

Chapter 4

Gerrard Winstanley, Radical Reformer*

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‘And this we count is our dutie, to endeavour to the uttermost, every man in his place ... a Reformation to preserve the peoples liberties, one as well as another’

Gerrard Winstanley, *A Declaration from the Poor oppressed People of England* (1649), n.p.

‘the main Work of Reformation lies in this, to reform the Clergy, Lawyers, and Law’

Gerrard Winstanley, *The Law of Freedom in a platform* (1652), p. 7

From Radical Reformation to English Revolution

There are six complementary approaches that are essential for enriching our understanding of the thought of Gerrard Winstanley (1609–1676) and the meaning of the short-lived Digger plantations at St George’s Hill in Walton-on-Thames, Surrey (April to August 1649) and the Little Heath in neighbouring Cobham (August 1649 to April 1650). One is biographical, which through careful recovery and reconstruction of the available evidence emphasises the importance of Winstanley’s experiences – especially his regional origins, social background, education, religious upbringing, bankruptcy, agricultural endeavours and, after the Diggers’ defeat, intermittent local office-holding – in the development of his thought. The lives of his fellow Diggers and associates have been similarly explored to the same purpose, though comparative lack of documentation has yielded a less complete picture. A second concentrates on local contexts and the Diggers’ social networks: the topography of St George’s Hill and Cobham, social and political relations within the parishes of Walton and Cobham, economic pressures, the shattering impact of Civil War and widespread rural unrest. A third places the

* In preparing this essay I have profited from the advice of Sarah Apetrei, Mario Caricchio, David Finnegan and Lorenza Gianfrancesco. Readers should be aware that it was completed before the publication of the magisterial new edition of *The Complete Works of Gerrard Winstanley*, edited by Thomas Corns, Ann Hughes and David Loewenstein (Oxford, 2010). Though Winstanley and the Diggers sometimes glossed scriptural phrases they did not always provide sources for their biblical allusions. I have therefore supplied these references to the so-called Authorised Version of the Bible (1611) in brackets. I alone am responsible for any mistakes or shortcomings.

Diggers within their wider milieu by examining what their writings and reported activities had in common with their contemporaries nationally; how they resembled yet also differed from other political and religious movements and communities then active, including the gathered Churches; why certain concepts they espoused were radical at specific moments during the course of the English Revolution. This approach invites a rigorous comparison between Diggers and Levellers, Particular and General Baptists, Familists, 'Seekers', 'Ranters', Quakers and Behmenists, in addition to less known 'wel-affected' communities in London and the southern and midland counties – particularly Buckinghamshire and Northamptonshire. The fourth involves making connections, identifying resonances and suggesting parallels between the Diggers and their predecessors over a longer period, going back to the Reformation and beyond. This requires a detailed knowledge of Winstanley's reading habits, the manner in which he appropriated and reworked his sources – notably biblical, millenarian, hermetic, mystic, utopian, philosophical, legal and medical texts – together with a convincing explanation for how potent ideas and distinctive, sometimes proscribed, scriptural interpretations were transmitted over time and across various geographical, cultural and linguistic boundaries. The fifth is primarily concerned with modes of expression, literary style, genre and typography. Finally, there has been a tendency to stress both the Diggers' continued significance and the relevance of Winstanley's writings for modern political activists and commentators responding to the challenges of addressing perceived class-based inequalities, widening participation in the democratic process, the 'transition from an agrarian to an industrial society' in parts of the Third World, as well as environmental damage to our planet caused by human activity.

By embracing the first five approaches and acknowledging the sixth, this essay fits neatly into a collection focused on radicalism in early modern England. For it not only reaffirms Glen Burgess's point that 'context matters to understanding the history of radicalism', but also partly considers whether it is still appropriate to posit a single continuous English radical tradition – or even multifaceted traditions – stretching from the peasants' rising of 1381 through to the Chartists.¹ This is vital for there is some agreement that what largely distinguished the English Revolution from baronial revolts, religious wars, rebellions and indeed what has been termed the 'general crisis' shaking mid-seventeenth century Ireland, France, Catalonia, Portugal, Naples and elsewhere was radicalism.² Even so, as is usually recognised, revolutionary England (that supposed '*Island of great Bedlam*') was never an island unto itself.³ Accordingly – and with some measure of success – scholars

¹ Burgess, 'Matter of Context', 1–3; Burgess, 'Introduction', pp. 2–9; Burgess, 'Radicalism and the English revolution', pp. 63–9.

² Davis, 'Radicalism in a traditional society: the evaluation of radical thought in the English Commonwealth 1649–1660', *History of Political Thought*, 3, no. 2 (1982): p. 213; G. Burgess, 'On Revisionism: an analysis of early Stuart historiography in the 1970s and 1980s', *HJ*, 33 (1990): pp. 625–7.

³ William Erbury, *The Mad Mans Plea* (London, 1653), p. 8.

have attempted to assess how and in what ways the changing political, religious, social, economic, cultural and intellectual landscapes of early modern continental Europe influenced comparable developments in England. Thus there have been studies tracing the roots of English revolutionary experiences and the manner in which they were articulated to a number of entangled yet identifiable traditions which, through a process of recovery, dissemination, reinterpretation and accretion, were continually evolving: humanism; biblical criticism; natural law; classical republicanism; ancient theology; occult and scientific learning; medical knowledge; Germanic mysticism; apocalypticism; and Christian primitivism. These traditions, among others, traversed, shaped or were themselves born out of the defining events of the period, namely the Renaissance, Voyages of Exploration, Magisterial and Radical Reformations, Counter-Reformation and the Thirty Years War.

Following in the footsteps of contemporary heresiographers and polemicists, late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century students of theosophy, literature and Protestant nonconformity began debating whether mainstream English Puritanism and, on its fragmentation, the multitude of sects it spawned was fundamentally a continental import or rather a home-grown phenomenon with its own peculiarities. Unsurprisingly, the subject was extensively investigated by denominationally committed historians who tended to be preoccupied with constructing complicated and unbroken genealogies of religious dissent thereby further legitimating received accounts of believers' sufferings and martyrdom.⁴ Marxist historians and a number of politically committed scholars, influenced to debatable degrees at various times during their careers by broadly left-wing ideas, likewise legitimated their doctrines by stressing supposed ideological antecedents. By turns organised and haphazard, this occasionally collective project was intended to reinforce links between an imagined past and present-day exigencies ('the battle of ideas today') by creating histories about aspects of an assumed 'heritage' of which the 'English people' had been 'robbed'. Here, however, the initial impulse was to recover an indigenous lineage: a 'progressive rationalist' native English tradition.⁵ Characterised by an unashamedly teleological, anachronistic, anti-clerical and anti-imperialist thrust, these sympathetic accounts with their unshakeable faith in class conflict driving historical processes and unwarranted secularisation of their subjects bore the brunt of the so-called revisionist backlash in all its varieties.

⁴ P. Collinson, 'Towards a broader understanding of the early dissenting tradition', in P. Collinson, *Godly People. Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (London, 1983), pp. 527–31.

⁵ R. Samuel, 'British Marxist Historians, 1880–1980: Part One', *New Left Review*, 120 (1980): pp. 26–8, 39–42, 50–52, 74; A. MacLachlan, *The Rise and Fall of Revolutionary England. An Essay on the Fabrication of Seventeenth-Century History* (Basingstoke, 1996); A. Hessayon, 'Fabricating radical traditions', in M. Caricchio and G. Tarantino (eds), *Cromohs Virtual Seminars*, 1, <http://www.cromohs.unifi.it/seminari/hessayon2_radical.html>, 1–6.

Although the revisionist shift in emphasis from tension to consensus was accompanied by a welcome reincorporation of religious beliefs into a grand narrative that had gradually been transformed from a bourgeois revolution into the breakdown of royal and ecclesiastical authority in the three Stuart kingdoms, there were drawbacks. Not least of these was the marginalisation of radicalism and a reluctance to take seriously the possibility that its mid-seventeenth-century manifestation may, as Christopher Hill proposed, have had deep if largely underground roots. Reconceived as a series of moments in context rather than a continuous tradition, it was nonetheless conceded that these wars of religion in the Atlantic Archipelago had ideological components and, moreover, that certain contemporaries held beliefs stemming from the Magisterial and Radical Reformations as well as early Christianity.⁶ Thus Jonathan Scott identified practical Christianity, derived from the New Testament and comprising the ‘core social agenda of the European radical reformation’, as the crucial element of a shared vocabulary expressed in otherwise divergent ‘Leveller’, ‘Digger’, ‘Ranter’ and ‘Quaker’ publications. Consequently, he envisaged the English Revolution as ‘the last and greatest triumph of the European radical reformation’.⁷

On their rediscovery in the nineteenth century – first by Liberal, Socialist and Marxist historians, and then Protestant nonconformists – the Diggers were not just appropriated, their image successively refashioned in the service of new political doctrines, but contextualised. Hence Eduard Bernstein, regarded as the ‘first and greatest of the heresiarchs of Marxism’, delineated the 1549 East Anglian revolts (Kett’s rebellion), noting the ‘communistic tendencies’ of one sixteenth-century Anabaptist faction together with their influence on the Familists. In addition, Bernstein connected the Quakers with German Anabaptists and mystics such as Jacob Boehme, and suggested that Winstanley’s *The Law of Freedom* was a utopian vision displaying unmistakable familiarity with Thomas More’s *Utopia*.⁸ Similarly, the Quaker Lewis Berens, who dedicated his work on the Digger movement to the Society of Friends, included chapters on the Reformation in Germany and England where he linked the common demands of the English peasantry in 1381 to those of the German peasantry in the Twelve Articles of 1525. Moreover, it seemed

⁶ C. Hill, ‘From Lollards to Levellers’, in C. Hill, *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill. Volume Two: Religion and Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (Brighton, 1986), pp. 89–116; G.E. Aylmer, ‘Collective Mentalities in mid Seventeenth-Century England. III. Varieties of Radicalism’, *TRHS*, 5th series, 37 (1988), pp. 2–3, 6–7; J.C. Davis, ‘Against Formality: One Aspect of the English Revolution’, *TRHS*, 6th series, 3 (1993): pp. 271–2.

⁷ J. Scott, *England’s Troubles: Seventeenth-century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 247–68; P. Baker, ‘Rhetoric, Reality and the Varieties of Civil War Radicalism’, in J. Adamson (ed.), *The English Civil War: Conflicts and Contexts, 1640–49* (Basingstoke, 2009), pp. 208, 216–17.

⁸ E. Bernstein, *Cromwell and Communism. Socialism and Democracy in the Great English Revolution* (Stuttgart, 1895), trans. H.J. Stenning (1930; reprinted, Nottingham, 1980), pp. 19–25, 52, 115, 186, 214, 230.

to Berens that Winstanley had been ‘greatly influenced’ by Familist teaching.⁹ Afterwards David Petegorsky completed a study of Winstanley’s philosophy which was distributed through an anti-fascist organisation called the Left Book Club. He thought the ‘social roots’ of ideas held by Winstanley and the Interregnum sects lay in the ‘religion of the common people’: politically immature, medieval popular movements like the English Lollards and German Anabaptists. Nor were these distinct ‘streams’ of mystical theology since German refugees fleeing religious persecution in their homeland had brought the vivifying spirit of writings by Hans Denck, Sebastian Franck, Caspar Schwenckfeld and Boehme to England. Popularised as these were through translations in print and manuscript, Petegorsky considered it possible to detect Boehme’s and the Familists’ ‘particular influence’ on Winstanley while simultaneously insisting that he owed his religious doctrines more to the ‘environment of the age’ than to any individual thinker.¹⁰ In the same vein, Christopher Hill, then a member of the Communist party of Great Britain, who had studied at Moscow and familiarised himself with Soviet interpretations of the Interregnum, grouped Winstanley’s writings with those ‘communist theories which have appeared with increasing maturity in all the great middle-class revolutions’. That is to say, doctrines disseminated by Thomas Müntzer, the Protestant reformer executed during the German Peasants’ War, and Jan of Leiden, king of the Anabaptists that had seized the town of Münster in Westphalia.¹¹

Another admirer of the pre-Stalinist Soviet Union, the journalist and broadcaster Henry Brailsford, pronounced Winstanley’s *The New Law of Righteousnes* ‘a Communist Manifesto written in the dialect of its day’. He too compared Winstanley’s *Law of Freedom*, an eloquent ‘sketch of a classless society’, with More’s *Utopia*, connecting Winstanley’s ideas with sixteenth-century Communist thought – particularly the fraternal, ‘left-wing’ Anabaptist communities of Switzerland, the Rhineland and Moravia; a revolutionary sermon by Müntzer (even if it was ‘unlikely that Winstanley had ever heard of him’); the ‘heroic tragedy’ that ensued at Münster; and the ‘pacifist’, persecuted underground heretical sect the Family of Love.¹² Hill himself later underlined the role of Familists in keeping alive Anabaptist theories in the ‘Elizabethan underworld’ before they fused with native lower class agrarian communist ideas, resurfacing in the ‘freedom of the 1640s’.¹³ While Hill’s idealised depiction of

⁹ L. Berens, *The Digger Movement in the Days of the Commonwealth as Revealed in the Writings of Gerrard Winstanley* (London, 1906), pp. 1–22.

¹⁰ D. Petegorsky, *Left-Wing Democracy in the English Civil War: A Study of the Social Philosophy of Gerrard Winstanley* (1940; reprinted, Stroud, 1995), pp. 64, 68–9, 125–6, 150–51.

¹¹ L. Hamilton (ed.), *Gerrard Winstanley. Selections from his Works* (London, 1944), p. 4.

¹² H.N. Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English Revolution* (1961; 2nd edn, ed. C. Hill, Nottingham, 1983), pp. 31–3, 524, 659–60.

¹³ C. Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down. Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (1972; Harmondsworth, 1984 edn), pp. 114–15, 134.

Winstanley as a precursor of nineteenth- and twentieth-century socialism and author of the world's 'first communist political programme' was attacked for its political subtext,¹⁴ Winstanley remained an audacious rational utopian communist for some literary critics, standing firmly within a radical Protestant tradition that went back by way of the Familists, General Baptists and Dutch Mennonites to Müntzer and Münster on the Continent, and John Wycliffe and the Lollards in England.¹⁵ Indeed, though Andrew Bradstock detected what he believed to be two 'false assumptions' weakening the argument that Winstanley was, or became, a secular thinker, he still situated Winstanley within a 'small but vocal tradition' on the fringes of the 'professing Christian church'. These oppositional voices, echoing from Lollards to Hussites, through the radical Protestant reformers and sects of the English Revolution down to Liberation Theologians today, challenged 'perceived conservative and reactionary interpretations of the faith'.¹⁶ More recently, John Gurney has argued that Winstanley should be seen as emerging from both a vibrant, fluid and heterogeneous 'puritan underground', and a 'radical and heterodox tradition of religious mysticism' embracing texts by the Family of Love's founder Hendrick Niclaes, Boehme and the anonymous *Theologia Germanica*.¹⁷

Despite differences in emphases, sophistication and quality of research, there is a common thread running through this assorted scholarship: it shares – and to some extent is unavoidably shaped by – the same concerns that confronted contemporary heresiographers and polemicists. Their outpourings, which were often modelled upon and positioned within a long line of anti-heretical writing, amply illustrate the manifold difficulties with heresiography as a genre. Determined to extirpate reported doctrinal errors compilers could be alarmist and self-serving, attaching labels – even when inappropriate – to facilitate categorisation, purposefully blurring or ignoring subtle doctrinal distinctions, sometimes failing to recognise novel beliefs because of their tendency to compare what they saw with earlier

¹⁴ C. Hill (ed.), *Winstanley: The Law of Freedom and Other Writings* (Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 9–10, 34, 68 n. 62; Hill, 'The Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', in Hill, *Collected Essays*, 2, pp. 194–200; cf. J.C. Davis, 'Gerrard Winstanley and the Restoration of True Magistracy', *P&P*, 70 (1976): pp. 76–93; L. Mulligan, J.K. Graham and J. Richards, 'Winstanley: A Case for the Man as He Said He Was', *JEH*, 28 (1977): pp. 57–75.

¹⁵ T. Wilson Hayes, *Winstanley the Digger. A Literary Analysis of Radical Ideas in the English Revolution* (Cambridge, MA, 1979), pp. 2, 48–50; R. Kenny (ed.), *The Law of Freedom in a Platform or, True Magistracy Restored* (New York, 1973), pp. 19–20, 22, 23.

¹⁶ A. Bradstock, 'Sowing in Hope: the relevance of theology in Gerrard Winstanley's political programme', *Seventeenth Century*, 6 (1991): pp. 194–5; A. Bradstock, *Faith in the Revolution: The Political Theologies of Müntzer and Winstanley* (London, 1997).

¹⁷ J. Gurney, *Brave Community. The Digger Movement in the English Revolution* (Manchester, 2007), pp. 90–91, 94–7; cf. N. Smith, 'Gerrard Winstanley and the Literature of Revolution', in A. Bradstock (ed.), *Winstanley and the Diggers, 1649–1999* (London, 2000), pp. 51–2.

Christian heresies. Thus Anabaptist excesses, including the seizure of Münster, were revived through print as cautionary atrocity stories. Published as warnings against introducing religious toleration in England, these pamphlets paralleled the infamous exploits of Thomas Müntzer and Jan of Leiden with contemporary events to highlight the threat to Church and State from Anabaptism, which was likened to a contagion that had infected limbs of the body politic and was spreading to its heart.¹⁸ In the same way, the Presbyterian minister Richard Baxter linked the Quakers to their ‘German Brethren’ the Paracelsians and Behmenists, assuming that with their forerunners – ‘Seekers, Ranters, and Anabaptists’ – they were part of a Popish confederacy let loose by the Devil.¹⁹ The Cambridge Platonist Henry More on the other hand looked to Holland, believing the Quakers were ‘descended’ from Nicolaes and that Familists had entered England through the wiles of Popish priests and their emissaries.²⁰

Mindful of this historiographic legacy, and of the challenging nature of Winstanley’s and his fellow Diggers’ texts, as well as the often brief and predominantly hostile nature of much of the remaining evidence, I have nonetheless suggested elsewhere that it is fruitful to consider the Diggers as an offshoot from the main branch of the General Baptists, with roots going back to the Radical Reformation. Furthermore, the outlines of Winstanley’s spiritual journey can be reconstructed with confidence. Beginning in either childhood, adolescence or some point in adulthood, he was a puritan; then perhaps a separatist; then, it can be inferred, a General Baptist; then he dispensed with the outward observance of gospel ordinances (like a ‘Seeker’), before falling into a trance sometime between 16 October 1648 and 26 January 1649. Though Winstanley’s puritan and Baptist phases can only be gleaned from reminiscences, they still provide a valuable insight into the evolution of his thought. So much so that the imprint of distinctive General Baptist tenets, especially in Winstanley’s first five publications, is both unmistakable and crucial for understanding the development of his ideas. The influence of Baptist precedents can be seen, for example, in Winstanley’s implementation of the doctrine of community of goods (Acts 4:32), with its striking resemblance to

¹⁸ Anon., *A Warning for England especially for London in the famous History of the Frantic Anabaptists* (1642); Anon., *A Short History of the Anabaptists of High and Low Germany* (London: Samuel Brown, 1642; reprinted, Robert Austin, 1647); Frederick Spanheim, *Englands Warning by Germanies Woe* (London: John Bellamie, 1646); Christoffel van Sichem, *Apocalypsis, or the Revelation Of certain notorious Advancers of heresie*, trans. John Davies (London: John Saywell, 1658), pp. 1–29; cf. Hughes, *Gangraena*, pp. 67, 72, 89.

¹⁹ Richard Baxter, *The Vnreasonableness of Infidelity* (London: Thomas Underhill, 1655), pt. iii, p. 155; Richard Baxter, *One Sheet against the Quakers* (London, 1657), pp. 1–2.

²⁰ M. Nicolson and S. Hutton (eds), *The Conway Letters: The Correspondence of Anne, Viscountess Conway, Henry More, and Their Friends: 1642–1684* (Oxford, 1992), pp. 512–13.

sixteenth-century Hutterite practice in Moravia, together with the Diggers' use of emissaries to spread the good news that they had begun laying the foundations of universal freedom (Matthew 28:19).²¹ Here I will examine Winstanley's beliefs about universal redemption and particular election, which must be viewed in the light of a serious schism among Baptists. For, though denominational alignments did not harden arguably until autumn 1644, there were on the one hand followers of Calvinist doctrine who believed in the 'particular Election and Reprobation' of individuals (Particular Baptists), and on the other essentially maintainers of core Arminian or Remonstrant tenets who, while accepting particular election and denying free will, nevertheless taught the '*Universal Love of God to all*' and therefore the possibility of universal redemption (General Baptists).²² In addition, I will show how Winstanley's attitudes towards the Saturday and Sunday Sabbath, tithes, ministers, magistrates and violence position his teachings as on the whole budding forth from fertile General Baptist soil.

Particular Election and Universal Redemption

On the title-page of Winstanley's *The Myserie of God, Concerning the whole Creation, Mankinde* (1648) was a biblical verse that, when laid open like an unsealed book, encapsulated his heterodox interpretation of accepted Calvinist teaching on soteriology and eschatology: '*And so all Israel shall be saved, as it is written, There shall come out of Sion, the Deliverer, that shall turne away ungodlinesse from Jacob*' (Romans 11:26). The mystery of God to which Winstanley referred was to be made known to every man and woman after seven dispensations (Revelation 10:7), and had been revealed to God's servants (Revelation 1:1).²³ Winstanley explained that these seven dispensations corresponded to the seven angels of the Apocalypse (Revelation 8:2).²⁴ These dispensations, moreover, had been preordained by God before the foundation of the world and demarcated periods of history.²⁵ Five had already occurred. These were: first, the sentence of death as a consequence of Adam's disobedience of the Law of God when eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge of good and evil

²¹ A. Hessayon, 'Early Modern Communism: The Diggers and Community of Goods', *Journal for the Study of Radicalism*, 3, no. 2 (2009): pp. 1–49.

²² Thomas Lambe, *A Treatise of Particvlar Predestination* (London, 1642); [Thomas Lambe?], *The Fountaine of Free Grace Opened* (London, 1645); Luke Howard, *Love and Truth in plainness Manifested* (London: T. Sowle, 1704), p. 107; Thomas Crosby, *The History of the English Baptists, from the Reformation to the Beginning of the Reign of King George I* (2 vols, London: the editor and author, 1738–39), 1, pp. 173–4.

²³ Gerrard Winstanley, *The Myserie of God* (London: Giles Calvert, 1649), title-page, pp. 11, 20.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 39.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 27–8.

in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:3, 2 Corinthians 3:6); second, the curse upon the serpent (Genesis 3:15), interpreted as a promise of mercy and redemption through Christ, who will deliver mankind from the bondage of death; third, God's covenant with Abraham, sealed by the token of circumcision (Genesis 17:9–10, Luke 1:55); fourth, the Law of Moses, which foreshadowed the Gospel; fifth, God's manifestation in flesh in the person of Jesus Christ. The sixth had begun with God's appearance in the flesh of his Saints (Joel 2:28), and would continue until the 'perfect gathering up of the Elect' at the Resurrection or Day of Judgment (Revelation 20:12–15).²⁶ During this sixth great dispensation Winstanley counselled patience, informing those of God's Saints waiting sorrowfully in a sinful condition or spiritual wilderness that this was the 'gathering time' when the elect out of 'every nation, kindred, tongue & people' would be numbered and taken to dwell in the City, Sion, with the Lamb (Revelation 7:9, 21:23).²⁷ Only those whose names were written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21:27), the 'scattered sheep of the House of *Israel*' (Matthew 10:6), would enter the City at this hour. Through the power of anointing these believers would be united and knitted together with Christ, baptised into one mystical body (1 Corinthians 12:13). Meanwhile, in these latter days (Daniel 10:14) God had granted a time, time and a half time to the serpent (Revelation 12:14) – which Winstanley identified with the Beast or Whore of Babylon (Revelation 17:4–6) – to make war on the Saints. The Beast would tread the holy City underfoot for 42 months (Revelation 11:2). Those whom God had not chosen were being cast into a lake of everlasting fire (Matthew 18:8, Revelation 20:15) to endure not eternal but temporary punishment. At the last hour God, who is the tree of life (Revelation 22:1–2), would send forth a healing virtue to the nations (Revelations 21:24). Thus 'all *Israel*' would be saved (Romans 11:26), without exception, to 'partake of the glorious manifestation of the Sons of God'.²⁸ Then, at the seventh dispensation, which was yet to come, the mystery of God would be absolutely finished. The Son would deliver up the Kingdom to the Father (1 Corinthians 15:24) and all God's work – the whole Creation, Mankind – would be redeemed; liberated from corruption, bondage, death and pain (Romans 8:21). Only the serpent, that is the humane nature within flesh which had sprung up as a weed in the Garden of Eden after God made Adam, would perish; cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10, 14).²⁹

Situating the 'violence, wrath, reproach, oppression, provocations and murders' suffered by the Saints within an apocalyptic framework, Winstanley was

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 13, 21–3, 29–32, 34.

²⁷ Ibid., pp. 15, 18, 35–7, 43, 59; cf. Gerrard Winstanley, *The Saints Paradise* [1648], p. 24.

²⁸ Winstanley, *Mysterie of God*, pp. 14–15, 37–8, 43–4, 48; cf. Winstanley, *Saints Paradise*, pp. 128–9; G. Sabine (ed.), *The Works of Gerrard Winstanley* (Ithaca, NY, 1941), pp. 445–6, 447, 454.

²⁹ Winstanley, *Mysterie of God*, pp. 6–7, 13–14, 27, 44.

therefore able to account both for the presence of religious persecution in England and anticipate its increased intensity, because the serpent's time was growing short.³⁰ His belief in universal redemption, however, was considered a doctrinal error. According to the provisions of an Ordinance for suppressing blasphemies and heresies, this offence was punishable by imprisonment if disseminated from 2 May 1648 and not renounced – which may explain why the first edition of *The Myserie of God* has an undated preface and bears no publisher's imprint.³¹ Furthermore, Winstanley's heterodox marriage of universal redemption with particular election appeared an irreconcilable combination. Acknowledging potential 'contradictions', he explained that, though God would 'save every one', this did not give people liberty to take 'pleasure in sin', to 'eat, drink, and be merry'. On the contrary, sinners would 'not escape punishment' since they would be cast into the 'everlasting fire', which Winstanley took to mean the dispensation of God's wrath rather than the 'materiall fire of purgatory'.³²

The continued significance Winstanley attached to Romans 11:26 can also be seen on the title-page of *The New Law of Righteousnes* (1649), which contains a partial reworking: 'This is Sion out of whom we are to expect the deliverer to come, that shall turn ungodlinesse from Jacob'.³³ Jacob, meaning following after or supplanter, was the younger of Isaac's twin sons by his wife Rebekah (Genesis 25:22–6). After wrestling with a man or angel, his name was changed to Israel, meaning ruling with God (Genesis 32:24–8, Hosea 12:4).³⁴ As Jacob was sometimes taken to be a synonym of Israel,³⁵ Winstanley should therefore be read as using twofold imagery here. First, he developed his belief in the salvation of all Israel by addressing this work to 'the twelve Tribes of *Israel* that are circumcised in heart, and scattered through all the Nations of the Earth' (cf. Revelation 7:4, Zechariah 7:14).³⁶ Second, he reaffirmed his conviction in particular election by expounding on the figure of Jacob and the struggle between the twins in the womb (Romans 9:6–13). These motifs were entwined in Winstanley's 'Epistle to the Reader' and require explanation.

Protestant exegetes commonly accepted that the Jewish people's misfortunes in the post-exilic period were attributable to their having crucified Christ and their rejection of the Gospel message. Winstanley's attitude was no different:

³⁰ Ibid., pp. 40–41, 47; cf. Gerrard Winstanley, *The Breaking of the day of God* (London, 1649), pp. 101, 102, 105, 111; Winstanley, *Saints Paradise*, pp. 21, 41, 42.

³¹ C. Firth and R.S. Rait (eds), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–1660* (3 vols, London: Stationery Office, 1911), 1, p. 1135.

³² Winstanley, *Myserie of God*, pp. 14, 19–20, 50–53, 55.

³³ Gerrard Winstanley, *The New Law of Righteousnes Budding forth, in restoring the whole Creation from the bondage of the curse* (London, 1649), title-page; cf. Isaiah 59:20.

³⁴ Cf. Winstanley, *Saints Paradise*, pp. 77–8.

³⁵ Cf. George Foster, *The Pouring Forth of the Seventh and Last Viall upon all Flesh* (1650), title-page, sig. a2v, p. 68.

³⁶ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, p. 149.

Jews could not behold God in Christ, calling Christ a deceiver, persecuting and ultimately killing him. For their evil deeds God cast off 'literal *Israel*', that is the descendants of Abraham who observed the Law of Moses.³⁷ These 'outward' Jews circumcised in the flesh were distinguished from 'inward' Jews circumcised in the heart (Romans 2:28–9). Inward Jews, whether of Jewish or Gentile ancestry were the 'Abrahamites' in whom the '*blessing of the most High*' remained (cf. Romans 4:9), the promised seed (Galatians 3:29) of whom it was said 'Salvation is of the Jews' (John 4:22). The blessing was the '*King of righteousness*' and '*Prince of peace*' (cf. Jeremiah 23:6, Isaiah 9:6) that ruled in the body of Abraham, that is the inward Abraham rather than the imperfect outward fleshy man called Abraham. Yet the blessing was also the 'seed of Abraham' (Galatians 3:16), the '*Saviour*' which lay hidden, '*hated, persecuted and despised*' within the twelve tribes of Israel circumcised in heart. In other words, Winstanley envisaged the blessing as the indwelling Christ which was now '*breaking forth*' to liberate the righteous from the '*dark clouds of inward bondage, and outward persecution*' (cf. Romans 8:21), spreading forth from them to fill the earth and '*restore all things*', thereby freeing '*the whole Creation from the curse*' under which it groaned (Genesis 3:17, Romans 8:22).³⁸ Doubtless it was identifying with Jews in an inward Pauline sense as inheritors of the blessed promised seed that reportedly prompted Winstanley's fellow Digger William Everard to declare that he was 'of the Race of the Jewes'.³⁹ Similarly, Winstanley signed himself '*a waiter for the consolation of Israel*' (Luke 2:25) and expecting Israel's imminent return from the mystery of Egyptian bondage (Exodus 6:5–6), 'self-seeking oppressing government' and outward observance of ordinances, he instructed the twelve tribes to stand still in this '*time of Jacobs trouble*' (Jeremiah 30:7). For the Lord himself, Reason, would deliver the Spirit within Israel from the oppressive burden of cursed flesh by burning up the outward body, a compound made of the four elements – fire, water, earth, air – in which the curse rested.⁴⁰

Conceiving of the blessing as the indwelling Christ hidden within inward Jews, Winstanley also regarded it as synonymous with Jacob. For Winstanley, Jacob was Christ, the '*elect or chosen one*'; Esau, his elder twin, the '*rejected one, the reprobate*' (cf. Romans 9:13). Jacob and Esau, moreover, represented the two Adams within mankind striving to rule in the Kingdom of heaven, interpreted as Christ within (cf. Luke 17:21). Esau, as the elder brother, was the disobedient Adam or 'son of bondage' (Galatians 4:22) that filled every man with 'sin and filth' (Romans 5:19). This Adam was within every man and woman, and was the first power to 'act and rule in every man'. Hence Esau was associated with the 'wisdom

³⁷ Winstanley, *Mysterie of God*, sig. A2v, p. 19; Winstanley, *Breaking of the day of God*, p. 43; Winstanley, *Saints Paradise*, p. 13; Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 113, 160, 215.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 149–54.

³⁹ Anon., *The Declaration and Standard of the Levellers of England* (1649), p. 2.

⁴⁰ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 152–3, 154, 163, 189, 191, 195.

and power of flesh' that initially reigned over mankind, with beastly, 'proud and covetous flesh' that delighted in 'unrighteous pleasures' (cf. 2 Peter 2:12–13). Consequently he sold both his 'birth-right and blessing' to Jacob (Genesis 25:27–34, Genesis 27:30–36, Hebrews 12:16–17), and his downfall was approaching. Jacob, that is the second Adam or 'son of the free-woman' (Galatians 4:22), had been downtrodden and in servitude a '*long time*'. Now, however, the younger brother was supplanting the elder (Isaiah 44:1), rising up in glory as the spirit within the hearts of inward Jews to rule in righteousness and 'restore all things'. Jacob's dominion would reach 'from one end of heaven to the other' (Luke 17:24) and would be like a 'spreading power of light' dispersing darkness and covering the earth with the 'knowledge of himself'. Nor would this blessing bring loss and misery to anyone (Genesis 18:18), for his law would be established in love and bring peace to the whole Creation.⁴¹

Winstanley thus envisioned Jacob and Esau as types, as figures in the Old Testament that foreshadowed aspects of the Christian dispensation. Esau – the reprobate – corresponded to sinful flesh ruled by the first Adam, whereas Jacob – the elect – corresponded to the spirit within ruled by the second Adam, Christ. But in a bold step Winstanley went further still. For he maintained that Esau's dominion was supported by university-trained clergymen and public preachers, 'false Teachers' and betrayers of Christ who, while deceitfully promising an outward heaven above the skies, picked the purses of their unsuspecting flocks.⁴² Conversely, Jacob would sweep away 'all the refuge of lies, and all oppressions' (Isaiah 28:17), and 'make the earth a common treasury'. The 'poor despised people' (cf. James 2:6) trodden upon like dust and stones had begun to '*receive the Gospel*', so that not the meek but '*The poor shal inherit the earth*' (cf. Matthew 5:5).⁴³ Eventually, Winstanley condemned monarchy as well for making the 'elder brethren freemen in the Earth, and the younger brethren slaves'. Indeed, in *The Law of Freedom in a platform* (preface dated 5 November 1651) he considered 'Kingly Government' – equated with the 'great Man of Sin' (2 Thessalonians 2:3) – to be supported by the central pillar of Calvinist doctrine, the double decree which made:

one brother a Lord, and another a servant, while they are in their Mothers womb, before they have done either good or evil: This is the mighty Ruler, that hath made the Election and Rejection of Brethren from their birth to their death, or from Eternity to Eternity.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 149, 150, 165, 173, 176–7, 178–80, 187, 189–90, 213, 228, 237.

⁴² *Ibid.*, pp. 178–9, 226–7, 240.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 188–90, 209; cf. Winstanley, *New Law of Righteousnes*, title-page.

⁴⁴ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 530, 381, 568.

The Saturday and Sunday Sabbath

Winstanley's use of types was widespread, extending to his understanding of Mosaic Law. Christians from Thomas Aquinas onwards conventionally divided the Law of Moses into three categories – the moral, judicial and ceremonial. This Law was believed to have been given by God to Moses, beginning with the Decalogue on Mount Sinai (Exodus 20:1–17), then supplemented and codified in the remainder of the Pentateuch. The moral law was derived from the Ten Commandments and all but a handful of Christians regarded it as inviolate. Judicial laws, according to Aquinas, 'did not bind for ever, but were annulled by the coming of Christ'; a sentiment with which the majority of Christians agreed. Nevertheless, Aquinas thought that it was not prejudicial to Christian faith for a sovereign to enact legislation based on these judicial laws, so long as they were not observed as if 'they derived their binding force through being institutions of the Old Law'. Both Calvin's advocacy of the death penalty for blasphemy and the Parliamentary Ordinance of May 1648 against the same offence can be seen as instances of Protestant reformers turning to judicial laws for exemplars. Ceremonial laws such as dietary regulations and restrictions governing specific kinds of clothing were regarded by Aquinas as being both 'dead' and 'deadly' – that is, of having been cancelled with the coming of Christ, making it a mortal sin for Christians to observe them. The seventh of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England essentially reaffirmed this view: the Law given by Moses, as touching ceremonies and rites did not bind Christian men, but no Christian man whatsoever was free from obeying the moral commandments.⁴⁵

As the fourth of God's Ten Commandments, the Sabbath was taken by certain English Protestant commentators from at least the mid-1590s to be '*properly and perpetually*' a moral law, rather than a ceremonial or partly moral, partly ceremonial law.⁴⁶ However, several notable separatist and Baptist Judaisers – Christians who adopted selected Jewish customs or religious rites – argued that following Jewish precedent the Sabbath should be celebrated on the seventh day of the week, Saturday, rather than the first day, Sunday.⁴⁷ Although Winstanley exhibited

⁴⁵ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, prima secundæ partis, question 101, 'The ceremonial precepts in themselves', art. 1–4, question 104, 'What is meant by the judicial precepts', art. 3; P.D.L. Avis, 'Moses and the Magistrate: a Study in the rise of Protestant Legalism', *JEH*, 26 (1975): pp. 149–72.

⁴⁶ Henry Burton, *A brief Answer to a late Treatise of the Sabbath Day* (Amsterdam, 1635), p. 5; Robert Cleaver, *A Declaration of the Christian Sabbath* (London, 1625), pp. 50–89; R.L. Greaves, 'The origins of English Sabbatarian Thought', *SCJ*, 12 (1981): pp. 26, 31–2; P. Collinson, 'The Beginnings of English Sabbatarianism', in Collinson, *Godly People*, pp. 429–43.

⁴⁷ D. Katz, *Sabbath and Sectarianism in Seventeenth-Century England* (Leiden, 1988); B. Ball, *The Seventh-Day Men: Sabbatarians and Sabbatarianism in England and Wales, 1600–1800* (Oxford, 1994).

Judaising tendencies, particularly his love of spiritual Israel and later borrowings from Mosaic Law when laying out the foundations of his ideal republic, he was no defender of the Saturday Sabbath. Indeed, he regarded the Jewish Sabbath as a type, as an outward observance practised one day in seven by Jews that prefigured what ‘Gentile Christians’ would constantly ‘perform in the substance’. For the ‘Sabbath Day’ denoted a ‘Day of a Christians rest’ (Hebrews 4:8, cf. Colossians 2:16–17): that is, the daily ‘reign of Christ in and over the Saints’, or his ‘indwelling in the soul, and the souls indwelling in him’.⁴⁸ Consequently, Winstanley rebuked ministers for enforcing observance of the Sunday Sabbath with the magistrates’ power, endeavouring to compel people ‘to keep that day after the manner of the Jewish tipe’.⁴⁹ Profanation of the Sabbath, it should be stressed, was a serious matter during the English Revolution. So much so that the ‘Book of Sports’ – a royal initiative encouraging traditional Sunday pastimes like Morris dancing, bowls and football outside the hours of divine service – was publicly burned by the hangman on 10 May 1643 at Cheapside, London.⁵⁰ What is more, according to the provisions of an Ordinance of 8 April 1644, travelling and labouring on the Sabbath were punishable by fines of 10 shillings and 5 shillings respectively; less severe penalties than the original laws for the Massachusetts Bay Colony which had made Sabbath-breaking a capital offence (cf. Exodus 35:2).⁵¹

Following the Golden Rule of doing to others as you would be done unto (Matthew 7:12), Winstanley looked forward to turning the tables on the clergy. Then the power of the risen Christ would stone to death thoughts, studies and ‘imagination of flesh’, for these were the men ‘found gathering sticks upon this sabbath day’ (Numbers 15:32–6). Denouncing the clergy’s manipulation of the New Testament to uphold their trade, Winstanley insisted that keeping Sunday holy had not been a forced business but a ‘voluntary act of love’ among the Apostles who had tasted the ‘day of Christ’. Once this context is appreciated, the actions of five Diggers who began cultivating the earth on St George’s Hill one April Sunday in 1649 takes on extra significance since this appears to have been a calculated, even confrontational gesture. Certainly this unashamed Sabbath breach echoes Jesus’ teaching that it was lawful to do good on Sabbath days (Luke 6:5–10), and chimes with Winstanley’s conviction that Saints filled with the indwelling Christ were not bound by outmoded forms of Jewish worship but liberated from weekly Sabbath

⁴⁸ Winstanley, *Mysterie of God*, pp. 53–4; Winstanley, *Breaking of the day of God*, p. 92.

⁴⁹ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, p. 143.

⁵⁰ *CJ*, ii, 847–8; *LJ*, vi, 32, *LJ*, vi, 504–10; *Die Veneris 5 Maij 1643* (London, 1643), brs.; John Vicars, *A Sight of ye Trans-actions of these latter yeares Emblemized* (London, 1646), p. 21.

⁵¹ Firth and Rait (eds), *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum*, 1, pp. 420–22; C. Durston, ‘“Preaching and sitting still on Sundays”: the Lord’s Day during the English Revolution’, in C. Durston and J. Maltby (eds), *Religion in Revolutionary England* (Manchester, 2006), pp. 205–25.

observance.⁵² This was reaffirmed in *The Law of Freedom* where Winstanley thought it ‘very rational and good’ that his Commonwealth should have a ‘*Day of Rest*’ one day in seven. Drawing on Mosaic Law in a manner akin to approved Protestant usage of judicial laws, that is as non-binding exemplars, Winstanley proposed three reasons why an unspecified day of the week should be set apart; first, it gave an opportunity for parishioners to mingle in fellowship; second, ceasing from labour refreshed human bodies and livestock; and third, it enabled ministers to communicate news and read the Law of the Commonwealth as well as allowing people the chance to make speeches and engage in disputations.⁵³

Tithes

Tithes were a sign of homage and had been given by the children of Israel to the Levites as tribute for their service in the tabernacle. Leviticus required that they consist of the tenth portion of all agricultural produce, fruit and livestock.⁵⁴ This ancient Jewish custom, practised for centuries by the Church, regulated in London by statute of Henry VIII and claimed not by donation but as of divine right, proved a source of bitter, protracted controversy. Shortly before the German Peasants’ War, for example, a renegade Carthusian monk named Otto Brunfels published *Von dem Pfaffen Zehenden (On Ecclesiastical Tithes)* (Strasbourg, 1524); a learned treatise of 142 theses arguing that tithes lacked any foundation in the New Testament. Those who compelled the poor to pay tithes, he declared, were ‘viler betrayers of Christ than Judas, yes worse than the godless priests of Baal’. In the summer of 1524 anti-tithe rebellions erupted all over southern Germany.⁵⁵ Similarly, with the outbreak of Civil War in England, removal of the church courts and sequestrations, resistance to the collection of tithes, hitherto sporadic, became widespread. On 8 November 1644, Parliament issued an Ordinance authorising Justices of the Peace in certain circumstances to commit defaulters to gaol. Opposition to the forced maintenance of ministers, however, grew fiercer. The General Baptist and future Leveller Richard Overton publicised the ‘abundance of Poore, Fatherlesse, Widdowes, &c.’ starving in every parish and advocated voluntary contributions as an alternative.⁵⁶ Petitions were organised and presented to the Lord Mayor of London and House of Commons urging the removal of the ‘tedious burthen’ of

⁵² Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 125, 141, 143, 265.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 562–3.

⁵⁴ Leviticus 27:30–32; Numbers 18:20–24; cf. Genesis 14:18–20, 28:22, Deuteronomy 14:22.

⁵⁵ J. Stayer, *The German Peasants’ War and Anabaptist Community of Goods* (Montreal and Kingston, 1991), pp. 36, 46–7; L.P. Buck, ‘Opposition to Tithes in the Peasants’ Revolt: A Case Study of Nuremberg in 1524’, *SCJ*, 4 (1973): pp. 11–22.

⁵⁶ [Richard Overton], *The Ordinance for Tythes Dismounted* ([London], 1645), p. 22.

tithes, arguing that they were a Jewish ceremonial law and had been abrogated with the coming of Christ.⁵⁷

Winstanley, too, reproved the clergy for enforcing the collection of tithes through the magistrate's power, despite lacking justification in either 'Reason' or 'Scripture'.⁵⁸ Condemning the 'selfish tyth-taking' preachers and all others that preached for hire, he compared their covetousness to Judas, betrayer of Christ.⁵⁹ In *An appeal to the House of Commons* (July 1649), Winstanley provided a historical explanation for the introduction of tithes to England, arguing that they had been brought in with the Norman Conquest so that William I could pay his debts to the Papacy and clergy, the latter having tried to persuade the people to embrace the Conqueror through their preaching. By including tithes among the burdensome Norman laws imposed upon the English, Winstanley was therefore able to suggest both that royal authority was buttressed by the 'Norman-Clergy' and that these mercenary 'oppressing Tith-mungers' were available to the highest bidder, whether Catholic or Protestant, Royalist or Republican.⁶⁰ In *The Law of Freedom*, Winstanley connected the Norman Conqueror's oppressive power, which stemmed from covetousness and pride, with Samuel's warning to the Israelite elders against setting up a king. For it was here that the 'burden of Tythes' placed upon the shoulders of the '*Commoners of England*' – a tenth of 'all profits' from their estates given to the clergy – had begun (1 Samuel 8:15).⁶¹ Interestingly, the anonymous author of *Light shining in Buckinghamshire* (1648) and *More Light shining in Buckinghamshire* (1649) cited the same scriptural verses when blaming kings for establishing tithes and outlining the injustices of regal tyranny from Nimrod (Genesis 10:8–10) to the Israelite monarchy through to the '*Norman Bastard William*'.⁶²

⁵⁷ Anon., *The Inditement of Tythes* (London, 1646), p. 6; Thomas Edwards, *Gangraena* (3 vols, London, 1646), 1, p. 30; Anon., *The Countreys Plea against Tythes* (London, 1647), p. 5; Anon., *The Husbandmans Plea against Tithes* (London, 1647), pp. 8–9; Anon., *To the Right Honourable the Commons of England in Parliament assembled. The humble Petition of Thousands of wel-affected persons inhabiting the City of London* (1648), brs.

⁵⁸ Winstanley, *Breaking of the day of God*, pp. 92, 117; Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 130, 143, 470.

⁵⁹ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 194, 206, 233.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 311–12, 333, 335, 357–8, 387, 429; G.E. Aylmer, 'England's Spirit Unfolded, or an Incouragement to take the Engagement. A Newly discovered pamphlet by Gerrard Winstanley', *P&P*, 40 (1968): p. 11.

⁶¹ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 504, 510, 522, 523, 532, 561.

⁶² *Ibid.*, Winstanley, pp. 612–13, 630–31.

Anticlericalism

Winstanley's anticlericalism pervades his writings.⁶³ In *The Breaking of the Day of God* he regarded the various forms of Church government as branches of the beast that was waging war against God's holy people. This 'Bastardly', oppressive human authority was hypocritically persecuting the Saints who worshipped the Lamb, 'God in Man', enforcing religious conformity through observance of outward fleshy forms. Nor was this done according to Scripture, but by imposition of the Canons of 1604 and then the Directory for Public Worship (4 January 1645). Yet these ecclesiastical laws did not succeed in suppressing wickedness and ungodliness.⁶⁴ Exercising a monopoly on preaching, proud learned scholars trained in 'humane letters' were preventing humble fishermen, shepherds, husbandmen and tradesmen – latter-day Apostles – from speaking about their spiritual experiences and revealing 'truths' which they had 'heard and seen from God' (Acts 4:20). Now, however, some clergymen would burn their books, forsake their comfortable quarters, and deny their ecclesiastical trade to join with the Saints and wait upon God.⁶⁵ Continuing in this vein, Winstanley subsequently denounced preaching as a trade, comparing preachers who did not speak of God from experience to 'clouds without rain' (Proverbs 25:14). With their temporal livings, these hirelings professing a 'literal' Gospel stood in opposition to the 'ministry of the Gospel' that God had put into men's hands (cf. John 10:12). Indeed, they were 'enemies' to the 'Spirit of truth' that had inspired the Prophets and Apostles (John 14:17).⁶⁶

In *Truth Lifting up its head above scandals* Winstanley adopted a catechetical format, telling his readers that, although church attendance was voluntary, the state could not force people to either hear clerical interpretations of scripture or maintain ministers by tithes. Furthermore, clergymen were not empowered to determine doctrinal errors. Winstanley concluded with a condemnation of ten outward ordinances whose observation he considered unwarranted; church services conducted on certain days at particular times according to custom, rather than when ministers were filled with the power of prayer; preaching not from inward experience but knowledge gained through hearing, reading and studying; praying

⁶³ F. Stripp, 'The Anti-Clericalism of Gerrard Winstanley', *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, 23 (1954): pp. 188–201; J.F. Maclear, 'Popular Anticlericalism in the Puritan Revolution', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 17 (1956): pp. 457–61; Hill (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 19, 42–4; G. Sanderson, 'The Digger's apprenticeship: Winstanley's early writings', *Political Studies*, 22 (1974): p. 455; Hill, 'Religion of Gerrard Winstanley', pp. 188, 192; G. Shulman, *Radicalism and Reverence. The Political Thought of Gerrard Winstanley* (Berkeley, 1989), pp. 95–9, Gurney, *Brave Community*, p. 98.

⁶⁴ Winstanley, *Breaking of the day of God*, pp. 73, 84–5, 88, 128, 133–4.

⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 115, 124, 130; cf. *The Confession of Faith, Of those Churches which are commonly (though falsly) called Anabaptists* (London, 1644), title-page.

⁶⁶ Winstanley, *Saints Paradise*, pp. 2, 11–12; cf. Winstanley, *Mysterie of God*, pp. 33–4.

with words spoken before and after sermons rather than in silence; expounding Scripture for financial gain; compelling people to attend church services by misusing the magistrates' power; enforcing parish boundaries and the provision of tithes; keeping the Sunday Sabbath; administering communion – a mere 'table gesture' – to a 'mixed company' of parishioners; infant baptism; preaching the Gospel and persecuting the 'Spirit within' that had made Moses (a shepherd), Amos (a fruit gatherer), the Apostles (fishermen) and Christ (a carpenter) preachers.⁶⁷

Reiterating his invective against the clergy in *The New Law of Righteousnes*, Winstanley also drew a comparison between the 'bitter' 'zealous Scribes and Pharisees' that had killed Christ (Matthew 23:14–15, 23–33) and his latter-day betrayers – subtle, proud, fleshy preachers and teachers motivated by greed, that were hindering Christ from rising within the cloudy hearts of his Saints. These deceitful Pharisees of Winstanley's own age, who despised poor men and women that spoke of God from an 'inward testimony', calling them 'Locusts, factious, blasphemers, and what not', would be stoned out of their pulpits (cf. Leviticus 24:16) and whipped out of God's Temple in the manner of Jesus driving the moneychangers out of the temple at Jerusalem and overthrowing their tables (John 2:15).⁶⁸ For their 'fine language' was but 'a husk without the kernall', 'words without life'; their stinking outward religious services, preaching, praying and public worship an 'abomination to the Lord'.⁶⁹ In *A New-years Gift for the Parliament and Armie* (January 1650), Winstanley envisaged 'Tything-priests' as a branch of 'Tyranical Kingly power'.⁷⁰ Though he came to identify clerical power with one of the four beasts that Daniel saw rising up out of the sea (Daniel 7:3),⁷¹ Winstanley returned to the relationship between monarchical and clerical power in *The Law of Freedom*. Singling out 'old formal ignorant Episcopal Priests' as bitter enemies of the new Commonwealth, he traced the origins of a 'National Ministry' to the Norman Conquest.⁷²

Magistracy and Magistrates

Although Scripture required Christians to render 'unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's' (Matthew 22:21) and submit to 'the powers that be' (Romans 13:1), Protestant reformers had developed arguments concerning the duty of obedience and concomitant rights of resistance. Calvin, for instance, suggested that 'unwitting agents' or 'manifest avengers' were raised up by God to deliver the people from calamity, while 'popular magistrates' were appointed to curb regal tyranny. He also

⁶⁷ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 130, 138–9, 142–5.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 164, 187, 200, 206, 208, 213–14, 224, 240, 339, 409, 463, 466.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 372, 381.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 466, 469.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 504, 522–3.

carefully mapped out separate spiritual and temporal jurisdictions, distinguishing between complementary ecclesiastical and civil powers. According to Calvin, the Church was to refuse unrepentant sinners communion but had no right to use the sword to punish, restrain or fine lawbreakers, nor to imprison them. Christian magistrates, on the other hand, were required ‘to purge the Church of offences by corporal punishment and coercion’.⁷³ Calvin’s attitude contrasted with that maintained in *Brüderliche vereynigung etzlicher kinder Gottes, siben Artickel betreffend* (*Brotherly Union of a number of children of God concerning Seven Articles*) (1527), probably by the Anabaptist leader Michael Sattler and better known as the Schleithem Articles. The sixth of these declared that, whereas secular rulers had wielded the sword under Mosaic Law to punish and kill the wicked, the sword was now ‘outside the perfection of Christ’. Consequently, magistrates were forbidden from using it to enforce law and order. Indeed, it did not befit Christians, whose weapons and armour were spiritual – truth, righteousness, peace, faith, holiness, and the Word of God – to serve as magistrates, because worldly affairs were governed by the flesh.⁷⁴ This controversial position was to be thrown back in the Baptists’ faces as one of several political errors attributed to them by Daniel Featley in *The Dippers dipt* (London, 1645): first, people may ‘depose their magistrates and chief rulers’; second, Christians with a good conscience could not bear the office of magistrate; third, none were permitted to administer oaths; and fourth, criminals should not be put to death.⁷⁵ Distancing themselves from some of these charges as well as unfavourable comparisons with the licentiousness of the Anabaptists of Münster, seven Particular Baptist churches in London issued *The Confession of Faith* (London, 1644). Modelled on the Separatist Confession of 1596, a revised second edition consisting of fifty-two articles was distributed outside the House of Commons in January 1646. The forty-eighth stated that civil magistracy was an ‘Ordinance of God’ set up by God for the punishment of evil doers, while the fiftieth affirmed that it was lawful for Christians to be magistrates or civil officers, and to take oaths. The intervening article, however, asserted that, in cases of religious persecution, Saints ought to obey God rather than

⁷³ Jean Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. F. L. Battles and ed. J. MacNeill (2 vols, 1559 edn), The Library of Christian Classics, vols 20–21 (Philadelphia, 1960), Book 4, chapter 11, sections 1–5; Book 4, chapter 20, sections 30–32.

⁷⁴ *Brotherly Union of a number of children of God concerning Seven Articles*, article 6, <http://members.iquest.net/~jswartz/schleithem/art6.html>; J. Stayer, *Anabaptists and the Sword* (1976; Eugene, OR, 2002), pp. 117–22; H.-J. Goertz, *The Anabaptists*, trans. T. Johnson (London and New York, 1996), pp. 98–9, 153–4; C.A. Snyder, ‘The Schleithem Articles in Light of the Revolution of the Common Man: Continuation or Departure?’, *SCJ*, 16 (1985): p. 427.

⁷⁵ Daniel Featley, *The Dippers dipt* (London, 1645), pp. 29, 157–98; cf. Richard Byfield, *Temple defilers defiled* (London, 1645), p. 20; Edwards, *Gangraena*, pt 2, p. 161; Thomas Bakewell, *Heresie detected: Or the grand sectaries of These times confuted* (London, 1649), pp. 40–46.

magistrates.⁷⁶ Similarly, the General Baptist Edward Barber gave out a pamphlet at the Commons' door in September 1648 in which he argued for separation of ecclesiastical and civil powers. Magistrates were to punish disobedient sinners – the ungodly murderers, pimps, thieves, liars and perjurers – but had no authority to meddle with a gathered church.⁷⁷

Winstanley initially regarded the institution of magistracy as 'Gods Ordinance' (1 Peter 2:14, Romans 13:1–2), a 'higher power' which God had established to preserve peace in the world by being '*a terror to the wicked*' and outwardly punishing evil doers. Civil magistrates had been empowered with authority to govern lawfully and individuals were commanded to be obedient.⁷⁸ Since the days of the Roman emperor Nero, however, which Winstanley called the 'day of the Dragon' (Revelation 12:17), identifying this period as the first of the three and a half ages during which the Beast or rather the Serpent (humane nature) within flesh '*treads down the holy City*' under foot (Revelation 11:2–3), there had been occasions when both magistrates and people had been deceived.⁷⁹ Through the subtle, crafty workings of the flesh, 'beastly' ecclesiastical power had stolen authority, reversing the progress of magistracy by making ecclesiastical laws which, lacking divine authority, punished the Saints and protected the wicked.⁸⁰ But now magistracy would run its right course to help God's Saints by putting Church government on Christ's shoulders (Isaiah 9:6), for the prophecy that magistrates '*shall love the people, and be nursing Fathers to them*' (Isaiah 49:23) was being fulfilled.⁸¹ Afterwards, having censured the clergy for enforcing the Sunday Sabbath, tithes, church attendance and doctrinal conformity by abusing the magistrate's power,⁸² Winstanley outlined how 'Imaginary government' would be overturned (Ezekiel 21:27) and replaced with 'True Government'. Ruled over by the Prince of darkness and power of Antichrist, imaginary government was unworthy of the name magistracy since it gave the gentry liberty to selfishly possess all land, to the detriment of poor commoners. Conversely, true government would be established when God, the King of righteousness, ruled over all with power and authority. Then pure magistracy – that is to say, the light of love, humility, reason, truth and peace – would shine forth among the nations uniting them in universal love.⁸³

⁷⁶ *CJ*, iv, p. 420; *A Confession of Faith of seven Congregations or Churches of Christ in London* (London, 1646), articles 48–51; cf. *CJ*, vi, p. 178.

⁷⁷ Edward Barber, *An Answer to the Eight Quaeries propounded by the House of Commons* (1648), pp. 13–16; cf. Edward Barber, *An answer to the Essex watchmens watchword* (London, 1649), p. 13.

⁷⁸ Winstanley, *Breaking of the day of God*, pp. 83, 88, 103, 132, 135.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 60–63, 103.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 83–4, 88, 132–5.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, sig. A4, pp. 59, 135.

⁸² Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 102, 130, 143, 206, 241, 470.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, pp. 472–4.

Hoping to see 'True Magistracy Restored', Winstanley dedicated to Cromwell his design for 'Commonwealths Government': *The Law of Freedom*.⁸⁴

Capital Punishment, Holy War, Military Service and Non-resistance

Just as the polygenetic and variegated nature of early Anabaptism produced conflicting attitudes towards magistracy, so a number of Anabaptist leaders developed different positions regarding capital punishment, holy war, military service and non-resistance. Having separated themselves from the ungodly multitude by voluntarily joining a community of believers bound in fellowship by a second baptism, they wrestled, like Luther before them, with the problem of reconciling Mosaic Law with New Testament teachings on the sword and peace (Matthew 5, Matthew 10:34, Luke 22:38, Romans 13:4).⁸⁵ Thus, on the one hand, Balthasar Hubmaier, echoing a view commonplace among Protestant reformers that wielding the sword was necessary to preserve order in a sinful post-lapsarian world, argued that Christian government was a higher power set up by God for the punishment of evil-doers.⁸⁶ On the other, however, following Conrad Grebel's teachings and the sixth of the Schleitheim Articles, some of the Swiss Brethren, Stähler (men of the staff) and Menno Simons in his later writings rejected capital punishment (Exodus 20:13).⁸⁷ Similarly, influenced by Thomas Müntzer's apocalyptic call to resist tyranny and wreak bloody vengeance upon the ungodly – including priests and monks – in the last days before the coming of Christ's earthly kingdom, Hans Hut counselled sheathing the sword until God called upon the Saints to draw it as the Day of Judgment approached.⁸⁸ Again at Münster, Bernhard Rothmann exhorted the Anabaptists to take up arms and prepare for battle against the entire 'Babylonian power' and 'godless establishment'.⁸⁹ Conversely a few Swiss Brethren refused military service as did the Hutterites, who professing love for their enemies also kept their consciences pure by repudiating payment of war

⁸⁴ Gerrard Winstanley, *The Law of Freedom in a platform: Or, True Magistracy Restored* (London, 1652), title-page.

⁸⁵ Stayer, *Anabaptists and Sword*, pp. 36–40, 62–3, 77, 102–3, 123, 126–8, 147–8, 169, 176.

⁸⁶ H.S. Bender, 'The Pacifism of the Sixteenth Century Anabaptists', *CH*, 24 (1955): p. 124; C.-P. Clasen, *Anabaptism: A Social History, 1525–1618. Switzerland, Austria, Moravia, South and Central Germany* (Ithaca and London, 1972), pp. 177–8; Stayer, *Anabaptists and Sword*, pp. 34, 65, 75, 89–90, 99, 105–8, 141–5, 214, 313; Goertz, *Anabaptists*, pp. 100–103.

⁸⁷ Bender, 'Pacifism of Sixteenth Century Anabaptists', pp. 121–3; Stayer, *Anabaptists and Sword*, pp. 102–3, 120–21, 129–30, 145, 169, 316–18; Goertz, *Anabaptists*, pp. 152–5.

⁸⁸ Stayer, *Anabaptists and Sword*, pp. 73–90, 152–6, 190; cf. Clasen, *Anabaptism*, pp. 160–66.

⁸⁹ Stayer, *Anabaptists and Sword*, pp. 227–52.

taxes.⁹⁰ Resonant of Erasmus's condemnation of mercenary warfare in *Querela Pacis* (1517), which was subsequently translated into German, it is significant both that Erasmus's pacifist writings effected Zwingli – at least before his death on the battlefield – and that Grebel's humanist education may have exposed him to these same texts.⁹¹ Indeed, Michael Sattler, together with the separatist Swiss Brethren, Hutterites and Menno, were all known for espousing the principle of non-resistance, advocating the use of spiritual weapons like God's word rather than devilish instruments of brutality such as the gun, sword or halberd; preferring martyrdom like sheep among the wolves ready for slaughter to forcefully defying tyrannical oppression.⁹²

Non-resistance was implicitly rejected by both the thirty-sixth of the Forty-two Articles (1553) and the thirty-seventh of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England (1563), which declared that Christian men could lawfully bear weapons at the magistrate's command and serve in wars. The Protestant preacher Hugh Latimer also denounced it as a foolish Anabaptist misinterpretation of scripture (Ephesians 6:12), dismissing their contention that 'no Christian man maye fighte or goe to warrefare'.⁹³ Furthermore, drawing on Zwingli's successor Heinrich Bullinger and other sources, English heresiographers and controversialists sustained the association between Anabaptism, pacifism and non-resistance, some attributing it to a peculiar sect within the movement called 'Separatists'. It must be emphasised, however, that these same critics gave far greater attention to Anabaptist acts of violence.⁹⁴ Nor for all their doctrinal disputes were the majority of English Baptists pacifists, a number serving as soldiers and chaplains in Parliament's armies during the Civil Wars.⁹⁵ Indeed Baptists were involved

⁹⁰ *The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren. Volume I.*, trans. The Hutterian Brethren (Rifton, New York, 1987), pp. 61–2, 236; Bender, 'Pacifism of Sixteenth Century Anabaptists', pp. 122, 125–6; Clasen, *Anabaptism*, pp. 174, 180–81; Stayer, *Anabaptists and Sword*, pp. 125, 176, 324; Goertz, *Anabaptists*, p. 104.

⁹¹ Stayer, *Anabaptists and Sword*, pp. 52–5, 57–8, 93, 95–6, 312, 314; cf. Bender, 'Pacifism of Sixteenth Century Anabaptists', pp. 119, 128–30.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp. 122–3, 124–5, 126, 128; Stayer, *Anabaptists and Sword*, pp. 4–5, 101–2, 118–25, 161, 169, 173–5, 269, 300, 310–11, 318–19.

⁹³ Hugh Latimer, *Certayn Godly Sermons* (London, 1562), fols 79v–80v; I. Horst, *The Radical Brethren: Anabaptism and the English Reformation to 1558* (Nieuwkoop, 1972), pp. 107, 174–5.

⁹⁴ William Wilkinson, *A Confutation of certaine Articles deliuered unto the Familie of Loue* (London, 1579), fol. 74v; Thomas Rogers, *The Faith, Doctrine, and Religion professed and protected in the Realm of England* (Cambridge, 1607), pp. 213–14; Featley, *Dippers dipt*, p. 32; Thomas Bakewell, *A Confutation of the Anabaptists* (London, 1644), sigs. C3v–C3r–2; Byfield, *Temple defilers*, p. 20; Anon., *The Anabaptists Catechisme* ([London]: R.A., 1645), p. 5; Spanheim, *Englands Warning*, p. 46; Ephraim Pagitt, *Heresiography* (London, 1654), p. 29.

⁹⁵ J.F. McGregor, 'The Baptists: Fount of All Heresy', in J.F. McGregor and B. Reay (eds), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984), pp. 25, 31.

in planning the abortive Fifth Monarchy rising of 1657 and, though they did not participate – despite their eagerness – as an organised group in the bloody insurrection of 1661, an enterprising pamphleteer nonetheless paralleled Münster with the ‘late massacres’ committed by the Fifth Monarchists.⁹⁶

Besides certain Anabaptist groups, the anti-Trinitarian Polish Brethren and English adherents of the Family of Love were the other sixteenth-century Protestant denominations notorious for non-resistance.⁹⁷ The latter reportedly condemned all wars and, according to a 1561 ‘confession’ of two alleged Familists taken at Guildford, initially prohibited the bearing of weapons but afterwards, to prevent identification as pacifists, permitted carrying staves.⁹⁸ Though Familists were notoriously skilful at dissembling, this problematic evidence can not be discounted since it resembles aspects of Nicolaes’s message. Nicolaes deplored killing and bloodshed, contrasting a promised spiritual land of peace where in the last times God would miraculously transport his holy people (the elect) to dwell peaceably in love, with a land of ignorance whose inhabitants fashioned physical swords, halberds, spears, bows, arrows, ordnance, guns and armour to wage destructive outward battles one against another.⁹⁹

Against this backdrop, Winstanley’s feelings about using violence – it is noteworthy that he did not fight in the Civil War – stand out. Disapproving of weapons which would destroy yet ‘never build up’ and peacefully expecting the fulfilment of the prophecy that ‘swords shall be beaten into plough irons’ and ‘spears into pruning hooks’ (Micah 4:3), he informed readers of *The New Law of Righteousnes* that ‘all these wars’, ‘killing one another’ and ‘destroying Armies’ were but ‘the rising up of the curse’ under whose burden the Creation groaned (Romans 8:22).¹⁰⁰ Then, in their first manifesto, *The True Levellers Standard Advanced* (April 1649), the Diggers lamented the death and destruction wreaked to maintain tyrannical oppression, questioning the madness of violent self-destruction – which

⁹⁶ CSPD 1660–61, p. 471; Anon., *Munster Paralleld In the Late Massacres Committed by the Fifth Monarchists* (London, 1661); C. Burrage, ‘The Fifth Monarchy Insurrections’, *EHR*, 25 (1910): pp. 724–5, 728–9, 731, 736, 744.

⁹⁷ G. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (3rd edn, Ann Arbor, MI, 2000), pp. 1136–9, 1148, 1159–60, 1209–10; P. Brock, ‘Conscientious Objectors in the Polish Brethren Church, 1565–1605’, *Slavonic and East European Review*, 70 (1992): pp. 670–87; J.D. Moss, ‘“Godded with God”: Hendrik Nicolaes and His Family of Love’, *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, 71 (1981): pp. 15, 39, 52, 61.

⁹⁸ Moss, ‘“Godded with God”’, p. 71; John Rogers, *The displaying of an horrible secte of grosse and wicked heretiques, naming themselues the Family of loue* (London, 1578), sig. I.vv2–r3; Rogers, *Faith, Doctrine, and Religion*, p. 214.

⁹⁹ Hendrick Nicolaes, *Euangelium regni* ([Cologne, 1575?]), fol. 78v; Hendrick Nicolaes, *Terra pacis* ([Cologne, 1575?]), fols 6v, 14r, 56v; Hendrick Nicolaes, *Introductio. An introduction to the holy understanding of the Glasse of Righteousnes* ([Cologne, 1575?]), fol. 21r [2nd pagination].

¹⁰⁰ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 182, 204, 222, 247; cf. Winstanley, *Breaking of the day of God*, pp. 136–7.

they likened to the Midianites slaying one another in confusion (Judges 7:22). Instead they declared their willingness to accept martyrdom, to offer their blood and, unarmed, sacrifice their lives to promote ‘universal Liberty’, trusting the Lord of Hosts to deliver them from Egyptian bondage (Exodus 6:5–6); ‘not by Sword or Weapon’ but by his ‘Spirit’ (cf. Zechariah 4:6).¹⁰¹ Accounts of their activities confirm that these were not hypocritical empty words, since the Diggers would neither fight nor ‘defend themselves by arms’, submitting meekly to authority.¹⁰² Moreover, there were several instances when they responded to violence with non-resistance. Hence when a Digger was punched during an argument he responded by turning the other cheek.¹⁰³ Winstanley claimed that Diggers imprisoned in Walton church were beaten by the ‘rude multitude’, and he also accused some infantry quartered at Walton of assaulting a man and thrashing a boy, stealing and setting fire to the Diggers’ house.¹⁰⁴ On 11 June 1649, four Diggers were brutally attacked by a group of local men wielding staves and clubs, all ritually dressed in women’s apparel.¹⁰⁵ Again, in April 1650, a poor man’s house was pulled down and his pregnant wife savagely kicked so that she miscarried. Finally, after six more of their houses were burned down, the Diggers were threatened with murder unless they abandoned their plantation.¹⁰⁶

Despite enduring these ‘Remarkable Sufferings’ brought about by the ‘great red Dragons power’ (Revelation 12:3), Winstanley remained unbowed.¹⁰⁷ Victories obtained by the sword were victories of the murderer, of the kind one slave got over another. Dragon had fought against dragon, beast against beast, covetousness and pride against covetousness and pride. Now, however, there was striving in England against ‘the Lamb, the Dove, the meek Spirit’ and ‘the power of love’. Though his enemies still fought with ‘fleshly weapons’ – the ‘Sword of Iron’ and covetousness – Winstanley warned that they would perish with them. For, armed with the ‘Sword of the Spirit which is love’ (cf. Ephesians 6:17), he regarded

¹⁰¹ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 247, 253, 256, 266.

¹⁰² Anon., *Declaration and Standard of Levellers of England*, p. 3; *A Modest Narrative of Intelligence*, no. 3 (14–21 April 1649), p. 23; *A Perfect Diurnall of Some Passages in Parliament*, no. 298 (16–23 April 1649), p. 2449; *The Kingdomes Weekly Intelligencer*, no. 308, (17–24 April 1649), p. 1334; *The Moderate*, no. 41 (17–24 April 1649), sig. ff; *The Perfect Weekly Account* (18–25 April 1649), p. 455; *The Kingdomes Faithfull and Impartial Scout*, no. 13 (20–27 April 1649), p. 98; cf. K.V. Thomas, ‘Another Digger Broadside’, *P&P*, 42 (1969), p. 63.

¹⁰³ *Kingdomes Faithfull and Impartial Scout* (20–27 April 1649), p. 101; cf. Anon., *The Speeches of Lord Generall Fairfax and the Officers of the Armie to The Diggers at St Georges Hill in Surry* (London, 1649), p. 40.

¹⁰⁴ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 281–92, 380, 392; Gurney, *Brave Community*, p. 153.

¹⁰⁵ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 295–8, 393; Gurney, *Brave Community*, pp. 153–4.

¹⁰⁶ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 433–6.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 392.

himself as a soldier of Christ engaged in a spiritual battle: ‘Dragon against the Lamb’, ‘the power of love against the power of covetousnesse’.¹⁰⁸ What is striking here is the resemblance with early Quaker apocalyptic thought. They too believed themselves called to fight the Lamb’s War in the last days. Nor was the Lamb’s War to be a bloody struggle since, in the mind of the Quaker leader George Fox, it was an inward conflict between flesh and spirit; Fox’s refusal to bear arms echoing Winstanley’s opposition to using weapons in self-defence.¹⁰⁹

All the same, Winstanley never remained entirely opposed to using violence. In *The Law of Freedom*, he envisaged an ideal republic established on patriarchal foundations with a Parliament protected by a standing army that would preserve public order, quell insurrection and repel foreign invasion. This was a necessity.¹¹⁰ Partly modelled on pre-monarchical ancient Israel, his commonwealth had a legal system that punished transgressors not just with public humiliation, whipping, restricted diet, year-long servitude, an ‘eye for eye, tooth for tooth, limb for limb’ (Exodus 21:24), but also execution. Among the capital crimes were taking legal fees, maintained preaching, buying and selling land or produce within the Commonwealth, rape and murder. It was an executioner’s job to decapitate, hang, shoot or whip the offender ‘according to the sentence of Law’.¹¹¹

In December 1646, Robert Baillie, a Church of Scotland minister and supporter of Presbyterianism concerned by the ‘great multitude’ of ‘seducing spirits’ that in ‘these very miserable times’ were going forth into an evil world, penned the preface to his *Anabaptism, the Trve Fovntaine of Independency, Brownisme, Antinomy, Familisme, And the most of the other Errours, which ... doe trouble the Church of England* (London, 1647).¹¹² Despite the problematic nature of anti-heretical writing in general and its spectre in particular, which haunts scholarly efforts to unearth the roots of Winstanley’s thought, there is much to be said for Baillie’s analysis. For distinctive General Baptist tenets were, as we have seen, the

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., pp. 271, 272, 286, 295, 297–8, 298, 329, 336, 346, 364, 379, 389–90, 437.

¹⁰⁹ J. Nickalls (ed.), *Journal of George Fox* (Cambridge, 1952; reprinted, London, 1986), pp. 65, 67, 384, 459, 676, 693; George Fox, *A declaration from the harmles & innocent people of God, called Quakers* (London, 1660); D. Gwyn, *Apocalypse of the Word. The Life and Message of George Fox (1624–1691)* (Richmond, IN, 1986), pp. 179–207; B. Reay, ‘Quakerism and Society’, in McGregor and Reay (eds), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, pp. 152–3; H. Barbour, ‘The “Lamb’s War” and the Origins of the Quaker Peace Testimony’, in H. Dyck (ed.), *The Pacifist Impulse in Historical Perspective* (Toronto and London, 1996), pp. 145–58.

¹¹⁰ Sabine (ed.), *Winstanley*, pp. 286, 552–3, 561–2, 571–6.

¹¹¹ Ibid., pp. 192, 197–8, 536, 553–4, 591–2, 593, 594–5, 597–8, 599; R. Zaller, ‘The Debate on Capital Punishment during the English Revolution’, *American Journal of Legal History*, 31 (1987): pp. 126–44.

¹¹² Robert Baillie, *Anabaptism, the Trve Fovntaine* (1647), sig. *2.

well-spring from which Winstanley imbibed ideas that informed his understanding – above all in the first five pre-Digger publications – of universal redemption, particular election, the Saturday and Sunday Sabbath, tithes, ministers, magistrates and violence. Furthermore, Winstanley's antiscrypturism together with his beliefs about divine gifts (revelation, visions, and glossolalia), apostolic practice and the soul's fate after death, likewise requires examination in the context of this General Baptist milieu. Then there is the question of Winstanley's reading habits and the manner in which he appropriated and reworked his sources. Yet, even if it can be demonstrated that Winstanley, one of the finest English prose writers of his generation, was heir to a dissenting Protestant tradition that went back by way of the General Baptists and Familists to Müntzer and Münster on the Continent, and John Wycliffe and the Lollards in England, I suspect that historians sceptical of the existence of continuous multifaceted English radical traditions would remain unconvinced. Doubtless the resonances and parallels shown here between Winstanley, his contemporaries and their predecessors will be regarded merely as evidence of a genealogy of ideas influenced by nonconformist notions of suffering and martyrdom. All the same, it is worth remembering that these beliefs, the manner in which they were articulated and the actions they engendered were indisputably radical at specific moments during both the Radical Reformation and the English Revolution – and that fact itself should give us pause for thought.

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