>. This approbation in turn provoked a denunciation of the 'diabolical practises' of 'those subtile Engineirs of Satan the ASTROLOGERS, whose religion is the same with *Jacob Behmens*, the *German-Conjurer*'<sup>30</sup>.

Locating Boehme's readership within a variety of partly overlapping mid-seventeenth century English intellectual circles ranging from several of Hartlib's associates and then a few members of the fledgling Royal Society to certain physicians, alchemists and astrologers, not to mention the so-called Cambridge Platonists is, however, just part of this story. For there is another aspect worth exploring: can the same phenomenon be observed among predominantly self-taught itinerant artisans turned prophets and preachers lower down the social scale? Here the question of Boehme's supposed influence on the Ranters offers a good case study.

Given extensive discussion of the Ranters and, to a lesser extent, the reception of Boehme's writings in the British Isles, it is curious that very little has been written about the Teutonic Philosopher's possible influence on their ideas. Concentrating on the printed texts rather than manuscript letters and reported speech, several scholars have drawn attention to the Ranters' understanding of the nature of God, good and evil; the significance of dualism in their thought; their use of paradox and combination of opposing properties such as light and dark, flesh and spirit; as well as their pantheistic speculation cum nature mysticism. Literary experts, moreover, have followed those contemporaries who remarked on the Ranters' elevated language by focussing on typography, genre, imagery, mimicry, parody, vocabulary and modes of address. Abiezer Coppe for instance expressed heterodox notions partly as parodies of conventional educational texts, displaying a distinctive use of syntax and tone to articulate spiritual experiences and apocalyptic warnings in a unique prophetic style that combined revealing autobiographical fragments with provocative sexual metaphors and exegesis of reworked biblical passages.

Together with these generally acute observations there have been several intriguing though seldom adequately documented assertions concerning certain Ranters' unacknowledged debts to Boehme. Thus Jacob Bothumley has been described by Margaret Bailey as 'a follower of Boehme, although he makes no mention of his master's name' in what Gordon Ellens called his 'Behmenistic' book, *The Light and Dark sides of God* (1650). According to E.P. Thompson, Boehme's influence permeated this work in 'a somewhat-qualified dialectic of the co-existence within God of good and evil principles', while for Joad Raymond Bothumley was 'expounding a Behmenist internalist eschatology'<sup>31</sup>. Turning to Coppe, Ellens noticed that he 'consorted with the Behmenists' in 1649 as did Nigel Smith, who added perceptively that Coppe's language shared some of Boehme's terminology<sup>32</sup>. In the same vein, Brian Gibbons supposed the title of Joseph Salmon's *Heights in Depths and Depths in Heights* (1651) reflected 'one of Boehme's favourite paradoxes'. Gibbons also suggested that Salmon underwent a 'mystical experience' which he recounted 'in terms redolent of Behmenism'<sup>33</sup>. As for Lawrence Clarkson, Wilhelm Struck maintained that he adopted Boehme's notion that in the beginning God had created good and evil and that both had emanated from God<sup>34</sup>. Smith thought that he was 'one of many' who referred to 'a "centre" for the spirit within him' in a manner reminiscent of Boehme, while A.L. Morton noted that Clarkson and Boehme had a common publisher: Giles Calvert. So as Davis appreciated, Clarkson's *A Single Eye All Light, no Darkness* [1650] undoubtedly needs re-examining in light of a growing interest in mysticism during the 1640s and the work of Cardinal Nicholas of Cusa (1401?-1464) and

Boehme in particular<sup>35</sup>.

What has been highlighted here is a problem not restricted to the Ranters: can Boehme's unmediated influence be distinguished from the wider tradition of theosophic and prophetic writing that he epitomised? Furthermore, since the genesis of the Ranters can be dated to about 1648 when Coppe underwent a profound spiritual transformation and their demise to autumn 1651 when he temporarily retreated into silence, their appearance coincided with upheavals in the publishing world. Despite Christopher Hill's claim that the English Revolution was a short-lived age of 'freedom' when relatively cheap and portable printing equipment may have made it easier than ever before for new and sometimes radical ideas to see the light of day, the desire to censor – as is widely recognised – remained in many quarters<sup>36</sup>. Although Boehme's writings were not suppressed (four books were entered in the London Stationers' Register)<sup>37</sup>, the licensing system was then in disarray. Pre-publication censorship, particularly of religious literature, which had been used to increasing effect during the 1630s, became a lost cause after 1641. For in that year the secular court of Star Chamber and the ecclesiastical court of High Commission were abolished by act of Parliament, leading to a disintegration of the London Stationers' Company monopoly. With the collapse of pre-publication censorship the licensing system upon which it had been built became increasingly used to protect the publisher's copyright rather than to indicate official approbation. Despite initial Parliamentary attempts at reasserting control by examining those considered responsible for committing abuses in printing and licensing, and subsequently through legislation, without an equivalent to the Papal Index of prohibited books pre-publication censorship appears to have been almost entirely at the licenser's discretion. As such it was utterly ineffective. Indeed, during the later 1640s and much of the 1650s licensing was characterised by inconsistent practice and the absence of a universally agreed strategy.

Conditions therefore became conducive not only for the production of unprecedented quantities of scandalous, seditious, libellous and blasphemous pamphlets, but also issuing English versions of continental European writings. So much so, that an estimated 32,238 titles were published between 1641 and 1660 within the British Isles or by English speakers elsewhere in the world; that is 25.3% of the total number of such publications between 1475 and 1700.<sup>38</sup> Though the number of English translations printed or reissued during this period has yet to be established<sup>39</sup>, this heterogeneous corpus of material consisted of writings by more than two hundred and twenty non-native authors including texts by or attributed to Greeks, Romans and Church Fathers, as well as alchemists, anti-Trinitarians, astrologers, astronomers, cardinals, geographers, grammarians,

heralds, herbalists, heresiographers, historians, lawyers, librarians, linguists, magicians, millenarians, monarchs, mystics, novelists, occultists, philosophers, physicians, physiognomists, poets, politicians, popes, prophets, satirists, soldiers, theologians and travellers. Added to this were untranslated works that appeared predominantly in the original Latin, but also other languages. This dramatic increase in the number of potential printed sources together with the Ranters' extensive social networks – which expanded as they travelled, preached and congregated – makes it difficult to determine whether they derived their ideas orally or textually. It should also be emphasised that post-publication censorship and a range of severe punishments remained. Doubtless legislation empowering civil and military officials to fine or imprison the authors, printers, publishers and booksellers of unlicensed material prompted strategies to avoid punishment: spurious imprints, anonymity, pseudonymity and varying degrees of self-censorship. Although no Ranter was burned at the stake for heresy, the printed writings of blasphemers and seditious – if not their bodies – were still consigned to the flames in public book burning rituals that resembled Protestant *Autos da Fé* by proxy. Coppe's notorious *A Fiery Flying Roll* (1649), Bothumley's *Light and Dark sides of God*, and Clarkson's *Single Eye* were sentenced to this fate between 1 February and 27 September 1650.<sup>40</sup>

Focussing on the relatively neglected topic of the Ranters' sources therefore offers one avenue out of a regrettable historiographical impasse. Although such an approach runs the risk of repeating the methodology of heresiographers with their beloved sectarian family trees, and although much of the evidence presented here is negative rather than definitive – in the sense of an absence of library catalogues, ownership inscriptions, quotations, paraphrases, allusions, borrowed neologisms, linguistic similarities and pronounced affinities of thought – nonetheless it helps situate the Ranters within the parameters of larger questions touched on above. Firstly, were the heterodox religious movements, communities and individuals that emerged so rapidly during the English Revolution predominantly the product of either a native tradition of militant Protestantism – that is a puritan 'underground' immersed in doctrinal disputes, antinomian experimentation and apocalyptic thinking – or a consequence of the loosely co-ordinated project to translate and disseminate writings by continental European Anabaptists, alchemists, astrologers, mystics, spiritual reformers and radical theologians? Secondly, in those instances where Behmenist resonances can be disentangled from other sources and identified positively, how were his texts received and adapted within contexts for which they had plainly not been intended? Finally, in seeking to demonstrate intellectual influence, has too much emphasis been placed on textual transmission at the expense of more intangible oral diffusion?

There is no mention of Boehme in the extant writings of Bothumley, Clarkson, Coppe, Salmon, Webbe, Wyke, and *A Justification of the Mad Crew*. Nor did contemporaries connect the Ranters with Boehme. Regularly demonised as a lustful, ungodly crew given to all manner of wickedness, the Ranters' allegedly lascivious habits and sinful theatrical antics – cursing, excessive drinking, revelling, roaring, smoking, whoring and parodying of religious ceremonies – were envisaged as a threat to patriarchal norms and societal order, their teachings denounced by Presbyterian moralists and scandalised former co-religionists alike as detestable doctrines inspired by the Devil<sup>41</sup>. Accordingly, many contemporaries perceived them as a horrible, monstrous sect. Some condemnations were modelled upon and positioned within a long line of anti-heretical writing that stretched from Paul, Epiphanius and Augustine to Luther and Calvin. Intemperate, alarmist and often inaccurate, their purpose was to represent doctrinal and behavioural errors as inversions of truths so as to facilitate their extirpation. Constantly alert to precedents, several polemicists also provided the Ranters with a distinctive identity and genealogies that variously linked their blasphemous doctrines and abominable, filthy practises to Adamites, Anabaptists, Atheists, Donatists, the Family of Love, Gnostics, Manicheans, Nicolaitans, Royalists, Simonians and Stoics, as well as the even more fanciful Athians, Clements, Marcious, Seleutians and Shelomethites<sup>42</sup>. Yet unlike the Quakers, with whom they would be associated, there is a significant silence concerning the Ranters' alleged descent from the teachings of Paracelsus, the Spiritualist reformer Valentin Weigel (1533–1588) and Boehme<sup>43</sup>. The closest relationship pamphleteers provided was the presence of Dr. 'Pockridge', 'Pordich' or 'Buckeridge' in two pieces against the Ranters. But these garbled accounts of the physician turned clergyman John Pordage (1607–1681) evidently derive from a tract entitled *A most faithful Relation of Two Wonderful Passages Which happened very lately ... in the Parish of Bradfield* (1650)<sup>44</sup>.

On 8 December 1654 Pordage was found guilty of 'denying the Deity of Christ, and the merit of his blood and passion', condemned as 'Ignorant and very Insufficient for the Work of the Ministry', and ejected out of the rectory of Bradfield, Berkshire<sup>45</sup>. According to Christopher Fowler (1613/14–1677), vicar of St. Mary's, Reading, Pordage had 'entertained ... *Abiezer Copp*, notorious for blasphemy, and *rantisme*' at Bradfield<sup>46</sup>. This was probably in the spring or summer of 1649, after Pordage had been accused of broaching 'new-fangled opinions' such as Hendrick Niclaes's Familist doctrines<sup>47</sup>. Judging from a work by M.P. entitled *The Mystery of the Deity in the Humanity, or, The Mystery of God in Man* (printed for Giles Calvert, 1649) – arguably by Pordage's wife Mary, or another member of his circle Mary Pocock – and from the nature of the blasphemy charge

brought against Pordage on 16 August 1649, it appears that Pordage had begun reading Boehme before or about the time Coppe sought refuge with him. Pordage may therefore have conveyed Behmenist notions to Coppe and it is also possible that Coppe knew Boehme through the London publisher and bookseller Giles Calvert (1615–1663), who issued Coppe's first work *Some Sweet Sips, of some Spirituall Wine* before 7 February 1649 and Boehme's *Epistles* sometime that same year<sup>48</sup>.

*Some Sweet Sips*, however, contains no discernible Behmenist allusions. While Coppe's declaration concerning 'the *day spring* from an high' resonates with the English title of Boehme's most famous book *Aurora, That is, the Day-Spring* (1656) the common source is obviously Luke 1 :78.<sup>49</sup> On the other hand, there is Coppe's preface to Richard Coppin's *Divine Teachings* (printed for Giles Calvert, 1649). This three-part treatise, written while Coppin was living in Berkshire and to which Pordage gave his 'approbation', provoked such a storm among several ministers within the surrounding area that they demanded Coppin recant his 'erroneous and blasphemous' doctrinal errors<sup>50</sup>. Coppe's contribution was 'An Additional and Preambular Hint, As a general Epistle written by ABC', and in the margin he showed familiarity with Behmenist terms. Here Coppe wrote of 'the eye of eternity', 'the Effluence or out-spreading of Divinity', the 'out-going of God into ALL THINGS', 'Trinity in Unity, and Unity in Trinity', 'the in-being' which 'out-speaks' of 'Hirogliphical Divinity', 'the out-breathing, or emanation of Divinity, into Father, Son and Spirit' and the 'globe of eternity'<sup>51</sup>. Effluence, out-going, out-speaking and out-breathing are all unusual words that appear in published English translations of Boehme's writings. Moreover, the 'Globe of Eternity' and the 'nature of the Holy Trinity' – a 'very great Mystery' which consisted of 'Unity in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity' – would be discussed extensively in Pordage's undated treatise on 'The Archetypal Globe'<sup>52</sup>. Indeed, there is a striking resemblance between Coppe's vocabulary and passages in Boehme's *XL. Questions Concerning the Soule* and *The Clavis, or Key* (1647) appended to it. Thus Boehme compared 'The Eye of God, the Eye of Eternity' to a 'Globe'. He also represented the 'Eternall beginning' of the Trinity as the letter 'A' in a manner that Coppe may have imitated. Even Coppe's attribution of 'An Additional and Preambular Hint' to 'ABC' instead of his customary monogram 'A.C.' – which was displayed together with his name in Hebrew characters on the title-page of *Some Sweet Sips* – may owe something to Boehme as well as a primer<sup>53</sup>.

Coppe's marginal excursus suggests a two-stage process in the composition of his 'Additional and Preambular Hint', enabling him to incorporate newly conceived notions stemming from his engagement with Boehme's text. Nonetheless,

this appears to have been a brief theological flirtation, extending perhaps to the duration of his stay with Pordage. For nothing Coppe wrote afterwards can be said to indicate deliberate use of expressions and ideas particular to Boehme.

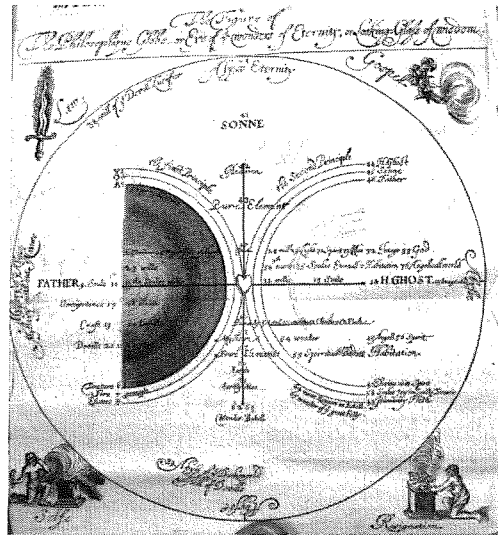


FIG. 1 : 'The Figure of The Philosophique Globe, or Eye of y<sup>e</sup> wonders of Eternity, or Looking-Glass of wisdom' in Jacob Boehme, *XL. Questions Concerning the Soule*, trans. J[ohn] S[parrow] (1647), inserted between p. 22 and 23 [Chetham's Library, Manchester, 3.F.2.70].

In January 1649, about the time he appeared in London 'in a most dreadful manner' before a secretive spiritual community called 'My one flesh', Coppe was given a 'little pretty piece' to read. He transcribed it and Calvert, who knew of 'My one flesh', published it<sup>54</sup>. This was *John the Divine's Divinity : or the Confession of the generall Assembly, or Church of the First-born in Heaven* by I[ohn] F[ile?]. The writer supposed that God appeared 'lesse in some, where the light is shadowed by darknesse, then in others, where the darknesse is dissolved by the light'. He also maintained that although God had 'a hand in sin', he was not the cause of it. Furthermore, he defined heaven as 'the place where the holy Angels and Saints are', while *Tophet* (Isaiah 30 :33) or hell was the 'dreadfull apprehensions of God'. Having spoken of God's 'gracious' and 'wrathfull' presence he added that the 'rationable' soul or spirit was an 'invisible, immortal, incomprehensible substance', which 'in its Angellicall estate hath God for its being'<sup>55</sup>. These tenets clearly require further examination but they seem unconnected with Boehme<sup>56</sup>. Much the same can be said about *A Justification of the Mad Crew* which espoused the principle of truly enjoying 'all things in common' (Acts 2 :44),

and whose anonymous author signed himself 'Jesus the Son of God'. An attribution in an early eighteenth-century library catalogue seems to imply he was Andrew Wyke<sup>57</sup>. Yet Wyke too demonstrates no knowledge of Boehme, either in *The Innocent in Prison complayning* (1646), which concerned legal proceedings against him in Suffolk for lay preaching and rebaptizing, or two letters written from Coventry gaol between 15 March and 1 April 1650. Wyke had been imprisoned for the misdemeanour of swearing and defying an order which prohibited visiting Coppe, as had another of Coppe's comrades, Joseph Salmon<sup>58</sup>.

32. Each Letter in this Name intimateth to us, a peculiar vertue and working : that is, a Forme in the working Power.  
\* Different, or a distinction. **J.**
33. For **I.** is the Effluence of the Eternall indivisible Unity ; or, the sweet gracefull effluence of the ground of the Divine something ineffe-  
\* I, I-hood, selfe, or selfe-ness. **E.**
34. **E** is a threefold **I** : where the Trinity shutteth it selfe up in the Unity : for the **I** goeth into **E** and joyneth **IE**, which is an out-breathing of the Unity in it selfe. **H.**
- \* Or speaking. 35. **H** is the Word, or \* breathing of the Trinity of God. **O.**
36. **O** is the Circumference, or, the Sonne of God, through which the **IE**, and the **H** or breathing, out-speaketh : from the compressed Delight of the Power and vertue. **V.**
- \* Or speaking. 37. **V** is the joyfull Effluence from the \* breathing ; that is ; the proceeding Spirit of God. **A.**      38. **A.**

FIG. 2 : Jacob Boehme, *The Clavis, or Key* (1647), 4.  
P.  
^

155. Behold, when you will speake of the Trinity, then looke upon the first Number, upon the **A**, upon the Eternall beginning which is the Father : and then looke upon the **O**, in the middle, *viz.* the Sonne, and then looke upon the **V**, which is the proceeding of the Holy Ghost, which in himselfe goeth with the speaking through the sharpe-wrathfullne into the second Principle which hath **E**, and goeth forth through the power, as a light flaming flash which hath **I**.

FIG. 3 : Boehme, *XL. Questions Concerning the Soule*, 1.155, 21.  
P.  
^



Which A. or Trinity is the  
 Effluence or out-spreading of  
 Divinity.  
 Or out-going of God into  
 ALL THINGS,  
 The figure is thus;  
 A ——— further Alpha.  
 Now, internally, or in the eye  
 of ourmy... which is found in  
 the soft, and am, equivoque, the  
 heart: scattered: in: sever. p.  
 ground down: a: mental, founded  
 as dust, and made up of myrmons.

FIG. 4 : Boehme, Richard Coppin, *Divine Teachings* (1649), sig. a2.

\* Or Lesson. But marke this \* A. B. C.  
 --- As a general Epistle written by  
 A B C.

FIG. 5 : Top, Boehme, *XL. Questions Concerning the Soule*, 12.26, 74.  
 Bottom, Richard Coppin, *Divine Teachings* (1649), sig. a2.

In his treatise *Anti-Christ in Man* (dated 12 December 1647) Salmon identified 'the Great WHORE that sits upon many Waters' (Revelation 17:1) with 'Babylon' and 'Antichrist'. He continued by placing the serpent, 'which is, the subtilest beast', in man's 'worldly heart; namely, *Selfe*, and *Flesh*'. Salmon explained that this creature, which had tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-7), was nothing in the mysterious sense of Scripture but 'fleshly wisdom', 'carrying the soul above that centre that God hath seated it in'. As for Eden, Salmon located it within man together with the tree of knowledge of good and evil, whose forbidden fruit he equated with the heart. He also insisted that the whole man with his wisdom, reason, judgment, affections, will and understanding had to be given to the Lord<sup>59</sup>. Salmon's allegorical interpretation of the story in Genesis did not come from Boehme but instead evokes the Spiritual Reformer Sebastian Franck's *The Forbidden Fruit: or, a treatise Of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evill* (1640, 1642). First published at Ulm in 1534 as the third of a four part collection which included German translations of Erasmus's *Praise of Folly* and Heinrich Cornelius Agrippa's *De incertitudine & vanitate scientiarum*, Franck's *Von dem Baum des Wissens güts unnd böses* was afterwards issued separately at Augsburg in 1538 and then a century later translated from a Latin version into English by John Everard (1584?-1640?), Doctor of Divinity and sometime lecturer at St. Martin-in-the-Fields, Westminster and St. Mary Abbots, Kensington<sup>60</sup>.

Combining elements of Johannes Tauler and the anonymous *Theologia Germanica* with selective paraphrasing of Agrippa's savage criticism of contemporary moral attitudes and the insufficiency of learning – 'meer ignorant fables and foolishness' – Franck's mockery of human wisdom was counterbalanced by his call for humility and self-abnegation:

except ye renounce your selves, and hate your own life, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

Accordingly he equated the tree with Adam's nature, will and knowledge. Upon eating its fruit Adam became enamoured of himself. This self-love was a vice and following his banishment from paradise the tree was planted in Adam's heart. Henceforth it spread throughout his boughs (descendants) so that:

This tree is planted in every one of our hearts, and is nothing else but our own wit, reason, flesh, knowledge, and will, to which as long as we adhere ... we can have no pardon from God<sup>61</sup>.

These echoes of Franck in Salmon's text are extremely significant for understanding the development of his theology. They also anticipate, as I have suggested elsewhere, Gerrard Winstanley's familiarity – albeit perhaps indirectly – with Franck's teachings<sup>62</sup>.

Salmon's next work *A Rout, A Rout: Or some part of the Armies Quarters beaten up, By the Day of the Lord Stealing upon Them* (1649) was addressed to the 'Fellowship (of SAINTS scattered) in the ARMY'. Here he envisaged a tripartite unfolding of divine dispensations: the times of Jewish law, the Gospel and the millennium. These spiritual dispensations were mirrored in outward forms of government: 'absolute and arbitrary' monarchy, Parliament and the Army. But now God had called forth Salmon as his instrument to declare his warning to the Army that they were 'in darkness, and far below the pure Light and life of God':

Look about you, for the Lord is now coming forth to rip up your bowels, to search your hearts, and try your reins; yea, to let loose the imprisoned Light of himself in you<sup>63</sup>.

Again, this does not resemble Boehme. Nor, as A.L. Morton hopefully proposed, was it likely to have been an 'ingenious application of Joachite ideas to the contemporary political situation'. Following the Quaker historian Rufus Jones, Morton supposed that Boehme's predicted 'Age of the Lilly' was indebted to the eschatological scheme of the Calabrian-born abbot Joachim of Fiore (c.1135-1202). He suggested, despite admittedly lacking evidence, that a simplified version of the Joachite conception of the 'three Ages or Commissions' was passed to seventeenth-century English sectaries primarily through the conduit of the Spiritual Reformers and, above all, Boehme<sup>64</sup>. Joachim's historian Marjorie Reeves,

however, subsequently cautioned against giving too much weight to direct influence, concluding that 'apparent parallels with Joachimism' sprang from 'a particular type of religious experience and hope common to both Joachites and Puritans'. Although sixteenth-century Protestant reformers such as John Bale, John Foxe and John Knox had appropriated several prophecies attributed to Joachim – notably Antichrist's birth at Rome and the three ages corresponding to God the Father (Jewish Law), God the Son (Christian Gospel), and the Holy Ghost (Spirit) – there were other tripartite divisions of human history<sup>65</sup>. Among the most notable were popularisations of a Jewish prophecy attributed to Elias's progeny or disciples and taken from the Babylonian Talmud. In the Hebraist Hugh Broughton's version these 6000 years of human history were divided into three equal ages: 2000 years before the Law (*Tohu*); 2000 years with Mosaic Law; 2000 years in the days of the Messiah (Christ)<sup>66</sup>. Whatever its origin, Salmon's three dispensations resonates with the parliamentary army preacher John Saltmarsh's '*Law, Gospel, and Spirit*'. Indeed, it seems to accord most closely with the central theme of *The Lord of Hosts: or, God guarding the Camp of the Saints* (1648) by his fellow New Model army chaplain William Erbery (1604/5–1654).<sup>67</sup>

Salmon came to believe that he was in community with God, insisting that 'God and the Saint are really one' in 'glorious union of the spirit'; 'I am in thee, and thou in me, that they also may be one with us'<sup>68</sup>. In his recantation *Heights in Depths and Depths in Heights* (1651) – its title perhaps a reworking of Ephesians 3:18 – he advanced a vision of God as the 'oneness or Eternity', a being of pure light and 'nothing but good' from whose womb our 'scattered spirits' had descended 'into the multiplicity' 'to lose our selves in an endless Labyrinth'. Yet our souls would 'ascend from variety into uniformity' to find 'bliss and happiness' in their 'original center'<sup>69</sup>. Salmon also related how he saw the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2) 'in its divine brightness and corruscant beauty' and how he had appeared to himself as:

one confounded into the abyss of eternitie, nonentitized into the being of beings;  
my soule spilt, and emptied into the fountaine and ocean of divine fulness: expired  
into the aspires of pure life<sup>70</sup>.

Nothing but good, multiplicity, variety, centre and the abyss of eternity are all Behmenist terms – but not exclusively so<sup>71</sup>. Indeed, Boehme had used them in contexts which suggest that Salmon was unfamiliar with his writings. Even so, Salmon's ideas appear to originate from the same Neoplatonic and perhaps also alchemical tradition.

While imprisoned at Coventry, Salmon wrote a letter to Thomas Webbe, minister of Langley Burrell, Wiltshire greeting him and his family with '*ten thousand*' holy kisses: '*Eternal plagues consume you all, rot, sink and damn your*

*bodies and souls into devouring fire*'. When still only a young man Webbe had appeared before the House of Lords charged with venting blasphemies, including denying the immortality of the soul, and he became infamous in Wiltshire for scandalous activities. Webbe was to be ejected in September 1651 and though his one known work from this period *A Masse of malice* appears to be no longer extant, it is interesting that his fiercest critic the magistrate Edward Stokes, or a namesake, owned a copy of *The Epistles of Jacob Behmen*. It is also noteworthy that Salmon's correspondence with 'the Webb' of his '*own spinning*' alluded to a soldier who had had his tongue bored through with a red hot iron<sup>72</sup>. This was Jacob Bothumley who, having been tried by a court martial upon several articles of blasphemy contained in his book *The Light and Dark sides of God* (printed for William Larnier, 1650), was cashiered from the army and condemned to have his book burned before his face in the Palace Yard, Westminster and at the Exchange, London<sup>73</sup>.

In this work Bothumley acknowledged that God was an 'endlesse and infinite Ocean' and if he spoke of God it would be 'nothing but contradiction', because God was 'beyond any expression'. He could not conceive of God as having a 'personall being' or a 'simple, pure, glorious, and intire being' confined in a place above the stars and firmament. Rather, he saw that:

God is in all Creatures, Man and Beast, Fish and Fowle, and every green thing,  
from the highest Cedar to the Ivey on the wall... God is the life and being of  
them all.

Only in man did God appear 'more gloriously in then the rest'<sup>74</sup>. Bothumley also supposed that some lived in the 'light side' of God, and some in the 'dark side' at the same time maintaining that there was nothing contrary to God but only to our apprehension. Elsewhere he presented an exposition of the dual presence of the divine and the diabolic within man, appealing to the verse 'God is Light, and in him there is no darkness' (1 John 1:5)<sup>75</sup>. There is, however, nothing to my mind indicating that Bothumley read Boehme. Moreover, while the problem of how to speak the ineffable is reminiscent of both Pseudo-Dionysius and *Theologia Germanica*, this was common for mystics. Similarly, Bothumley's conception of God evokes Nicholas of Cusa's admission in *The Single Eye* (1646) concerning 'the Coincidence of contraries, above which is the infinite'. Yet the resemblance is not close enough to indicate readership<sup>76</sup>. In the same way, Bothumley's belief that God was in all creatures resonates with the Hermetic notion that God was 'All, and the All, through all, and about all', as well as with John Everard's alleged doctrine that 'God is every thinge, and all els is but accidents'<sup>77</sup>. But these again are parallels rather than influences. Indeed, it may simply recall the biblical maxims '[Christ] filleth all in all' (Ephesians 1:23) and 'Christ is all, and in all'

(Colossians 3:11)<sup>78</sup>. *The Light and Dark sides of God* may therefore be considered an individual meditation on the nature of God in a tradition exemplified by another East Midland work, *The Divine Cloud of Unknowing*<sup>79</sup>.

Bothumley had served as quartermaster in Colonel Alban Cox's infantry regiment and probably also preached at Hertford. It is not known if Cox heard Bothumley, but he did hear Lawrence Clarkson in 'a high pitch of free Grace' at nearby Sandridge<sup>80</sup>. Like Wyke, Clarkson had been imprisoned by order of the Committee of Suffolk at Bury St. Edmunds for lay preaching and rebaptizing. There were also accusations of sexual misconduct during his trial and while confined he was visited sometime between 24 January and 15 July 1646 by the parliamentary army chaplains William Erbery and William Sedgwick (c.1610–1663).<sup>81</sup> Sedgwick, nicknamed 'The Apostle of the Isle Ely' and 'Doomsday Sedgwick', developed an idiosyncratic doctrine of spiritual fatherhood and sonship and significantly Abiezer Coppe may have been one of his spiritual offspring<sup>82</sup>. Erbery was later charged in February 1653 before the Committee for Plundered Ministers with several offences, including saying that the Ranters had been the holiest people in the nation<sup>83</sup>. In his written defence to the tenth article alleging that he 'saw no evil' in the Koran, Erbery responded by paraphrasing part of a prophecy concerning the conversion of the Turks from Boehme's *Mercurius Teutonicus* :

y<sup>c</sup> Teutonick Theosopher sayeth y<sup>t</sup> y<sup>c</sup> Turks doe (in their righteous ways) worship y<sup>e</sup> Sonne in y<sup>e</sup> father though not nameing Christ as Christians doe[.] y<sup>e</sup> same Author adds y<sup>t</sup> y<sup>e</sup> Turks shall yet turne to bee true Christians & y<sup>t</sup> Ch[ristia]ns shall all know y<sup>e</sup> truth as it is in Jesus<sup>84</sup>.

Clarkson himself attained notoriety as 'Captain of the Rant' and for his 'impious and blasphemous' *A Single Eye All Light, no Darkness* [1650]. The book's title was a conflation of Luke 11:34 and 1 John 1:5, while its contents may have originated in a sermon on Isaiah 42:16, 'I will make Darkness Light before them'. From allusions in Winstanley's *Fire in the Bush* (1650) it appears either that Winstanley had heard Clarkson preach or that he had read this text, though whether in manuscript or print is unclear. Calvert was believed to have had it published and the work was allegedly funded by Major William Rainsborough (brother of the murdered Leveller martyr, Colonel Thomas Rainsborough)<sup>85</sup>.

Here Clarkson maintained that 'the Being and Essence of God admits not of the plural but singular', explaining that 'there is but one God, whose Name is Light'. Moreover, because 'all Powers' derived from God all acts arising from this power were as pure as God. Therefore there were no acts which were 'impure in God, or sinful with or before God'. Thus Clarkson insisted 'sin hath its conception only in the imagination'. Indeed, 'so long as the act was in God' it was 'as holy as God'. Consequently there was no iniquity to behold with 'purer' eyes,

only that 'Devil is God, Hell is Heaven, Sin Holiness, Damnation Salvation'<sup>86</sup>. These oxymorons recall Nicholas of Cusa's editor's dictum that knowledge of God consisted of 'opposites and contradictories'. That editor was Giles Randall (c.1608–fl.1646), who owned and sold copies of Clarkson's first book *A Pilgrimage of saints* (1646).<sup>87</sup> Though Randall may have discussed Cusanus's writings with Clarkson, there is no indication in *A Single Eye* that Clarkson had read them. Nor does it appear that he was familiar with Boehme's teachings. A more likely source for Clarkson's doctrines was the posthumously published sermons of Tobias Crisp (1600–1643), a minister who extolled free grace, defended libertinism and was considered an Antinomian<sup>88</sup>.

\* \* \*

Despite contemporaries not connecting Boehme with the Ranters, one would have expected the Teutonic Philosopher to have had a greater influence on their writings. After all, Coppe knew Pordage and Clarkson Erbery, while Coppe, Clarkson and Salmon all had works published by Calvert. Bothumley is perhaps less surprising since the religious community he represented appears to have existed independently of those clustered around the other Ranter ringleaders. Yet with the important exception of Coppe's marginal annotations to his 'Additional and Preambular Hint' there is no evidence indicating that any Ranter read Boehme or made use of his ideas. While there are fascinating resonances of Sebastian Franck in one of Salmon's texts and possible hints of Cusanus in Clarkson, Boehme's unmediated influence on the Ranters was nonetheless negligible. There are several possible explanations for this. Firstly, by the time of the Ranters' demise the bulk of Boehme's writings had still to be published in English translation. Secondly, his potentially powerful albeit somewhat strange and incomprehensible ideas were disseminated gradually; initially having a core reception among continental Protestant exiles, university-educated ministers, lawyers and army officers rather than artisans turned prophets and preachers. Thirdly, aside from Coppe the Ranters were not trained scholars. As itinerant evangelisers with relatively meagre finances the likelihood is that they possessed, at most, modest libraries intermittently supplemented with books borrowed from friends and relations. What texts they carried with them would therefore probably have been pocketable editions. Indeed, the absence of a demonstrable and sustained Ranter readership for Boehme was actually – at least in this instance – in keeping with the audience his translators envisaged.

This conclusion also has wider implications for the study of religious radicals. For it suggests that, whatever his agenda and evolving modifications to his argument, two of Christopher Hill's suggestions must still be taken seriously :

that English radicalism – or at least a variety of it – appears to have been an essentially indigenous phenomenon; and that even if their radical ideas did not emanate from a continuous, orally transmitted underground tradition then oral sources – notably sermons and disputations – nonetheless played a significant part in spreading teachings that were radical in particular contexts.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup>J.C. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History. The Ranters and the historians* (Cambridge, 1986), 75, 124.
- <sup>2</sup>Robert Barclay, *The Inner Life of the Religious Societies of the Commonwealth* (1876), 416–24, Appendix;
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<sup>11</sup>The name was pronounced Bothumley, while he signed himself Bothumley. Scholars have tended to call him Bauthumley because that is how it was spelled on the title-page of his best known work. For Bothumley, in addition to the sources cited above, see; C.E. Welch, 'Early Nonconformity in Leicestershire', *Transactions of the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society*, 37 (1961–62), 35, 38–39, 41.

<sup>12</sup>See also B.G. Reay, 'Laurence Clarkson: an artisan and the English Revolution', in Christopher Hill, Barry Reay and William Lamont, *The World of the Muggletonians* (1983), 162–86; William Lamont, *Last Witnesses. The Muggletonian History, 1652–1979* (Aldershot, 2006), 37–43.

<sup>13</sup>See also N. McDowell, 'A Ranter Reconsidered: Abiezer Coppe and Civil War Stereotypes', *The Seventeenth Century*, 12 (1997), 173–205; R. Kenny, '"In these last dayes": the strange work of Abiezer Coppe', *The Seventeenth Century*, 13 (1998), 156–84; Nicholas McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination: Culture, Religion and Revolution, 1630–1660* (Oxford, 2003), 89–136; A. Hessayon, 'The Making of Abiezer Coppe', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 62 (2011), 38–58; N. Flinker, 'The Poetics of Biblical Prophecy: Abiezer Coppe's Late Converted Midrash' in Ariel Hessayon and David Finnegan (ed.), *Varieties of Seventeenth- and early Eighteenth-century English Radicalism in context* (Aldershot, 2011), 113–27.

<sup>14</sup>See also D. Gwyn, 'Joseph Salmon: From Seeker to Ranter – and almost to Quaker', *Journal of the Friends Historical Society*, 58 (1998), 114–31.

<sup>15</sup>See also U. Dreher, 'Sex, sermons and ornithology: Thomas Webbe, Edward Stokes and the Wiltshire Ranters', *Shakespeare and Renaissance Association of West Virginia*, 27 (2004), 62–78; U. Dreher, 'Of amorous pigeons and passionate parsons: Thomas Webbe and the Ranter community at Langley Burrell, c.1647–1651', in C.H.L. George and Julie Sutherland (ed.), *Heroes and Villains: the Creation and Propagation of an Image* (Durham, 2004), 000–000.

<sup>16</sup>See also Ariel Hessayon, 'Wyke, Andrew (fl. 1645–1663)', *ODNB*.

<sup>17</sup>The Bodleian Library copy of Richard Coppin's *Divine Teachings* (2nd edn., 1653) [Antiq.e.E 34(2)] has a manuscript note after his name describing him as 'one of the chiefe rantors'.



Although undated, the annotation may be in the hand of the London bookseller John Denis (d.1798) who owned this copy.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. J.M. Stayer and W.O. Pachull, 'From Monogenesis to Polygenesis: The historical discussion of Anabaptist origins', *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, 49 (1975), 83–121.

<sup>19</sup>*Several Proceedings in Parliament*, n°. 16 (11–18 January 1650), 213; *A Perfect Diurnall*, n°. 6 (14–21 January 1649), 42; Richard Baxter, *Plain Scripture Proof of Infants Church-membership and Baptism* (1651), 148; *A Perfect Diurnall*, n°. 14 (11–18 March 1650), 128; *HMC. Leyborne-Popham*, 57.

<sup>20</sup>Margaret Bailey, *Milton and Jakob Boehme: A study of German Mysticism in Seventeenth-Century England* (New York, 1914);

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<sup>21</sup>A. Hessayon, "'The Teutonicks writings": translating Jacob Boehme into English and Welsh', *Esoterica*, 9 (2007), 129–65 <http://www.esoteric.msu.edu/VolumeIX/EsotericaIX.pdf>.

<sup>22</sup>George Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius. Gleanings from Hartlib's papers* (Liverpool, 1947); Charles Webster, *The great instauration: science, medicine and reform, 1626–1660* (1975); Mark Greengrass, Michael Leslie and Timothy Raylor (ed.), *Samuel Hartlib and universal reformation: studies in intellectual communication* (Cambridge, 1994).

<sup>23</sup>Jacob Boehme, *XL. Questions Concerning the Soule*, trans. J[ohn] S[parrow] (1647), 'To the Reader'; Jacob Boehme, *Signatura Rerum*, trans. J[ohn] Ellistone (1651), sig. A3<sup>r-2</sup>.

<sup>24</sup>Ariel Hessayon, *Jacob Boehme's theology and the reception of his writings in the English-speaking world: the seventeenth century* (forthcoming).

<sup>25</sup>William London, *A Catalogue of The most vendible Books in England* (1658), sig. L.

<sup>26</sup>A. Hessayon and L. Penman, "'Seventeenth-century editions of Jacob Boehme's works in English and Welsh: a census of extant copies, their owners and their readers" (forthcoming).

<sup>27</sup>Jacob Boehme, *Forty Questions of the Soul*, trans. John Sparrow (1665), 'Preface'.

<sup>28</sup>Jacob Boehme, *The Epistles of Jacob Behmen*, trans. J[ohn] E[llistone] (1649), 'Preface'.

<sup>29</sup>Henry Huntington Library, shelf-mark 88271, title-page.

<sup>30</sup>William Rowland, *Judiciall Astrologie, Judicially Condemned* (1651), 'To the Christian Reader'.

<sup>31</sup>Bailey, *Milton and Boehme*, 114 n. 1; Ellens, 'Ranters Ranting', 94, 96;

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<sup>34</sup>Wilhelm Struck, *Der Einfluss Jakob Boehmes auf die Englische Literatur des 17. Jahrhunderts* (Berlin, 1936), 172; cf. S[amuel] P[ordage], *Mundorum Explicatio* (1661), 108, 'the

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<sup>35</sup>Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 188; Morton, *World of the Ranters*, 127 n. 2; Davis, *Fear, Myth and History*, 61; Davis, 'Fear, Myth and Furore', 102; cf. Raymond, *Milton's Angels*, 120.

<sup>36</sup>C. Hill, 'Censorship and English Literature', in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill. Volume One. Writing and Revolution in 17th Century England* (Brighton, 1985), 34, 40, 51; Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, 17; Christopher Hill, *The Experience of Defeat. Milton and Some Contemporaries* (1984), 21.

<sup>37</sup>G.E. Briscoe Eyre, H.R. Plomer and C.R. Rivington (ed.), *A Transcript of the Registers of the worshipful Company of Stationers from 1640 to 1708* (3 vol., privately printed, 1913–14), vol. 1, 309, 459, vol. 2, 91.

<sup>38</sup>John Barnard, D.F. McKenzie and Maureen Bell (ed.), *Cambridge History of the Book. Vol. IV. 1557–1695* (Cambridge, 2002), 783, 785; cf. A. Veylit, 'Some Statistics on the Number of Surviving Printed Titles for Great Britain and Dependencies in the Beginnings of Print in England to the year 1800', <http://estc.ocr.edu/ESTCStatistics.html#WING>.

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<sup>41</sup>Anon., 'A Censure upon ye Flying Roule' [Thomason E 594(3)]; Anon., *A Blow at the root* (1650), 152; Philalethes [pseud.], *An Answer to Doctor Chamberlaines Scandalous and Faslse [sic] Papers* (1650), 6; *Heart-Bleedings for Professors Abominations* (1650).

<sup>42</sup>Gilbert Roulston [pseud.], *The Ranters Bible* (1650), 2–4; Anon., *The Ranters Religion* (1650), 3–4; Anon., *The Rovting of the Ranters* (1650), 3–4; Anon., *The Arraignment and Tryall with a Declaration of the Ranters* (1650), 4–5; Anon., *The Ranters Recantation* (1650), 3; Samuel Tilbury [pseud.], *Bloudy Newse from the North, and The Ranting Adamites Declaration* (1651), 1; Anon., *The Ranters Monster* (1652), 4–5; cf. Anon., XXXVI. *Several Religions, held and maintained ... 4. Adamites ... 11. Shelomethites ... 13. Clements ... 15. Achaians ... 19. Nicholaitans. 20. Marcions ... 28. Donatists. 29. Seleucians ...* (1645).

<sup>43</sup>Cf. Richard Baxter, *The Vnreasonableness of Infidelity* (1655), part iii, 147, 155, reprinted in Richard Baxter, *The Practical Works of the late Reverend and Pious Mr. Richard Baxter* (4 vol., 1707), vol. 2, 320, 322;

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<sup>44</sup>Anon., *The Ranters Declaration* (1650), title-page, 3; Anon., *Arraignment and Tryall*, title-page, 6; cf. Anon., *A most faithful Relation of Two Wonderful Passages Which happened very lately ... in the Parish of Bradfield* (1650), which Thomason dated 20 September 1650.

<sup>45</sup>Pordage, *Innocencie Appearing*, 95–6; Ariel Hessayon, 'Pordage, John (bap. 1607, d. 1681)', *ODNB*.

<sup>46</sup>Fowler, *Daemonium Meridianum*, 60; cf. Anthony Wood, *Athenae Oxoniensis*, ed. Philip Bliss (4 vol., 1813–20), vol. 3, 1099, 'as the commissioners said, he took part with the great blasphemous Abiezer Coppe, and appeared in his behalf before, when he was accriminated by, them of various foul matters'.

<sup>47</sup>Sheffield University Library, HP 29/2/40B, Samuel Hartlib, 'Ephemerides' (1634); John Etherington, *A Brief Discovery of the Blasphemous Doctrine of Familisme* (1645), 10.

<sup>48</sup>Mario Caricchio, *Religione, politica e commercio di libri nella rivoluzione inglese. Gli autori di Giles Calvert* (Genoa, 2003); Ariel Hessayon, 'Calvert, Giles (bap. 1612, d. 1663)' [sic], *ODNB*; Ariel Hessayon, 'Coppe, Abiezer (1619–1672?)', *ODNB*; Hessayon, 'Pordage, John',

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<sup>49</sup>Abiezer Coppe, *Some Sweet Sips, of some Spirituall Wine* (1649), 10-11, 47.

<sup>50</sup>Richard Coppin, *Truths Testimony* (1655), 18-19; Fowler, *Daemonium Meridianum*, 60. Thomason dated his copy 18 September 1649.

<sup>51</sup>Abiezer Coppe, 'An Additional and Preambular Hint, - As a general Epistle written by ABC', in Richard Coppin, *Divine Teachings* (1649), preface; reprinted in Smith (ed.), *Collection of Ranter Writings*, 73-75.

<sup>52</sup>John Pordage, 'The Archetypal Globe', in Edward Hooker (ed.), *Theologia Mystica* (1683), 3-16.

<sup>53</sup>Jacob Boehme, *XL. Questions Concerning the Soule*, trans. J[ohn] S[parrow] (1647), 1.30, 1.155, 12.26, 21.9, 26.32, 4, 21, 74, 95, 113; Jacob Boehme, *The Clavis, or Key* (1647), 4.

<sup>54</sup>Lawrence Clarkson, *The Lost sheep Found* (1660), 24-6; Worcester College, Oxford, MS Clarke 18 fol. 23 r-v; I[ohn] F[ile?], *John the Divine's Divinity* (1649), sig. A3.

<sup>55</sup>F[ile?], *John the Divine's Divinity*, 5, 48, 49-51.

<sup>56</sup>Cf. Jacob Boehme, *The Way to Christ Discovered*, [trans. John Sparrow?] (1648), book 3, 9, 12.

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<sup>58</sup>[Andrew Wyke?], *The Innocent in Prison complayning* (1646); Worcester College, MS Clarke 18 fols. 25r-27r; Hessayon, 'Wyke, Andrew', ODNB; Hessayon, 'Gold Tried in the Fire', 167-8.

<sup>59</sup>Joseph Salmon, *Anti-Christ in man* (1647), title-page, 1-5, 12-13;

see also, Friedman, *Blasphemy, Immortality, and Anarchy*, 141-3;

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<sup>60</sup>Cambridge University Library, MS Dd.XII.68 fols. 2-49, Sebastian Franck, 'The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil', trans. John Everard (1638); Rufus Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (1914; reprinted, Gloucester, MA, 1971), 51, 57-8; Steven Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent. Religious Ideology and Social Protest in the Sixteenth Century* (New Haven, 1973), 146-8; Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 114-5, 122, 125.

<sup>61</sup>Augustine Eluthenius [pseud. = Sebastian Franck], *The Forbidden Fruit: or, a treatise Of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil*, trans. John Everard (1642), 5-6, 15, 46-7, 50, 61, 107-8, 150; cf. Valentin Weigel [pseud.], *Astrology Theologized* (1649), 27.

<sup>62</sup>A. Hessayon, 'Gerrard Winstanley and Jacob Boehme', forthcoming.

<sup>63</sup>Joseph Salmon, *A Rout, A Rout* (London, for G[iles] C[alvert], 1649), 6, 9-14; reprinted in Smith (ed.), *Collection of Ranter Writings*, 189, 191, 192-4. There are two imprints of this tract. Thomason dated his copy of the version printed by T.N. 10 February 1649.

<sup>64</sup>A.L. Morton, 'Salmon, Joseph (fl. 1647-1655)', in Richard Greaves and Richard Zaller (ed.), *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals* (3 vol., Brighton, 1982-84), vol. 3, 134; Morton, *World of the Ranters*, 71, 83, 126-8; cf. Hirst, *Hidden Riches*, 101-2; Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, 147-8.

<sup>65</sup>Marjorie Reeves, *Joachim of Fiore & the Prophetic Future. A Medieval Study in Historical Thinking* (1976; reprinted, Stroud, 1999), 136-65 (at p. 162); Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, 231-2.

<sup>66</sup>Hugh Broughton, *A treatise of Melchisedek, proving him to be Sem* (1591), sig. Iii<sup>r</sup>;

John Harvey, *A Discursive Probleme concerning Prophetes* (1588), 12-7;

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Katherine Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain* (Oxford, 1979), 150, 156, 161.

<sup>67</sup>John Saltmarsh, *Sparkles of Glory, or, Some Beams of the Morning-Star* (1648), 52; William Erbery, *The Lord of Hosts: or, God guarding the Camp of the Saints* (1648), 25-30. Thomason dated his copy of Erbery's work 24 December 1648.

<sup>68</sup>Joseph Salmon, *Divinity Anatomized* (1649), 5-6.

<sup>69</sup>Joseph Salmon, *Heights in Depths and Depths in Heights* (1651), 3, 28, 44, 50; reprinted in Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, 207, 216, 220, 222. Thomason dated his copy 13 August 1651.

<sup>70</sup>Salmon, *Heights in Depths*, 15-16; reprinted in Smith (ed.), *Ranter Writings*, 211-2.

<sup>71</sup>Cf. Anon., *Divinity and Philosophy Dissected, and set forth, by a mad Man* (Amsterdam?, 1644), 26; Jacob Boehme, *Signatura Rerum*, trans. J[ohn] Ellistone (1651), 6.5, 38 (abyss of eternity).

<sup>72</sup>House of Lords Record Office, main papers, 22 November 1644, 2 December 1644; *LJ*, vii, 71, 80-81; Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena* (3 vol., 1646), vol. 1, 54, 74-5; Edward Stokes, *The Wiltshire Rant* (1652), 13-4; Woodbrooke Quaker Study Centre, Birmingham, F07 BEH, inscribed 'Edw. Stokes ow[n]eth this booke 1650'.

<sup>73</sup>H. Stocks and W.H. Stevenson (ed.), *Records of the Borough of Leicester, 1603-1688* (Cambridge, 1923), 386-7; W. Kelly, 'Memorials of prohibited literature', *Willis's Current Notes* (1854), 94; *A Perfect Diurnall*, nr. 14 (11-18 March 1650), 125; *The Man in the Moon*, nr. 48 (13-20 March 1650), 373; British Library, Add. MS 37, 345, fol. 56, printed in Bulstrode Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English affairs* (1682; 1732 edn.), 445.

<sup>74</sup>Jacob Bothumley, *The Light and Dark sides of God* (1650), 1, 2, 4-5, 71.

<sup>75</sup>Bothumley, *Light and Dark sides of God*, 10, 29.

<sup>76</sup>Nicholas of Cusa, *The single Eye*, trans. John Everard (ed. Giles Randall, 1646), 77; cf. K. Emery, 'Mysticism and the coincidence of opposites in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-century France', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 45, 1984, 3-23.

<sup>77</sup>Hermes Trismegistus [pseud.], *The Divine Pymander of Hermes Mercurius Trismegistus*, trans. John Everard (1649), 157; Bodleian Library, MS Tanner 67, fol. 222.

<sup>78</sup>Cf. Abiezer Coppe, *Copp's Return to the wayes of Truth* (1651), 10, 'He filleth ALL in ALL, Ephes. 2.23 [sic] ... He is ALL in ALL, Colos. 3.11'.

<sup>79</sup>Davis on the other hand heard 'strong echoes' of Winstanley's early writings in Bothumley's text and this suggestion is worth exploring, see *Fear, Myth and History*, 47.

<sup>80</sup>Clarkson, *Lost sheep Found*, 23.

<sup>81</sup>Edwards, *Gangraena*, vol. 1, 72-4; Clarkson, *Lost Sheep Found*, 12-9; Morton, *World of the Ranters*, 117-25, 29-31; Reay, 'Laurence Clarkson', 167-8.

<sup>82</sup>Wood, *Athenae Oxoniensis*, ed. Bliss, vol. 3, col. 894;

Charles Firth (ed.), *The Clarke Papers. Selections from the Papers of William Clarke, Secretary to the Council of the Army, 1647-1649*, Camden Society (4 vol., 1891-1901), vol. 1, 4;

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Worcester College, MS Clarke 18 fol. 17v-19v, 55v-56v;

Abiezer Coppe, *A Second Fiery Flying Roule* (1649), 15, 'Wil. Sedgewick [in me] bowed to that poor deformed ragged wretch'.

<sup>83</sup>Firth (ed.), *Clarke Papers*, vol. 2, 235; cf. William Erbery, *The testimony of William Erbery*, ed. John Webster (1658), 314-5, 331.

<sup>84</sup>Royal Society, RB/1/40/11, fol. 56v, printed, with additional marginalia, in Erbery, *Testimony*, 333-4; Jacob Boehme, *Mercurius Teutonicus; or A Christian information concerning the last Times*, [trans. John Sparrow and John Ellistone?] (1649), 36-8; Hessayon, 'Gold Tried in the Fire', 301-2.

<sup>85</sup>Clarkson, *Lost Sheep Found*, 26-7, 30-1; *CJ*, vol. 6, 444, 474-5; *Complete Works of Winstanley*, vol. 2, 181, 203-4, 230-1 n.142; L[awrence] C[larkson], *A Single Eye All Light, no Darkness* (no date = 1650) [Thomason E 614(1)], title-page, 1.

<sup>86</sup>C[larkson], *Single Eye*, 3-4, 7-8, 13-4.

<sup>87</sup>Nicholas of Cusa, *Single Eye*, 'To the Reader'; Clarkson, *Lost Sheep Found*, 9, 20.

<sup>88</sup>Clarkson, *Lost Sheep Found*, 9; D. Parnham, 'The humbling of "High Presumption": Tobias Crisp dismantles the puritan *Ordo Salutis*', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 56, 2005, 50-74; D. Parnham, 'The Covenantal Quietism of Tobias Crisp', *Church History*, 75, 2006, 511-43.



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ISBN : 978-2-85367-263-4



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