CHAPTER SEVEN

# *Civil War and Revolution*

It might be argued that the British Civil Wars and Interregnum are the central and most dramatic events of the early modern period. Why? One place to begin is with the lives they cost: according to a recent calculation, while 3 percent of the population of the British Isles died from "war-attributable" causes in World War I, over 11 percent did so during the Civil Wars. Another measure of their significance is their effect on speech and culture: after years of Church-imposed censorship, printing and pamphleteering flourished in the 1640s and 1650s. One collection alone, that of London bookseller George Thomason, contains over 20,000 items from these decades. Finally, there is the Revolution that followed Civil War: at no other time in the history of the British Isles was the monarch tried and executed by his own people; nor were monarchy, the Lords, and the bishops abolished; nor as many new political and religious groups, such as the Levellers and Quakers, formed. As you read the following sources, ask yourself:

- What impact did civil war have on the lives and psyches of the English people?; How did this impact differ between men and women?
- To what extent were the political, religious, and social issues and ideas of the 1640s and 1650s new or unique?; to what extent were they rooted in controversies left over from the late Tudor and early Stuart periods?

## War and Reaction in the Three British Kingdoms

### *7.1 Walter Balcanquhall,* A Large Declaration Concerning the Late Tumults in Scotland *(1639)*[1]

The violence which tore apart Scotland, England, and Ireland began with the Edinburgh "Prayer Book" riots of 1637. These erupted after Charles I

[1] [W. Balcanquhall], *A Large Declaration Concerning the Late Tumults in Scotland, from their First Originals* (London, 1639), 1–2, 23–4.

attempted to impose an Anglican-style Prayer Book on largely Presbyterian Scotland (see Bucholz and Key, chapter 8). Walter Balcanquhall (ca. 1586–1645), dean of Durham, ghost-wrote a narrative of the "late tumults" which was published under the king's name "for the further and full satisfaction of all our true-hearted and loyal subjects in all Our Kingdoms." Where do his sympathies lie? How did Balcanquhall discredit the rioters?

On the twenty third day of July 1637, being Sunday, according to the public warning given the Sunday before, the service book was begun to be read in Edinburgh in St. Giles's church. … No sooner was the book opened by the dean of Edinburgh, but a number of the meaner sort, who used to keep places for the better sort, most of them women, with clapping of their hands, cursings, and outcries, raised such a barbarous hubbub in that sacred place, that not any one could either hear or be heard. The bishop of Edinburgh, who was to preach, stepped into the pulpit …, intending to appease the tumult, by putting them in mind that the place, in which they were, was holy ground, and by entreating them to desist from that fearful and horrible profanation of it. But … if a stool, aimed to be thrown at him, had not by the providence of God been diverted by the hand of one present, the life of that reverend bishop, in that holy place, and in the pulpit, had been endangered, if not lost. The archbishop of St. Andrews, lord chancellor, and diverse others offering to appease the multitude, were entertained with such bitter curses and imprecations, as they not being able to prevail with the people, the provost, bailiffs, and diverse others of the council of that city were forced to come down from the gallery …, and …, in a very great tumult and confusion, thrust out of the church these disorderly people, making fast the church doors. After all which, the dean devoutly read service. … Yet the outcries, rapping at the church doors, throwing of stones at the church windows by the tumultuous multitude without, was so great as the bailiffs of the city were once more put to … use their best endeavors for the appeasing of the rage and fury of those who were without.

## *7.2 The Covenanters and the King at camp before the Pacification of Berwick (June 11, 1639)*[2]

In February 1638, Presbyterian Scots nobles responded to the Prayer Book crisis by approving a National Covenant "to defend the foresaid true religion …, forbearing the practice of all innovations already introduced in the matters

[2] P. Y. Hardwicke, *Miscellaneous State Papers: From 1501–1726* (London, 1778), 2: 131–7.

of the worship of God …, till they be tried and allowed in … Parliaments."[3] Later that year the Glasgow Assembly abolished the power of the bishops and nullified all royal religious legislation in Scotland since 1606. By January 1639, the Covenanters had raised an army, which fought the king in two successive Bishops' Wars. By the end of the Second Bishops' War in 1640 the Scots Covenanters occupied the northern counties of England (see Bucholz and Key, chapter 7). The settlement of that occupation would force Charles to call first the Short Parliament and then the Long Parliament in 1640. In the following discussion, King Charles surprised the leading covenanting lords – John Leslie, earl of Rothes (ca. 1600–41) and John Campbell, earl of Loudoun (1598–1662) – by entering the army tent in which they were discussing peace terms with his officers, and proceeding to debate with them directly. What do the Covenanters want? What does the king want? According to each, who has the power to make laws for the Scottish Kirk? What is the king's idea of representation? What are possible answers to the king's query: "when I say one thing, and you another, who shall judge?" (This question dominated discussions in all three kingdoms for the next decade.)

*The King*. My Lords, you cannot but wonder at my unexpected coming hither; which I would myself have spared, were it not to clear myself of that notorious slander laid upon me, that I shut my ears from the just complaints of my people in Scotland; which I never did, nor shall. But on the other side, I shall expect from them, to do as subjects ought. …

*Loudoun*. … Our purpose is no other but to enjoy the freedom of that religion, which we know your Majesty and your kingdom do profess; and to prevent all such innovations as be contrary to the laws of the kingdom, and all alterations of that religion which we profess. Which finding ourselves likely to be deprived of, we have taken this course, wherein we have not behaved ourselves, nor proceeded, any otherwise than becometh loyal subjects. …

*The King*. Here his Majesty interrupted this long intended declaration, saying, That he would neither answer any proposition which they made, nor receive any, but in writing.

Then they withdrew themselves to a side table, and wrote this following supplication. …

> "First, It is our humble desire, that his Majesty would be graciously pleased to assure us, that the acts for the late assembly holden at Glasgow, by his Majesty's indiction, shall be ratified by the ensuing Parliament to be holden at Edinburgh, July 23rd. …

[3] J. Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (London, 1721), 2: 734–5, 739–70.

> Secondly, That his Majesty, from his tender care of the preservation of our religion and laws, will be graciously pleased to declare and assure that it is his will, that all matters ecclesiastical be determined by the assembly of the kirk, and matters civil, by Parliament. …

*Thirdly,* That a blessed pacification may be speedily brought about, and his Majesty's subjects may be secured, our humble desire is, that his Majesty's ships, and forces by land, be recalled …, and we made safe from invasion. …"

*The King*. This supplication being presented and read, his Majesty said, he could give no sudden answer to it; subjoining, here you have presented your desires; as much as to say, "Give us all we desire"; which, if no other, than settling of your religion and laws established, I never had other intentions than to settle them. His Majesty withal told them, that their propositions were a little too rude at the first.

*Loudoun*. We desire your Majesty, that our grounds laid down, may receive the most favorable construction.

*The King*. … Here his Majesty again protested, that he intended not to alter any thing, either in their laws or religion, that had been settled by sovereign authority. Neither will I, saith he, at all encroach upon your laws by my prerogative; but the question will be at last, Who shall be the judge of the meaning of those laws? His Majesty then farther told them, that their pretenses were fair, but their actions otherwise.

*Rothes*. We desire to be judged by the written word of the laws. Here he proceeded in justifying the assembly at Glasgow.

*The King*. You cannot expect the ratification of that assembly, seeing the election of the members of it were not lawful, nor was there any free choice of them.

*Rothes*. There was nothing done in it, which was not answerable to the constitutions of the church. Adding, that there is no other way for settling differences in religion, but by such an assembly of the kirk.

*The King*. That assembly was neither free nor lawful, and so consequently the proceedings could not be lawful. But when I say one thing, and you another, who shall judge? …

*Loudon*. Here the Lord Loudon began to make a relation of the nature of the assembly, saying, How that in every parish there is a presbyter, and a lay elder who in every assembly is joined with the minister. And this order he affirmed to be so settled by the Reformation, as is to be found in the Book of Discipline [Knox's plan for Church government, 1560, and another in 1578, had been adopted by the Scottish Church but not fully ratified by Scottish Parliaments], which is authentic of itself, and ever heretofore received, without needing to be confirmed by act of Parliament, it having been continually observed, as valid enough of itself, though it had not so been ratified.

*The King*. The book of discipline was never ratified, either by king or Parliament; but ever rejected by them. Besides this, there were never in any assembly, so many lay elders as in this.

*Rothes.* Lay elders have been in all assemblies, and, in some, more than of the clergy. And in this assembly, every lay elder was so well instructed, as that he could give judgment of any one point, which should be called in question before them.

*The King.* To affirm thus much of a truth, seems very ridiculous; namely, that every illiterate person should be able to be a judge of faith and religion. Which yet, his Majesty said, was very convenient and agreeable to their disposition; for by that means they might choose their own religion.

## 7.3 *"Heads of the causes which moved the Northern Irish and Catholics of Ireland to take arms" (1641)*[4]

In October 1641, as the Long Parliament debated both the Scottish problem and the past policies of Charles's Personal Rule in England, the Gaelic Irish rose against English rule. The rebels' plan to seize Dublin failed, but was more successful in Ulster. According to the following "Heads" (main points), why did they rebel? Why did they think themselves the victims of a plot? Recall that after the Flight of the Earls, the Crown had evicted Catholic–Gaelic landowners from this part of Ireland and redistributed their holdings to Presbyterian Scots colonists (see chapter 4). In fact, thanks to Charles I's religious policies, the rising of Irish Catholics against their Protestant landlords seemed to confirm a widespread English belief that *they* were the intended victims of a royal conspiracy uniting Popery with prelacy (see documents 7.4 and 7.5). It did not help that the rebels brandished forged letters of support from Charles I, thus enabling them to claim to be the loyal faction. How could they claim this? Which points from the following list seem exaggerated? Which seem convincing? Which points are rooted in the Irish context alone?; which reflect a wider, British context?

1. It was plotted and resolved by the Puritans of England, Scotland, and Ireland, to extinguish quite the Catholic religion, and the professors and maintainers thereof, out of all those kingdoms; and to put all Catholics of this realm to the sword, that would not conform themselves to the Protestant religion.
2. The State of Ireland did publicly declare, that they would root out of this realm all the natives, and make a total second conquest of the land, alleging that they were not safe with them. … <no. 3 missing>
4. That the subjects of Ireland, especially the Irish, were thrust out forcibly from their ancient possessions, against law, without color or right; and could not have propriety or security in their estates, goods or other rights, but were wholly subject to an arbitrary power, and tyrannical government, these forty years past, without hope of relief or redress. … <no. 5 missing>

[4] E. Lodge, *Desiderata Curiosa Hibernica: or, A Select Collection of State Papers* (Dublin, 1772), 2: 78–81.

6. The Catholics of this realm are not admitted to any dignity, place, or office, either military or civil, spiritual or temporal, but the same conferred upon unworthy persons, and men of no quality, who purchase it for money, or favor, and not by merit. … <nos. 7–11 missing>
12. His majesty's royal power, honor, prerogative, estate, revenue and rights, invaded upon, by the Puritan faction in England. … <nos. 13–16 missing>
17. All the natives in the English plantations of this realm, were disarmed by proclamation, and the Protestant plantators armed, and tied by the conditions of their plantations, to have arms, and to keep certain numbers of horse and foot continually upon their lands, by which advantage, many thousands of the natives were expulsed out of their possessions, and as many hanged by martial law, without cause, and against the laws of this realm; and many of them otherwise destroyed, and made away, by sinister means and practices.

## *7.4* *Lucy Hutchinson,* Memoirs of the Life of Colonel Hutchinson *(written ca. 1664–71, pub. 1806)*[5]

Lurid reports of the Irish Rebellion claiming 200,000 victims (instead of the more probable 12,000 historians have reckoned) captured the English imagination. Three decades later, Lucy Hutchinson (1620–81) noted how first the Bishops' Wars in Scotland, and second the Catholic Rebellion in Ireland, pushed many English people to oppose their king and to side with Parliament. In fact, her biography of her husband, Col. John Hutchinson (1615–64), reads as a defense of Parliamentarian actions and views. In the following passage, is she impartial in her description of 1639–41? How does Hutchinson relate the Bishops' Wars and Irish Rebellion to divisions within English politics and religion? What is her most serious charge against the king?

About the year 1639, the Scots having the English service-book obtruded upon them violently refused it and took a national covenant against it, and entered England with a great army to bring their complaints to the king, which his unfaithful ministers did much, as they [the Scots] supposed, misreport. The king himself levied an army against them, wherein he was assisted … most of all by the prelates, insomuch that the war got the name of *Bellum Episcopale* [Bishops' Wars]; but the commonality of the nation, being themselves under grievous bondage, were loath to oppose a people that came only to claim their just liberties.…

While the king was in Scotland, that cursed rebellion in Ireland broke out [October 23, 1641], wherein about 200,000 were massacred in two months'

[5] L. Hutchinson, *Memoirs of Colonel Hutchinson*, ed. N. H. Keeble (London, 1968, 1995), 71, 73–4.

space, being surprised, and many of them most inhumanely butchered and tormented; and besides the slain, abundance of poor families stripped and sent naked away out of all their possessions; and had not the providence of God miraculously prevented the surprise of Dublin Castle the night it should have been seized, there had not been any remnant of the Protestant name left in that country. As soon as this sad news came to the Parliament, they vigorously set themselves to the work of relieving them; but then the king returned from Scotland, and being sumptuously welcomed home by the city, took courage thereby against the Parliament, and obstructed all their proceedings for the effectual relief of Ireland. Long was he before he could be drawn to proclaim those murderers rebels, and when he did, by special command there were but 40 proclamations printed, and care taken that they should not be much dispersed; which courses afflicted all the good Protestants in England, and confirmed that this rebellion in Ireland received countenance from the king and queen of England.

## *7.5 Richard Baxter on Royalists and Parliamentarians (written ca. 1664, pub. 1696)*[6]

After neither King Charles nor the Long Parliament would entrust the other with command of an army to suppress the Scottish and Irish Rebellions, the former declared war on the latter by raising the royal standard at Nottingham on August 22, 1642. How did individuals decide whether to fight with the king or with Parliament? Some knew clearly where their duty lay. For example, Sir Edmund Verney (1590–1642) is supposed to have said "my conscience is only concerned in honor and in gratitude to follow my master. I have eaten his bread and served him near thirty years, and will not do so base a thing as forsake him."[7] Compare Verney's reasoning with that of Richard Baxter (1615–91), a Puritan minister, whose posthumously published autobiography is an insightful narrative of the 1640s–80s. First, note how Baxter distinguishes Royalists from Parliamentarians by class, by religion, and by constitutional viewpoint. How does he link allegiances in 1642 with struggles of the 1620s and 1630s? Are his assessments fair? If so, what were the motivating factors in choosing sides? Then, consider Baxter's own allegiance: what issues loomed largest for him? Finally, consider that Baxter wrote some time *after* the Restoration of monarchy in 1660. How might that affect his reliability as a guide to choices made in 1640–2? (For propaganda published *during* the war in an attempt to influence allegiance, see Plate 9.)

[6] *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (London, 1696), 1, part 1: 28–31, 33, 39.
[7] F. P. Verney, *Memoirs of the Verney Family during the Civil War* (London, 1892), 2: 126.


**Plate 9** Francis Quarles, *The Shepherds Oracles* (1644), frontispiece (Source: © British Library.)

Who is watering and defending the tree of religion, and who is lopping off branches or attempting to uproot it? (Hints: who wields a sword against its enemies? Radical religious clergy often preached outside, thus were known as tub-preachers – the equivalent of soap-box speakers today.) What documents or sources might this comment on?

It is of very great moment here to understand the quality of the persons which adhered to the king and to the Parliament, with their reasons.

A great part of the Lords forsook the Parliament, and so did many of the House of Commons, and came to the king; but that was, for the most of them, after Edgehill fight (October 1642, see document **7.6**), when the king was at Oxford. A very great part of the knights and gentlemen of England in the several counties (who were not Parliament-men) adhered to the king.… And most of the tenants of these gentlemen, and also most of the poorest of the people, whom the other call the rabble, did follow the gentry and were for the king.

On the Parliament's side were (besides themselves) the smaller part (as some thought) of the gentry in most of the counties, and the greatest part of the tradesmen and freeholders and the middle sort of men, especially in those corporations and countries which depend on clothing and such, manufactures.…

But though it must be confessed that the public safety and liberty wrought very much with most, especially with the nobility and gentry who adhered to the Parliament, yet was it principally the differences about religious matter that filled up the Parliament's armies and put the resolution and valor into their soldiers, which carried them on in another manner than mercenary soldiers are carried on.… But the generality of the people through the land … who were then called Puritans, precisians, religious persons, that used to talk of God, and heaven, and Scripture, and holiness.… I say, the main body of this sort of men, both preachers and people, adhered to the Parliament. And on the other side [the Royalists], the gentry that were not so precise and strict against an oath, or gaming, or plays, or drinking nor troubled themselves so much about the matters of God and the world to come, and the ministers and people that were for the King's Book [of Sports, document 6.8 above], for dancing and recreations on the Lord's days, and those that made not so great a matter of every sin, but went to church and heard Common Prayer, and were glad to hear a sermon which lashed the Puritans, and which ordinarily spoke against the strictness and preciseness in religion …, these were against the Parliament.…

And abundance of the ignorant sort of the country, who were civil, did flock in to the Parliament, and filled up their armies afterward, merely because they heard men *swear* for the Common Prayer and bishops, and heard others *pray* that were against them; and because they heard the king's soldiers with horrid oaths abuse the name of God, and saw them live in debauchery and the Parliament's soldiers flock to sermons and talking of religion, and praying and singing Psalms together on their guards. And all the sober men that I was acquainted with, who were against the Parliament, were wont to say, "The king hath the better cause, but the Parliament hath the better men."

## 7.6 *Captain Edward Kightley on the battle of Edgehill, October 23, 1642 (November 4, 1642)*[8]

The first major battle of the *English* Civil Wars was fought in October, at Edgehill. The violence of actual civil war came as a shock. In this account by a Parliamentarian officer, what signs can you detect of the commanders' and soldiers' inexperience? Why was discipline such a problem on both sides? Can you see why the battle was a draw? (This account was published; how is it propaganda?)

On Sunday 23 October [1642] about one o'clock in the afternoon the battle did begin and continued until it was very dark; the field was very great and large and the king's forces came down a great and long hill. He had the advantage of the ground and the wind, and they gave a brave charge and did fight very valiantly. … My lord general [Robert Devereux, earl of Essex (1591–1646), commander of the parliamentary forces] did give first charge, presenting them with two pieces of ordinance which killed many of their men, and then the enemy did shoot one to us which fell twenty yards short in ploughed land and did no harm; our soldiers did many of them run away … and there did run away 600 horse … and when I was entering the field I think 200 horse came by me with all the speed they could out of the battle, saying that the king hath the victory and that every man cried "God and King Charles." I entreated, prayed, and persuaded them to stay and draw up in a body with our troops, for we saw them fighting and the field was not lost, but no persuasions would serve, and then turning to our three troops, two of them were run away [and] of my troop I had not six and thirty men left. … I stayed with those men I had … and diverse of the enemy did run that way, both horse and foot. I took away about ten or twelve horse, swords and armor. I could have killed 40 of the enemy [but] I let them pass, disarming them and giving spoil to my troopers. The armies were both in confusion. … The enemy ran away as well as our men. …

Let us pray one for another, God I hope will open the King's eyes, and send peace to our kingdom. … (All my run-aways, I stop their pay …, and give their pay to the rest of the soldiers.)

[8] *A full and true Relation Of the great Battle fought between the Kings Army, and his Excellency, the Earle of Essex, upon the 23. of October last past* (London, Nov. 4, 1642), 3–4, 6–7.

## 7.7 *Oliver Cromwell's letters about the English Civil War (1643–4)*[9]

As in all wars, some rose to the occasion. Among the best sources on the Civil Wars and the religious politics of the Parliamentary army are the letters of Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658). Cromwell was an obscure fenland farmer who became, first, an MP in the Short and Long Parliaments; then, from early 1643, a captain in a regional army (the Eastern Association); and from early 1644, a lieutenant-general of horse. What does the letter of September 11, 1643 reveal about the staffing, logistics, and expenses of such an army? Why was the issue of the soldiers' religion so volatile? The letter of July 5, 1644 is a famous letter of condolence informing a father that his son has died in battle. Note the structure and the message(s). Do you think this letter was effective? Why or why not? This letter also describes the important battle of Marston Moor. According to Cromwell, why were the Parliamentarians victorious? Can you suggest other reasons? We will return to Cromwell; in the meantime, what do these letters reveal about his nature?

*September 11, 1643, Oliver Cromwell with the Parliamentarian Eastern Association army to Oliver St. John, Esq., at London*

Of all men I should not trouble you with money matters, did not the heavy necessities my troops are in, press me beyond measure. I am neglected exceedingly!

I am now ready for my march towards the enemy; who hath entrenched himself over against Hull, my Lord Newcastle having besieged the town. Many of my lord of Manchester's troops are come to me: very bad and mutinous, not to be confided in; they paid to a week almost; mine no ways provided for to support them, except by the poor sequestrations of the county of Huntingdon. My troops increase. I have a lovely company; you would respect them, did you know them. They are no Anabaptists, they are honest sober Christians: they expect to be used as men.

If I took pleasure to write to the House in bitterness, I have occasion. Of the £3,000 allotted me, I cannot get the part of Norfolk nor Hertfordshire: it was gone before I had it. I have minded your service to forgetfulness of my own and soldiers' necessities. I desire not to seek myself, but I have little money of my own to help my soldiers. My estate is little. I tell you, the business of Ireland and England hath had of me, in money, between eleven and twelve hundred pounds; therefore my private can do little to help the public. You have had my money: I hope in God I desire to venture my skin. So do mine. Lay weight upon their patience; but break it not. Think of that which may be a real help. I believe £5,000 is due.…

[9] *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, ed. W. C. Abbott (Oxford, 1937, 1988), 1: 258–9, 277–8, 287–8.

*July 5, 1644, Oliver Cromwell, before York to his brother-in-law Col. Valentine Walton*

It's our duty to sympathize in all mercies; that we may praise the Lord together in chastisements or trials, that so we may sorrow together.

Truly England and the Church of God hath had a great favor from the Lord in this great victory given unto us, such as the like never was since this war began. It had all the evidences of an absolute victory obtained by the Lord's blessing upon the godly party principally. We never charged but we routed the enemy. The left wing, which I commanded, being our own horse, saving a few Scots in our rear, beat all the prince's [Rupert's] horse. God made them as stubble to our swords; we charged their regiments of foot with our horse, routed all we charged. The particulars I cannot relate now, but I believe, of twenty thousand the prince hath not four thousand left. Give glory, all the glory, to God.

Sir, God hath taken away your eldest son by a cannon-shot. It brake his leg. We were necessitated to have it cut off, whereof he died.

Sir, you know my trials this way, but the Lord supported me with this: that the Lord took him into the happiness we all pant after and live for. There is your precious child full of glory, to know sin nor sorrow any more. He was a gallant young man, exceeding gracious. God give you His comfort. Before his death he was so full of comfort that to Frank Russell and myself he could not express it, it was so great above his pain. This he said to us. Indeed it was admirable. A little after, he said one thing lay upon his spirit. I asked him what that was. He told me that it was that God had not suffered him to be no more the executioner of His enemies. At his fall, his horse being killed with a bullet, and as I am informed three horses more, I am told he bid them open to the right and left, that he might see the rogues run. Truly, he was exceedingly beloved in the army, of all that knew him. But few knew him, for he was a precious young man, fit for God. You have cause to bless the Lord. He is a glorious saint in Heaven, wherein you ought exceedingly to rejoice. Let this drink up your sorrow; seeing these are not feigned words to comfort you, but the thing is so real and undoubted a truth. You may do all things by the strength of Christ. Seek that, and you shall easily bear your trial. Let this public mercy to the Church of God make you to forget your private sorrow. The Lord be your strength.

## 7.8 *Oliver Cromwell at Dublin to William Lenthall, Esq., Speaker of the Parliament of England (September 17, 1649)*[10]

Parliament's war against the Irish could not begin in earnest until the wars against the king were over in England. The first Civil War ended in 1646 and the king surrendered, but negotiations for a settlement were still ongoing

[10] *Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, 2: 125–8.

when a second Civil War broke out in May 1648. It was not until after the trial and execution of the king in January 1649 (see next section) that Cromwell landed with an army in Ireland (August 15), and led his troops in the siege and sack of Drogheda (September 11) and Wexford (October 11). How had the nature of the fighting changed since Edgehill? What was Cromwell's explanation for the Drogheda massacre? Why were priests treated so harshly? Why did it not matter to him that most of the Irish defenders of Drogheda were Old English and not native Irish, the group that had actually risen in October 1641? Should it matter to historians? (Note that, whatever its morality, the violence was effective: towns like Ross soon submitted to terms, and, thus, Ireland submitted to Cromwell and Parliament.)

Your army came before the town [Tredah, Drogheda] upon [September 3], where having pitched, as speedy course was taken as could be to frame our batteries.… Upon [September 10] …, the batteries began to play. Whereupon I sent Sir Arthur Ashton, the then governor, a summons to deliver the town to the use of the Parliament of England. To the which I received no satisfactory answer, but proceeded that day to beat down the steeple of the church on the south side of the town, and to beat down a tower not far from the same place.…

Upon [September 11] …, about five o'clock in the evening, we began the storm, and after some hot dispute we entered about seven or eight hundred men, the enemy disputing it very stiffly with us. And indeed, through the advantages of the place, and the courage God was pleased to give the defenders, our men were forced to retreat quite out of the breach, not without some considerable loss.…

Although our men that stormed the breaches were forced to recoil …, yet, being encouraged to recover their loss, they made a second attempt, wherein God was pleased [so] to animate them that they got ground of the enemy, and by the goodness of God, forced him to quit his entrenchments. And after a very hot dispute …, they gave ground, and our men became masters both of their retrenchments and the church; which indeed, although they made our entrance the more difficult, yet they proved of excellent use to us, so that the enemy could not now annoy us with their horse.…

The enemy retreated, diverse of them, into the Mill-Mount: a place very strong and of difficult access, being exceedingly high, having a good graft, and strongly palisadoed. The governor, Sir Arthur Ashton, and diverse considerable officers being there, our men getting up to them, were ordered by me to put them all to the sword. And indeed, being in the heat of action, I forbade them to spare any that were in arms in the town, and, I think, that night they put to the sword about 2,000 men, diverse of the officers and soldiers being fled over the bridge into the other part of the town, where about one hundred of them possessed St. Peter's church-steeple, some the west gate and others a strong

round tower next the gate called St. Sunday's. These being summoned to yield to mercy, refused, whereupon I ordered the steeple of St. Peter's Church to be fired, where one of them was heard to say in the midst of the flames: "God damn me, God confound me; I burn, I burn."

The next day, the other two towers were summoned, in one of which was about six or seven score; but they refused to yield themselves, and we knowing that hunger must compel them, set only good guards to secure them from running away until their stomachs were come down. From one of the said towers, notwithstanding their condition, they killed and wounded some of our men. When they submitted, their officers were knocked on the head, and every tenth man of the soldiers killed, and the rest shipped for the Barbados. The soldiers in the other tower were all spared, as to their lives only, and shipped likewise for the Barbados.

I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgment of God upon these barbarous wretches, who have imbrued their hands in so much innocent blood; and that it will tend to prevent the effusion of blood for the future, which are the satisfactory grounds to such actions, which otherwise cannot but work remorse and regret. The officers and soldiers of this garrison were the flower of all their army, and their great expectation was, that our attempting this place would put fair to ruin us. …

I believe all their friars were knocked on the head promiscuously but two; the one of which was Father Peter Taaffe, (brother to the Lord [Theobold] Taaffe [earl of Carlingford, d. 1677]), whom the soldiers took the next day and made an end of; the other was taken in the round tower, under the repute of lieutenant, and when he understood that the officers in that tower had no quarter, he confessed he was a friar; but that did not save him. …

I do not think we lost one hundred men upon the place, though many be wounded.

## Constitutional Experiments, Regicide, and Reconfiguration

### *7.9 The Heads of the Proposals agreed upon by Sir Thomas Fairfax and the Council of the Army (August 1, 1647)*[11]

The king lost the first English Civil War, but there was a good chance he could win the peace. First the Scots and the English disputed the settlement, and then the English themselves divided between moderate Parliamentary Presbyterians and more radical Parliamentary Independents and their allies in the army. After the war, the Rump sought to curry favor with the landowning

[11] *A Declaration from his Excellency Sr. Thomas Fairfax, And his Councell of Warre* (London, "Aug. 5," 1647), 6–8, 9–10 (mispaginated, B2–v). Dates in quotes are when purchased by the original owner (e.g., George Thomason)

classes by disbanding the army in order to lower taxes or by sending them to subdue the Irish Rebellion (as they would do in 1649: see document **7.8**). The army responded by airing their grievances in a series of addresses, electing political "agitators" from each regiment, and offering their own proposals for a new constitution. In August 1647, the army leadership proposed the following blueprint for a settlement, drawn up principally by Cromwell's son-in-law Henry Ireton (1611–51). If it represents army officer opinion, what issues in the settlement were most important to them? What is their attitude to the Rump Parliament? What is their principle of representation? Which issues discussed have come up before and which are new? What is their attitude toward the king's role?

I. That the things hereafter proposed, being provided for by this Parliament, a certain period may by act of parliament be set for the ending of this Parliament (such period to be put within a year at most). And in the same Act provision to be made … as followeth:

1. That Parliaments may biennially be called and meet at a certain day, with such provision for the certainty thereof, as in the late Act was made for triennial Parliaments [1641]. …
2. Each biennial Parliament to sit 120 days certain (unless adjourned or dissolved sooner by their own consent), afterwards to be adjournable or dissolvable by the king, and no Parliament to sit past 240 days from their first meeting. …
3. The king, upon advice of the Council of State, in the intervals between biennial Parliaments, to call a Parliament extraordinary, provided it meet above 70 days before the next biennial day, and be dissolved at least 60 days before the same; so as the course of biennial elections may never be interrupted. … <no. 4 missing>
5. That the elections of the Commons for succeeding Parliaments may be distributed to all counties, or other parts or divisions of the kingdom, according to some rule of equality or proportion, so as all counties may have a number of Parliament members allowed to their choice, proportionable to the respective rates they bear in the common charges and burdens of the kingdom, according to some other rule of equality or proportion, to render the House of Commons (as near as may be) an equal representative of the whole; and in order thereunto, that a present consideration be had to take off the elections of burgesses for poor, decayed, or inconsiderable towns, and to give some present addition to the number of Parliament members for great counties that have now less than their due proportion, to bring all (at present), as near as may be, to such a rule of proportion as aforesaid.

6. That effectual provision be made for future freedom of elections, and certainty of due returns. …

XI. An Act to be passed to take away all coercive power, authority, and jurisdiction of bishops and all other ecclesiastical officers whatsoever. …

XII. That there be a repeal of all Acts or clauses in any Act enjoining the use of the Book of Common Prayer, and imposing any penalties for neglect thereof; as also of all Acts or clauses of any Act, imposing any penalty for not coming to church, or for meetings elsewhere for … religious duties …, and some other provision to be made for discovering of Papists and popish recusants, and for disabling of them. …

XIII. That the taking of the Covenant [an English version of the Scottish one, adopted largely in order to win Scottish armed support for the Parliamentary side] be not enforced upon any, nor any penalties imposed on the refusers. …

XVI. That there may be a general Act of Oblivion to extend unto all (except the persons … in exception as before), to absolve from all trespasses, misdemeanors, etc. done in prosecution of the war.

## **7.10** *An Agreement of the People (ca. late October 1647)*[12]

Two months later, the army agitators and the political Levellers, claiming to represent the rank-and-file, drafted their own plan, the *Agreement of the People*. (Although its authorship is unknown, the civilian Levellers Maximilian Petty, 1617–1661?, and John Wildman, 1622/3–93, defended it at Putney, see document **7.11**). While the *Agreement* never had the backing of more than a minority of the army, it had support among the cavalry and from a portion of London's citizens. Compare and contrast the settlement envisioned in the Heads and that in the *Agreement* (especially compare "Head" 5 with article I of the *Agreement*). To what extent did the latter move into new territory? According to the *Agreement*, who is sovereign in England?

Having by our late labors and hazards made it appear to the world at how high a rate we value our just freedoms, and God having so far owned our cause, as to deliver the enemies thereof into our hands: We do now hold ourselves bound in mutual duty to each other, to take the best care we can for the future, to avoid both the danger of returning into a slavish condition, and the chargeable remedy of another war. For as it cannot be imagined that so many of our country-men would have opposed us in this quarrel, if they had understood their own good;

[12] *Proposalls from Nine Regiaments of Horse, and Seven Regiaments of Foot, for a Modell of an Agreement of the People for A firme and present Peace, upon grounds of common-right and freedom* (London, Nov. 4, 1647), 2–6.

so may we safely promise to ourselves, that when our common rights and liberties shall be cleared, their endeavors will be disappointed, that seek to make themselves our masters: since therefore our former oppressions, and scarce yet ended troubles have been occasioned, either by want of frequent national meetings in council, or by rendering those meetings ineffectual. We are fully agreed and resolved, to provide that hereafter our representatives be neither left to an uncertainty for the time, nor made useless to the ends for which they are intended. In order whereunto we declare:

I. That the people of England being at this day very unequally distributed by counties, cities, and boroughs, for the election of their deputies in Parliament, ought to be more indifferently proportioned, according to the number of the inhabitants: the circumstances whereof, for number, place, and manner, are to be set down before the end of this present Parliament.
II. That to prevent the many inconveniences apparently arising from the long continuance of the same persons in authority, this present Parliament be dissolved upon the last day of September … 1648.
III. That the people do of course choose themselves a Parliament once in two years. …
IV. That the power of this, and all future representatives of this nation, is inferior only to theirs who choose them, and doth extend … to the enacting, altering, and repealing of laws; to the erecting and abolishing of offices and courts; to the appointing, removing, and calling to account magistrates, and officers of all degrees; to the making war and peace, to the treating with foreign states: and generally, to whatsoever is not expressly, or impliedly reserved by the represented to themselves.

Which are as followeth,

1. That matters of religion, and the ways of God's worship, are not at all intrusted by us to any humane power, because therein we cannot go remit or exceed a tittle of what our consciences dictate to be the mind of God, without wilful sin: nevertheless the public way of instructing the nation (so it be not compulsive) is referred to their discretion.
2. That the matter of impressing and constraining any of us to serve in the wars, is against our freedom; and therefore we do not allow it in our representatives. …
3. That after the dissolution of this present Parliament, no person be at any time questioned for anything said or done, in reference to the late public differences. …
4. That in all laws made, or to be made, every person may be bound alike, and that no tenure, estate, charter, degree, birth, or place, do confer any exemption. …
5. That as the laws ought to be equal, so they must be good, and not evidently destructive to the safety and well-being of the people.

These things we declare to be our native rights, and therefore are agreed and resolved to maintain them with our utmost possibilities, against all opposition whatsoever, being compelled thereunto … by our own woeful experience, who having long expected, and dearly earned the establishment of these certain rules of government are yet made to depend for the settlement of our peace and freedom, upon him that intended our bondage, and brought a cruel war upon us.

## *7.11 The Putney Debates of the General Council of the Army (October 29, 1647)*[13]

The *Agreement*, particularly the first article on the franchise, became the basis of the first day's discussion when the army met for three days in October 1647 at Putney Church (ominously close to Westminster) for what became known as the Putney Debates. (William Clarke, 1623/4–66, secretary to the Army Council, recorded the Debates in shorthand.) The second day's debate focused both on the franchise and the redistribution of seats in the Commons. There were essentially two types of seats: those for the counties and those for boroughs (town corporations). Traditionally, all freeholders with land worth 40 shillings (£2) per annum could vote for the county representatives (also known as knights of the shire). This was a small amount of land, but requiring it effectively excluded the landless and farmers who only rented land. The borough franchise varied: in some towns it was fairly open, including all freemen or all who did not receive alms. Other towns restricted the vote more severely, sometimes just to the town council (often only 32 voters). And new towns and cities, such as Manchester, did not return any members to Parliament, because they had no medieval charter. One protagonist in the debate on this issue was Ireton, a Nottinghamshire country gentleman, general, MP, and Cromwell's son-in-law. Opposing him was Col. Thomas Rainsborough (d. 1648), also an MP. Rainsborough, an obscure figure before Putney, appears to have been much influenced by Leveller ideas. Over what issue do Ireton and Rainsborough disagree? Where would they stand on older disputes over divine right and the ancient constitution? How does each define "interest" and "property"? If traditional arguments about political authority had been based on the law of God (the Bible) and law of man (the civil constitution), upon what *new* basis does Rainsborough make his claim? That is, how does he justify change? Cromwell took the moderator's chair when General Fairfax refused to participate. Why might Fairfax refuse? From this excerpt, where do you think Cromwell stood on the issues?

[13] C. H. Firth, ed., *The Clarke Papers* (London, Camden Society, 1891), 1: 299–310; compared with A. S. P. Woodhouse, *Puritanism and Liberty* (London, 1938, 1992), 52–60; and G. E. Aylmer, ed., *The Levellers in the English Revolution* (Ithaca, N. Y., 1975), 99–119, from Worcester College, Oxford, Clarke MSS., vol. 67.

The paper called the *Agreement* read. Afterwards the first article read by itself. …

*Mr. Maximilian Petty [a civilian Leveller]:* We judge that all inhabitants that have not lost their birthright should have an equal voice in elections.

*Rainborough:* I desired that those that had engaged in it [might be included]. For really I think that the poorest he that is in England hath a life to live as the greatest he; and therefore truly, sir, I think it's clear, that every man that is to live under a government ought first by his own consent to put himself under that government. And I do think that the poorest man in England is not at all bound in a strict sense to that government that he hath not had a voice to put himself under. And I am confident that, when I have heard the reasons against it, something will be said to answer those reasons, insomuch that I should doubt whether he was an Englishman or no, that should doubt of these things.

*Ireton:* That's [the meaning of] this ["according to the number of inhabitants"].

Give me leave to tell you, that if you make this the rule I think you must fly for refuge to an absolute natural right, and you must deny all civil right; and I am sure it will come to that in the consequence. … For my part, I think it is no right at all. I think that no person hath a right to an interest or share in the disposing of the affairs of the kingdom, and in determining or choosing those that shall determine what laws we shall be ruled by here, no person hath a right to this, that hath not a permanent fixed interest in this kingdom, and those persons together are properly the represented of this kingdom, and consequently are also to make up the representers of this kingdom, who taken together do comprehend whatsoever is of real or permanent interest in the kingdom. And I am sure otherwise I cannot tell what any man can say why a foreigner coming in amongst us – or as many as will coming in amongst us, or by force or otherwise settling themselves here, or at least by our permission having a being here – why they should not as well lay claim to it as any other. We talk of birthright. Truly by birthright there is thus much claim. Men may justly have by birthright, by their very being born in England, that we should not seclude them out of England, that we should not refuse to give them air and place and ground, and the freedom of the highways and other things, to live amongst us – not any man that is born here, though by his birth there come nothing at all (that is part of the permanent interest of this kingdom) to him. That I think is due to a man by birth. But that by a man's being born here he shall have a share in that power that shall dispose of the lands here, and of all things here, I do not think it a sufficient ground. … That those that choose the representers for the making of laws by which this state and kingdom are to be governed, are the persons who, taken together, do comprehend the local interest of this kingdom; that is, the persons in whom all land lies, and those in corporations in whom all trading lies. This is the most fundamental constitution of this kingdom and that which if you do not allow, you allow none at all. … It is true, as was said by a gentleman near me, the meanest man in England ought to have a voice in the election of the government he lives under – but only if he has some local interest. I say this: that those that have the meanest local interest – that man that hath

but forty shillings a year, he hath as great voice in the election of a knight for the shire as he that hath ten thousand a year, or more if he had never so much; and therefore there is that regard had to it. But this local interest, still the constitution of this government hath had an eye to (and what other government hath not an eye to this?). … And if we shall go to take away this, we shall plainly go to take away all property and interest that any man hath either in land by inheritance, or in estate by possession, or anything else – I say, if you take away this fundamental part of the civil constitution.

*Rainsborough:* Truly, sir, I am of the same opinion I was, and am resolved to keep it till I know reason why I should not. I confess my memory is bad, and therefore I am fain to make use of my pen. I remember that, in a former speech which this gentleman brought before this meeting, he was saying that in some cases he should not value whether there were a king or no king, whether lords or no lords, whether a property or no property. For my part I differ in that. I do very much care whether there be a king or no king, lords or no lords, property or no property; and I think, if we do not all take care, we shall all have none of these very shortly. But as to this present business. I do hear nothing at all that can convince me, why any man that is born in England ought not to have his voice in election of burgesses. … I do think that the main cause why almighty God gave men reason, it was that they should make use of that reason, and that they should improve it for that end and purpose that God gave it them. And truly, I think that half a loaf is better than none if a man be an-hungry. [This gift of reason without other property may seem a small thing], yet I think there is nothing that God hath given a man that any one else can take from him. And therefore I say, that either it must be the law of God or the law of man that must prohibit the meanest man in the kingdom to have this benefit as well as the greatest. I do not find anything in the law of God, that a lord shall choose twenty burgesses, and a gentleman but two, or a poor man shall choose none. I find no such thing in the law of nature, nor in the law of nations. …

And truly I have thought something else: in what a miserable distressed condition would many a man that hath fought for the Parliament in this quarrel, be! I will be bound to say that many a man whose zeal and affection to God and this kingdom hath carried him forth in this cause, hath so spent his estate that, in the way the state and the army are going, he shall not hold up his head, if when his estate is lost, and not worth forty shillings a year, a man shall not have any interest…, so that a man cannot lose that which he hath for the maintenance of his family but he must also lose that which God and nature hath given him! …

*Ireton:* ….I think I agreed to this matter, that all should be equally distributed. But the question is, whether it should be distributed to all persons, or whether the same persons that are the electors now should be the electors still, and it be equally distributed amongst them. I do not see anybody else that makes this objection; and if nobody else be sensible of it I shall soon have done.…

All the main thing that I speak for is because I would have an eye to property. I hope we do not come to contend for victory – but let every man

consider with himself that he do not go that way to take away all property. For here is the case of the most fundamental part of the constitution of the kingdom, which if you take away, you take away all by that. … Why now I say then, if you, against the most fundamental part of the civil constitution …, will plead the law of Nature, that a man should … have a power of choosing those men that shall determine what shall be law in this state, though he himself have no permanent interest in the state, but whatever interest he hath he may carry about with him – if this be allowed, because by the right of nature we are free, we are equal, one man must have as much voice as another, then show me what step or difference there is, why I may not by the same right take your property. …

*Rainsborough:* I shall now be a little more free and open with you than I was before. … For my part, as I think, you forgot something that was in my speech, and you do not only yourselves believe that some men are inclining to anarchy, but you would make all men believe that. And, sir, to say because a man pleads that every man hath a voice by right of nature, that therefore it destroys by the same argument all property – this is to forget the law of God. That there's a property, the law of God says it; else why hath God made that law, "Thou shalt not steal?" I am a poor man, therefore I must be oppressed: if I have no interest in the kingdom, I must suffer by all their laws be they right or wrong. Nay thus: a gentleman lives in a country and hath three or four lordships, as some men have (God knows how they got them); and when a Parliament is called he must be a Parliament-man [MP]; and it may be he sees some poor men, they live near this man, he can crush them. … Therefore I think that to that it is fully answered: God hath set down that thing as to propriety with this law of his, "Thou shalt not steal." And for my part I am against any such thought, and, as for yourselves, I wish you would not make the world believe that we are for anarchy.

*Cromwell:* I know nothing but this, that they that are the most yielding have the greatest wisdom; but really, sir, this is not right as it should be. No man says that you have a mind to anarchy, but that the consequence of this rule tends to anarchy, must end in anarchy; for where is there any bound or limit set if you take away this limit, that men that have no interest but the interest of breathing shall have no voice in elections? Therefore I am confident on it, we should not be so hot one with another.

*Rainsborough:* I know that some particular men we debate with believe we are for anarchy.

*Ireton:* I profess I must clear myself as to that point. I would not desire, I cannot allow myself, to lay the least scandal upon anybody. And truly, for that gentleman that did take so much offence, I do not know why he should take it so. We speak to the paper – not to persons – and to the matter of the paper. And I hope that no man is so much engaged to the matter of the paper – I hope that our persons, and our hearts and judgments, are not so pinned to papers but that we are ready to hear what good or ill consequence will flow from it.

## 7.12 *King Charles's Refusal to Plead at His Trial (January 20, 1649)*[14]

Having been forced to defeat King Charles again in the Second Civil War, it was clear to the army leaders by December 1648 that the time for negotiation was over: the only hope for a peaceful settlement in England was to eliminate him. On the morning of the 6th, Col. Thomas Pride (d. 1658) and his men occupied the entrances to Parliament and allowed in only those MPs who had rejected further negotiations with the king. The resulting Rump Parliament set up a High Court of Justice, and, on January 20, the trial of the king began with Lord President Bradshaw's address to the prisoner. This was followed by the reading of a lengthy charge recounting much of the history of the Civil Wars from a parliamentary perspective. It concluded:

that the said Charles Stuart hath been, and is the occasioner, author, and continuer of the said unnatural, cruel and bloody wars; and therein [is] guilty of all the treasons, murders, rapines, burnings, spoils, desolations, damages and mischiefs to this nation, acted and committed in the said wars, or occasioned thereby.

Why did the king refuse to plead to these charges? Why does he distinguish between "authority" and "lawful authority"? How could he claim to "stand more for the liberty of my people than any here that come to be my pretended judges"? How does Bradshaw (1602–54), previously a provincial judge, justify the court's legitimacy? The verdict a foregone conclusion, King Charles was executed on January 30, 1649. On March 17, the Commons abolished "the kingly office in England and Ireland."

*Lord president* [John Bradshaw]: Sir, you have now heard your charge read, containing such matter as appears in it. You find that in the close of it, it is prayed to the court in the behalf of the Commons of England that you answer to your charge. The court expects your answer.

*The king*: I would know by what power I am called hither. I was not long ago in the Isle of Wight. How I came there is a longer story than I think is fit at this time for me to speak of. But there I entered into a treaty [at Newport] with both Houses of Parliament with as much public faith as it's possible to be had of any people in the world. I treated there with a number of honorable lords and gentlemen, and treated honestly and uprightly; I cannot say but they did very nobly with me. We were upon a conclusion of the treaty. Now, I would know by what authority – I mean lawful – there are many unlawful authorities in the

[14] D. Iagomarsino and C. T. Wood, ed., *The Trial of Charles I: A Documentary History* (Hanover, N. H., 1989), 64–5; Rushworth, *Historical Collections* (1721), 7: 1396–8 (for the charge).

world – thieves and robbers by the highways – but I would know by what authority I was brought from thence and carried from place to place, and I know not what. And when I know what lawful authority, I shall answer. Remember, I am your king – your lawful king – and what sins you bring upon your heads and the judgment of God upon this land, think well upon it – I say think well upon it – before you go further from one sin to a greater. Therefore let me know by what lawful authority I am seated here and I shall not be unwilling to answer. In the meantime, I shall not betray my trust. I have a trust committed to me by God, by old and lawful descent [by hereditary right]. I will not betray it to answer to a new unlawful authority. Therefore, resolve me that, and you shall hear more of me.

*Lord president*: If you had been pleased to have observed what was hinted to you by the court at your first coming hither, you would have known by what authority. Which authority requires you – in the name of the people of England, of which you are elected king – to answer them.

*The king*: No, sir, I deny that.

*Lord president*: If you acknowledge not the authority of the court, they must proceed.

*The king*: I do tell them so – England was never an elective kingdom but an hereditary kingdom for near these thousand years. Therefore, let me know by what authority I am called hither. I do stand more for the liberty of my people than any here that come to be my pretended judges. And, therefore let me know by what lawful authority I am seated here, and I will answer it. Otherwise I will not answer it.

*Lord president*: Sir, how really you have managed your trust is known. Your way of answer is to interrogate the court, which beseems not you in this condition. You have been told of it twice or thrice.

*The king*: … I do not come here as submitting to the court. I will stand as much for the privilege of the House of Commons, rightly understood, as any man here whatsoever. I see no House of Lords here that may constitute a Parliament, and the king too should have been. Is this the bringing of the king to his Parliament? Is this the bringing an end to the treaty in the public faith of the world?

## Radicals, Sectaries, and Revolving New Notions

### *7.13 Thomas Edwards,* Grangraena *(1646)*[15]

The execution of the king and dissolution of the monarchy, combined with the earlier elimination of strict controls on religion and the press, opened up a

[15] T. Edwards, *Gangraena: or a Catalogue and Discovery of Many of the Errours, Heresies, Blasphemies and Pernicious Practices of the Sectaries of this Time, Vented and Acted in England in These Four Last Years* (London, "Feb. 16," 1646, facsimile, Exeter, 1998), 1st part, 16–7, 74–5 [sig. m1v]; 2nd part, 46; 3rd part, 242–3, 245, 246–7.

brave new world of political, social, and economic possibilities. Historians know of those possibilities because the Civil War also opened the floodgates of pamphleteering; between 1644 and 1653 the press was probably the freest it had ever been. John Milton (1608–74), in his pamphlet *Areopagitica* (1644), celebrated London as "a city of refuge, a mansion house of liberty," and its printers during the 1640s as so many artisans "sitting by their studious lamps, musing, searching, revolving new notions and ideas wherewith to present…the approaching Reformation."[16] Not everyone appreciated the cacophony of the press, with its competing news and ballad sellers promoting ideas which would lead to a bewildering array of new political groups and religious sects. The Presbyterian Thomas Edwards (ca. 1599–1648), in his popular *Gangraena* (published in three parts), portrayed these radical Protestant religious sects as illnesses of the body politic, spread by print and the parliamentary army. What do the selections in this section tell us about the role of print culture in the mid-1640s? What do they tell us about the role of Scripture? Compare Edwards's views with the varieties of sects categorized in *The Discription* [sic] *of the Severall Sorts of Anabaptists* (1645, **Plate 10**). Given that our knowledge of these sects comes from the attacks of more conservative Puritans, can we be certain that they were really so radical; or that they even existed?

The army that is so much spoken of upon all occasions in the news books, pulpits, conferences, to be Independent [favoring autonomous congregations] …, yet of that army, called by the sectaries, Independent …, I do not think there are 50 pure independents, but [rather it is] … made up and compounded of Anabaptism, Antinomianism, Enthusiasm, Arminianism, Familism; all these errors and more too sometimes meeting in the same persons, strange monsters, having their heads of Enthusiasm, their bodies of Antinomianism, their thighs of Familism, their legs and feet of Anabaptism, their hands of Arminianism, and Libertinism as the great vein going through the whole; in one word, the great religion of that sort of men in the army, is liberty of conscience, and liberty of preaching. …

They upbraid in printed books and speeches many Presbyterians, particularly of the [Westminster] Assembly [which met from 1643, and produced the Presbyterian Confession of Faith], with their former conformity [i.e., many Presbyterians had formerly been Anglican clergy], yea they brand and asperse them, that they have been great time-servers …, and this they do to make the people believe that what they do now is not out of conscience, but to serve the times, and that such men are not likely to have the truth revealed to them, nor fit to have a hand in the Reformation. …

[16] *Complete Prose Works of John Milton* (New Haven, 1959), 2: 553–4.

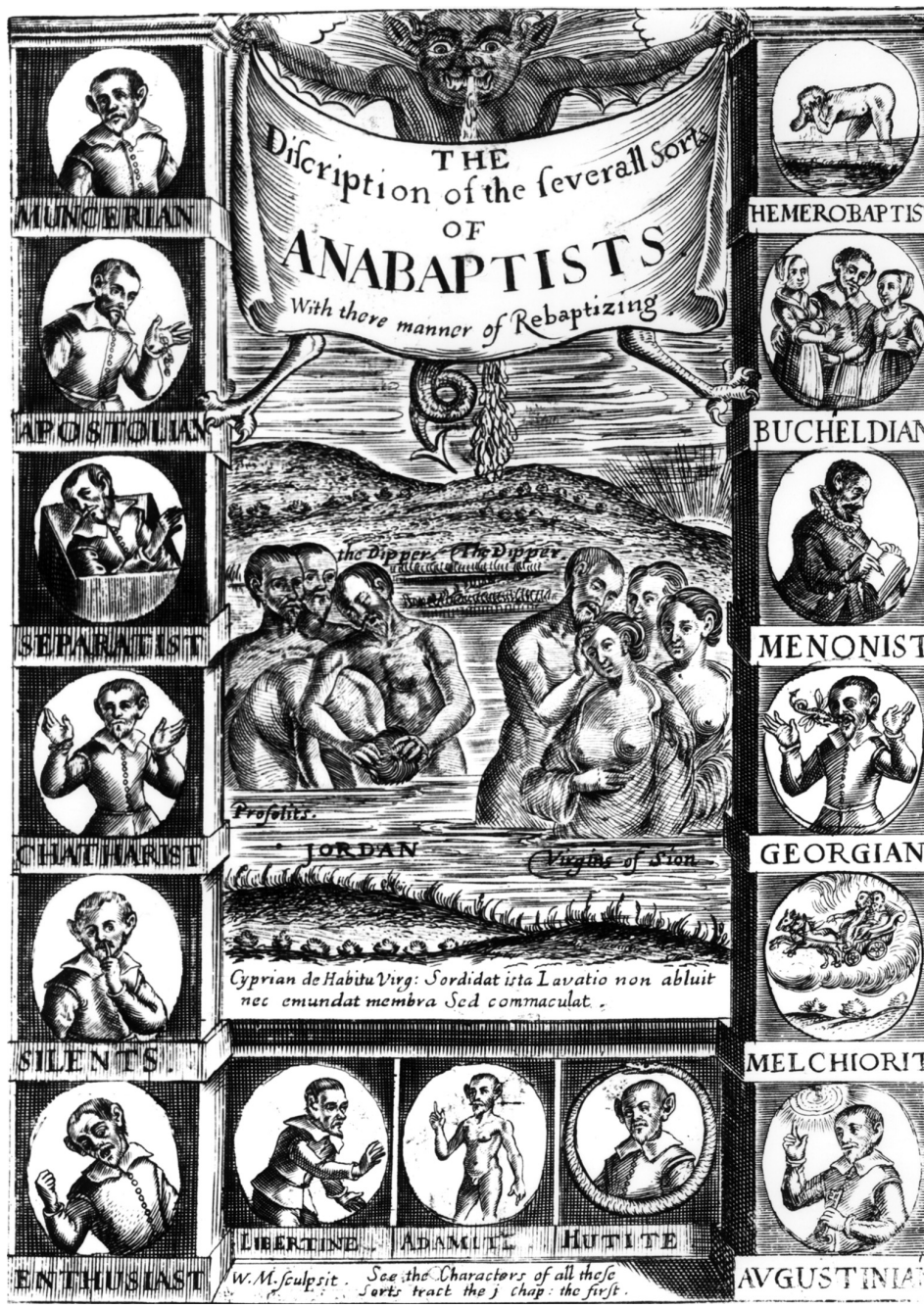


**Plate 10** "The Discription of the severall Sorts of Anabaptists with there [*sic*] manner of Rebaptizing." (Source: Daniel Featley, *Katabaptistai kataptüstoi: The dippers dipt, or, The anabaptists duck'd and plung'd over head and eares, at a disputation in Southwark*, 1645, Bridgeman Art Library.)

"Anabaptists" was the contemporary name given to various groups ranging from what are modern-day Mennonites to Calvinist Baptists whose one common trait was a belief in adult baptism. What is wrong with adult baptism according to the central image of this woodcut (the sun appears to be setting)? What appear to be the beliefs of the "Separatist"; the "Silents"; the "Hemerobaptist"; the "Adamite"? Is this a positive or negative image of these groups? Did all these groups exist?

By my books, especially *Gangraena*, many sectaries being so discovered by name and places of abode, laid open in several of their opinions and ways, will not be able for the future to do so much hurt and mischief among the people; their sheepskins are by this pulled over their wolves' ears, and many will now shun, and be afraid of them, who before knew them not.

## *7.14 Leveller Women (May 1649)*[17]

For all those who feared new ideas, there remained a vocal minority pushing for political, social, and religious change. We have already seen basic Leveller political ideas in the *Agreement of the People* (document 7.10). The Levellers continued to advocate reformed elections and a written constitution granting individual civil rights in print. When, in March 1649, Leveller leaders William Walwyn (1600–81), John Lilburne (1615?–57), Thomas Prince (fl. 1630–57), and Richard Overton (fl. 1640–63) were thrown in prison after publication of Lilburne's *Second Part of Englands New Chains Discovered* (1649), a group of Leveller women in London petitioned for their relief. What political and legal rights do the protesting women claim for the prisoners? What do they claim for themselves? How do they play with more traditional concepts of gender order and hierarchy? What do you suppose was the source of their ideas? How radical were the Levellers between 1647 and 1649?

That since we are assured of our creation in the image of God, and of an interest in Christ, equal unto men, as also of a proportionable share in the freedoms of this Commonwealth, we cannot but wonder and grieve that we should appear so despicable in your eyes, as to be thought unworthy to petition or represent our grievances to this honorable House. Have we not an equal interest with the men of this nation in those liberties and securities contained in the Petition of Right and other the good laws of the land? Are any of our lives, limbs, liberties, or goods to be take from us more than from men, but by due process of law? …

Would you have us keep at home in our houses, when men of such faithfulness and integrity as the four prisoners our friends in the Tower [Levellers], are fetched out of their beds, and forced out of their houses by soldiers to the affrighting and undoing of themselves, their wives, children, and families? …

And therefore … we entreat you to review our last petition in behalf of our friends …, and not to slight the things therein contained because they are presented unto you by the weak hand of women, it being a usual thing with God, by weak means to work mighty effects.

[17] *To the Supreme Authority of England The Commons Assembled in Parliament. The humble Petition of diverse wel-affected Weomen [sic].… Affecters and Approvers of the Petition of Sept. 11. 1648* (n. p., n. d., "May 5," 1649), broadside.

## 7.15 *Gerrard Winstanley, "To His Excellency Oliver Cromwell, General of the Commonwealth's Army" (1652)*[18]

One of the groups from which the Levellers sought to distance themselves was the Diggers, or self-styled "True Levellers," who advocated a primitive communism. In mid-April 1649, the government received report that at St. George's Hill, Surrey, in the Thames Valley not far from London, this group "began to dig on that side the hill … and sowed the ground with parsnips and carrots and beans." While the Diggers there numbered several dozen, "they give out they will be four or five thousand within ten days."[19] The Diggers' leader, Gerrard Winstanley (1609?–76?), was arrested at Kingston at least twice in the summer of 1649. Just what was so alarming about a dozen people digging on a hillside? In *The True Levellers' Standard Advanced* (ca. April 1649) Winstanley outlined the Digger rationale: "the great Creator, Reason, made the Earth to be a common treasury. … But not one word was spoken in the beginning, that one branch of mankind should rule over another."[20] He also accompanied his masterpiece, *The Law of Freedom in a Platform*, with a long prefatory letter – or, rather, lecture – to Oliver Cromwell, already one of the most powerful MPs and army generals and, within a year, to rule as lord protector. Upon what basis does Winstanley argue for socio-economic change? Are his grievances old or new? Is this revolutionary?

God hath made you a successful instrument to cast out that conqueror, and to recover our land and liberties again, by your victories, out of that Norman hand.

That which is yet wanting on your part to be done, is this, to see the oppressor's power to be cast out with his person; and to see that the free possession of the land and liberties be put into the hands of the oppressed commoners of England. …

Now you know sir, that the kingly conqueror was not beaten by you only as you are a single man, nor by the officers of the army joined to you; but by the hand and assistance of the commoners, whereof some came in person, and adventured their lives with you; others stayed at home, and planted the earth, and paid taxes and free-quarter to maintain you that went to war.

So that whatsoever is recovered from the conqueror is recovered by a joint consent of the commoners. Therefore it is all equity, that all the commoners who assisted you should be set free from the conquerors power with you. …

[18] G. Winstanley, *The Law of Freedom in a Platform, or, True Magistracy Restored*, in *Gerrard Winstanley: Selections from His Works*, ed. L. Hamilton (London, 1944), 109, 112–4.
[19] *The Clarke Papers* (London, Camden Society, n.s. 54, 1894), 2: 210–1.
[20] *The Works of Gerrard Winstanley*, ed. G. H. Sabine (New York, 1965), 76–95.

I have asked diverse soldiers what they fought for; they answered, they could not tell; and it is very true, they cannot tell indeed, if the monarchial law be established without reformation. …

If we look into parishes, the burdens there are many.

First, for the power of lords of manors remains still over their brethren, requiring fines and heriots [customary payment upon death of tenant]; beating them off the free use of the common land, unless their brethren will pay them rent; exacting obedience, as much as they did, and more, when the king was in power. …

Secondly, in parishes where commons lie, the rich Norman freeholders, or the new (more covetous) gentry, over-stock the commons with sheep and cattle; so that inferior tenants and poor laborers can hardly keep a cow, but half starve her; so that the poor are kept poor still, and the common freedom of the earth is kept from them. …

Thirdly, in many parishes two or three of the great ones bears all the sway, in making assessments, over-awing constables and other officers. …

Fourthly …, country people cannot sell any corn or other fruits of the earth in a market town, but they must either pay toll, or be turned out of town. …

Now saith the whisperings of the people, the inferior tenants and laborers bears all the burdens, in laboring the earth, in paying taxes and free-quarter beyond their strength, and in furnishing the armies with soldiers, who bear the greatest burden of the war; and yet the gentry, who oppress them, and that live idle upon their labors, carry away all the comfortable livelihood of the earth.

For is not this a common speech among the people, we have parted with our estates, we have lost our friends in the wars, which we willingly gave up, because freedom was promised us; and now in the end we have new task-masters, and our old burdens increased? And though all sorts of people have taken an Engagement to cast out kingly power, yet kingly power remains in power still in the hands of those who have no more right to the earth than ourselves.

## *7.16* *Abiezer Coppe,* A Fiery Flying Roll: a Word from the Lord to All the Great Ones of the Earth *(January 1650)*[21]

Just as Presbyterians like Edwards warned of new sectarian groups, and just as Levellers attempted to distance themselves from Diggers, so too did *all* groups attempt to distance themselves from Ranters, or "the ranting crew."[22] Who were "the ranting crew"? Unfortunately, most of our evidence for the Ranters comes from anti-Ranter pamphlets. But several writers of the period did develop an extensive theology that could be called Ranter, arguing that, since Gods' goodness dwelt in all things, sin was impossible to those who

[21] A. Coppe, *Fiery Flying Rolle*, 1–2, 5; *A Second Fiery Flying Rolle*, 8–9 (both, London, "January 4," 1649 [i.e. 1650], facsimile, Exeter, 1973).

[22] *Works of Gerrard Winstanley*, 392.

embraced him or it. Abiezer Coppe (1619–72?), a former Oxford undergraduate, wrote a tract which so upset the Rump Parliament that they not only condemned it to be burnt by the common hangman but also passed the Blasphemy Act of August 1650 to outlaw similar tracts and the behavior they inspired. As you read this and the following selection, ask yourself why the authorities found these writings so threatening. Coppe contrasts his own "blood-life-spirit levelling" with "sword levelling" and "digging levelling": how does his argument relate to those of the Levellers and the Diggers described above? How does he apply this to the recent history of England?

Thus saith the Lord, *I inform you, that I overturn, overturn, overturn*. And as the bishops, Charles, and the lords, have had their turn, overturn, so your turn shall be next (ye surviving great ones) by what name or title soever dignified or distinguished) who ever you are, that oppose me, the eternal God, who am universal love, and whose service is perfect freedom, and pure libertinism.

But afore I proceed any further, be it known to you, that although that excellent Majesty, which dwells in the writer of this roll, hath reconciled all things to himself, yet this hand (which now writes) never drew sword, or shed one drop of any man's blood. (I am free from the blood of all men) though (I say) all things are reconciled to me, the eternal God (in Him) yet sword levelling, or digging-levelling, are neither of them his principle. …

Though you can as little endure the word Levelling, as could the late slain or dead Charles (your forerunner, who is gone before you) and had as live [rather] hear the Devil named, as hear of the Levellers (Men-Levellers) which is, and who (indeed) are but shadows of most terrible, yet great and glorious good things to come. …

Not by sword; we (holy) scorn to fight for anything; we had as live be dead drunk every day of the week, and lie with the whores i'the market place, and account these as good actions as taking the poor abused, enslaved ploughman's money from him.

## *7.17 Laurence Clarkson,* The Lost Sheep Found *(1660)*[23]

Laurence Clarkson (1615–67), like many of the radicals during the Civil Wars and Interregnum, drifted from Presbyterianism to Independency, to Baptism, and beyond. His autobiography suggests that his questioning of Scripture changed his life, causing him about 1650 to follow the implications of Ranter theology to their logical – and physical – conclusions. What is a Ranter, according to Clarkson's description? How does he justify it? What was the relation between that Ranterism and Puritanism? Who might Coppe's and Clarkson's ideas most upset? Are they revolutionaries?

[23] Laur. Claxton [pseud.], *The Lost Sheep Found* (London, 1660), 25–6.

Now observe at this time my judgment was this, that there was no man could be freed from sin, till he had acted that so-called sin as no sin; this a certain time had been burning within me, yet durst not reveal it to any. … I pleaded the words of Paul, That I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there was nothing unclean, but as man esteemed it [Romans 14, 14], unfolding that was intended all acts, as well as meats and drinks, and therefore till you can lie with all women as one woman, and not judge it sin, you can do nothing but sin: now in Scripture I found a perfection spoken of; so that I understood no man could attain perfection but this way, at which Mr. Rawlinson was much taken, and Sarah Kullin, being then present, did invite me to make trial of what I had expressed, so as I take it, after we parted she invited me to Mr. Wats in Rood Lane, where was one or two more like herself; and as I take it, lay with me that night. … Now [Abiezer] Coppe was by himself with a company ranting and swearing, which I was seldom addicted to, only proving by Scripture the truth of what I acted; and indeed Solomon's writings was the original of my filthy lust. … Now I being as they said, "Captain of the Rant," I had most of the princip[al] women come to my lodging for knowledge, which then was called The Head-quarters.

## **7.18–7.19** *Quakers*

A religious group with greater staying power arose in the 1650s called the Quakers. Today we view Quakers as benign: pacifists of few words, reliable in negotiations, searching within for guidance from the Spirit. But in the 1650s that search took them out into the world and led them to criticize its Great Ones in a manner not unlike Coppe. Quakers also engaged in symbolic demonstrations intended to testify to their faith and the world's hypocrisy, but which, in fact, only brought notoriety and infamy. For example, Quaker women went "naked for a sign," usually wearing sackcloth with hair undone and uncovered rather than actual nakedness, in order to demonstrate humility and purity of spirit (document **7.18**). James Nayler (1618–60), a prominent Quaker preacher and apostle reenacted Christ's entry into Jerusalem in Bristol in the autumn of 1656 (document **7.19**). How did the authorities react to these displays? Why was Parliament so much more severe towards Naylor than the Bristol city officers towards the Quaker women? (Despite Lord President Lawrence's plea for toleration, most MPs felt that the last decade had been a referendum on the dangers of religious freedom and they resolved to have Nayler whipped, pilloried, his tongue bored through, branded with a B [for blasphemy], and committed to solitary confinement.) What justifications did Nayler give for his actions? How did the MPs interpret what he had done? What were they afraid of?

**7.18** *Quaker women going "naked" for a sign (May 3, 1655)*[24]

On the 3d of the 3d month [May: Quakers did not believe in pagan names for days of the week nor for months], 1655, Sarah Goldsmith, being moved to put on a coat of sackcloth of hair next her, to uncover her head and put earth thereon, with her hair hanging down about her, and without any other clothes upon her, excepting shoes on her feet, and in that manner to go to every gate, and through every street within the walls of the city, and afterward to stand at the High-Cross in the view of the town and market, as a sign against the pride of Bristol, and to abide so in that habit seven days, in obedience thereto, though in great self-denial, and in a cross to her natural inclinations, she cheerfully prepared her garment, being long and reaching to the ground; and on the 5th of the 3rd month early in the morning, two friends accompanying her, passed through the streets to the several gates, some people following them, but doing no harm: then she returned home. And about the ninth hour came to the High-Cross, and one friend with her, a great multitude of people following; there she stood about half an hour, till the tumult, which consisted of many hundred, grew so violent, that some bystanders, in compassion, forced them into a shop, out of which the multitude called to have them thrown, that they might abuse them; but by the intervention of the chamberlain kept out of their hands, and carried to the tolzey [tolbooth, guildhall]. The mayor came thither, and asked her, why she appeared in the city in that habit? She answered, "in obedience to the light in my conscience." "What if you," said the mayor, "in your obedience had been killed by the rude multitude?" She replied, "I am in the hands of Him that ruleth all things. I have harmed none, yet have I been harmed; neither have I broken any law by which I can be brought under just censure; if I had appeared in gay clothing you would [not?] have been troubled." In conclusion, the mayor, at the instigation of Joseph Jackson one of the aldermen sent her to Bridewell [prison], and with her Anne Gunnicliffe and Margaret Wood, for owning and accompanying her.

**7.19** *Parliament on James Nayler (Dec. 5–8, 1656)*[25]

*Dec. 5, 1656*. Resolved, That Nayler's report be heard. …

The articles against him read, and summed thus–That he assumed the gesture, words, names, and attributes of our Savior Christ.

*Major-General [Philip] Skippon* [d. 1660]. … It has been always my opinion, that the growth of these things is more dangerous than the most intestine or foreign enemies. I have often been troubled in my thoughts to think of this

[24] P. Crawford and L. Goring, *Women's Worlds in Seventeenth-Century England: A Sourcebook* (London, 2000), 256, from Friends House Library, London, The Great Book of Sufferings, 1: 548, and Abstract of the Sufferings, 1: 15.

[25] J. T. Rutt, ed., *The Diary of Thomas Burton, Esquire* (London, 1828), 1: 24–6, 46–7, 63.

toleration; I think I may call it so. Their great growth and increase is too notorious, both in England and Ireland; their principles strike both at ministry and magistracy.

Many opinions are in this nation, (all contrary to the government), which would join in one to destroy you, if it should please God to deliver the sword into their hands. Should not we be as jealous of God's honor, as we are of our own ? Do not the very heathens assert the honor of their Gods, and shall we suffer our Lord Jesus thus to be abused and trampled upon? …

*Major-General [William] Boteler* [fl. 1645–70]. … My ears did tingle, and my heart tremble, to hear the report. I am satisfied that there is too much of the report true. I have heard many of the blasphemies of this sort of people; but the like of this I never heard of. The punishment ought to be adequate to the offence. By the Mosaic law, blasphemers were to be stoned to death. The morality of this remains, and for my part, if this sentence should pass upon him, I could freely consent to it. …

It is not intended to indulge such grown heresies and blasphemies as these, under the notion of a toleration of tender consciences. He that sets himself up in Christ's place, certainly commits the highest offence that can be. …

*Dec. 6, 1656*. James Nayler being brought to the bar, refused to kneel or to put off his hat. The House agreed beforehand that they would not insist upon his kneeling, being informed that he would not do it, and that he might not say that was any part of his crime. They would not give him that advantage; but commanded the serjeant to take off his hat. …

*Question.* King of Israel; assumed you thus?

*Answer.* As I have dominion over the enemies of Christ, I am King of Israel spiritually.

*Q*. Are you the judge of the world?

*A*. I cannot deny what I said at the Committee. But the Speaker, desirous to help him, here said, "Mind what you say; are you the judge, have you no fellow-judges." Then he answered "No;" saying again, "I hope you have so much justice and charity as not to wrest my words."

*Q*. Why did you ride into Bristol in that manner?

*A*. …I knew that I should lay down my life for it.

*Q*. Whose will was it, if not yours?

*A*. It was the Lord's will, to give it into me to suffer such things to be done in me; and I durst not resist it, though I was sure to lay down my life for it.

*Q*. How were you sure?

*A*. It was so revealed to me of my father, and I am willing to obey his will in this thing. …

*Q*. Are there any more signs than yours?

*A*. I know no other sign. There may be other signs in some parts of the nation; but I am set up as a sign to this nation, to bear witness of his coming. You have been a long time under dark forms, neglecting the power of godliness, as bishops. It was the desire, of my soul, all along, and the longing expectation

of many godly men engaged with you, that this nation should be redeemed from such forms. God hath done it for you, and hath put his sword in the hands of those from whom it cannot be wrested. That sword cannot be broken, unless you break it yourselves, by disobeying the voice, the call, and rejecting the sign set up amongst you to convince them that Christ is come. …

*Dec. 8, 1656. Lord President [Henry Lawrence* (1600–64)]. This gentleman has spoken very zealously, yet they were honest men, too, that called for fire from heaven, and we know how they were reproved. …

I wonder why any man should be so amazed at this. Is not God in every horse, in every stone, in every creature. …

If you hang every man that says, Christ is in you the hope of glory, you will hang a good many. You shall hear this in every man's mouth of that sect, and others too, that challenge a great interest in Christ.

I do not believe that James Nayler thinks himself to be the only Christ; but that Christ is in him in the highest measure. This, I confess, is sad. But if, from hence, you go about to adjudge it, or call it blasphemy, I am not satisfied in it. It is hard to define what is blasphemy.

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