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**Early Eighteenth-Century Trinitarian Debates and  
Anglo-American Discourse on Authority, c. 1702-1758**

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## Introduction

### Authority and the Trinitarian Debates

The purpose of this study is threefold. First, I provide more detail regarding the Anglo-American discourse on authority in the early eighteenth-century through an assessment of the Trinitarian debates. Second, I argue thereby that the Trinitarian debates were a significant medium for activating discourse on institutional (Church and State) and individual (Conscience) authority. Third, concurrent with that discourse, I demonstrate that the debates provided substantial material for arguments within the related discourse on the authority of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason.

#### *The Significance of the Doctrine of the Trinity to Understanding the Early Eighteenth-Century Discourse on Authority*

Previous scholarship on the Trinitarian debates in relation to authority has either focused almost exclusively on the British Isles or, in the American context, it has largely focused on individuals within the doctrinal and political developments of the latter-half of the century, with succinct transatlantic acknowledgements, and/or been subsumed by the growing divides caused by revivals, the wider Calvinist and Arminian controversy, and the more prominent or vocal Deists.<sup>1</sup> Scholars, particularly J.C.D. Clark and James E. Bradley, have also debated the ideological significance of the Trinitarian debates to religious, social, and political reform movements in eighteenth-century Britain.<sup>2</sup> In contrast to Clark, and in

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<sup>1</sup> For the British context, see footnote below. For examples of scholarship on the American context, see John S. Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries: Transformation and Tradition in the Religious and Political Thought of Charles Chauncy and Jonathan Mayhew* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2016); E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); J.C.D. Clark, *Language of Liberty: Political Discourse and Social Dynamics in the Anglo-American World* (Cambridge University Press, 1994); Robert J. Wilson III, *The Benevolent Deity: Ebenezer Gay and the Rise of Rational Religion in New England, 1696-1787* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1984); Alan Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (1966); and Conrad Wright, *The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America* (Boston: Starr King Press, 1955). Of these, I recommend foremost Wilson's *Benevolent Deity*. Soon to be published scholarship includes Jan Stievermann, ed., Introduction to *Biblia Americana: America's First Bible Commentary, A Synoptic Commentary on the Old and New Testaments, Volume 10: Hebrews-Revelation*, by Cotton Mather (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming 2022).

<sup>2</sup> See J.C.D. Clark, *English Society 1660-1832*, second edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); and James E. Bradley, "The Religious Origins of Radical Politics," in *Religion and Politics in Enlightenment Europe*, eds. James E. Bradley and Dale K. Van Kley (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2001). See also A.M.C. Waterman, "The nexus between theology and political doctrine in Church and Dissent," in *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in eighteenth-century Britain*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge:

qualified continuity with Bradley, I distinguish between the *activating* role that debate over Trinitarianism played in refining the institutional and individual relations and claims to authority, and the more *substantive* role it had in argumentative appeals to contested sources of authority. By drawing this distinction between the types of contribution the Trinitarian debates made to the discourse on authority, I largely avoid being drawn into the “heresy-radicalism” debate.<sup>3</sup> Even so, I accept from Bradley that the discourse on institutional and individual authority was ideologically informed by a “profound experience of social alienation” due to schism and the wider theological backdrop of egalitarian ecclesiology and belief in the absolute and sole authority of Christ.<sup>4</sup> But rather than set aside or take for granted the Trinitarian debates, I demonstrate that the debates often provided the events from which the discourse and processes of institutional authority could be and were then informed by these other theological principles. However, in the realm of argument, the Trinitarian debates played a more critical and substantive role in the value and accepted nature of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason as authoritative sources.

I am not, therefore, positing substantive ideological connections to theological frameworks, but utilizing the Trinitarian debates to observe the discursive categories within the ongoing crisis of authority stemming from the sixteenth-century Reformation. Subsequent developments in the succeeding seventeenth-century had served to temper violent zeal but the categorical claims and appeals to authority were still retained. I accordingly provide detailed accounts of episodes bearing on the discourse relating to institutional and individual authority as they contributed to what Frank Furedi has identified as the emerging priority of “political pragmatism”.<sup>5</sup> This does not mean that these early-modern societies gave up on looking to or building upon just claims to authority, but that to various degrees they qualified Church and State institutional capacities and priorities to countenance the legitimacy of individual Conscience in the resolution of religious conflict. Political priorities and relations shifted in

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Cambridge University Press, 1996); and Robert D. Cornwall and William Gibson, Introduction to *Religion, Politics and Dissent, 1660-1832: Essays in Honour of James E. Bradley* (Ashgate, 2010); John Gascoigne, “Anglican Latitudinarianism, Rational Dissent and political radicalism in the late eighteenth century,” in *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in eighteenth-century Britain*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); J.A.I. Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and its enemies, 1660-1730* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Maurice Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy: Arianism through the Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Clarendon Press, 1996). The state of the scholarship is well assessed by Cornwall and Gibson.

<sup>3</sup> See Bradley, “Religious Origins,” 191-92; and Cornwall and Gibson, Introduction to *Religion, Politics and Dissent*, 3-7.

<sup>4</sup> Bradley, “Religious Origins,” 194.

<sup>5</sup> Frank Furedi, *Authority: A Sociological History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 159.

the light of disciplinary endeavors by religious societies, which played a practical role in advancing Lockean frameworks as models for civil society more generally. By connecting events (in their discourses) that have not previously been highlighted with regard to the Trinitarian debates I am able to demonstrate the contributive role of the debates to the overall discourse on authority.

My readings of primary sources have been focused on ascertaining their contribution to how doctrinal controversy leads to a categorical discourse on authority. My searches have not sought to be exhaustive but contributive and suggestive of that discourse in relation to the Trinitarian debates. I therefore selected most often the published accounts of trials and controversies provided by (usually) defendants in the public square, along with their previously published doctrinal work relating to Trinitarian dogma, to thereby highlight their contributions to the institutional and argumentative discourses therein. I am not looking for doctrinal development as such, but instances of discourse relating to authority as prioritized by the post-Reformation's categories of institutional and individual claims and argumentative appeals to authority. Furthermore, my aim has not been to define theological factions but to follow their categorical treatments of authority. However, by more precisely demarcating Trinitarianism to antedate the Athanasian Creed and medieval frameworks of the doctrine, or by seeing through the polemical use of terms and ascribing instead more descriptive labels, we may be able to better apprehend the contributions to the doctrinal debate and discourse on authority. We can, therefore, through a post-polemic form of scholarship, more clearly see the methodical and ideational contributions by individuals to the processes of human and societal endeavor, interaction, and development, as exhibited by both their discourse and their devotion. Such a detachment from polemical paradigms also allows for the historical-linguistic arguments, such as Samuel Clarke's understanding of *homoousia*, to better stand out in their particular capacity to potentially unsettle accepted notions of Nicene orthodoxy. This is in contrast to Thomas Pfizenmaier's recognition of Clarke's argument regarding *homoousia* but then his subsequent ascribing to Clarke the term *homoiousia* as the identifier for his Trinitarian theology.<sup>6</sup> Similar allowances have been made in the scholarship generally with regard to the term *Arian*.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Thomas C. Pfizenmaier, *The Trinitarian Theology of Dr. Samuel Clarke (1675-1729): Context, Sources, Controversy* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 172-73.

<sup>7</sup> See for example, Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 125-26.

By placing side-by-side many of the early-eighteenth century's Trinitarian debates' most prominent controversies and the disciplinary measures taken by institutions therein, we gain a more sustained understanding of the discourse on authority as it regards both the relationship between institutions and individuals, and the argumentative status of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. We also gain a greater understanding of how the discourse helped to shift alliances between competing institutional and individual claims to authority, manifest in part by the implementation of Lockean practices within voluntary societies. Moreover, we can better observe the impetus for pietistic and rational emphases and priorities in the argumentative discourse, with the latter in the ascendancy. Furthermore, while not a sustained focus of my study, the context of empire is present and may be of use to historians. For, by producing a more detailed assessment of such local episodes of doctrinal discipline and controversy, scholars will be able to better trace Evan Haefeli's observation that "England's rulers" increasingly believed that religious pluralism "could be a reliable instrument of empire." For example, the ably managed internal strife that did not concern Pennsylvania's civil magistracy in the Presbyterian's Hemphill Affair, was in the Congregationalist's Breck Affair externalized and ultimately became the explicit purview of the Massachusetts General Court. Pluralism and general tolerationist policies perceptibly eased the burden of empire and tied the beneficiaries more closely to their imperial benefactors, albeit this latter benefit was not realized where strong establishments (by the dispensation of the empire) existed.<sup>8</sup>

In accord with other scholars, I view the selected controversies and/or trials relating to Thomas Emlyn, William Whiston, Henry Sacheverell, Anthony Collins, Samuel Clarke, and Benjamin Hoadly to be contributive to the weakening of state supported ecclesiastical prosecutions as experienced in the latter part of Queen Anne's reign, while at the same time they helped to further direct the discourse on the authority of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. The detail I provide through categorical readings are the main contribution here, such as their use of Scripture, particularly the nature of sacred texts in light of textual corruptions, reliance on the Church Fathers, historical and linguistic assessments of the Creeds and primitive Christian texts, and/or their particular emphases on Reason. Where at least one other scholar has viewed Tradition to incorporate the discernment of its truths by

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<sup>8</sup> Evan Haefeli, "Toleration and Empire: The Origins of American Religious Pluralism," in *British North America in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, ed. Stephen Foster (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 134, see also 132.

“the application of reason to the historical record”,<sup>9</sup> I see such rational applications to be the purview of Reason, a competitive source and category of authority. Appeals to the historical record are different from a rational assessment of their verity. With regard to Scripture, I observe that historical warrants for textual criticism of specific passages such as the Johannine Comma produced careful attempts to ensure that this ultimate source of authority was not generally undermined.

I build on these more established (primarily English and episcopal) debates and controversies, culminating with James Pierce and the Salter’s Hall controversy (among Dissent), to assess the context of early eighteenth-century America. Cotton Mather’s concerns for doctrinal purity and discipline run parallel to these English debates and, in part, occasion his priority of piety as well as his growing ecumenism surrounding the doctrine. In a detailed manner that addresses continued aspects of the English and Anglican context, I connect the Hemphill Affair and the Breck Affair, as well as the attempts to block both Robert Breck and Jonathan Mayhew’s ordinations, to concerns over the Athanasian doctrine of the Trinity, highlighted among other doctrinal and ecclesiological concerns. In contrast to John S. Oakes, I demonstrate that Mayhew’s Arianism owed much more to Emlyn’s influence than to that of Clarke.<sup>10</sup> Also, by focusing on the Trinitarian debates rather than simply developments within the doctrine of the Trinity (most notably exhibited by Jonathan Edwards), other historically significant persons to the Trinitarian debates in America become more fully evident, such as Edwards’s son-in-law, Aaron Burr, Sr. And with the increasing priority of institutional self-determination, unsettling the priority of institutional disciplinary capacities, an effort to ensure doctrinal soundness through academic curriculum ensued. The Berkeleyan Samuel Johnson’s shifting emphases within such endeavors reflected the Anglican crisis of Trinitarian dogma due to the Newtonian and Hutchinsonian theologies. These individuals and controversies in America are thereby more connected to the Trinitarian debates and the discourse on authority than previously recognized.

The selection of these cases is based on the fact of their relative connections to each other, either in circumstance or in direct conversation, as well as their substantive relation to both the institutional and the argumentative post-Reformation discourse on authority. Accordingly, the case studies are a reconstruction that aims to offer a representative picture

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<sup>9</sup> Robert Ingram, *Reformation Without End: Religion, Politics and the Past in Post-Revolutionary England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2018), 14.

<sup>10</sup> See Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 87, 90.

or survey of the development of the period's discourse on authority available through institutional trials that in whole or in part attempted to ensure doctrinal discipline on the question of Trinitarian dogma. Each of these trials and/or controversies represents a different facet of such institutional attempts that resulted in discourse on the authority of Church and State relative to individual Conscience, while also providing examples of the doctrinal arguments made by individuals that highlighted the authority of Scripture, Tradition, and/or Reason.

Emlyn's trials, conducted by both a Presbyterian synod and then the Queen's Bench in Ireland (but which were paid close attention in England) were the first such during the second period of the Trinitarian debates (as will be explained later in the chapter). Whiston's trial takes place in a university, and the related trial of Sacheverell in Parliament. Collins's book is burned by the public hangman in his absence, though it served to undermine Clarke's professional career with his near escape from the censure of Convocation. Hoadly, in the context of these prior trials and controversies, was backed by the monarchy in his own trial in the court of public opinion<sup>11</sup> against that of a Convocation ready and willing but unable to officially denounce him. Cotton Mather acted as a bridge for the transatlantic discourse, indicating the relevance of the English debates to New England Protestants, continued in the Exeter and Salter's Hall controversies. The later trials of Hemphill and Breck, and the controversies surrounding Mayhew's ordination and subsequent publications, along with the responses from Franklin, Edwards, and Burr continued to demonstrate the transatlantic discourse on authority sparked by concerns over the doctrine of the Trinity. Johnson and the shifting iterations of his proposed academic curriculum serve to more closely demonstrate not only the relevance of the doctrinal controversy in the transatlantic world of British Protestantism but specifically of the Anglican responses to it outside of England.

The variety of the institutional trials, their differing denominational and civil contexts, and yet the continuity of the discursive categories withal, demonstrates the notion of a widespread concern for the doctrine of the Trinity and for the legitimate application of authority. With the exchanges of the interlocutors and the connections between the episodes made plainer, the physical distances involved in the transatlantic discourses and distinctive colonial experiments seemingly contract to reveal a less geographically hampered discourse surrounding both doctrine and authority than is perhaps readily apparent. In the end, the

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<sup>11</sup> I would like to credit William Gibson for the categorization of this "trial" for Benjamin Hoadly.

prime criteria for the selection of these cases are their salience in both the transatlantic Trinitarian debates and the transatlantic discourse on authority, particularly with regard to the nexus of institutional and individual authority. Further studies will be able to build on these connections, that are primarily introductory in their merit.

### *Empire, Establishments, and the Athanasian Trinity*

In May 1689, royal assent was given to the Act of Toleration that conditionally granted religious liberties to all Protestants who declared belief in the Trinity according to the Apostle's, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds. In October 1689, John Locke's *Epistola de Tolerantia* (written in 1685) was published in English. Therein, Locke, who did not agree with this demarcation of Athanasian Christianity, immediately asserted that "every one is Orthodox to himself" and that claims boasting of "Antiquity", or "Reformation", or "Orthodoxy" were "much rather Marks of Men striving for Power and Empire over one another, than of the Church of Christ."<sup>12</sup> His comment aptly introduces and encapsulates much of the discourse on authority that this study seeks to better understand. Namely, the relation between doctrinal debates surrounding the Trinity and the Anglo-American discourse on authority during roughly the first half of the eighteenth century.

The doctrine of the Trinity was a core feature of religious and political authority in a post-Reformation world that still operated on the principle (promulgated in Christianity since at least the fourth century Edict of Thessalonica) that there was only one true religion and that a state's strength was according to its adherence to that religion. As religious, political, and confessional divisions multiplied, many Protestants looked to the doctrine as a mainstay of social cohesion since from antiquity it had proven an able marker for unity in the faith, the one true religion.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, because of the legal strictures that were built up around it by British Protestants, no other doctrine bore such practical significance in relation to the Anglo-American discourse on authority during the long eighteenth-century.

Taking a very wide scope, we can observe that for nearly two millennia the doctrine of the Trinity has played a constructive as well as critical role in empire and schism, both political and religious. In the fourth century, the Arian debates threatened to rend the already

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<sup>12</sup> [John Locke], *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, translated into English by [William Popple] (London: Awnsham Churchill, 1689), 1 (hereafter cited as *Letter*).

<sup>13</sup> See Sidney Z. Ehler and John B. Morrall, ed., trans., *Church and State Through the Centuries: A Collection of historic documents with commentaries* (New York: Biblo and Tannen, 1967), 6-7.

hard won Constantinian settlement. Accordingly, Constantine sought to avoid the destabilization of his newly united (political) empire by defining the boundaries of acceptable (religious) doctrine via an imperial request for and subsequent endorsement of an ecclesial decision regarding the Christian God and the nature of Christ.<sup>14</sup> Though unsuccessful in quelling imperial strife related to the controversy, that decision was then added to over the next few centuries in the ensuing discourse.<sup>15</sup> Eventually, a particular reading of the imperially accepted doctrine's written creed was elevated (or expositied) into a further creedal definition sometime between the fifth and ninth centuries,<sup>16</sup> "the so-called Athanasian Creed".<sup>17</sup> This creed delineated how a candidate for salvation "must...thus think of the Trinity."<sup>18</sup> There was continued imperial and theological disagreement concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, particular aspects of which (e.g., the controversy over the *filioque*) contributed to the east-west schism of the eleventh century that still divides the Christian religion to this day.<sup>19</sup> Conflict over the proper understanding of the Trinity continued.<sup>20</sup> Similarly, one could argue that the British Empire grappled with (among other things) this same nexus of Trinitarian orthodoxy and empire as it sought to establish its authority and identity on the eve of its own experience of imperial schism in North America in the latter-eighteenth century. This is not to claim that controversy over the doctrine of the Trinity and its significance to the Christian religion was at the heart of these multi-faceted conflicts that occurred over millennia. Rather, the argument is that at the very least, debate over the doctrine and disciplinary measures related thereunto were among the prime contributions to

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<sup>14</sup> See Kate Cooper, "Constantine the Populist," *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Summer 2019), 264; John Alfred Faulkner, "The First Great Christian Creed," *The American Journal of Theology*, Vol. 14, No. 1 (Jan., 1910), 52. See also, Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, Volume 1: The Emergence of the Catholic Tradition (100-600)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971), 203, 278.

<sup>15</sup> See Cooper, "Constantine the Populist," 268; and then, Jean-Louis Quantin, *The Church of England and Christian Antiquity: The Construction of a Confessional Identity in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 45.

<sup>16</sup> J.N.D. Kelly, *The Athanasian Creed* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 116-24; Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom, with A History and Critical Notes, Volume I: The History of the Creeds* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), 36-37, 3n. See also, Pelikan, *Christian Tradition, Vol. 1*, 351.

<sup>17</sup> Pelikan, *Christian Tradition, Vol. 1*, 351: Relying on Kelly, Pelikan states: "The theology of the Athanasian Creed has been called 'codified and condensed Augustinianism...traditional, almost scholasticized Augustinianism.'" Pelikan later continues, still drawing on Kelly, "...the Athanasian Creed, which, despite its official name, could more aptly have been called 'the Augustinian Creed.'"

<sup>18</sup> Philip Schaff, *The Creeds of Christendom with A History and Critical Notes, Volume II: The Greek and Latin Creeds, With Translations* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1877), 68.

<sup>19</sup> See Pelikan, *Christian Doctrine, Vol. 5*, 21-23.

<sup>20</sup> See Paul C.H. Lim, *Mystery Unveiled: The Crisis of the Trinity in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 2.

the discourse on authority in religious societies seeking legitimate or moral (i.e., just) grounds for the resolution of conflict.

This British imperial context was, however, in an especially emergent position during the late seventeenth and early-eighteenth centuries.<sup>21</sup> I therefore primarily focus on the Church-State settlements and discourses that experienced continuity within and under the control of Great Britain from 1707. Therein, I primarily focus on England and its North American colonies. Scotland was Presbyterian with recourse in government only to the shared and increasingly limited crown, with no Lords Spiritual in Parliament. Only the episcopal establishment in England could directly influence the imperial policies of Parliament and the monarch. In England they were able to assert a unified Church-State settlement. However, England was itself a seat of Christian pluralism due in part to the proliferation of sects during the Commonwealth era and later the Act of Toleration.

The fact of England's (largely Protestant) pluralism was amplified by the existence of its various colonial establishments, with pluralism considered a necessary virtue in some of them.<sup>22</sup> Evan Haefeli has stated that it is "misleading" to think "that America was a place of religious refuge from England's stormy religious and political history [rather than] an active participant in it".<sup>23</sup> Haefeli also claims, that "Though American scholars like to locate the emergence of something new and distinctly American in both phenomena, what is more impressive in the long run is the effectiveness and determination of local establishments in restricting and absorbing these challenges." This was similar he says to the situation of the Church of England "at home".<sup>24</sup> To this construction I highlight and provide detail for the significant controversy regarding the doctrine of the Trinity that was an indelible part of this scene that Haefeli does not mention.

Accordingly, we can observe that the Anglo-American discourse was primarily concerned with the overarching principles and proper application of the complimentary jurisdictions of civil and religious authority. This was often manifest in the period's language

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<sup>21</sup> See Owen Stanwood, *The Empire Reformed: English America in the Age of the Glorious Revolution* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011), 28.

<sup>22</sup> See Catherine A. Brekus, "Dissent in the American Colonies before the First Amendment," in *The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, Volume II: The Long Eighteenth Century c. 1689-c. 1828*, edited by Andrew C. Thompson (Oxford University Press, 2018), 184-92; and Andrew R. Murphy, *Conscience and Community: Revisiting Toleration in Early Modern England and America* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 165-87, 209-10.

<sup>23</sup> Haefeli, "Toleration and Empire," 106.

<sup>24</sup> Haefeli, "Toleration and Empire," 131.

of “the Civil Sword” or “Secular Arm” or the dichotomy of “Ecclesiastical or Temporal” in parallel contrast with “the Affairs of Religion” or “Spiritual Authority” or “matters of Religion and Salvation”, to name only a few. Furthermore, the rhetoric of church discipline in relation to doctrine and practice was primarily that of relatively localized establishment (i.e., colony or kingdom) concerns over the relationship between “(the) Church and (the) State” much more often than “Religion and Empire”.<sup>25</sup> That is not to downplay or to at all dismiss the eighteenth century Protestant project of counter-(Catholic) Empire but instead to recognize and highlight challenges to such an endeavor in the myriad of local hurts and respective denominational religious histories of persecution situated in grand, often millenarian narratives and nurtured at times for centuries since or even prior to the Reformation.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, Haefeli asserts the recognized utility of religious pluralism to political empire. However, such a policy could and did raise alarms for local Church-State establishments, most readily exhibited by the High Church faction in England. But as Haefeli points out, this same alarm was felt by church-state establishments in America.<sup>27</sup> The situation was therefore one of increased imperial pluralism and alarmed local establishments. I seek to be aware of this larger and emergent imperial context while chronicling it most often from the vantage of more entrenched local concerns. As such, for this study, the primary language of the early-eighteenth century’s doctrinal debate and discourse on authority is found in local controversies, where the potentially challenged interests of the established church-state were the focus, and there was less talk of empire as such. That said, it is hoped that this study can be of use to historians of empire as they seek to ever take better account for the interaction between the concerns of imperial and local governance.

### *Post-Reformation Authority*

Authority in this eighteenth century context concerned not only the assumed or identifiable processes of authorization (i.e., legitimacy) but the question of authorship. This

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<sup>25</sup> See Haefeli, “Toleration and Empire,” 131.

<sup>26</sup> See Carla Pestana, *Protestant Empire: Religion and the making of the British Atlantic World* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 159-72. Pestana notes that “Britain became Europe’s leading Protestant stronghold” and states (on page 161): “A nascent sense of British identity converged around hostility to absolutist and expansionist Catholicism, positing it as the opposite of English rights and Protestantism.” See Clark, *Language of Liberty*, 41. Clark appears to be responding in part to the criticisms of Justin Champion regarding his *English Society 1688-1832* (1985). See Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*, 19-20. See also A. Thompson, “Toleration, Dissent, and the State in Britain,” 266: “...the memory of past wrongs loomed large in their [Dissenters] thinking.”

<sup>27</sup> Haefeli, “Toleration and Empire,” 134.

was not a question of power (at least not immediately), but of right. Hence the relevance of any doctrine concerning God, the Author of all, and specifically, the significance of the doctrine of the Trinity. For emanating from the Godhead was the authorial right to be obeyed, the very ordinance of heaven. Even further, within the Godhead existed the primary model for functioning and harmonious relations, whether in co-equality or subordinationist hierarchy. To be clear, my study concerns the post-Reformation crisis of authority and specifically the role of the debate over the Trinity in the early-eighteenth century as part of that ongoing crisis, as such, I am not exploring political theory postscripts to theological developments.<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, as the Reformation had disrupted the papal hierarchy of authority and revitalized certain categorical claims to authority, my interest is with authority as it has been historically understood.<sup>29</sup>

Frank Furedi has written, that, “Historically, the meaning of authority was associated with the acknowledged capacity of certain people to gain the voluntary obedience of people to commands and beliefs.”<sup>30</sup> Earlier, Furedi had already supported the nuanced distinction between the foundational source of a command and the exercise of ensuring compliance, explaining that “Authority rests on a foundation that warrants its exercise and for the right to expect obedience.” He continued by highlighting the categorical claims observed in this study: “Throughout history, such foundational norms – divine authority, tradition and customs, reason and science, popular consent – provide the resources for narratives of validation.”<sup>31</sup> With the exception of divine authority (which, for the period, I view as present throughout the whole) I see these respective categories in relative competition during the early-eighteenth century. The endeavor by their competing advocates was to appropriately order and/or practically apply the sovereign claims to divine authority made on behalf of the

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<sup>28</sup> See, for an example of such postscripts, David Nicholls, *God and Government in an ‘Age of Reason’* (New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 1995), 221-22.

<sup>29</sup> I will discuss this context in greater detail when discussing Luther in chapter 2, but, with regard to the revitalized categories of authority stemming from the Reformation, Jaroslav Pelikan helpfully explains that, including “Roman Catholics, the issue of authority had in fact become a burning one in every denomination” (Pelikan, *Christian Tradition: Vol. 5*, 70-71).

<sup>30</sup> Furedi, *Authority*, 9. For, in the early modern era, authority was wholly and everywhere derived from *the* Author and relative to him, i.e., God. Hopfl states that the human capacity that is moral authority “participates in the nature of God, the ‘Author of Nature’” (H.M. Hopfl, “Power, Authority and Legitimacy,” *Human Resource Development International*, Vol. 2, No. 3, 220).

<sup>31</sup> Furedi, *Authority*, 8. Also, Furedi’s claims on page 10 that there is a difference between how authority was debated in the eighteenth from the nineteenth century support my focus on the crisis of authority and its early-eighteenth century categories in relative continuity with the Reformation. See John Spurr, *The Post-Reformation, 1603-1714: Religion, Politics, and Society in Britain* (Harlow, England: Pearson Education Limited, 2006), 2: “The Post-Reformation was a phase of British history shaped by competition over the meaning and legacy of the Reformation.”

State, Church, and individual Conscience, and to do so on the legitimizing basis of identifiable benchmarks provided by Scripture, Tradition, and Reason, whether in concert or alone. Furedi makes it clear that, in the post-Reformation era, power had become separated from authority. Power no longer denoted authority or legitimacy (i.e., authorization), for “the elaboration of the thesis that an evil ruler need not be always obeyed led directly to the contention that coercive power could in some cases lack legitimacy.”<sup>32</sup> Furedi specifically highlights that Locke made “a distinction between power and authority and argu[ed] that tyranny was the exercise of the former without the latter.”<sup>33</sup>

For many in the early eighteenth-century, however, the endeavor to locate (divine) authority was still in the midst of vacillating shifts from God’s institutions (Church or State) to God’s individual relations (God-given conscience). There were very few who would have removed God entirely from the equation of authority. Religious authority had been unstable before the Reformation, with competing claims to the papacy, assertions of conciliar authority, as well as royal vs. papal investiture.<sup>34</sup> But Luther had settled on a potent and enduring combination: conscience and scripture. Yet Luther only survived due to protection proffered by competing princes.<sup>35</sup> I briefly note also that Furedi quotes Hannah Arendt who said “it was Luther’s error to think that his challenge of the temporal authority of the Church and his appeal to unguided individual judgment would leave tradition and religion intact.”<sup>36</sup> This reference to “unguided individual judgment” is incorrect as Luther clearly anchored conscience to the guide of Scripture. Luther’s combination, a shift in the locus of religious authority, coupled with the jealousies of princes allowed for the advent of nation-state fixtures of authority that no longer aspired to universal acceptance but were first and foremost concerned with local control. As Furedi reminds us,

That Luther’s break with the Roman Church coincided with the emergence of soon-to-be nation states ensured that controversies over religious doctrines would intersect with secular political conflicts. The ferocity of theological conflict and its destructive divisive impact had the long-term effect of forcing European society to look for an authoritative solution to the problem of endemic disorder and insecurity.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Furedi, *Authority*, 169.

<sup>33</sup> Furedi, *Authority*, 216.

<sup>34</sup> Furedi, *Authority*, 131, 141, 145 (141-146).

<sup>35</sup> See Furedi, *Authority*, 150-151, 155-161. On page 150, Furedi states: “At most what Luther sought was the constitution of a different locus for religious authority.”

<sup>36</sup> Furedi, *Authority*, 151.

<sup>37</sup> Furedi, *Authority*, 149. See also Furedi, *Authority*, 166: “Advocates of the Reformation contributed to the process of secularization through developing doctrines that reconciled theology with political pragmatism.” Furthermore, Furedi’s statement about the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries holds true for the early-

The Act of Toleration reflected something of this reality, insisting on the necessity of the Athanasian understanding of the Godhead (as backed by scripture) to social cohesion that was so significantly absent in the preceding century. The ensuing Trinitarian debates helped to both facilitate and frustrate the search for an authoritative solution in the ongoing search for the basis of a civil society. As already stated, this study adds finishing detail from the early-eighteenth century to Furedi's assessment of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries where "[t]he growth of religious conflict and affirmation of theological orthodoxy was paralleled by the tendency towards political pragmatism."<sup>38</sup>

In particular, the study corroborates the growing distinction between authority and power that Locke identified in *tyranny*, which Furedi (following in the Weberian tradition) summarizes as power without authority. However, by the early eighteenth century, princes, priests, and individuals were sufficiently aware of this dichotomy or at least the claims of it, that, accordingly, we find that the period's interlocutors were careful to tie their respective claims of legitimacy (or their rights) to divine authority, including tradition and monarchy, not only individual consent.<sup>39</sup> Of course, one could still be a tyrannical king or a corrupt priest even if they claimed divine right, but there would be no question of their tyranny or corruption if divine right or institution was not claimed. Accordingly, the discourse on authority still very much concerned the question of legitimate uses of power via legitimate claims to authority. Legitimation was indelible to claims of divine institution or of divine right. These claims were of course contested and hierarchized differently by the interlocutors, but not the source of authority. To augment their claims to this, the only source of true authority, participants in the discourse utilized Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. Debates over the doctrine of the Trinity, as established by the authority of both Church and State, reflected this situation both in claims to establish but also in arguments to defend against the corresponding claims and arguments of detractors and reformers. The aim was to be moral, or just, in complete alignment with divine commands and will.

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eighteenth century: "Religious opinion was inherently political and theological disputes had direct political ramifications" (p. 158). This study is concerned to understand the detail and outcomes of that continuity.

<sup>38</sup> Furedi, *Authority*, 159. Earlier on the same page, Furedi states that "The interweaving of religion and politics fostered a public culture where the intensity of doctrinal and religious conflict co-existed with political pragmatism." Benjamin Hoadly in particular comes to mind as an interlocutor who exhibited this pragmatism well, as perhaps also George Smalridge (see both William Gibson and Guglielmo Sanna's chapters in *Religious Identities in Britain, 1660-1832*, eds., William Gibson and Robert G. Ingram (Routledge, 2005).

<sup>39</sup> Furedi, *Authority*, 216.

## Overview

The 1689 Act of Toleration extended religious freedom (though not full civil liberties) to Protestants who did not deny the Trinity.<sup>40</sup> More specifically, the Act applied to those who maintained adherence to the doctrine of the Trinity as declared in the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion, the basis of the Elizabethan settlement. The Episcopal 1571 Articles, along with the Presbyterian 1647 Westminster Confession and the Congregational 1648 Cambridge Platform, framed much of the Anglo-American discourse on authority in relation to the Trinitarian debates.<sup>41</sup> Article VIII of the Thirty-Nine Articles espoused the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds, "for they may be proved by moste certayne warrauntes of holye Scripture."<sup>42</sup> The Act of Toleration, therefore, placed the backstop of Protestant unity at the doctrine of the Trinity contained in the "three Creeds" according to the rationale of scriptural warrant. This initiated more than a century of strife concerning the exact measures of the doctrine of the Trinity and its use as the precise demarcation of the (Protestant) Christian religion as arbitrated by arguments from Scripture. For non-adherents to the received (i.e., Athanasian) doctrine of the Trinity, that strife held the attendant exercise of both religious and civil liberties in the balance.

This transatlantic study of Trinitarian debates among British Protestants follows the second period of that strife as it unfolded from 1702 to 1757, from the prosecution of Thomas Emlyn to the last written work of Jonathan Edwards's son-in-law, Aaron Burr, Sr. This period can be divided into three phases: trials and controversies of the first three decades that framed the (Trinitarian) debate and discourse (on authority), trials of the 1730s that applied the resulting Lockean frame of the discourse, and controversies of the 1740s and 1750s that

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<sup>40</sup> This excluded Jews and non-Athanasians (see Brekus, "Dissent in the American Colonies before the First Amendment," 189).

<sup>41</sup> For more information on the relationship between the Westminster Confession and the Cambridge Platform (and the criticisms by Presbyterians and Episcopalians of Congregationalism for doctrinal purity), see Williston Walker, *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* (Philadelphia/Boston: Pilgrim Press, 1969), 180-86; 185.

<sup>42</sup> See "William and Mary, 1688: An Act for Exempting their Majestyes Protestant Subjects dissenting from the Church of England from the Penalties of certaine Lawes. [Chapter XVIII. Rot. Parl. pt. 5. nu. 15.]," in *Statutes of the Realm: Volume 6, 1685-94*, ed. John Raithby (s.l.: Great Britain Record Commission, 1819), 74-76. *British History Online* (hereafter cited as 1689 Act of Toleration). See Article 8 "Of the three Creeds" in Church of England. *Articles, Whereupon it was Agreed by the Archbishops and Bishops of both Prouinces, and the Whole Cleargie, in the Conuocation Holden at London in the Yere of our Lorde God. 1562. According to the Computation of the Churche of Englande for the Auoiding of the Diuersities of Opinions, and for the Stablishyng of Consent Touching True Religion. Put Foorth by the Queenes Auctoritie* (London: Powles Churchyard, by Richarde Iugge and Iohn Cawood, printers to the Queenes Maiestie, 1571), 1, 25 (hereafter cited as Thirty-Nine Articles). See also Pelikan's discussion of "the three so-called ecumenical creeds" in *Christian Tradition, Vol. 5*, 31-32.

brought the course of the debate full circle and the discourse to an opening view of related political difficulties just cresting the horizon. Derya Gurses Tarbuck has also noted “two different Trinitarian controversies. The first Trinitarian controversy in the 1690s arose when Bishop George Bull (1634-1710) became the iconic figure set against the anti-Trinitarianism of the continental Arians.... Later, the second Trinitarian controversy...developed in the second and third decades of the eighteenth century, having been instigated by Samuel Clarke and William Whiston.” My own analysis seeks to segment the second period of controversy according to the crisis of authority in both Church and State in relation to individual conscience, hence my beginning with the trials of the first decade of the eighteenth century.<sup>43</sup>

I attempt to observe a fair and holistic approach to the debates, favoring none while acknowledging the sincerity and merits of each in the discourse. My selection of terms and labels is intended to be descriptive rather than simply allowing the grant of traditional polemic. The dynamic between the Athanasian, Subordinationist, and Deist theological factions are variously represented in the figures of the period whom I have selected to populate this reconstructed conversation. And though the nature of this particular project does not allow for the full treatment or even inclusion of the ample number of subjects involved, the bare scope employed is meant to provide a helpful framing, indeed, a merely informative basis for further endeavors in this area. Similarly, the categories of analysis used to apprehend the debate and discourse are not meant to be exhaustive or exclusive. The categories center on a claim to sovereign (or, divinely mandated) authority made by (or from within) the institutions of Church and State, as well as the same claim made for the sanctity (of a sanctioning) individual Conscience, and the (non-)appeals to Scripture in connection to Tradition and Reason to shore up those claims.

My aim has been to distill insights from the Trinitarian debates and their relation to the discourse on authority for a better understanding of the period, the aims of its various actors, and, more especially, the practical shifts in institutional warrants that stemmed therefrom. For example, the increasing separation of Church and State due to doctrinal controversy, and/or the nascent alliance between the burgeoning State and the rational (i.e., divinely endowed) individual via legal protections for individual Conscience. The thus employed analytical categories are essential to the acknowledged existence of the early-modern crisis of authority, most immediately, because they are thoroughly recognized among

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<sup>43</sup> See Derya Gurses Tarbuck, *Enlightenment Reformation: Hutchinsonianism and Religion in Eighteenth-Century Britain* (London: Routledge, 2017), 29.

the actors in the discourse. However, the resulting immediate necessity of the employed categories does not preclude the possible relevance of others left un- or under-explored in this study, such as those within the so-called “holy trinity” of American Studies.<sup>44</sup>

After providing relevant background to the Trinitarian debates and the discourse on authority, from the Elizabethan settlement to Locke’s *Letter Concerning Toleration*, I follow a successive cast of connected trials and/or controversies that demonstrate the Anglo-American discourse on authority in relation to the Trinitarian debates. I begin primarily within the purview of the episcopal establishment in the first two decades of the century: Thomas Emlyn’s civil trial that sentenced him to a hefty fine and imprisonment, William Whiston and the university consistory that expelled him from his chair, Henry Sacheverell’s parliamentary trial that helped usher in the heyday of High Church power in Convocation, Anthony Collins’ anonymous publication that was tacitly burned *in absentia* of the author, Samuel Clarke’s subsequent run-in with convocation, and Benjamin Hoadly’s wholly related stand in the Bangorian controversy. These were part of the conduit that helped to regularize Lockean categories and terms in the practical discourse on authority and promulgate non-Athanasian theologies in the Trinitarian debate that further catalyzed the discourse.

As the Sacheverell affair made plain, distress over sustained attacks on the Athanasian Trinity was widespread among devout Article VIII (“three Creeds”) Anglicans, even so, such a concern was not exclusive to them. Dissenters in Exeter were alarmed to find the works of Whiston and Clarke not only read but also believed by their ministers. Thus ensued the 1719 Salter’s Hall debate among Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists over subscription and the sufficiency of scripture-terms, a debate that reverberated within a transatlantic correspondence with learned clergy in New England. As such, though he was opposed to High Church ecclesiology and politics, Cotton Mather shared in their concern for maintaining the tri-creedal understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity against the growing influence of the Religious Society of Friends (particularly in America) and of his own “learned friend” Whiston. Tellingly, Mather decided upon a very Lockean solution that, in point of fact, had

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<sup>44</sup> See John Higham, *Hanging Together: Unity and Diversity in American Culture* (Yale University Press, 2001), 227. See also Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds., “Editor’s Introduction: Multiplying Identities” in *Identities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 1.

been in practice among Independent (or Congregational) churches well before Locke wrote his *Letter*.<sup>45</sup>

By the mid-1730s, the necessity and efficacy of subscription, a topic that had been hotly contested and by then either explicitly or implicitly adopted among Presbyterians and Congregationalists, had not altogether put to rest debates over the best methods for conducting doctrinal discipline and ensuring doctrinal purity in the pulpit. Such concerns were manifest across the Atlantic, once again, sparked in part by concern for the doctrine of the Trinity, in the parallel trials of two ministerial candidates: Samuel Hemphill and Robert Breck. The argumentative discourse surrounding these trials concerned heavily the institutional measures of doctrinal discipline, at once drawing on and commenting on Lockean categorical frameworks. Hemphill's ecclesiastical trial occurred in Philadelphia, conducted by representatives of the Presbyterian synod for the Middle Colonies who were enthusiastically opposed by a young 29-year-old Benjamin Franklin, who had as yet retained his affiliation with his denominational upbringing. A celebrated Harvard graduate, Breck's ecclesiastical and civil trials took place in western Massachusetts where the rising tension between not only Congregational and Presbyterian forms of ecclesial discipline, but also shared concerns over doctrinal purity were displayed. The Breck affair ran parallel to the Northampton awakening in 1735, and it exposed growing rifts between clergy and laity alike concerning the roles of ecclesial and civil authorities in the commonwealth.

The pattern of controversy over ministerial candidates continued with Jonathan Mayhew's ordination in Boston during the summer of 1747. His was an ordination that in significant ways mirrored the concerns and manner of Breck's ordination roughly a dozen years earlier. Mayhew's subsequent provocations and challenges to Athanasian orthodoxy, including a 1756 reprint of Emlyn's *Scripture-Account of Jesus Christ* (1702) brought the debate full circle. According to the earnest desires of Jonathan Edwards, Mayhew was (it appears) appropriately answered by the president of the College of New Jersey, Aaron Burr, Sr.—there was no response. And though Samuel Johnson of Connecticut published his educational systems prior to Burr's effective response to Mayhew, this Church of England priest, who had been one of the "Yale apostates" and later became the first president of King's College in New York, rounds out this study of the early-eighteenth century's Trinitarian debates. Johnson impressed a mature (colonial) Franklin with his textbook,

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<sup>45</sup> See Michael R. Watts, *The Dissenters: From the Reformation to the Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Clarendon Press, 1978), 260-61.

*Ethices Elementa* (1746) that enshrined the philosophical as much as behavioral path to morality. And despite the fact that the 1752 version, retitled *Elementa Philosophica* (printed by Franklin), sold poorly, its comparison with the 1746 version provides an impressive key to the vicissitudes of Trinitarian thought among Anglican clergy in the revisions Johnson made. Furthermore, Johnson provides an apt conclusion to this study via his insightful reflections on the increasing discord manifest within the discourse on authority during his life, which, to his mind, warranted a separation of the sacred Church and the corrupting State.

The transatlantic connections are maintained throughout, though for this study I have largely grounded the Trinitarian debate and discourse on authority within the Anglican context or Episcopal disputes and controversies (i.e., among those of the established religion of England (and Ireland)), and then followed the succeeding debate and discourse among the Dissenters (as in Exeter) and colonial establishments (as in Massachusetts and Connecticut) or tolerations (as in Pennsylvania). However, the initial trial of Thomas Emlyn by the Presbyterian synod gives evidence for the presence of the Trinitarian debate outside of established circles; and though a member of the Church of England, the same can be said of Locke's protégé, Anthony Collins. That said, my point is that the practical importance of the debate was most often manifest in its rubs with the state-established orthodoxy. For it was there that the "cause of Conscience" gained the ear of the magistrate and the maintenance of a particular, exclusionary reading was counter-weighted to imperial aims of unity, where the societal cement of doctrinal purity began to erode in the face of popular piety.

My concern has not been to ascertain any exact connection or correlation between theological and political thought. Rather, my aim is to follow a certain role that doctrinal controversy had in the developments of political practice (and structure) regarding the arbitration of competing claims to and exercises of authority. More precisely, I am interested in understanding better the relationship between the Trinitarian debates of the early eighteenth-century and the Anglo-American discourse on authority. In particular, the overall debate's relation to the discourse on the relationship between Church and State, and of both to individual Conscience, as competing sovereign authorities in the continuing crisis of authority stemming from the Reformation. I have an equal interest in ascertaining the role of Scripture in that discourse, as it was held forth and interpreted via the traditional categories of creedal and scholastic exegesis in contention or concord with the enlightenment categories of rational and historicist inquiry that could be (though often was not) independent of Scripture. Accordingly, I do not brand someone as "anti-Trinitarian" when they in fact merely depart

from the Athanasian understanding of the Trinity but not the stated parameters of Nicene orthodoxy, or, for that matter, the extant writings of ante-Nicene Christians concerning “the Trinity” of “God, and His Word, and His wisdom”.<sup>46</sup> I do not, therefore, proscribe or prescribe doctrinal developments or processes of systematic theology, but see the whole as an ongoing discourse. Within that discourse my study concerns only a part and a particular period, that of consequent practical impacts in the early eighteenth century that helped shape Anglo-American societies leaving medieval categories of judgement for those developing within the context of post-renaissance-early-modernity, both theologically and socially.

In summary, within this study is contained a further understanding of the Trinitarian debates and their relation to the Anglo-American discourse on authority. I argue that the debates served to trigger discourse on institutional and individual authority, regarding the proper relations between and sovereign claims made on behalf of Church, State, and Conscience. I further argue, that while the Trinitarian debates did not provide the ideological substance of political reform movements, they did provide a great amount of argumentative material for the related discourse on the authority of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. This included the various interlocutors’ use of Scripture passages from the Old and New Testaments, particularly with regard to their understanding of the nature of sacred texts that exhibited textual corruptions, their reliance on the Church Fathers, on historical and linguistic assessments of the Creeds and primitive Christian texts, and/or their particular assertions regarding the limits of human rationality. Those assertions carried consequent meaning for the Christian life and the pursuit of truth. From this detailed understanding of the arguments, I correct, corroborate, and expand the current scholarship’s purview of the Trinitarian debates and their relation to the Anglo-American discourse on authority. The Trinitarianism of Thomas Emlyn, William Whiston, Samuel Clarke, and Benjamin Hoadly are each assessed, as is their use of Old and New Testament Scripture, the writings of Primitive Christians, the Creeds and Church Fathers, and their application of Reason. The trials and controversies involving these figures, as well as Henry Sacheverell and Anthony Collins, are placed within a continuum of concern over Church-State prosecutions at the time. The English debates are placed parallel to the ecumenical and pietistic concerns of Cotton Mather. The precedents of

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<sup>46</sup> Theophilus, *Theophilus to Autolytus*, Book II, trans. Rev. Marcus Dods, in *Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers Down to A.D. 325*, Volume 2: Fathers of the Second Century: Hermas, Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and Clement of Alexandria (Entire), eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1995), 101. First printing in 1885: “In like manner also the three days which were before the luminaries, are types of the Trinity, of God, and His Word, and His wisdom. And the fourth is the type of man, who needs light, that so there may be God, the Word, wisdom, man.”

Exeter and Salter's Hall for English Dissent, particularly the challenges facing young ministers, are echoed not only in the Presbyterians' Hemphill Affair, but in the Congregationalists' ordination controversies relating to Robert Breck and Jonathan Mayhew, events that have not previously been connected, or at least not at length. Franklin's written contributions to the Hemphill Affair are briefly assessed with new insights on his relation to the ecclesiology of Hoadly. Also, I briefly explore Franklin's theology and posit possible links with the Radical Reformation. Against the latest scholarship, Mayhew's theological position is demonstrated to accord with Emlyn rather than Clarke. Aaron Burr, Sr.'s response to Mayhew is assessed to its greatest extent yet in secondary scholarship. Samuel Johnson, Anglican clergyman in Connecticut and president of King's College, is found to convey in his published curriculums the vicissitudes of Anglican Trinitarianism during the early to mid-eighteenth century. Through all, the Trinitarian debates are seen to consistently activate the discourse on institutional and individual authority and to provide further material and direction for the discourse on the authority of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason.

## Literature Review

In reviewing the relevant literature, I discuss key issues that this study engages, as well as the methodology, lacunae in the existing scholarship, and contributions that my study makes to the scholarly discourse. In the key issues section, I assess the scholarship on the Trinitarian debates in America, and then of the competing schools of Clark and Bradley regarding the significance of the debates in Britain. I then explore the scholarship on the particular categories of sovereign claims to authority by institutions and individuals (Church, State, Conscience) and the argumentative authority of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason, all within the framing of the post-Reformation discourse on authority. The question of Locke's influence, as well as the question of polemical labels and the definition of *Trinitarian* in the scholarly discourse, are subsequently discussed.

### Key Issues

#### *The Trinitarian Debates in America*

There is nothing in Americanist scholarship quite on the scale of either Clark or Bradley as it relates to discussion about the significance of the Trinitarian debates or doctrine of the Trinity in the transformation of society. Brief historical treatments relevant to the Trinitarian debates, often of individuals, have been made, such as those within Richard J. Wilson's *The Benevolent Deity* (1984), John S. Oakes's *Conservative Revolutionaries* (2016), or David Komline's chapter on Cotton Mather "The Controversy of the Present Time" (2010).<sup>1</sup> Wilson's work is particularly commendable.<sup>2</sup> But these do not compare with the deep and broad assessments made of the English and then British contexts. An exception is Clark's *Language of Liberty* (1994) that transposed his paradigm of *English Society* (1985) onto the transatlantic context of Anglo-America, but that largely passes on the episodes that I highlight (discussed in the lacunae section).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> See Robert J. Wilson's *The Benevolent Deity: Ebenezer Gay and the Rise of Rational Religion in New England, 1696-1787* (1984); Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries* (2016); and David Komline, "The Controversy of the Present Time: Arianism, William Whiston, and the Development of Cotton Mather's Late Eschatology" in *Cotton Mather and Biblia Americana, America's First Bible Commentary: Essays in Reappraisal* (2010), edited by Reiner Smolinski and Jan Stievermann (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2010), 439-459.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Wilson, *Benevolent Deity*, 128-29.

<sup>3</sup> See also John Gascoigne, "Latitudinarianism, Rational Dissent and radicalism," 220.

Earlier efforts to trace the significance of the Trinitarian debates in America include Conrad Wright's *The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America* (1955) and Alan Heimert's *Religion and the American Mind* (1966) (both briefly discussed later). Deism, Liberal Congregationalism and/or Arminianism have been widely written about in a manner that incorporates the Trinitarian debates as aspects of larger systems of theology.<sup>4</sup> Therein, the primary doctrinal discourse is often taken to be within the grace and works dichotomy, and the nexus of doctrine and authority to be manifest in revival rather than discipline. This lack of focus on doctrinal discipline is perhaps because such endeavors at ensuring discipline are for the most part believed to have failed, and therefore the focus shifted onto what prevailed in challenging the status quo rather than what preserved it. Moreover, whereas in British historical scholarship the period's Trinitarian debates have loomed large as a subject in itself, within the American context doctrinal debate surrounding the Trinity has been largely subsumed into the wider historical treatment of the theological debate between Calvinism and Arminianism.<sup>5</sup>

*Heresy-Radicalism Thesis (Clark) vs. Alienation-Radicalism Thesis (Bradley)*

Regarding the discourse on authority and the Trinitarian debates, the scholarly works of J.C.D. Clark, James E. Bradley, Brent S. Sirota, Matthew Kadane, and Charles Scott Sealy give an appropriate illustration of the current scholarship on the discourse on authority in relation to the Trinitarian debates, most significantly that of Clark and Bradley. Bradley's scholarship, as conveyed by Robert D. Cornwall and William Gibson in the Introduction to *Religion, Politics, and Dissent, 1660-1832*, challenges Clark's forceful restatement of the "heresy-radicalism" thesis. Cornwall and Gibson put the question as "whether there is a necessary relationship between Trinitarianism and political leanings?"<sup>6</sup> In a straightforward manner, Clark answers in the affirmative, and Bradley in the negative.

Clark's *English Society 1660-1832: Religion, ideology and politics during the ancien regime* (2000, second edition) devotes extensive analysis toward understanding both the

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<sup>4</sup> See Clark, *Language of Liberty*, 355. Relying on Wright's *Beginnings of Unitarianism in America*, Clark states: "'Arminianism' was a term already used by Calvinists as synonymous with anti-Trinitarianism." The same page contains Clark's very brief assessment of the Hemphill Affair.

<sup>5</sup> For example, see Holifield, *Theology in America* (2003). Holifield's emphasis on understanding Calvinism results in his addressing the Trinitarian debates largely insofar as they shaped that theological tradition. This treatment allows certain assumptions to remain and the debate's contextual significance to bear less weight than may have historically been the case, such as his failure to mention Aaron Burr, Sr. (p. 133).

<sup>6</sup> Cornwall and Gibson, Introduction to *Religion, Politics and Dissent* (2010), 5

impact of the Church of England's claim "to embody a specific authorization by Christ" and the connection between the Church's "authoritative hierarchy" and that of society in early-modern England, acknowledging the same for colonial America (directing his readers in a footnote to his *Language of Liberty*). The Trinitarian debates of the 1690s are discussed to a good extent as some basis for his discussion of the continued disaffection toward the existing regime in the following century by the small religious minority identified as Deists, Arians, and Socinians. Clark states of the late seventeenth and entire eighteenth century, that, "The critique of those most disaffected from their society was centrally aimed against what society's hegemonic framework defined as basic to its political ideology: Trinitarian Christianity, as interpreted within the ecclesiology of the Church of England."<sup>7</sup> Trinitarianism as defined by the Church of England is a prominent and significant reference point for Clark in defining the traditional social order in Christian/English history and its dissidents. For example, he identifies the "Trinitarian Filmer and the Socinian Locke" with the former as signaling support for the monarchy/church and the latter seeking "to bring about a fundamental reconstruction of English society on anti-monarchical, anti-ecclesiastical lines."<sup>8</sup> Additionally, and quite consciously, Clark lumps (as he claims the self-perceived orthodox at the time did) all the perceived heterodox into a single "essentially allied" category, albeit a contentious one.<sup>9</sup>

In contrast to Clark, Bradley's alternative reading proposes that Dissenters were predisposed to republican government and social reforms due to their "social alienation and egalitarian religious polity".<sup>10</sup> In the conclusion to "The Religious Origins of Radical Politics," Bradley states that "[t]he ideological origins of radical disaffection cannot be located in a 'low' heterodox Christology that was placed over against the institutional orthodoxy of the Anglican and Presbyterian establishments". In fact, Bradley reverses Clark's equation to instead argue that "high" christological orthodoxy was the basis for reform movements in the eighteenth century.<sup>11</sup> He therein points out that for Dissenters (regardless

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<sup>7</sup> Clark, *English Society*, 321. See also Waterman, "The nexus between theology and political doctrine, 193-218.

<sup>8</sup> Clark, *English Society*, 132-33. See also Clark's discussion in *Language of Liberty*, 37-39. For another example, on page 264 of *English Society*, following a discussion that extensively involved George Horne and the Hutchinsonian's role during the eighteenth century in countering Newton and Clarke, Clark relates: "The Church's doctrine, then, remained predominantly Providential and Trinitarian. This was important, and effective, in the face of reformist or revolutionary ideologies which were to a large degree anti-Trinitarian and offered a millenarian emancipation from man's location in a providentially-guided history. The Church's doctrine could therefore help shape a political theory for a new age."

<sup>9</sup> See Clark, *English Society*, 359.

<sup>10</sup> Cornwall and Gibson, Introduction to *Religion, Politics and Dissent*, 5.

<sup>11</sup> Bradley, "Religious Origins," 235.

of their Trinitarianism) “the separation of civil and spiritual authority” was, in fact, grounded on Christ’s absolute authority in his kingdom and over his subjects, hence the voluntary nature of his church and the right of private judgement.<sup>12</sup> Furthermore, he asserts that the most significant contributor to Dissenters’ non-hierarchical conception of society was their belief in Scripture as the only sure source of religious authority and their idolization of the purity and equality that existed among primitive Christians.<sup>13</sup> He does not fully explore the fact that this was true of many latitudinarians of the established church as well.<sup>14</sup> In any case, Bradley argues that Dissenters’ “commitment to individualism and self-government” were based on theologically “orthodox” principles that “were effectively introduced into the civil realm through a profound experience of social alienation.”<sup>15</sup>

While in agreement with Bradley’s overall point of the theological source of these ideological principles, among Athanasians or otherwise, my study maintains that a primary and practical point of contact that activated these principles (for both Dissent and latitudinarian theories of authority) was the Trinitarian debates, not merely “a religious minority’s separated social identity”. My study does not, therefore, accord with Clark’s “heresy-radicalism” thesis.<sup>16</sup> Instead, I accept Bradley’s framework while yet asserting the relevance of the Trinitarian debates as causal and refractory. Again, I see the Trinitarian debates as significant in activating the discourse on authority and in proffering categorical emphases rather than in providing the precise theological substance of that discourse.

An important question is, therefore, whether Hoadly would have delivered the sermon he did, that sparked the Bangorian controversy over Church authority, without the prior attempts to quell the Trinitarian debates by the Lower House of Convocation. Also, it is difficult to see the Convocation controversy without its attending concerns over doctrinal purity upon fundamentals, including quite emphatically the Athanasian doctrine of the Trinity; the same can be said for the Dissenters’ debate at Salter’s Hall, and the Presbyterian and Congregationalist’s Hemphill and Breck Affairs. The Athanasian doctrine of the Trinity

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<sup>12</sup> Bradley, “Religious Origins,” 195, 198.

<sup>13</sup> Cornwall and Gibson, Introduction to *Religion, Politics and Dissent*, 6.

<sup>14</sup> See Bradley, “Religious Origins,” 199. For such an assessment, see John Gascoigne, “Latitudinarianism, Rational Dissent and radicalism” in *Enlightenment and Religion: Rational Dissent in eighteenth-century Britain*, edited by Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 219-240.

<sup>15</sup> Bradley, “Religious Origins,” 194.

<sup>16</sup> That said, a question can be posed to Bradley regarding the roles of heresy and schism in disaffection: If schism is the fundamental basis for reform, would not a greater degree of alienation in non-tolerated theology produce a desire for more radical reform? Certainly, the former general point is made, but the relevance of the latter is not fully dismissed.

was widely believed to have absolute salvific import and alarms were raised accordingly, with the oft attending processes of institutional discipline and iterative categorical arguments bearing on the discourse. This is not at all to dismiss the steady concern for maintaining ecclesial structures of discipline and of dispensing providence, but to acknowledge that doctrinal debate regarding the Trinity fueled the discourse on authority and refined the Lockean practices of voluntary societies. These (religious) societies thereby modeled what were taken to be more appropriate structures for an increasingly pluralistic age, particularly one that held individual Conscience to be sacrosanct and institutional identity to be self-determining. To be clear, I am not making an argument for the ideological significance<sup>17</sup> of the theological schemes of Subordinationism, Athanasianism, or Deism but, rather, my study helps to highlight the causal significance of the Trinitarian debates in activating the theological principles upon which reformists sought to channel the authority of their churches and the state.<sup>18</sup>

Given the nuance of causal or catalytic significance for the Trinitarian debate (within Bradley's framework) my argument can be helpfully situated in relative continuity with Brent S. Sirota's scholarship. In his article, "The Trinitarian Crisis in Church and State: Religious Controversy and the Making of the Postrevolutionary Church of England, 1687-1702," Sirota asserts the priority of doctrinal discipline with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity as the prime mover in ecclesiastical politics in the direct aftermath of the Glorious Revolution. He forcefully outlines a key principle for understanding the relation between doctrine and authority in this era, namely, that doctrine and discipline go together. The controversy over the doctrine of the Trinity was "a disciplinary crisis: a far-reaching debate over not only the content of orthodoxy but also the constitutional apportionment of responsibilities for its enforcement." Efforts by "Crown, Parliament, university, episcopate, and convocation" in the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution, to ensure doctrinal discipline in this area, all contributed to the "unprecedented" cast of institutional authorities that claimed "preeminent custody of orthodoxy". Sirota goes so far as to suggest that church politics in the period following the revolution was principally defined by the Trinitarian controversy in the final

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<sup>17</sup> Bradley, "Religious Origins," 235.

<sup>18</sup> Bradley, "Religious Origins," 224-25: Christ's authority was "the basis for the liberty of individual conscience, the corresponding right of private judgement, and it ultimately grounded the spiritual nature of Christ's kingdom."

decade of the seventeenth century.<sup>19</sup> My study picks up many of the threads that Sirota leaves off at the turn of the eighteenth century.

Matthew Kadane's article on the correlations between Anti-Trinitarianism and the eighteenth-century Republican tradition in Britain helpfully identifies many non-Trinitarian actors and some of their interlocutors. He more particularly focuses on "midcentury Presbyterian ministers",<sup>20</sup> correctly situating them in the aftermath of the 1689 Act of Toleration and the ensuing "Lockean tradition" which held that "religious conscience should not and could not, salvifically, be regulated by the state".<sup>21</sup> Kadane proffers occasional references to the Reformation era's continued relevance as a discursive reference, such as, the burning of Michael Servetus in Geneva.<sup>22</sup> He focuses on the Presbyterian and later Unitarian efforts to provide stability for like-minded clergy, often drawing on the theologically-motivated economic activity and success of their congregations "filled with prosperous merchants, proto-industrialists, and an emerging middle class".<sup>23</sup> Kadane's is an insightful article that highlights "the political and economic links to heterodoxy".<sup>24</sup>

Regarding the role of doctrine in the discourse on authority, I disagree with the otherwise significant contribution of Charles Scott Sealy's study on Presbyterianism's transatlantic non-subscription controversies in the early-eighteenth century. Sealy identifies "the doctrine of the Church rather than the nature of Christ, the Trinity or salvation [as] the core point of dispute", subsequently explaining that, for the participants in these controversies, "their focus was Church authority and the implications on Presbyterian polity."<sup>25</sup> From my perspective, theological concerns for purity do not diminish in the face of ecclesial concerns for unity. The Trinitarian debates spurred much of the debate concerning institutional authority in Church and State precisely because of the doctrine's widely held soteriological significance. A particular reading of the doctrine, to be sure, was perceived as

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<sup>19</sup> Brent S. Sirota, "The Trinitarian Crisis in Church and State: Religious Controversy and the Making of the Postrevolutionary Church of England, 1687-1702," *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 52 (January 2013), 26.

<sup>20</sup> Matthew Kadane, "Anti-Trinitarianism and the Republican Tradition in Enlightenment Britain." *Republics of Letters: A Journal for the Study of Knowledge, Politics, and the Arts* 2, no. 1 (December 15, 2010), 44.

<sup>21</sup> Kadane, "Anti-Trinitarianism and the Republican Tradition," 49.

<sup>22</sup> Kadane, "Anti-Trinitarianism and the Republican Tradition," 45. On the same page Kadane neglects to mention that George Benson wrote for the *Old Whig* in 1738 *A Brief Account of Calvin's Burning of Servetus for an Heretic*, which he later revised and published as a separate pamphlet under the same title in 1743 (see R. K. Webb, "George Benson (1699-1762)," *Oxford DNB*).

<sup>23</sup> Kadane, "Anti-Trinitarianism and the Republican Tradition," 43.

<sup>24</sup> Kadane, "Anti-Trinitarianism and the Republican Tradition," 45.

<sup>25</sup> Charles Scott Sealy, "Church Authority and Non-Subscription Controversies in Early 18<sup>th</sup> Century Presbyterianism," (PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2010), 229.

crucially supporting the authoritative implications for political/ecclesial order—but salvation was the bottom-line issue. I overlap with Sealy in a few areas of summary and analysis, particularly regarding Bishop Hoadly and the Bangorian Controversy, Exeter and Salter’s Hall, Thomas Emlyn, and the Hemphill Case. Our overlap is explained in that his “primary goal...to examine the subscription debates in relation to one another” and their influence on “the application of theories of ecclesiology, polity and Church authority” inevitably draws on the trials and controversies surrounding key episodes of the Trinitarian debates and their relation to the same.<sup>26</sup> My study, that is not confined to arguments ultimately concerned with Presbyterian controversy or exclusively with Church authority, should instead be read in a parallel position with his, especially as mine presents a further examination of some of these events alongside others, and includes questions of Church authority along with other categories in the discourse on authority. Furthermore, the tenor of analysis changes by placing the primacy of any subscription controversy within soteriological concerns propounded by the creedal doctrine of the Trinity. Such concerns were indelibly connected in a *primary* way with the life (and therein doctrine) of the salvific economy of the Godhead, rather than the merely claimed and derivative exercise of ecclesial authority. Comparative to Sealy, I proceed with an understanding of the wholly soteriological doctrine of the Trinity as playing the primary role in activating fault-lines in the discourse on authority during the early eighteenth century, which, therein, the subscription controversies were a ministerial response.

### *Church, State, and Conscience*

Andrew C. Thompson has written that, “Many governments in the early modern period were keen to enhance their power and diminish the position of rival centres of authority, such as churches.” He agrees with other scholars that a significant impetus for the widespread European adoption of the “confessional-state model” was the basic belief that it was Erastian in nature. In a state’s capacity to rival or reduce the power of their own corporate religious establishments and channel further claims to religious rights, Britain had a ready reliance on “well-established” coercive structures. In contrast, colonial governments lacked “deeply embedded state structures” to counteract the increasing demands by dissenters from their establishments.<sup>27</sup> Therefore, the situation in Britain, where the state “could

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<sup>26</sup> Sealy, “Church Authority and Non-Subscription Controversies,” 9.

<sup>27</sup> Andrew C. Thompson, “Toleration, Dissent, and the State in Britain,” in *The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, Volume II: The Long Eighteenth Century c. 1689-c. 1828*, edited by Andrew C. Thompson (Oxford University Press, 2018), 266-67.

prudentially promote the atomization and privatization of religion in the interest of their own autonomy”, was in America simply a matter of pragmatism rather than (apparently) any exact prudence.<sup>28</sup>

Catherine Breckus summed up the situation in early-America to be one where religious pluralism was undesired even if viewed by some as necessary. Accordingly, there was a medley of attempts to avoid or navigate the situation by the varying Protestant denominations: state coercion by Congregationalists and Anglicans, toleration by Presbyterians, and freedom of religion and conscience (in the pursuit of Christian unity) by Quakers and Baptists.<sup>29</sup> A. Thompson also conveys that an important transformation during the period included “the belief that forcing conscience was a greater sin than false belief itself” as asserted by Locke in his anonymous *Letter Concerning Toleration*. Furthermore, it appeared that “wisdom and wealth” were to be found in practicing toleration.<sup>30</sup> Conscience, or private judgement, “was sovereign” in matters that concerned religion, a position its proponents claimed was supported by both the evidence of God’s revealed word and his perceived hand in world events.<sup>31</sup> Therefore, while the assertors of Church authority were seemingly bogged down in questions regarding the extent of State authority (“its senior partner”)<sup>32</sup> over an established Church, the claims for individual liberty of Conscience were becoming more entrenched in the discourse on authority.

Breckus’s observation above seems to be supported by Andrew Murphy. Murphy has written that we should remember “that antitolerationists often had good reasons for being concerned about the social and political consequences of toleration.” For example, those advocating for toleration were also responsible for “rebellion and regicide” and seemed to forget toleration when in power, such as “the lack of reciprocal toleration for Anglicans, Quakers, or Presbyterians in New England or Pennsylvania”. Also, the historical specter of Münster or the Interregnum could loom large. “Proponents of religious liberty sought to dissociate two phenomena (civil and ecclesiastical power) that had been closely affiliated for centuries.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> As quoted in A. Thompson, “Toleration, Dissent, and the State in Britain,” 267. See also Brekus, “Dissent in the American Colonies,” 183-84.

<sup>29</sup> Breckus, “Dissent in the American Colonies,” 192.

<sup>30</sup> A. Thompson, “Toleration, Dissent, and the State in Britain,” 269.

<sup>31</sup> A. Thompson, “Toleration, Dissent, and the State in Britain,” 276-77.

<sup>32</sup> See Ingram, *Reformation Without End*, 4.

<sup>33</sup> Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, 213. Mark Noll has explained Christendom’s traditional and indelible linking of Church and State as institutions of divine authority and how they had been disrupted by individual

The overarching narrative that I write more or less subscribes to this general account of the related claims to authority by advocates of Church, State, and/or Conscience during the period and the fears of civil/ecclesiastical leaders striving to maintain unitary structures of temporal and spiritual governance. My contribution here is mainly in the bundling of events that have hitherto been less connected, particularly in the transatlantic scope of the discourse on authority, and drawing out the doctrinal aspect of controversies as they regard the Trinity.

### *Scripture, Tradition, and Reason*

The Trinitarian debates were conducted in the post-Reformation categories of authority, namely: Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. David Thompson has written that, “The underlying issue for all Protestant Dissenters was the principle of *sola scriptura*, coupled with the right of private judgement.” Furthermore, *sola scriptura* “put biblical interpretation, especially of the New Testament, at the centre of doctrinal controversy.”<sup>34</sup> Robert Ingram discusses the priority of truth in eighteenth century discourse and places its “origins...in the Reformation, a religious movement meant to ground truth on something solid, irrefutable and irrefragable: *sola scriptura*.”<sup>35</sup> To this he adds the observation that bears on the context of my own study as it seeks to navigate the historical aftermath of this assertion: “the Reformation unexpectedly and wholly unintentionally generated competing truth-claims.” And when this problem stemming from the Reformation became the cause for bloodshed rather than the dispenser of the gospel’s peace, “eighteenth-century English polemical divines tried to use Renaissance tools to solve Reformation problems”.<sup>36</sup>

These tools Ingram identifies as “rationalistic metaphysics” and history, or “the actual, documented historical record.” The first of these only spawned “more truth-claims”, the second sought to “recover or recreate a golden past, a state of primitive purity before things had gone badly wrong.” The second tool was wielded widely, while the first by only a few. As such, the eighteenth-century “was a chapter in the Reformation that had not ended” because the debates over the arbitration of truth had not ended. Like the Reformation, the

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assertions and reliance on authoritatively susceptible Scripture (see Mark A. Noll, *America’s God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 33-37).

<sup>34</sup> David M. Thompson, “Theology and the Bible,” in *The Oxford History of Protestant Dissenting Traditions, Volume II: The Long Eighteenth Century c. 1689-c. 1828*, edited by Andrew C. Thompson (Oxford University Press, 2018), 310-11.

<sup>35</sup> Ingram, *Reformation Without End*, 9. For more on the (English) Protestant Dissenter’s reliance on *Sola Scriptura*, see D. Thompson, “Theology and the Bible,” 307.

<sup>36</sup> Ingram, *Reformation Without End*, 1.

creativity engendered by this “restorative project...threatened to destabilize civil society” that is, “unless it could be channelled, controlled or squelched.”<sup>37</sup>

Ingram’s assessment of the historical situation inhabited by the interlocutors within the Trinitarian debates of the early-eighteenth century is that in which my study is best placed. However, Tradition in my study is meant somewhat differently than how Ingram has categorically placed it, as foremost among “the apologetical triumvirate of *faith, reason* and *tradition*”. Wiles’s “Scripture, tradition, and reason” is instead the three categories that I follow. And where Ingram states that the truths of tradition “were discerned by the application of reason to the historical record” I agree, but I do not see the application of reason and the resulting discernment as part of the category of Tradition. Instead, I see this as the assertion of the separate and competitive category of Reason during the period.

In my own assessment, I observe that those championing the authoritative claims of Church, State, and/or individual Conscience appealed to the Reformation’s arbiters of truth: Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. And while Scripture retained much of its recognized status as the chief source and guide in questions of truth and salvation, Tradition (Church Fathers, Councils, Creeds) and Reason (historical and philological scholarship, *a priori* principles) were increasingly contending to be the interpretive paradigm whereby the truths of Scripture were vitalized.<sup>38</sup> Accordingly, where for Ingram it is not clear whether “rationalized metaphysics” is part of categorical Reason and history is viewed as part of categorical *tradition*, I see both metaphysics and history as part of Reason, categorically speaking, since they applied the Renaissance tools of textual/historical analysis to understand both the verity and the interpretive understanding of Tradition.

Accordingly, I follow the authoritative categories of the Trinitarian debate as they have existed since their inception in the fourth century rather than the Church of England’s apologetic categories of *faith, reason, and tradition*.<sup>39</sup> In his *Archetypal Heresy*, Maurice Wiles hones in on this quotation from Athanasius rejecting his opponents’ appeals to the authoritative categories of “reason, tradition, and Scripture”: “Their heresy has no ground in reason and no clear proof in Holy Scripture, so they are always resorting to shameless subterfuges and plausible fallacies. And now they have ventured to slander the Fathers.” Wiles notes that the longevity of the success of Athanasius’s denial to his adversaries any

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<sup>37</sup> Ingram, *Reformation Without End*, 10.

<sup>38</sup> See Ingram, *Reformation Without End*, 14.

<sup>39</sup> See Ingram, *Reformation Without End*, 14.

ground in these three categories was demonstrated by the reoccurrence in the late-nineteenth century of the same tone and denial by “one of the foremost British scholars” on that doctrinal controversy.<sup>40</sup> Throughout his reconstruction and analysis of the history he presents, Wiles follows the categories of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. To give just one example, when discussing the aftermath of Whiston’s initial publications, Wiles notes that, “In the long-running debate that ensued, the primacy of Scripture is universally acknowledged by both sides, with reason and tradition as subsidiary norms given varying degrees of secondary authority.”<sup>41</sup> My study has continued to follow those same categories of “Scripture, tradition, and reason” utilized by Wiles.

Regarding approaches to Scripture in the early eighteenth-century, David Thompson’s statement (based in part on Whiston’s literalism) that at the time, “[t]here was no sense that the translation of the Christian message is not just a word-by-word exercise, but entails understanding the conceptual world of both past and present”, is not compatible with the scholarship of Stephen D. Snobelen.<sup>42</sup> Snobelen focuses on the legacy of Erasmus to “Antitrinitarian textual criticism of the seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century” and specifically the debt owed by English antitrinitarian writers to the continental Socinians. He offers substantive but brief assessments of Samuel Clarke and William Whiston, and, of course, Newton, as well as those who preceded him, such as Paul Best, John Biddle, and Stephen Nye. Snobelen succinctly summarizes the situation as one where their intent was to emphasize “the Bible or biblical faith” while undermining the interpretive hegemony of “the dominant church”. Integral to this was the antitrinitarian method of “explor[ing] the historical and controversial backdrops to [textual] corruptions” which in turn convinced them that such altered texts “were often deliberate and driven by theological rivalries and apologetics. In sum,” he concluded, “[these writers] tell a Machiavellian story in which it is not only history, but also in part the Bible that is written by the victors.”<sup>43</sup>

For my part, I observe that the textual criticism of suspected texts was indeed considered in a historical manner, but that attempts were made to confine these criticisms, particularly of the Johannine Comma, to corruptions as such. Scriptural verity was upheld by

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<sup>40</sup> Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 8-9.

<sup>41</sup> Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 96.

<sup>42</sup> D. Thompson, “Theology and the Bible,” 320.

<sup>43</sup> Stephen D. Snobelen, “‘To us there is but one God, the Father’: Antitrinitarian Textual Criticism in Seventeenth- and Early Eighteenth-Century England,” in *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England*, eds., Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene (Aldershot, HR: Ashgate, 2006), 136.

its advocates more strongly than perhaps their crusade to rid the sacred text of the marginal accretions that had crept into the text proper. Furthermore, the authority of Church Fathers had increased with the Reformation, and the historicist turn in exegesis caused the ante-Nicene Fathers to increase in their particular importance for a time before the double-edged sword was recognized.<sup>44</sup> As Jean-Louis Quantan has pointed out, “Concentration on the ante-Nicene Fathers made historical enquiry especially dangerous for received Christianity, many fundamental doctrines of which had been historically defined by the great doctors and councils of the fourth and fifth centuries”.<sup>45</sup> Quantan also notes that the Trinitarian controversy of the 1690s along with the Nonjuring crisis “opened a long series of intestine quarrels, which were largely conducted in the shared language of antiquity, but which resulted in making the Restoration style of patristic theology the preserve of what was now called the High Church...party within the Church of England.”<sup>46</sup> Moreover, “the exploration of the Christian past became a major source of doctrinal innovation”,<sup>47</sup> or depending on one’s perspective, recovery.

In a limited fashion, my study explores this period when the Church Fathers were still seen as valid (though increasingly contested) sources of authority. This was particularly the case for the ante-Nicene Fathers but also those who had attended the Council of Nicaea and contributed to the determinations therein. These Fathers and their theological moment, their politics, their learning, were significant to the historical and philological arguments and claims made by competing interlocutors within the Trinitarian debates of the early eighteenth century.

### *Locke’s Influence*

My assessment of Locke’s *Letter Concerning Toleration* appears in the background chapter and his framing remains relevant throughout my study of the period’s debates. Similar to Locke’s self-defense that his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* had been co-opted,<sup>48</sup> Andrew Murphy points out that Locke’s arguments on toleration have “become popular among those with broader ideas about expression and social tolerance” who, he

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<sup>44</sup> See Quantan, *Church of England and Christian Antiquity*, 406-11.

<sup>45</sup> Quantan, *Church of England and Christian Antiquity*, 410.

<sup>46</sup> Quantan, *Church of England and Christian Antiquity*, 407.

<sup>47</sup> Quantan, *Church of England and Christian Antiquity*, 410.

<sup>48</sup> Used to serve the purposes of theological dispute bearing on the Trinity (see Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 154-55).

suspects would, at the same time, likely find Locke “excessively Protestant”.<sup>49</sup> The fact that it is Locke’s thought, nonetheless, that receives criticism for *their* readings of him<sup>50</sup> points to an opposite outcome with regard to the religious principles on which he grounded his argument for toleration. As some scholars have argued, by and large “the establishment of toleration was a function of *raison d’etat* [i.e., purely political reasons] rather than a matter of principle.”<sup>51</sup>

This study attempts to modify such claims regarding the origin of “establishment toleration” as it helps to demonstrate the utilized salience of Locke’s categories in the discourse on authority as individuals and societies sought to pursue consistent, religiously principled approaches to doctrinal discipline amidst increasing pluralism. On a different aspect of Locke’s relevance, others have claimed that “it is becoming clear that the most intellectually influential ideas on the relationship between Church and State [in the British Isles] were not so much based on Locke and Warburton as on Hooker and Filmer.”<sup>52</sup> Contrary to this sidelining of Locke’s influence, my own study found not only the categories but also the solutions outlined in Locke’s *Letter* to be ubiquitous in the practical discourse of institutional endeavors to effect doctrinal discipline. Andrew Murphy has stated, “Paying careful attention to Locke’s reasons for writing the *Letter* is not... ‘mere pedantry’: it is an issue of fundamental interpretive importance.”<sup>53</sup> Locke’s formulations, written in response to the revocation of the Edict of Nantes and published in English only after the Act of Toleration, had a long-lasting salience within the discourse of doctrinal discipline and Church-State authority. Accordingly, Locke’s *Letter* is often referred to throughout my assessments of the arguments and practices pursued by the representative figures.

### *Polemical Labels and the Definition of Trinitarian*

Robert Ingram has asserted that “Eighteenth-century English polemical divines were either orthodox or not” and that “[a]ffixing labels to the participants in eighteenth-century polemical divinity or to the positions they held is a fraught matter”. He makes an exception,

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<sup>49</sup> Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, xiv-xv.

<sup>50</sup> Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, xv.

<sup>51</sup> Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel, and Nicholas Tyacke, eds., Introduction to *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England* (New York: Oxford University Clarendon Press, 1991), 1.

<sup>52</sup> David Hempton, *Religion and Political Culture in Britain and Ireland: From the Glorious Revolution to the Decline of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 3.

<sup>53</sup> Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, xv; see also pages 216-26.

however, for the label of *orthodoxy*, which was “the most substantive and least contested of contemporary categories during the early and mid-eighteenth century.” He explains that for the most part, “contemporaries reckoned that orthodoxy entailed belief in the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds”, as well as episcopal government and the necessary legal establishment of the Church of England.<sup>54</sup> In other words, *orthodoxy* simply meant what had been traditionally (and legally) received, and therefore did not concern the question of right or wrong belief. However, as Locke’s *Letter Concerning Toleration* demonstrated, the term was not universally agreed to be settled.

Ingram’s use of *orthodoxy* (i.e., as tradition) bears some relation to the widespread use of the term “Arian” among scholars. Wiles notes the “inaccuracy” of the latter term (in the words of Rowan Williams) and he seems to use “Arian” only because as a category it “has certainly existed as a powerful concept throughout Christian history.” Still, Wiles states that for Newton, Whiston, and Clarke, “the archetypal heresy was Athanasian orthodoxy, and what the fourth-century Fathers called ‘Arianism’ was the true embodiment of ‘primitive Christianity’.”<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, David Thompson argues that “the widespread use of the term ‘Arian’ or even ‘Socinian’ [are not] particularly helpful in clarifying what various writers meant theologically, despite being used at the time.”<sup>56</sup>

Other scholars embrace these labels. For example, J.C.D. Clark’s definition of Arianism is “that the Son, though divine, was not a co-equal person of the Deity but was created by the Father, and thus a subordinate, not an eternal, being.”<sup>57</sup> Clark, therefore, equates *subordination* to *non-eternal*, which seems to be in keeping with the patristic anathema of those who say there was a time when the Son was not. What Clark does not explain is the role of aseity, or self-existence, to this controversy over subordination and the complex historical (he does mention scriptural) context for determining precisely what was decided at Nicaea and the received status of the Athanasian Creed.<sup>58</sup> In this study, *orthodoxy* is always qualified and “Arianism” (in quotes) is avoided in order to preserve the technical rather than polemical label. I hope that greater theological nuance will assist in navigating the

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<sup>54</sup> Ingram, *Reformation Without End*, 13-14.

<sup>55</sup> Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 4-5; see also, pages 116-17 and 142. This question of definitions and labels within the secondary scholarship has been noted for quite some time, for an example see J. Hay Colligan, *The Arian movement in England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1913), 2-4.

<sup>56</sup> D. Thompson, “Theology and the Bible,” 317. The footnote to this quote demonstrates that Thompson’s understanding of the theological position of Arius is suspect: “a denial of Christ’s pre-existence”.

<sup>57</sup> Clark, *English Society*, 326. See also Clark, *Language of Liberty*, 37.

<sup>58</sup> See also Waterman, “The nexus between theology and political doctrine,” 195.

thick fog of polemical fears and hyperbolic tactics that do little to help scholars today understand the equal devotions of the “other side”.

With further regard to labels and definitions, I will note that Stephen Hampton’s chapter on “The Slide into Subordinationism” in his *Anti-Arminians* begins to address the wide variety of applications that can be observed for terms and labels involved in the Trinitarian debates. Hampton is able to demonstrate that the term *Socinian* has been incorrectly applied to Samuel Clarke’s *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*, which he says was thoroughly informed by the theology of the Dutch Remonstrant tradition within the Church of England.<sup>59</sup> And while Hampton acknowledges the asserted claims to use of the term “Trinitarian” by others during the period, it is clear that he does not accept attempts to enlarge the *proper* appellation beyond medieval categories that prescribe the Athanasian Creed and Fourth Lateran understanding of the Trinity.<sup>60</sup> In contrast, my study departs from Hampton’s more recent precedent by allowing rival claims to *possible* rather than *accepted* Trinitarian theology to co-exist. Here, I am inclined to allow the interlocutors a wide berth for self-definition and to abstain from the (again) polemical assignment of “anti-Trinitarian” to others whose views are within the bounds of Trinitarian theology, even if not accepted by medieval frameworks of the doctrine.<sup>61</sup>

Such latitude is primarily guided by the Nicene Creed of 325, and therefore does not include specifically (or technically) Arian formulations of the Godhead. Rather, Trinitarian formulations ascribe divinity to the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, though they may order that divinity and subordinate the persons in their relational rather than essential unity. Indeed, one of the sticking points in the debates was the nature (let alone the possibility) of subordination within a perfect *unity* of three persons.

Hampton asserts the medieval warrants to categorize Clarke as patently Arian (however highly subordinationist he may be) due to Clarke’s ascription of the attribute of aseity solely to the Father. To do this, he seems to rely heavily on John Edwards’ rationale

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<sup>59</sup> Stephen Hampton, *Anti-Arminians: The Anglican Reformed Tradition from Charles II to George I* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 164-66.

<sup>60</sup> For one example in his chapter, see Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, 168-69. For further understanding on the Fourth Lateran Council with regard to the Trinity, see Fiona Robb, “The Fourth Lateran Council’s Definition of Trinitarian Orthodoxy,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (January 1997), 22-43.

<sup>61</sup> See, for example, Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 125-26. Wiles admits that Clarke did not view himself as an Arian, yet ascribes to Clarke a “moderate Arian” position and continues to refer to him as an Arian and his doctrine as Arianism. Based on Clarke’s historical and theological understanding of the Nicene Creed and of the term *homoousios*, I cannot (along with others, who for similar or other reasons) place him among the Arians if the actual Arian prescription is to be observed. See chapter 2, section 2.4.

that since the Nicene Council determined that Christ was “God of God” all and every essential attribute, including *autotheos*, was communicated to the Son in his generation.<sup>62</sup> Whereas other scholars, such as Thomas C. Pfizenmaier, have argued the alignment of Clarke within the Eusebian branch of Nicene orthodoxy (later proscribed by the Athanasian branch), which held the substance to be similar but not the same.<sup>63</sup> This long debate by these theological branches over what constituted Nicene orthodoxy is present in my study. Each side chose their preferred mysteries, which, during the period covered in my study, allowed either the distinction between divine person and divine essence on one hand; or, on the other, for the capacity of the Son to share all the attributes of the Father except aseity, and therefore to ascribe priority to the Father as Supreme God (“your God and my God”) or at least to be the principle of the Godhead.

The question of ante-Nicene Trinitarianism is also in play when the aim of the Reformation (for some) was to peel back all the layers of papal corruptions to enjoy the primitive Christian traditions of worship and apostolical understanding in the first through third centuries after Christ. Again, my focus is not to draw crisp distinctions between the theological factions, but rather to observe the way that their dynamic debate interacted within the discourse on institutional and individual authority. I am not beyond hoping that, in the process of pursuing the latter, I may contribute on behalf of interested scholars to a more nuanced understanding of the former, at least for the period and persons studied herein.

## Methodology

The secondary scholarship from which I have methodologically and conceptually approached the subject matter in its diverse factional and categorical discourses include primarily Maurice Wiles’s *Archetypal Heresy* (1996), Philip Dixon’s *Nice and Hot Disputes* (2003), and Justin Champion’s *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken* (1992).<sup>64</sup> I selected these due to their

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<sup>62</sup> Hampton, *Anti-Arminians*, 189: “...since he is God, the Son must have this attribute [of self-existence] as well.”

<sup>63</sup> Pfizenmaier, *Trinitarian Theology of Dr. Samuel Clark*, 138-41.

<sup>64</sup> Other secondary texts that helped guide my thinking on authority in relation to the Trinitarian debates and their context include Gordon Rupp, *Religion in England, 1688-1791* (New York: Oxford University Clarendon Press, 1986); Holifield, *Theology in America* (2003); Noll, *America’s God* (2002); Carl Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre: Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities, and Politics 1689-1775* (1962); Clark, *Language of Liberty* (1994); Watts, *Dissenters* (1978); Francis J. Bremer, *The Puritan Experiment: New England Society from Bradford to Edwards*, revised edition (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 1995); Thomas, “The Non-Subscription Controversy” (1953); Nicholls, *God and Government* (1995); and Hampton, *Anti-Arminians* (2008), particularly his chapter “The Slide into Subordinationism” (p. 162-191). The source, Henning Graf Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible and the Rise of the Modern World*, trans., John Bowden (London: SCM

respective particular merits relative to the Trinitarian debates and the discourse on authority. Wiles's categorical framing, Dixon's chronological and conceptual bridging, and Champion's religious scope. Wiles particularly highlights the authoritative discourse of "Scripture, tradition, and reason" within the Trinitarian debates. Dixon's later chapters provide an example of the continuity between Locke and Clarke from the debates of the 1690s to that of the early decades of the next century, focusing on the univocal use of *person*. Champion expands the purview of religion to include Freethinkers and Deists. The categories, continuity, and scope of the debate and the discourse I cover are therefore largely the result of these works of scholarship and their impact on how these issues are historically approached and framed. As already stated, I have not followed the basic "heresy-radicalism" thesis restated by Clark in his *English Society* (1985, first edition; 2000, second edition) and offer instead a nuanced support for James E. Bradley's critique of that thesis made in his article "The Religious Origins of Radical Politics" (2001).

Maurice Wiles's *Archetypal Heresy* provided much of my initial framework for thinking about the debates, particularly with regard to assessing the impact of Newton on Whiston and Clarke and, subsequently, their relation to the British contribution to the overall debate regarding the Godhead in Christian history. His ascription to Newton as bearing the status of "Secret Arianism" contributed to Newton's backseat in my study of the Trinitarian debates that focuses on the discourse on authority. I therefore highlight the trials and troubles of Whiston and Clarke, since they actually bore the burden of that inherently public discourse.<sup>65</sup> But beyond his articulate assessments of the eighteenth century and of Newton, Clarke, and Whiston, Wiles clearly works within the framework of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason (discussed previously) as the arbiters to theological and authoritative claims made throughout the Trinitarian debates of both antiquity and early modernity.<sup>66</sup> Wiles recognizes the early eighteenth-century as the highwater mark for non- or anti-Athanasian views in Britain and provides insightful commentary on why that period and many of its notable intelligentsia demanded and promulgated a more prosaic understanding of God.

Dixon's *Nice and Hot Disputes* provides much of the context of the seventeenth and early-eighteenth century discourse on the Trinity, specific to my study are his related

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Press, 1984) focuses a good deal on Deism and very little on the nuance of the Trinitarian debates in relation to the authority of Scripture. For example, he does not discuss Samuel Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine* but rather his Boyle Lectures. That said, his study is helpful for understanding someone like Anthony Collins.

<sup>65</sup> Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 77.

<sup>66</sup> For examples, see Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 8-9, 96.

assessments of Locke and Clarke. He primarily follows the shifting meanings attached to the term *person*, but provides helpful commentary and analysis on the doctrinal debate throughout. The end of his study, as indicated, bridges the Trinitarian controversy of the 1690s and its continuity, or the “fallout from the explosion” in the debates that took place in the early decades of the eighteenth century. Dixon presents a lucid and well-researched account that not only details the debates, but one that is cognizant that the same concerns driving the debate over the doctrine of the Trinity “are also clearly manifest about the true nature of Protestantism and the extent of the Reformation, the acceptability of non-scriptural language in a Reformed Church, and above all the meaning and proper application of the word ‘person’.” Additionally, he holds that “[t]here is also a marked shift from the classical Anglican position, which had given a reverential weight to the Fathers and early tradition as an interpretive matrix, to one that stressed the individual as the final arbiter or scriptural meaning.”<sup>67</sup> Dixon’s focus is on the discourse surrounding theological concepts rather than the practical consequences and the specific discourse of applied authority that is in interplay with conceptual shifts. As such, in analyzing the early eighteenth century he focuses on authors and (more precisely) their written words that engage in the discourse on the doctrine of the Trinity, particularly as it relates to the use of the term *person*.<sup>68</sup> By contrast, I focus on prosecutorial trials (often associated with publications) connected to the discourse on the doctrine of the Trinity, as they (the trials) relate to the discourse on authority.

Regarding the discursive theological factions, Champion’s widely acknowledged critique of J.C.D. Clark opens the distinct necessity to account or at least include in any discussion of doctrinal controversy those who were polemically labeled irreligious, antireligious, or heretical.<sup>69</sup> Champion’s *Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken* fills a large lacuna in the scholarship on religion in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century by simply correcting by expansion its religious scope. Furthermore, he provides a comparative to my own study of the Trinitarian debates, where he almost exclusively focuses on what he perceives to be Socinianism. In contrast, I accept his invitation to not see “anti-

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<sup>67</sup> Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 171.

<sup>68</sup> Similar to Dixon, Gregory singles out the “widespread metaphysical univocity” of the seventeenth century and its “default influence of ordinary linguistic grammar on discourse about God”. Unlike Dixon, he repeatedly insists that such conceptual language was “inherited from the late Middle Ages”. See Gregory, *Unintended Reformation*, 384.

<sup>69</sup> See Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*, 18-20. On page 20, Champion states: “While sensibly deconstructing the commonplace assumption that anticlericalism implies secularism, Clark seems blind to the premise of his own work that religion implies Anglicanism.” Clark has specifically, though in a qualified manner, acknowledged Champion’s point in the second edition of his *English Society* on page 339.

Trinitarianism...as a significant but ultimately unimportant event in the history of the period” and to instead situate the doctrinal debates within the wider post-Reformation crisis of authority. That crisis bore weight in not only the Church but also the State and in their respective relations to individuals who were increasingly assertive of the rights of Conscience.<sup>70</sup>

Regarding the influence of other secondary works of scholarship on my methodology, their relative utility and correspondence to my own study varied. Without engaging the full breadth of Brad S. Gregory’s Catholic apologetic thesis in *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (2012), I have observed that our respective studies share a basic observational paradigm: that doctrinal controversy is a key to understanding the discourse of a period.<sup>71</sup> John Gascoigne’s work on the links between “Latitudinarianism, Rational Dissent and radicalism” (1996) points to the necessity of nuance in finding connection and continuity, as well as contrast, among theological kin separated by institutional labels and vice versa. David Nicholls’s *God and Government in an “Age of Reason”* (1995) offers keen insights into the discourse of divine imagery and analogy in relation to social and political developments. However, his method of “working ‘backwards’” is potentially disorienting for the reader, and his basic assertion of a mechanistic divinity does not accord with the Newtonian theology of a God who is actively *doing* rather than who is placidly *done*.<sup>72</sup> Additionally, Pelikan’s five volume *The Christian Tradition* (1971-1989) largely limits his assessment of the doctrine of the Trinity to doctrinal developments.<sup>73</sup> However, included in his assessment is the increasingly atrophied authority of traditional creeds due to the principle of *sola Scriptura*<sup>74</sup> and an acknowledgement of the prominent role that Anglicanism “and its offshoots” played in the more general “crisis of orthodoxy” that preceded that of authority.<sup>75</sup> While I appreciate the context Pelikan provides, I do not adopt his frame of that wider crisis except to acknowledge the contested nature of related labels.

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<sup>70</sup> Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft*, 100-101. In a generalized criticism, Champion fails to provide satisfactory attention to some of the most significant and influential voices in the Trinitarian debates “between priest and deist” (page 20) at the time, namely Samuel Clarke, William Whiston, and (most surprisingly) Anthony Collins.

<sup>71</sup> Brad S. Gregory, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Belknap Press, 2012).

<sup>72</sup> Nicholls, *God and Government*, 1-2, 11.

<sup>73</sup> See Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, Vol. 1, 173.

<sup>74</sup> See Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, Vol. 4, 323.

<sup>75</sup> Pelikan, *Christian Doctrine*, Vol. 5, 12, 24, 58.

Somewhat dated but insightful summaries and assessments that view the period's history and discourse on authority in relation to the American Revolution include Carl Bridenbaugh's *Mitre and Sceptre: Transatlantic Faiths, Ideas, Personalities, and Politics 1689-1775* (1962) and Alan Heimert's *Religion and the American Mind: From the Great Awakening to the Revolution* (1966). Bridenbaugh's study helpfully demonstrates the transatlantic priority of the Church-State discourse during the period. Heimert asserts the basic social conservatism of theologically liberal clergymen in the decades prior to the American Revolution. For the discourse on authority generally, Gerald R. Cragg's *Reason and Authority in the Eighteenth Century* (1964) addresses most of the main categories of authority relevant to the post-Reformation discourse and accordingly points to the doctrinal concerns that led to developments within it.

Regarding primary sources, I have approached them with the intent to address the public discourse on authority and debate on the doctrine of the Trinity. For reasons of scope, I have largely limited my analysis to the trials or efforts at doctrinal discipline that resulted in controversy and that therefore have published period sources, most often the controverted publication and the subsequent personal accounts of proceedings against them provided by the defendant to the public. My purpose has not been to gain an entire understanding of a controversy or trial, so much as to apprehend the publicly made or subsequently published arguments by these individuals as they related to authoritative claims and supports. For example, how an individual may have asserted the role of Scripture and the weight of tradition and/or reason alongside implications for institutional and individual relations between Church, State, and Conscience. Emlyn's trial was a good place to start since his prosecution was a joint Nonconformist and Anglican establishment endeavor, and was the first after the death of William III that (in some manner) separated the controversy from the earlier debate associated with the 1690s (e.g., see Sirota).<sup>76</sup>

I have generally not given an extended analysis of other events beyond the scope of a single trial per each individual and the related material thereto. This complicates the narrative with regard to someone like Whiston, who had multiple trials. I chose his first trial, conducted by the University of Cambridge, in part for its benefit of demonstrating the variety of institutions involved and its immediate relation to the fallout from the Sacheverell

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<sup>76</sup> See Sirota, "Trinitarian Crisis in Church and State, 26-54. See also Bradley, "Religious Origins," 223. Though the Act of Toleration did not extend to Ireland, Emlyn's trial instigated an enactment by the Synod of Ulster thereafter requiring subscription to the Westminster Confession.

impeachment trial and subsequent parliamentary elections. On the other hand, Cotton Mather's sustained involvement in disciplinary developments and controversies relevant to the maintenance of the Athanasian doctrine of the Trinity is approached in that extended and multifaceted manner as a demonstration of the transatlantic scope of the debates and discourse. I end with the controversies surrounding the 1756 reprint of Emlyn's *Scripture Account* since they can be seen to bring the debate full circle and to demonstrate the shift away from use of the "civil sword" by mid-century in matters of doctrinal dispute surrounding the Trinity. Not every category within the discourse on authority is addressed to the same extent in each section, as some participants in the debate exhibited a greater proclivity to engage or utilize one or another of the categories in relation to the relevant material.

### **Lacunae and Contributions**

Overall, there is relatively little sustained scholarship that has approached the transatlantic aspect and specific relation of the Trinitarian debates to the Anglo-American discourse on authority. There is a good amount of scholarship that discusses Isaac Newton and his chief disciples, William Whiston and Samuel Clarke, with somewhat less coverage accorded Locke's disciple, Anthony Collins, in relation to the debates in the early decades of the eighteenth-century.<sup>77</sup> A fair amount has been written about Thomas Emlyn's prosecution, Benjamin Hoadly and the Bangorian controversy, as well as the later Exeter and Salter's Hall controversy regarding subscription that fractured the already nominal union of non-conformist denominations and a number of their congregations.<sup>78</sup> Of these episodes, I offer a fresh reading but only, or at least primarily, as they concern doctrinal discipline with regard

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<sup>77</sup> See Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy* (1996); Rob Iliffe, "Friendly Criticism: Richard Simon, John Locke, Isaac Newton and the Johannine Comma," in *Scripture and Scholarship in Early Modern England*, edited by Ariel Hessayon and Nicholas Keene (Cornwall: Ashgate, 2006), 137-57; James E. Force, *William Whiston: Honest Newtonian* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1985); Pfizenmaier, *Trinitarian Theology of Dr. Samuel Clarke* (1997); J.P. Ferguson, *An Eighteenth Century Heretic: Dr. Samuel Clarke* (Kineton, Warwick: The Round Wood Press, 1976); for Clarke, see also, Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes* (2003); for Locke and Collins, see James O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins: The Man and His Works* (The Hague, Netherlands: Martinus Nijhoff, 1970). I will mention briefly that Ferguson's biography of Clarke has been noted by one reviewer as "inadequate" and yet "those seeking a clear and brief summary, baldly stated, of the principal writings in early eighteenth century trinitarian controversy will find [it] of use" (see Eamon Duffy, Review of *An Eighteenth Century Heretic: Dr. Samuel Clarke*, by J.P. Ferguson in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 31, No. 3 (July 1980), 370).

<sup>78</sup> See William Gibson, "The Persecution of Thomas Emlyn, 1703-1705," *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Summer 2006), 525-539; and, Roger Thomas, "The Non-Subscription Controversy amongst Dissenters in 1719: the Salters' Hall Debate," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (October 1953), 162-186.

to the doctrine of the Trinity and in light of the crisis of authority and the categories of its discourse.

As this list scholarship indicates, there are many cases of individuals being assessed with regard to the Trinitarian debates in the secondary scholarship. This scholarship is something that my study seeks to begin to correlate. Yet, I do so while adding a more comprehensive point about their overarching relevance in activating discourse on institutional and individual authority, while supplying substantive material for the related discourse on the authority of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason (i.e., through a consciously applied lens of the post-Reformation crisis of authority). There are a good number of books written on the Trinitarian debates of the seventeenth-century for background reading.<sup>79</sup> I need to also mention that later episodes within the British Trinitarian debates merit further attention, such as those that involved Thomas Chubb, or John Hutchinson and his followers, or Robert Clayton. However, for reasons of scope, I have addressed these only in their relation to American controversies (Chubb with regard to the Robert Breck, and the other two in relation to Samuel Johnson of Connecticut).<sup>80</sup>

Andrew C. Thompson cautions against writing a “triumphalist tale of persecution to toleration to power” for Dissenters, in part because “[w]ithin Britain and Ireland and the wider Atlantic world, the legal position of, and context for, Dissent varied considerably.”<sup>81</sup> He further imparts that, whereas Unitarian historians had championed the role that the Trinitarian debates played (prominent among other doctrinal controversies) “in the growth of liberty”, J.C.D. Clark’s *English Society* (1985) “revers[es] the moral polarities” to instead implicate them for their contribution to the “collapse of the ‘protestant constitution’ in Britain.” Yet looking beyond England (but only to the extent of the British Isles), James E.

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<sup>79</sup> For the 1690s I recommend Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 105-69. For earlier in the seventeenth century, see Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, (2010); Sarah Mortimer, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution: The Challenge of Socinianism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Christopher J. Walker, *Reason and Religion in Late Seventeenth-Century England: The Politics and Theology of Radical Dissent* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2013). These provide helpful insights for the seventeenth century background to the Trinitarian debates of the early eighteenth-century, but do not extend into that period, in contrast to Philip Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes: The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Seventeenth Century* (London: T&T Clark, 2003).

<sup>80</sup> See Nigel Aston, “The Limits of Latitudinarianism: English Reactions to Bishop Clayton’s *An Essay on Spirit*,” *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 49, No. 3, (1998), 407-433; Tarbuck, *Enlightenment Reformation* (2017); Clive Probyn, “Thomas Chubb (1679-1747),” *Oxford DNB*; and the brief conclusion that concerns Thomas Chubb in Elad Carmel’s, “Anthony Collins on toleration, liberty, and authority,” *History of European Ideas* (2022). Thomas Rundle’s nomination to the episcopal bench in 1734 is another episode that merits further attention, despite the fact that transatlantic links are, as yet, not readily seen (see Ingram, *Reformation Without End*, 3-5).

<sup>81</sup> A. Thompson, “Toleration, Dissent, and the State in Britain,” 263.

Bradley's scholarship posits that such changes were just as significantly influenced by "issues of ecclesiology".<sup>82</sup> Bradley's *Religion, Revolution and English Radicalism* (1990) is not transatlantic in scope but an assessment of the British context in relation to opinions regarding the American Revolution and does not cover the early eighteenth-century.<sup>83</sup> However, his subsequent "The Religious Origins of Radical Politics" does address the early-eighteenth century, stating that the first two decades bore the "essential theoretical and practical breakthrough" for Dissents' conception of authority (as discussed earlier).<sup>84</sup> Even so, Bradley's article does not approach the Anglo-American transatlantic debate or discourse.

On the other hand, Clark's *Language of Liberty* (1994) is transatlantic in its scope, but pays very little attention to the episodes I focus on in the American context. For example, Clark does not mention the Breck Affair, assesses the Hemphill Affair in two sentences, and includes a single primary source quote that merely mentions Cotton Mather.<sup>85</sup> Similarly, David M. Thompson relates that "the Trinity became one of the most keenly contested doctrines among some Dissenters", but then fails to explore the impact of Salter's Hall outside of Britain (which he follows up to Unitarian legalization in 1813). This is in contrast to his sections on other topics where he does, for example, address the influence and links between Jonathan Edwards and English Baptists.<sup>86</sup>

Building on a categorical reading of primarily English debates and trials (and sought prosecutions) during the first two decades of the century, I therefore offer a new perspective on the Trinitarian debates and the discourse on authority by an analysis of parallel and subsequent developments in the British colonies of continental North America. I similarly, as with England (and Ireland) among Anglicans and Dissenters, focus on the attempt to effect and ensure doctrinal discipline, thereby linking together events and controversies in America not usually seen as connected. Accordingly, in America, as already introduced, I have selected Cotton Mather, Samuel Hemphill, Benjamin Franklin, Samuel Johnson, Robert Breck, Jonathan Edwards, Jonathan Mayhew, and Aaron Burr, Sr. as principal representatives of the discourse on authority in relation to doctrinal discipline (again, as connected to concerns over the doctrine of the Trinity).

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<sup>82</sup> A. Thompson, "Toleration, Dissent, and the State in Britain," 264.

<sup>83</sup> James E. Bradley, *Religion, Revolution, and English Radicalism: Nonconformity in Eighteenth-Century Politics and Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), xiii.

<sup>84</sup> Bradley, "Religious Origins," 195.

<sup>85</sup> Clark, *Language of Liberty*, 246, 355.

<sup>86</sup> D. Thompson, "Theology and the Bible," 305; 323-26

In this later discussion, however, I seek to avoid an Americentric lens and specifically identify ready transatlantic threads. These include connections such as Mather's correspondence with Isaac Watts and concern for William Whiston; Benjamin Franklin's youthful Deism influenced by Anthony Collins and his quarter-life affinity for plagiarized sermons that belonged to Samuel Clarke and other non-Athanasians; the influence of Thomas Chubb on Robert Breck's conversant perspectives; the relevance that Samuel Clarke's Trinitarianism, George Berkeley's idealism and, later, John Hutchinson's approach to the Hebrew language for Samuel Johnson's evolving formulations; and Thomas Emlyn's Arianism with regard to Jonathan Mayhew. These allow for insights provided by a wider British-Atlantic scope to understand the persons and events, in their intellectually contextualized significance, for the practical discourse on authority.<sup>87</sup>

Additionally, and necessitating some comment for its enduring availability and therefore status as a resource, Conrad Wright's *The Beginnings of Unitarianism in America* (1955) is helpful in relation to understanding the context of Jonathan Mayhew's anti-Athanasian assertions and the 1756 reprint of Emlyn's *Scripture Account*, along with the impact on New England clergy. However, Wright ultimately only dedicates about nine pages to this period of the Trinitarian debates in America. Clarke's work is briefly summarized and acknowledged as a significant influence, but not Whiston's. The accusation that Robert Breck denied 1 John 5:7 is mentioned, but not Cotton Mather's multiple publications defending and asserting the doctrine of the Trinity. "Throughout the first half of the century," Wright writes, "incidents revealing unsoundness on the Trinity were rare" and the doctrine "had not been particularly stressed in New England." He claims that "Neglect of [the doctrine of the Trinity] was an established custom long before any Arians appeared on the scene." Instead, Wright focuses on the period from 1755 to 1805, therefore allowing for some overlap but then offers relatively little analysis of Mayhew's publications and no analysis of Aaron Burr, Sr.'s response (of which I do give an analysis where most scholars only mention his response, if that). Wright does, however, state that Burr's response led to "[a] few years of quiescence"

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<sup>87</sup> See Stievermann, Introduction to *Biblia Americana*, Vol. 10 (forthcoming 2022); Komline, "The Controversy of the Present Time," (2010); Kenneth Silverman's *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (1970); J.A. Leo Lemay's *The Life of Benjamin Franklin, Volume 2: Printer and Publisher, 1730-1747* (2006); Kerry Walters, "Franklin and the question of religion" in *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Franklin*, ed., Carla Mulford (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 91-103; and Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, (2016); J. Patrick Mullins's *Father of Liberty: Jonathan Mayhew and the Principles of the American Revolution* (2017); George M. Marsden's *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (2003); and Joseph J. Ellis's *The New England Mind in Transition: Samuel Johnson of Connecticut, 1696-1772* (1973). Of additional help was Wilson, *Benevolent Deity* (1984); and Tarbuck, *Enlightenment Reformation* (2017).

until 1767, thereby supporting my decision to place 1758 (the year of Edward's death and a year after Burr's) as the end date for my study of the early eighteenth-century Anglo-American Trinitarian debates. My study helps to qualify if not correct Wright's localized claim that the doctrine of the Trinity "never took up much attention" for New England's first settlers and their descendants prior to the mid-eighteenth century.<sup>88</sup>

Lastly, as Francis J. Bremer has pointed out, the "neglected decades" of the early- to mid-eighteenth century have evaded close scrutiny as a period in itself rather than simply as either the "anticlimax" of the seventeenth century or the "prelude" to the revolutionary era.<sup>89</sup> Furthermore, significant controversies have often been spared proper assessment outside the nodes of revival or revolution.<sup>90</sup> This study attempts to make a foray into these decades and the interwoven doctrinal and disciplinary discourses seeking legitimated resolutions amidst that period's particular flux of authoritative claims and appeals within the rapidly changing imperial, yet post-Reformation era.

Therefore, some of the more notable contributions that my study makes to the scholarship on the early-to mid-eighteenth-century discourse on authority includes the analyses and accounts of controversies more connected to the Trinitarian debates than previously demonstrated. This includes Benjamin Hoadly's sermon that sparked the Bangorian Controversy, as well as the Hemphill and Breck Affairs that ran parallel to the Northampton revival in 1735. Furthermore, I introduce the comparative potential of Robert Breck's and Jonathan Mayhew's controversial ordinations separated by a decade in western and eastern Massachusetts, respectively, and such in relation to the troubles of other young ministers such as Hubert Stogdon and Samuel Hemphill. Cotton Mather's concern to maintain the vital piety he believed to be wholly and only available in the Athanasian Trinity is placed in the context of the debates, as well as his concern for his particular friend, William Whiston.

Additionally, Samuel Johnson's *Ethices Elementa* (1746) and *Elementa Philosophica* (1752) are found to be helpful signals for shifts in the transatlantic Anglican discourse related to the Trinity, while also pointing to Benjamin Franklin's potentially continued interest in the

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<sup>88</sup> Wright, *Beginnings of Unitarianism*, 200-209; 208.

<sup>89</sup> Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 218.

<sup>90</sup> For one ready example, see Richard Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1967), 182. Here, Bushman briefly mentions the Breck Affair, that was relevant to both Connecticut and Massachusetts, but only insofar as it was relevant to the Northampton revival.

subject from his days as a Presbyterian controversialist during the Hemphill Affair in Philadelphia. Samuel Hemphill's plagiarized sermons from Samuel Clarke, Benjamin Ibbot, and James Foster, are analyzed for their significance to the young, moral (and religious) reformer Franklin. Franklin's written contributions to the Hemphill Affair are briefly assessed with new insights on his relation to the ecclesiology of Hoadly. Also, I briefly explore Franklin's theology and posit possible links with the Radical Reformation. Jonathan Mayhew's exact position within the theological mapping for the Trinitarian debates is demonstrated to be more closely associated with Thomas Emlyn and Arianism proper, rather than with Samuel Clarke's Trinitarian theology as has been recently argued.

Throughout, I employ a historical lens to the label of *Trinitarian*, one that antedates the Athanasian Creed's reception (as discussed earlier). The theological positions of most representative interlocutors are thereby also assessed, with related attention given to Clarke's historical and linguistic arguments regarding the use and meaning of the term *homoousia* and Whiston's use of the term *Arian*. Anthony Collins's probable role in Clarke's demise is made more explicit by assessing his attack on the diversity of views held by the clergy about the Trinity. Jonathan Edwards is noted for his role in controversies involving the doctrine of the Trinity (Breck and Mayhew) but his theological contributions are not explored at length since they were not public or did not have any direct bearing on the period's discourse on authority. This non-theological focus on Edwards with regard to the Trinitarian debates during the period of his lifetime allows for other voices (such as Aaron Burr, Sr.'s) and developments to be heard and explored, perhaps even appropriately amplified, for a more contextualized understanding of the debate and period. The relevance of Locke's framework for toleration is noted throughout.

In all, I have sought to convey and detail the role of the Trinitarian debates within the post-Reformation crisis of authority: activating discourse on the authority of institutions relative to individuals, and providing substantive material to the discourse as it related to the authority of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. The endeavors therein to ensure doctrinal discipline among ordained clergy and a related reliance on the combination of Church and State authority led toward a weakening of that alliance. These doctrinal debates further elevated the authority of Scripture and of Reason and both together as State protections of individual Conscience began to shift the locus of doctrinal debate from the pulpit to the pews. In any case, the press was always busy.

## Chapter 1

### **Background: Categories of the Crisis and the Discourse on Authority**

This chapter traces the categories of authority as they were practically brought into discourse via select episodes of Trinitarian controversy (or relating thereto) in England during the late sixteenth and throughout the seventeenth century that succinctly capture the crisis of authority well. The contents of this chapter will help to establish familiarity with the discourse on authority prior to the early-eighteenth century's Trinitarian debates. After giving some background of the Reformation categories of authority, as conveyed through Luther at Worms and Erasmus regarding Scripture, I focus on the context of England and its American colonies. These subsequent episodes range from the finalized *Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion* for the Church of England in 1571 to the published translation of John Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* following the passage and royal approval of the Act of Toleration in 1689. The writings of Paul Best and William Penn relative to their imprisonments are explored in particular. For America, I follow developments and episodes primarily related to New England, but also Pennsylvania and New York. These range from the theology of William Ames to the trial of Francis Makemie in New York, with the disputes in the colonies relative to William Pynchon and between John Cotton and Roger Williams in New England, and George Keith in Pennsylvania explored relevant to the Trinitarian debates and Anglo-American discourse on authority. There was a particular emphasis placed on the firm elevation of the monarch over the Church, the status of Scripture in navigating competing claims to *authorized* verity in doctrinal controversy, as well as the assertion of individual Conscience in relation to the sovereign-authority claims of Church and State. Also observed is the frustrated hope of many who endeavored toward a comprehensive national English church in the Reformation's first century, which eventually gave way by the end of its second century to the necessity of seeking to establish instead a basic pan-Protestant consensus. These broadened boundaries and their widely assumed inhering definitions of (Protestant) Christianity were then contested amidst the novel context of an established toleration administered by a multi-denominational (Episcopal in England, Presbyterian in Scotland) imperial monarch and a subsequently explicit multi-national parliament (following the Acts of Union in 1707). For many, the primary contest of definition concerned the doctrine of the Trinity, and, as such, the particular authority of the Church of England in relation to the new imperial and religiously heterogenous state in settling questions of doctrine and discipline.

## 1.1 – Reformation Context: Martin Luther at Worms and Erasmus’s New Testament

The European emergence or, rather, transition from medieval categories of authority, both theological and social, was catalyzed in 1521 when Martin Luther had a series of exchanges with representatives of both papal and imperial authority. The exchanges delineated well the categories of authority that both frame and furnish this study of the eighteenth-century Trinitarian debates in relation to the Anglo-American discourse on authority. A relatively brief treatment of the discourse on authority displayed at the Diet of Worms will, therefore, help to place this study in relation to the Reformation’s crisis of authority and serve to introduce the categories of authority that persisted within early modern questions concerning doctrinal discipline, with a particular highlight of the discourse’s acknowledged relation to the earlier patristic-era debates over the Trinity. Additionally, the controversy that surrounded Desiderius Erasmus’ *Novum Instrumentum* (1516) will be briefly related (per its significance to the Trinitarian debates) and placed into the context of the categories of discourse.

For at least a portion of my assessment, I have chosen to use the Hazlitt 1846 translation of M. Michelet’s *Life of Luther* for a number of reasons.<sup>1</sup> Hazlitt was the grandson of the Reverend William Hazlitt, well known to Americans such as James Freeman of Boston’s King’s Chapel, Charles Chauncy and Ebenezer Gay, as well as Benjamin Franklin and John Adams. His grandfather sojourned in Pennsylvania and New England with his family from 1783 to 1786 with a significant impact on the growth of overt Unitarianism (along the lines of Joseph Priestly) there. Upon the family’s return from America, Hazlitt’s grandfather “devoted his energies to the education of his son William”, who in turn ensured that his son was schooled by a Unitarian pastor as well.<sup>2</sup> The use of Hazlitt’s translation therefore adds some texture to how the Reformation’s founding narrative was viewed from a generationally nurtured Unitarian perspective.<sup>3</sup> Roger A. Hornsby’s 1958 translation in volume 32 of *Luther’s Works* is also referenced for comparison. Luther’s famous final statement before the Emperor is taken from Hornsby’s translation and references for

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<sup>1</sup> M. Michelet, ed., *The Life of Luther. Written by Himself.*, trans. by William Hazlitt (London: David Bogue, 1846). Hereafter cited as Hazlitt, trans., *Life of Luther*.

<sup>2</sup> Duncan Wu, “William Hazlitt, 1737-1820,” *Oxford DNB*; Jonathan Bate, “William Hazlitt, 1778-1830,” *Oxford DNB*; and Margaret Lesser, “William Hazlitt, 1811-1893,” *Oxford DNB*. See also Wilson, *Benevolentg Deity*, 236-38.

<sup>3</sup> See also Wright, *Unitarianism in America*, 213-16; 210-17.

comparison Roland Bainton's *Here I Stand* (1978), and James L. Schaaf's 1985 translation of Martin Brecht's *Martin Luther* (1981).

Before discussing Luther, it must be understood that the categorical exchanges at Worms were recognized by the interlocutors to be a reiteration of prior conflicts between the Church and "insubordinate" clergy, particularly John Wycliffe and Jan Hus, settled at the council of Constance (1414-1418) a century earlier. Jaroslav Pelikan makes it clear that the crisis of authority, often perceived as stemming from Luther's Ninety-Five theses in 1517 and his subsequent refusal to recant in 1521 at Worms, had its deeper roots within the crisis of church definition in the previous two centuries, in part due to the conflicting injunctions in Scripture. For example, was the church the spiritual or political kingdom of Christ? "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matthew 28:18). What authority did it have in relation to temporal, civil authorities? "My Kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). Furthermore, within the church, was the church's authority from apostolic succession in the office of the Pope as Bishop of Rome, or from the working of the Holy Spirit in ecumenical councils? And, as for the purpose of the church, was unity or was holiness (i.e., purity and piety) the primary identifier of Christ's church? These questions were answered variously in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, yet, as with Nicaea, competing interpretations of those answers extended the debate further into the 1500s.<sup>4</sup>

At Worms, Luther was specifically told that he had "resuscitated dogmas...distinctly condemned by the council of Constance," and that "if every one were at liberty to bring back into discussion points which for ages have been settled by the church and by councils, nothing would be certain and fixed, doctrine or dogma...". The ready example was prospectively before them. Perhaps Luther would "to-day reject the authority of the council of Constance, to-morrow [he] may, in like manner, proscribe all councils together, and next the fathers, and the doctors; and there would remain no authority whatever, but that individual word which you call to witness, and which we also invoke..."<sup>5</sup> Scripture was, therefore, effectively

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<sup>4</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Reformation of Church and Dogma (1300-1700)*, Volume 4 of *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 82-85. See also pages 79-87. See also Alister E. McGrath, *The Intellectual Origins of the European Reformation*, second edition (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 15-17, though all of Chapter 1, "The Shape of Late Medieval Religious Thought" (pages 11-33), is relevant to the question of the fourteenth and fifteenth century continuities and discontinuities with the Reformation and the context for the crisis of authority that preceded the Reformation's particular crisis of authority.

<sup>5</sup> Hazlitt, trans., *Life of Luther*, 89-90. Compare to Roger A. Hornsby, trans., "Luther at the Diet of Worms, 1521" in George W. Forell, ed. *Luther's Works: Career of the Reformer II, Volume 32* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1958), 113 and 127; and James Atkinson, *The Trial of Luther* (New York: Stein and Day, 1971), 162

neutralized as an authority in the conflict.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Luther was subsequently told by John Eck, that Scripture was no sure basis for unity: "...there is no one of the heresies which have torn the bosom of the church, which has not derived its origin from the various interpretation of the Scripture." Luther had previously stated that his conscience was "chained up with the Scripture." Eck accordingly reminded him that "The Bible itself is the arsenal from whence each innovator has drawn his deceptive arguments."

One of the two examples Eck then gave referred to the confusion that necessitated the council of Nicaea, and he pointedly used it in an effort to convince Luther of his error: "Arius, for instance, found the negation of the eternity of the Word—an eternity which you admit in this verse of the New Testament—*Joseph knew not his wife till she had brought forth her first-born son*; and he said, in the same way that you say, that this passage enchained him..."<sup>7</sup> The Hornsby translation notes that in addition to Matthew 1:25, Eck included a second passage of scripture that was foundational to Arius's heresy, that of John 14:28: "The Father is greater than I".<sup>8</sup> Eck's recourse to the history of declared heresies propounded his overall argument: the elevation of Scripture above the church and its councils would result in a very real bondage to "no authority whatever"—a prolix phrase for chaos.<sup>9</sup>

Just prior to Eck's statements, Luther had been implored by the chancellor of Baden to submit to the "advice given you by the states of the empire" with the explanation that "Those states were established by God to watch over the security of a people whose tranquility your doctrines are calculated to disturb. To resist them is to resist God." (In another account, Luther was told that "his imperial majesty" was "the supreme authority").<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, the chancellor asked, if he (Luther) was going to insist on obedience to God (through the holy word) above man, "do you think that we, any more than yourself, are deaf to his word, or have not meditated thereupon?" Luther replied that "I know well that we must pay obedience to the civil magistrate" and said that he would do so—in "all things that does not shut out the Word of God." All was anchored to the measure and prescription of Scripture. Luther later continued, "I do not decline the judgment of the emperor and of the states; but the word of God, on which I rely, is to my eyes so clear that I cannot retract what I have said, until a still

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<sup>6</sup> I have read "individual word" to reference something akin to personal reading of scripture, though another possible or likely reading would have those words reference a person's word, or personal witness, more akin to conscience.

<sup>7</sup> Hazlitt, trans., *Life of Luther*, 92-93.

<sup>8</sup> Hornsby, trans., *Luther Works: Vol. 32*, 119.

<sup>9</sup> See the prior paragraph.

<sup>10</sup> Hazlitt, trans., *Life of Luther*, 85.

more luminous authority is opposed to that Word.”<sup>11</sup> Neither “mere” church or imperial state were “more luminous” than Scripture to Luther. But, as had been pointed out to him, who was he to say who was and was not “deaf to [God’s] word.” Luther’s primary recourse was then, as it had been before, to conscience.

When asked to recant, Luther’s famous words, spoken before the emperor himself and the pope’s representative, display the discursive categories of Church, State, Conscience, Scripture, Tradition, and Reason:

Since then your serene majesty and your lorships seek a simple answer, I will give it in this manner, neither horned nor toothed: Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason (for I do not trust either in the pope or in councils alone, since it is well known that they have often erred and contradicted themselves), I am bound by the Scriptutres I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not retract anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. / I cannot do otherwise, here I stand, may God help me. Amen.<sup>12</sup>

Luther had no faith in either the pope or in councils to judge correctly, and he would not submit the Scriptures to the prerogative of divinely instituted civil governors. He demanded clear evidence and “clear reason” which neither church or state would (or seemingly could) supply to his satisfaction. And lastly, he would not submit his conscience “captive to the Word of God” to the equally sovereign claims of divine institutions, whether civil, papal, or conciliar. Luther’s categories were not different from those of his detractors, but, rather, he hierarchized them differently. These exchanges at Worms in April 1521 convey the friction that lit the tinder of an enduring crisis of authority.<sup>13</sup> The rub was between competing conceptions and categories of authority.

In 1519, two years prior to Luther’s appearance at the imperial diet, he had written to Erasmus seeking his support. Erasmus replied that his attentions were wholly employed in “aiding as best I may the restoration of literature.” He cautioned Luther that, “Instead of throwing scorn upon the schools, it were advisable to bring them back to sounder studies.” A renewed interest in Greek manuscripts following the fall of Constantinople in 1453 had spurred on the promising scholarship of comparative literature and textual history, which

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<sup>11</sup> Hazlitt, trans. *Life of Luther*, 93.

<sup>12</sup> Hornsby, trans., *Luther Works: Vol. 32*, 112-13. See also Roland Bainton, *Here I Stand: Martin Luther* (Tring, Herts: Lion Publishing, 1978), 185; and in Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: His Road to Reformation, 1483-1521*, translated by James L. Schaaf (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1985), 460.

<sup>13</sup> The prior works and testimony of John Wycliffe and Jan Hus are two leading figures that preceded Luther’s controversy with the medieval Church, with Luther even identifying himself as a Bohemian (i.e., Hussite) in his convictions. The Council of Constance, rejected by Luther, had condemned Wycliffe and burned Hus.

Erasmus believed could achieve the reforms needed in the Church. He was not overzealous in his aim to ground scholasticism: “It is better to raise one’s voice against those who abuse the authority of the priesthood, than against the priesthood itself” to which the young Emperor’s childhood tutor prudently enjoined, “and so with regard to kings.”<sup>14</sup> This endeavor had led Erasmus into his own trouble with of the Church’s scholars. In 1516, he published his first edition of the Greek New Testament sans the text of 1 John 5:7, later known as the Johannine Comma. The passage was widely perceived as an indispensable defense of the doctrine of the Trinity. David M. Whitford has pointed out that the editors of the Complutensia Polyglot (completed two years prior but not made public) made a rare marginal note that demonstrated the significance of the passage and their reasons for reverse translating it when they did not find it in the available Greek copies of 1 John. “The marginal note highlights the importance of the verse for Trinitarian thought and specifically its utility against all Christological subordinationalisms; including most specifically ‘Arian heresy.’”<sup>15</sup> Erasmus on the other hand, not finding it in the Greek manuscripts available to him, concluded that it was a later, Latin interpolation and left it out. Therefore, at nearly the same moment that Luther was staking all on the inspiration of the sacred text, Erasmus was undermining its authoritative stability.

In the second edition Erasmus again left the insertion out. But to placate detractors, the publication prominently displayed what Whitford calls “signals of orthodoxy”: additional references to prominent patristic defenders of the Nicene Creed, Athanasius and Gregory of Nazianzus; a letter from Pope Leo X endorsing the edition; and a depiction of the Trinity (the Holy Spirit as dove above the regally crowned Father who is supporting his suffering Son crowned with thorns) alongside the text of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed of 381.<sup>16</sup> However, these signaling supports were unnecessary once he inserted the comma in the 1522 third edition, perhaps due to the claim that a single early Greek manuscript had been found with the sought for text. More likely, as Whitford argues, Erasmus was seeking to distance himself from the taint of widespread rumor and dangerous accusations that he was a trouble-maker who had plowed the soil for Luther’s pronounced heresies by the Edict of Worms the year before.<sup>17</sup> The appellation of unquestionable orthodoxy was demanded by the times, and for Erasmus this was at the expense of allowing questionable texts to perpetuate in the

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<sup>14</sup> Hazlitt, trans., *Life of Luther*, 70.

<sup>15</sup> David M. Whitford, “Yielding to the Prejudices of His Times: Erasmus and the Comma Johanneum,” *Church History and Religious Culture*, Vol. 95, No. 1 (2015), 26.

<sup>16</sup> Whitford, “Yielding to the Prejudices...,” 27-34.

<sup>17</sup> Whitford, “Yielding to the Prejudices...,” 34-40.

scriptural canon. His “restoration of literature” would have to await a more seasonable advent. In this study, historical and textual scholarship, such as Erasmus favored, is generally placed into the category of reason in the hierarchy of authority, as it privileged the rational faculty to discern the merits of available data, specifically taking into account not only intertextual comparison but also extratextual history.

As Stephen D. Snobelen has pointed out about Erasmus’ *Novum Instrumentum*, there is “no single event more important” to the advent of biblical criticism against the doctrine of the Trinity than its publication. In 1527, Migel Servet, more commonly referred to as Michael Servetus, became a passionate convert to Erasmus’ style of scholarship, taking it further in his publications: *On the errors of the Trinity* in 1531 and (after a period of hiding) *Restitution of Christianity* in 1553.<sup>18</sup> The same year as the latter publication he would be burned in effigy in Catholic France and at the stake in Reformed Geneva. His death caused a backlash amongst some men of letters, most prominently Sebastian Castellio, who argued forcefully for religious toleration and liberty of conscience in its wake.<sup>19</sup> Furthermore, Servetus’ martyrdom and writings inspired the Minor Church of Polish Brethren, later known as Socinians in relation to Fausto Sozzini (nephew to a friend of Castellio) whose writings influenced the 1605 publication of their *Racovian Catechism*. Snobelen points out that Erasmus was cited fifteen times in the Polish Brethren’s instrument of instruction.<sup>20</sup> When the Polish Brethren were forced to leave their homeland in 1648 they became prominent in Holland and England, though their pointed, biblicist arguments had already influenced the Cambridge fellow and Protestant soldier, Paul Best (discussed later).<sup>21</sup>

As a general overview, Best and another Englishman, John Biddle, were the first drops in what became, by the last decade of the seventeenth century, a torrent of controversy surrounding the doctrine of the Trinity in England. The wealthy merchant, Thomas Firmin, financed the publication of numerous tracts opposed to the doctrine, not least among them Stephen Nye’s *Brief History of the Unitarians* (1687) and *Brief Notes on the Creed of St. Athanasius* (1690). The controversy in the 1690s became so heated that William III (per the advice of Archbishop Tillotson) had to place a moratorium on further publications and public

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<sup>18</sup> Snobelen, “Antitrinitarian Textual Criticism,” 119.

<sup>19</sup> See Sebastian Castellio, *Concerning Heretics: Whether they are to be persecuted and how they are to be treated; a collection of the opinions of learned men, both ancient and modern*, trans. Robert H. Bainton (New York, NY: Octagon Books, 1979).

<sup>20</sup> Snobelen, “Antitrinitarian Textual Criticism,” 121.

<sup>21</sup> See also Snobelen, “Antitrinitarian Textual Criticism,” 119-23.

dispute.<sup>22</sup> The Trinitarian controversy, therefore, experienced a brief if nominal lull in the debate until the summer of 1702, just months after William's death, when Thomas Emlyn was turned over to the civil courts by his (formerly) fellow Presbyterians (see Chapter 2).

Discussion of Emlyn needs to be preceded by highlights of some of the English and American developments from the later sixteenth century and throughout the seventeenth century in relation to efforts that were aimed to either maintain or undermine traditional understandings of the doctrine of the Trinity and the relation therein to discourse on authoritative relations between Church and State and individual Conscience. This extends from the finalized Thirty-Nine Articles (1571) in the reign of Elizabeth I to John Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* following the 1688 Glorious Revolution and subsequent Act of Toleration in 1689, and includes the relevant American discourse surrounding the Cambridge Platform of 1649. John Cotton and Roger Williams conflicting views on conscience are explored, as well as Pennsylvania's own attempts to protect and also guide conscience, all with relevance to the history of the doctrine of the Trinity.

Before proceeding, I will note that I spend very little time on the well-studied Trinitarian controversy of the 1690s pertaining to England (particularly as it concerned Locke). The 1690s is accepted by scholars as the first phase of the Trinitarian debates post-toleration. This period saw the initial endowment of theological and philosophical parameters for the ensuing debate, but much less so a supply of cases that required active Church or State discipline (excepting Thomas Aikenhead's January 1697 execution in Presbyterian Scotland under the Scottish Parliament's 1661 and 1695 Acts against Blasphemy that shocked many in England, including John Locke).<sup>23</sup> John Coffey has situated Aikenhead's trial within a "wider political and intellectual crisis of international Calvinism" that was manifest in Geneva, Rotterdam, Boston and London.<sup>24</sup> The trial of Thomas Emlyn, though it happened primarily in Ireland, is the first such trial following the Act of Toleration in England that had further highlighted the significance of any rival conceptions of the Trinity, or Godhead, throughout the Anglican or Episcopal establishment. As a result, Emlyn's is the first trial I explore in

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<sup>22</sup> *Directions to our Arch-Bishops and Bishops, for the Preserving of Unity in the Church, and the Purity of the Christian Faith, Concerning the Holy Trinity* (London: Printed by Charles Bill, 1695). See Brent S. Sirotka, "The Trinitarian Crisis in Church and State: Religious Controversy and the Making of the Postrevolutionary Church of England, 1687-1702," *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 52 (January 2013), 26-54.

<sup>23</sup> See Michael Hunter, "Thomas Aikenhead, *bap.* 1676, *d.* 1697)," *Oxford DNB*. See also Michael F. Graham, *The Blasphemies of Thomas Aikenhead: Boundaries of Belief on the Eve of the Enlightenment* (Norfolk: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).

<sup>24</sup> John Coffey, review of *The Blasphemies of Thomas Aikenhead: Boundaries of Belief on the Eve of the Enlightenment* by Michael F. Graham, *Innes Review*, Vol. 61 No. 1, (Spring, 2010), 101-102.

relation to the discourse on institutional, individual, and scriptural claims to sovereign authority—which is, ultimately, the authority to decide questions bearing on salvation. In the Church of England, that authority had been invested in the 1571 Elizabethan settlement’s Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion.

## 1.2 – From the Elizabethan Settlement to the 1689 Act of Toleration: The Thirty-Nine Articles, Paul Best, and William Penn

“Put forth by the Queen’s authority” read the emphasized final line of the 1571 title page to the Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion. Though the articles had been “agreed upon” by the bolded Archbishops and semi-bolded Bishops, the final “40<sup>th</sup>” article ratifying the whole once again announced that the foregoing articles adopted in 1562 had been “approved, and allowed to be holden and executed within the Realm, by the ascent and consent of our Sovereign Lady Elizabeth” and both the upper and lower houses of Convocation had “confirmed again by the subscription...in the year of our Lord GOD, 1571.”<sup>1</sup> These finalized articles marked the boundaries of English Christianity that were challenged and defended for the next two centuries.

Following the reigns of Henry VIII and Edward VI, where the Royal Supremacy over the Church had been established, Mary I sought to return England to the Catholic fold but died childless five years later, with her religious program (therefore) unsolidified. Elizabeth I reasserted the Royal Supremacy but distrusted the more reformed-minded clergy. She maintained the catholic ecclesial government of bishops, with herself as the “supreme governor” but cast aside many of the practices and doctrines of the Catholic tradition, including celibacy for clergy, transubstantiation, relics, purgatory, prayer to Saints, and five of the seven sacraments.<sup>2</sup> However, both the negative and positive articles framed much of the subsequent two centuries of discourse on authority and doctrine.

First and foremost among the Thirty-Nine Articles was “faith in the holy *Trinity*”, the doctrine that would underly many of the trials that would in turn try the hierarchy of authority the Articles were intended to support and which was correlated throughout the remaining articles. The Article declared: “THERE is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body, parts, or passions; of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the maker, and preserver of all things both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; the father, the son, and the holy ghost.” The authority of Scripture was asserted next and consistently maintained throughout the Articles’ web of authority. And yet, while Scripture supported the authority of Creeds, the Church, Church

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<sup>1</sup> Thirty-Nine Articles. Spelling modernized.

<sup>2</sup> David D. Hall, *The Puritans: A Transatlantic History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 45-46, 49-50.

Councils, and the State, it was the Church that was designated to hold responsibility for Scripture and the head of State that held supremacy over the Church, and any Church Council.

Articles one through five concerned the members of the Godhead. The sixth and seventh articles then addressed “*the sufficiency of the holy Scriptures* for salvation” and established the canon and standing of the Old and New Testaments. The eighth article established that the Nicene, Athanasian, and Apostles’ Creeds “ought thoroughly to be received and believed: for they may be proved by most certain warrants of holy scripture.” The twentieth article declared the Church to be “a keeper of holy writ” and disallowed its ordering “anything that is contrary to God’s word written, neither may it so expound one place of scripture, that it be repugnant to another.” The twenty-first article established that “General Counsels...may err, and sometime have erred” therefore nothing determined by them had any authority “unless it may be declared that they be taken out of holy Scripture.” Furthermore, such councils could only be convened by “the commandment and will of princes.” And more explicitly, the Civil Magistrate at the head of the realm had full power, both “Ecclesiastical or Civil” except in the ministering “of God’s word, or of Sacraments”. This “prerogative” of the “Queen’s Majesty” having the “chief power in this Realm of England” and “the chief government” was established (and qualified) by Scripture: “that only prerogative which we see to have been given always to all godly Princes in holy Scriptures by God himself, that is, that they should rule all estates and degrees committed to their charge by God, whether they be Ecclesiastical or Temporal, and restrain with the civil sword the stubborn and evil doers.”<sup>3</sup> A relevant comparative observation, that may help a modern reader understand the crisis of and discourse on authority in the long wake of 1521, is that the Thirty-Nine Articles were designed to place limits on the clerical Church in much the same way that the US Constitution was crafted so as to place limits on the executive office in the State. Both were reactions to a perceived overreach of sovereign authority in their time, with comparative leeway in the authority/rights bestowed on the counter-balance: the monarch in Reformation England, religion in Revolutionary America. Such historical comparisons aside, at the time of their “confirmation” the Thirty-Nine Articles “put forth” in a straightforward manner a consequential (and contested) hierarchy of competing sovereign claims.

The Church of England under Elizabeth I constituted what would later be referred to as an Erastian Church-State settlement, with the Church firmly under the prerogative of the Crown. The conversation then gradually shifted to that of Royal versus Parliamentary (intra-

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<sup>3</sup> Thirty-Nine Articles. Spelling modernized.

State) control over the Church and Government, occupying much of the next century's controversies and civil wars. Yet, this was an intra-State dispute that was determined in no small measure by their (the monarch or parliament's) respective and corresponding allies among the clergy and laity with settled or unsettled concerns regarding the authority of the monarch over the Church. The more reform-minded Protestants were uneasy (to say the least) about the royal supremacy and sought to reassert the Church's autonomy under the kingship of Christ.<sup>4</sup> David Hall explains that while Elizabeth (and supporters of the royal supremacy) may have believed in a future state of the Church under Christ "enjoying a unique spiritual freedom...At the present moment, however, church and civil state remained coextensive, a 'Constantinian' position based on the premise that the Christian commonwealth was more or less identical with the church of Christ".<sup>5</sup> Thus, Church and Civil discipline were coextensive as well.

Though not specifically concerned with the doctrine of the Trinity, and preceding the Thirty-Nine Articles, it may be helpful to highlight briefly an illustration of the categorical discourse on authority, outside questions of Trinitarianism, from Hall's discussion of the wider discourse surrounding the surplice controversy. For, in addition to clerical vestments, and based on a particular reading of the epistolary New Testament, the office of bishop (as more than a congregational leader) was called into question. Hall asks (for these reformers) what responsibility do observers of corruption bear to right unscriptural wrongs? And, if the royal supremacy in the form of state authority was preventing the correction of those wrongs, could faithful followers of Christ claim the right to act on their own and against the claims of divine rule? Hall acknowledges that a standard New Testament passage often asserted as a foil to royal supremacy was Galatians 5:13, which declared Christians "called unto liberty". That said, however, he insists that it was in fact the very real concern of reformers to strengthen the faith of the "little ones" by the Word that proved an even deeper motive. Hall explains that Matthew Parker, Archbishop during the reign of Elizabeth I, responded to "those who evoked the unwavering authority of Scripture" by pointing to the difference between "what the Bible explicitly authorized and the many topics on which it was silent or contained general rules the church was empowered to interpret." The principle of *adiaphora*, or things indifferent to salvation, "validated the authority of the state church to decide how to interpret Scripture." Or, rather, "it endorsed the intervention of the queen in religious affairs in her role

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<sup>4</sup> See Hall, *Puritans*, 55-57.

<sup>5</sup> Hall, *Puritans*, 57.

as arbiter of religious policy.” Hall explains, in this escalating back and forth of claims to interpretive authority, that the “holdouts countered by playing the card of conscience.” For, “If the surplice was truly a thing indifferent, then the church should allow clergy to practice what their conscience was telling them about idolatry. Conscience came first... And if conscience were recognized as authoritative, what basis was there for the queen’s role as governor of the church?” Hall quotes a contemporary of the controversy: “You think it dangerous for subjects to restrain the prince’s authorities to bounds and limits. We think it dangerous to enlarge the prince’s authority beyond the bounds and limits of holy Scripture.”<sup>6</sup> Hall’s summary of the surplice controversy helps to demonstrate that the authoritative categories of the discourse surrounding the Trinitarian debates was the same (or similar) to that of any other religious, and ultimately doctrinal, controversies. Scripture not only anchored and framed the sovereign claims of Church, State, and individual Conscience, but was itself interpreted by those competing authorities (and their priorities).

Hall had previously explained that “In reality, all but a very few of those who criticized the Elizabethan Settlement endorsed the model of a comprehensive state church and a ministry-magistracy alliance.”<sup>7</sup> And, according to Sarah Mortimer, when Parliament prevailed in the Civil Wars it too favored the authority of the civil magistrate to settle questions of religious orthodoxy and “did not want to rely on ecclesiastical authority”. However, the ecclesiastically heterogeneous Parliamentarians struggled to establish a church settlement that maintained a doctrinal consensus on the Trinity. Mortimer explains that, “Like all Protestants,” Parliamentarians upheld the sufficiency of Scripture “to provide men with knowledge of salvation.” That said, doubt about “the biblical basis” of the accepted doctrine of the Trinity grew in the late 1630s that had to be reckoned with. For, besides its interwoven status within Church of England worship services, the doctrine was a significant barrier to additional (human) claims of divine authority. As incarnate God, who thereby saved mankind by his voluntary death on the cross, Christ held an authoritative status above “finite human beings”. Mortimer explains: “...the doctrine of the Trinity and the divinity of Christ were important because they made God accessible to Christians, while at the same time preventing Christians from seeking Christ-like authority or status for themselves.” Therefore, Mortimer observes, “Given the important social and political implications of the Trinity, as well as its centrality within Christian theology, it is easy to see why there was a strong body of opinion

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<sup>6</sup> See Hall, *Puritans*, 49-50.

<sup>7</sup> Hall, *Puritans*, 46.

in favour of a church settlement which retained this doctrine.<sup>8</sup> And it was upon this effort to retain the doctrine of the Trinity that much of the subsequent practical discourse on authority rested. Beginning then with the conundrum of doctrinal discipline during the interregnum, when Parliament, and not ecclesiastical courts, decided questions of doctrinal error and their proper punishments.

The categories of authority in the discourse are readily apparent in the case of Paul Best, making his trial and prison publications a good primer for our study of the trials of the early eighteenth-century. Most recently, Paul C.H. Lim has summarized Best's case and his *Mysteries Discovered* (1646).<sup>9</sup> Lim's assessment is focused on Best's "antitrinitarian theology" within a "wider contextualization"<sup>10</sup> and is more or less incidental with regard to Best's relation to the discourse on authority. I accordingly offer a reading of Best's case and prison-publication that highlights and focuses more specifically on those aspects/categories relevant to this study. That said, Lim's entire section on Best, including his assessment of the manuscript correspondence between Best and Roger Ley, is recommended reading.

Best had been elected a fellow of St. Catherine's College, Cambridge in 1617 before leaving to fight in the Thirty Years War against the Habsburg's Catholic forces in the Protestant army of Gustavus Adolphus. He was reported to have thereby traveled in Germany, Poland, and Transylvania, including a visit to the University of Greifswald in Pomerania. As one who was ready to enter verbal disputes with others when the opportunity presented itself, he became influenced by the Polish Brethren, and converted to an anti-Trinitarianism that held the Father alone to be God. By 1644 he was back in England fighting in the parliamentary army and by at least early 1645 he had begun to promulgate his views. He was quickly apprehended by the local York clergy who had Best imprisoned in February 1645, but it was not until they sent a complaint to the Westminster Assembly, which was received in June, that further action was taken. The entire Assembly of divines delivered to the House of Commons the reports about Best's "Blasphemies...against the Deity of our Saviour Jesus Christ, and of the Holy Ghost, contained in Books, Treatises, and Notes of his." They wanted Parliament to make an example of Best by using its authority to punish him for his high offence. The House tasked its Committee of Plundered Ministers to prepare a report on their

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<sup>8</sup> Mortimer, *Reason and Religion in the English Revolution*, 148.

<sup>9</sup> See Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 22-29.

<sup>10</sup> Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 11.

examination of his writings. Best was moved to the Gatehouse prison in Westminster and questioned by the committee throughout the next several months.

When the report was finally made at the end of January 1646, parliament placed all its lawyers on the committee in order to prepare its resolution that an ordinance be created so that Best could be punished with death for his declared heretical blasphemies. And while the “draconian” ordinance was subsequently prepared,<sup>11</sup> before proceeding Parliament asked the Westminster divines to try to obtain a recantation from Best.<sup>12</sup> That proving unsuccessful, the Commons questioned Best on 4 April where he stated “That he acknowledged the Holy and Heavenly Trinity; and doth not speak against it; but hoped to be saved by it”. However, he denied “That the Godhead of Jesus Christ is co-equal, co-eternal, and co-existent, with the Godhead of the Father.” He declared that “the Tripersonality of *Athanasius*” was “*Romish*, and *Popish*” and that he would “detest it, till he be otherwise convinced”.<sup>13</sup> Paul C.H. Lim notes that the “considerable stalling between April and June 1646...indicates the level of intra-parliamentary support for Best and the degree of divisiveness and debate over the question of heresy, toleration, and the prickly issue of defining orthodoxy” (the questions Locke attempts to solve in his *Letter Concerning Toleration* discussed later).

Snobelen relates that the same month Best was questioned by the Commons, he managed to get published (while yet in prison) *A Letter of Advice unto the Ministers Assembled at Westminster*, “in which he argues that the denial of liberty of conscience to others was a departure from the gospel, and that repentance was possible only so long as a heretic lived.” Parliament was unable to decide how best to proceed. As a result, Best saw fit to publish his *Mysteries Discovered* in 1647 (again from prison) “a densely written sixteen-page theological manifesto” that argued “the unbiblical nature of the Trinitarian doctrine.” Parliament ordered all copies to be burned by the hangman, but counteracting the Presbyterian’s zeal was “a reticence to prosecute among Erastians and Independents in the Commons” who “were reluctant to see anti-tolerationist forces gain ascendancy.” Lim also notes that “over a hundred petitions were presented to the Commons on [Best’s] behalf.” And from “[t]his polarization in the public sphere” Lim denotes “the crucial place the controversy over the Trinity had in the minds of the Erastian-leaning Presbyterians, both MPs and

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<sup>11</sup> Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, 160.

<sup>12</sup> See Stephen D. Snobelen, “Paul Best (1590-1657)”, *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>13</sup> “House of Commons Journal Volume 4: 4 April 1646.” *Journal of the House of Commons: Volume 4, 1644-1646* (London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 1802), 500. See also Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, 160; and Snobelen, “Paul Best,” *DNB*.

ministers.”<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, Best’s *Mysteries Discovered* openly revealed a “thoroughgoing biblicist, citing scripture no less than 330 times” in the small tract.<sup>15</sup> Mortimer observes that “Parliament was clearly loath to inflict any form of capital punishment upon a man who appealed to the Scriptures and to scholarship [(his own and others)] to substantiate his position.”<sup>16</sup> For, while his scriptural prowess was impressive, Best also appealed, among other scholars, to the authority of “the learned *Erasmus*”, citing (for instance) his “observation...that where God is put absolutely the Father is understood” (referencing John 8:54) to prove the distinction between God and Christ.<sup>17</sup> Interestingly, in Chapter 4, Best did not capitalize on Erasmus’s scholarly omission of the Johannine Comma, offering instead “That 1 *John* 5.7, 8. be the same in effect, like that *Mar.* 10.8. [the Godhead is] one by conspiracy, or conjugation, not individuation, as 1 *Cor.* 6.17. *John* 17.21. *Acts* 4.32. *Heb.* 2.11. *Jer.* 32.39. otherways we should confound the Trinity by such an Unity”.<sup>18</sup> Nigel Smith believes that part of the sympathy Best (and Biddle) met with was the result of “their evident piety, and above all else, ...their reasonableness” that was persuasive for its appeal to contemporary learning in grammar schools and universities.<sup>19</sup> Such a pause for similarly admirable appeals would not be as forthcoming in later cases of Trinitarian import as other Protestants warmed to the debate.

Best was no advocate of the Constantinian model of Church-State authority. In his *Mysteries Discovered* he allowed that “*Constantine* by Gods providence was ordained for ceasing the heathenish persecutions, yet had he no commission for setting up a new religion of redivided Ethnicisme [or, revived Heathenism]...in imitation of the three sons of Saturne, their three major Gods”. Best observed from a series of Old Testament passages “how Kings, Captains, and Counsellors (albeit renowned) are not presidents for Religion more than meaner men” but “that such servile cattell and men-admirers for advantage...are the very bane of ingenuity and Christianity.”<sup>20</sup> Previously in the text, Best explained that “by iniquity of time the reall truth of God hath been trodden under foot by a verball kinde of Divinity,

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<sup>14</sup> Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 23.

<sup>15</sup> Snobelen, “Paul Best,” *DNB*.

<sup>16</sup> Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, 160. For an example of Best’s own original scholarship, see his discussion of “Geometrical proportions” in relation to Christ’s satisfaction and the following deduction of a “*Hysteron proteron* in the Deity” in Chapter 5, pages 9-10.

<sup>17</sup> Paul Best, *Mysteries Discovered* ([London], 1647), 4. See also Best’s Chapter 1, on page [3], for an example of his further use of Erasmus and other scholars.

<sup>18</sup> Paul Best, *Mysteries Discovered* ([London], 1647), 7.

<sup>19</sup> Nigel Smith, “‘And if God was one of us’: Paul Best, John Biddle, and anti-Trinitarian heresy in seventeenth-century England,” in *Heresy, Literature, and Politics in Early Modern English Culture*, edited by David Lowenstein and John Marshall (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 164.

<sup>20</sup> Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, 12.

introduced by the Semi-pagan Christians of the third Century in the Western Church". The earlier hostile "Heathenish Emperours" had been "likened to a Lyon" whereas "their successors to a Dragon, for their serpentine subtilties, continuing 1260 years, begun by the first Nicen Council about 328, and made Catholike by the Imperial decree at *Thessalonica*, 342". But "that prescription" of Church Council with Imperial decree was "no plea against God, and God be thanked, the time of this generall Apostasie is expired, the mystery discovered, and the unity of God...come upon the stage, Covenant."<sup>21</sup> And as to the remaining combined power of the Church and State in his own time, Best could not "understand what detriment could redound either to Church of Common wealth by the toleration of religio[ns], [that were] not antipolitical." He then held forth the promise of toleration's "benefit, as we see by example in *Holland* and *Poland*."<sup>22</sup>

Also, with regard to Scripture, Best charged that these "semi-Pagan Christians" forced "some more difficult and figurative texts to confirme their inventions; whereas that which is most plain, common and commanded is [or ought to be] the measure of that which is more difficult and obscure".<sup>23</sup> This is somewhat contrary to Philip Dixon's use of Best as one who "exhibits definite traits amongst certain religious radicals" including "the impatience of analogical and formal linguistic usage, [and] biblical literalism".<sup>24</sup> Best certainly allowed for figurative and metaphorical senses and took time for grammatical nuances, distinguishing between a solecism and Hebraism in Genesis 11: 7-8 and criticized "some Translations" of Acts 20:28.<sup>25</sup> For a further example, he claimed Christ is "called God by a metaphor, as *Gabriell* a man, *Dan*. 9. 21. and *Judas* a devil, *John* 6.70." And in the first chapter, "...so that Christ is to us both God and his Word, as *Moses* was to *Aaron*, and *Aaron* to him, *Exod*. 4.16. not that a word is Christ, or Christ life everlasting, but in a figurative sence after a Scripture manner and meaning". Thereby, Christ "is said to be that visible God...the word...yea, and palpable word...life eternal....that Lambe of God...our Passeover...the rock...in them typicall predications, and the like...by a Metaphor, or Metonymy..."<sup>26</sup> What Best detested was that the "more difficult and figurative texts" were used to measure the "plain, common and commanded" passages rather than the other way round: the plain thread should precede the complex pattern. Best complained that Christ's humanity was disparaged and his co-

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<sup>21</sup> Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, 11.

<sup>22</sup> Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, 14.

<sup>23</sup> Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, 12.

<sup>24</sup> Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 45.

<sup>25</sup> See Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, 5-6, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Best, *Mysteries, Discovered*, [2].

equality with the Father upheld when there was “not one such word, or any one text tending to that purpose in the whole holy Scriptures, but many to the contrary”. He then gave a succinct argument for the proper approach to understanding scripture and determining doctrine: “If we have respect to the scope, coherence, analogy, and the originals, in discerning figurative forms and phrases according to the sense and meaning, which is the spirit and life of the two Testaments, *Revel.* 11.11. whereas the letter is but the corpse [corpse] common as the high-way throughout Christendom.”<sup>27</sup> Elsewhere he concluded: “Wherefore let us labour to reconcile Scripture by Scripture, and by no means admit of an absurd sense.”<sup>28</sup> In light of his stated approach to Scripture, this later statement by Best (noted by Dixon)<sup>29</sup> was not meant to obviate analogical exegesis, but to expel irrational readings that relied on irreconcilable senses stemming from the testimony of the text itself.<sup>30</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Best was also opposed to the authority given to traditional creeds and that claimed by Church officers, such as the “glorious titles of the orthodox *Nicene* Fathers, and the Pope his Holinesse”. He asked that these and their supporters “consider that in the precepts necessary to salvation, we are to believe what we may apprehend according to our best understanding”. Belief (so called) without understanding could never produce salvation. Those who disagreed were “shut[ting] their eyes against the most illustrious and authentical testimonies of all” and only allowing “the most vain and improbable traditions amongst men”.<sup>31</sup> Best denied “the doctrine of *Athanasius* in his Symbole” citing Galatians 1:10 “against such setters up of new Creeds without warrant”.<sup>32</sup> In Chapter 8, Best parenthetically refers to the first Nicene Council as “the Load-star of the three following”, then commenting that “humane Councils are but externall and accidentall means of truth”. And in a list of disputable decisions by councils, he also saw fit to relate that “*Sozimus* the Civilian” (Pope Sozimus) “falsified...the point of [papal] Primacy”. And he claimed that theological scholarship was on his side (“all the Doctors”, including Calvin in some aspects).<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, 4.

<sup>28</sup> Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> See Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 45.

<sup>30</sup> Nigel Smith also asserts Best’s reliance on figurative language in his brief summary of *Mysteries Discovered*. See Smith, “Best, Biddle, and anti-Trinitarian heresy,” 164.

<sup>31</sup> Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, 15.

<sup>32</sup> Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, [2].

<sup>33</sup> Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, 12-13. See also Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 28-29.

Best offered his own rendering of the Trinity “beleev[ing] that these three are one, or agree and conspire in the substance of the same truth to salvation.” With Best, the Trinity as a whole was not God but the unified means of salvation as ordained by God, the Father.

...to speak definitively of the heavenly Trinity. I beleeve the Father to be God himself...and that the Son is our *Messiah*...whom God made Lord and Christ...Prince and Saviour...And that the holy Spirit is the very power of God... [O]r the Father God essentially, the Sonne vicentially, the holy Spirit potentially, or the Father God above all...the Son of God with us...the holy Spirit God within us...but for the Son to be coequall to the Father, or the holy Spirit a distinct coequall person I cannot finde...<sup>34</sup>

I agree with Paul C.H. Lim that Best is best described as a Socinian (“a Socinian of Best’s sort”). However, Best left open the door to the label of Arianism proper. He maintained Christ as “our Mediator” who held the “offices” of King, Priest, and Prophet. More specifically, he sought to rebut the understanding of the plurality within God drawn from such phrases as “Let us make man” or “Let us go down” (Genesis 1:26; 11:7). Instead, Best offered a counter exegesis to the argument that “us” in these instances stood for the Trinity, and avered that “the person of Christ (according to the flesh) [not] then existing” closed the case. The parenthetical qualification left open the distinct possibility of Christ’s person existing before he was incarnated. However, elsewhere he stated that “*John 8.58.* of Christ his being before *Abraham*, is to be understood in place and dignity...and not time (as appeareth) by circumstance...like that ...of the Baptist.” He acknowledged the “high and glorious Epithites...of a man-child that was to be born” in Isaiah 9:6, and allowed that Christ was “of his Fathers most intimate Counsell, a mighty God (not almighty God) above all appellative gods...of whose government although there were a beginning”.<sup>35</sup> Christ was likened to the “sonne and heire” of “some great King” such as “some of the old *Persians*,” who was “fully acquainted with his will and pleasure, as his vicegerent plenipotentiary and prolocutor”. The Son was “tenant *in Capite*, to God the Father”.<sup>36</sup>

For Best, to say that Christ was both God and man was “contrary both to reason and Scripture”, attempting to bridge “so great a disparity”. This he saw as the error of believing in the “*Apotheosie* of a man-God”. Additionally, Best feared that “we now, and others hereafter shall suffer” for the “high Treason” committed “to equallize even the Kings Sonne, with the King himselfe”—for “it is high blasphemy to eqallize the first borne of every creature, *Col.*

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<sup>34</sup> Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, 4-5. See also Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 44.

<sup>35</sup> Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, 4; 5-[6]. Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 27; see pages 25-27.

<sup>36</sup> Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, [2], 4.

1.15. with the Creator himself”.<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, Best saw the prophet Zacharias as speaking “of a social and not a coequall party. ...God and Christ concurring as social causes, to wit, primary efficient, and principall instrusment in the businesse of salvation”.<sup>38</sup> From these we can understand that, for Best, there was “a time when the Son was not,” though it is not certain Christ’s person did not pre-exist his fleshly frame. Ultimately, Best believed that “the denying of a second Deity or Godhead is not destructive of faith, but onely removes it from a false foundation to a true, that is God the Father by Christ Jesus”.<sup>39</sup> Faith was founded in God the Father, but only realized through his anointed Son.

With regard to Best and the discourse on authority, Lim has noted that, “For Best, the powerful dynamic of the Reformation was unleashed heroically, but only provisionally, by Luther and Calvin” and that Best fully supported “the emphasis on *sola scriptura*.” Lim also observes that Best viewed “human Councils,” as poor means of acquiring truth, as they had been wrong so often, and this included Nicaea. Lim draws from this that “the degree to which one is willing to criticize the legacy of the Nicene and post-Nicene history was a key barometer of one’s sympathy toward the doctrine of the Trinity.”<sup>40</sup> In addition to these observations by Lim, I will point out that Best likened “the discharge of my conscience to God, and man” to Christ’s parable of the talents, declaring “that woe is mee if like a fearfull or idle servant I should bury that simple talent.” He claimed that he denied neither the Trinity nor the canonical Scriptures, and appealed his long imprisonment “to my Countrey and all good Christians” wherein he had not been “debarred of Christian, but of the liberty of a Subject contrary to Law, Ordinance of Parliament: equity and humanity.” There had been no legal hearing or final judgment rendered, contrary to Parliament’s own regular proceedings.<sup>41</sup> He petitioned the House of Commons to not only recognize in him “a liege loving and active Subject to the utmost of his ability” but that they would “*grant him his release or judgement*”.<sup>42</sup> Mortimer sees the clerical and civil authorities as “at a loss as to how to deal with Best.” She explains that, “Prior to the Civil War, heretics had been dealt with by bishops in the ecclesiastical courts and then turned over to the civil authorities for punishment. ...With the abolition of episcopacy such a procedure was no longer possible, for no machinery for the exercise of ecclesiastical authority had been put in its place.” The Westminster Assembly had

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<sup>37</sup> Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, 10, 12.

<sup>38</sup> Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, [6].

<sup>39</sup> Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, 5.

<sup>40</sup> Lim, *Mystery Unveiled*, 25, 28-29.

<sup>41</sup> Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, 1-2.

<sup>42</sup> Best, *Mysteries Discovered*, [17].

been established in order to advise Parliament on ecclesiastical issues, but it held no jurisdiction over Best.<sup>43</sup> As a partial result of this confusion, Best was released from prison in late 1647 and allowed to retire to Yorkshire where he died ten years later. However, his case along with that of John Biddle helped to make denial of the Trinity after 1648 a capital offence.<sup>44</sup> In all, Best opposed the authority of both the church ministers and the civil magistrates to ultimately determine questions of doctrine, let alone punishment, for personally salvific beliefs clearly based on Scriptural evidence.

As the Cromwellian protection of (Protestant) “Christian liberty” (recall the assertion of Galatians 5:13 that could be used by liberal as well as conservative reformers) became standard in the next decade, Best was not alone in his insistence on the authority of his conscience and the absolute guide of Scripture. “Religion,” Cromwell declared to Parliament in 1654, “was not the thing at first contested for, but God brought it to that issue at last...and at last it proved to be that which was most dear to us. And wherein consisted this more than in obtaining that liberty from the tyranny of the bishops to all species of Protestants to worship God according to their own light and conscience?”<sup>45</sup> And accordingly, with varying levels of devotion to Scripture, England abounded with what have been termed radical sects during this period: Fifth Monarchy Men, Ranters, Baptists, Quakers, Diggers, Muggletonians, and other individuals and lay preachers that claimed to be guided by personal revelation or by the light within.<sup>46</sup> John Spurr has related that the plethora of religious sects in the mid-seventeenth century has been explained “variously” as (1) a result of the Reformation’s emphases on individual conscience, a certain biblicism, and concern for personal assurance of salvation, or (2) a rejection of Protestant perspectives about a depraved and incapacitated humanity paralleled by a willingness for common people to enter discourses that had previously been reserved to elites, or (3) simply the chaotic condition that necessarily preceded any final settlement of the Reformation’s aims.<sup>47</sup>

With Cromwell’s death in 1658 and the subsequent end of the Protectorate and Stuart Restoration in May 1660 came the promise of greater stability through episcopal government, marked by “a liberty to tender consciences”.<sup>48</sup> The ecclesiastical courts were reestablished

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<sup>43</sup> Mortimer, *Reason and Religion*, 159. See also Smith, “Best, Biddle, and anti-Trinitarian heresy,” 164.

<sup>44</sup> Snobelen, “Paul Best,” *DNB*.

<sup>45</sup> As quoted in Charles Harding Firth, *Oliver Cromwell and the Rule of the Puritans in England* (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1908), 73. See also Spurr, *Post-Reformation*, 130-31.

<sup>46</sup> See Spurr, *Post-Reformation*, 131-32. See also Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 135.

<sup>47</sup> Spurr, *Post-Reformation*, 133.

<sup>48</sup> Spurr, *Post-Reformation*, 140.

along with a “moderate” episcopacy in 1661. By the end of 1661, however, the “Cavalier Parliament” had been elected and such moderation firmly ended with the 1662 Act of Uniformity that “rent English Protestantism into two”—conformity or non-conformity to the established national church’s Book of Common Prayer, as well as subscriber or non-subscriber to the Thirty-Nine Articles. Between 1649 and the events of 1688, the royalist conforming clergy of the Church of England nurtured a special care for the doctrine of “passive obedience” to the monarch in deference to his or her divine right to rule. This later proved, however, to be a two-edged sword (both during and after the Glorious Revolution). Those unable to conform to the Church of England’s prescriptions (anywhere between four to ten percent of the population) were labeled “Dissent”, awkwardly placing hitherto dominant Presbyterians and influential Independents categorically alongside Separatists, Sabbatarians, Quakers, and Baptists.<sup>49</sup> As the Church-State alliance (recognized as a veritable *reliance* on the part of the episcopal Church post-Restoration) moved forward in its program of uniformity it became more aggressive against any Nonconformists.

A series of Acts passed by Parliament (subsequently known as the Clarendon Code) successively sought to starve Dissenters of their supports and prevent them from any intrigue against the Church-State settlement. Foremost was the Act of Uniformity, passed in April 1662, that forced any remaining Dissenters among the clergy to submit to the Book of Common Prayer and obtain episcopal ordination if not already had. Academics were also required to conform to the established church.<sup>50</sup> This moment of decision, however, had been preceded by the Quaker Act (1661) forbidding five or more adherents from worshipping together and the Corporation Act (1661) requiring even local civil magistrates to take an oath of loyalty to the crown and receive communion in the Church of England. In all, more than 2,000 clergy and academics lost their livings on or before 24 August 1662 (St. Bartholomew’s Day). In the main, Michael Watts reports, they were “committed Presbyterians” but of whom “perhaps a majority were...mere Puritans who had hitherto eschewed sectarian labels.”<sup>51</sup> Similarly, David Appleby wrote that “it should always be borne in mind that most [of the ejected ministers] regarded themselves as opponents of the Act of Uniformity rather than an

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<sup>49</sup> Spurr, *Post-Reformation*, 149-50. Also, “Dissent” was the term more often used in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries for both those who did not conform to the Book of Common Prayer or who did not subscribe to the Thirty-Nine Articles, while “Nonconformity” was the term more widely used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. I would like to credit William Gibson for supplying this general rule for the use of such nomenclature.

<sup>50</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, 218-29. The decision to conform or not had to be made by August 24, 1662, St. Bartholomew’s Day. See also David J. Appleby, *Black Bartholomew’s Day: Preaching, polemic and Restoration nonconformity* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 27-37.

<sup>51</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, 219. See also Appleby, *Black Bartholomew’s Day*, 33.

alternative to the Church of England.”<sup>52</sup> The Conventicle Act (1664) extended the Quaker Act to all Dissenters and was made permanent in 1670. And to add to these difficulties for Non-Conformists, the Five Mile Act (1665) prohibited preachers who had not taken an oath to abstain from seeking “any alteration of government either in church or state”<sup>53</sup> from coming within five miles of former parishes or preaching near the cities, towns, or borough represented in Parliament.<sup>54</sup> This last was particularly pointed as it resulted from the courageous even if open ministry of Dissenting clergymen to Londoners during the plague, who had been (in contrast) abandoned by King and Parliament and a majority of the parish clergy.<sup>55</sup> In addition to the Clarendon Code, the Test Act of 1673 would require “sacramental tests on all holders of civil and military offices under the crown” but it “did not apply to M.P.s”. And, similarly, the updated 1678 Test Act allowed Dissenters to be elected to Parliament and take their seat if they took the oaths of allegiance and supremacy, as well as declared against the Roman Catholic dogmas of transubstantiation and the adoration of Mary and the Saints. However, these proved to be for the most part hollow allowances, for the problem lay in getting a scattered religious minority elected. Dissenters, therefore, never held any political influence of themselves, remaining reliant on “sympathetic Anglicans”<sup>56</sup> or, for at least one Dissenting sect, on the integrity and social status of its converts.

The most prominent follower of George Fox, William Penn (1644-1718), was a striking example of the impact of individual conscience on institutional authority. Penn’s writings on the Trinity are another good primer for the later trials and controversies explored in the subsequent chapters. Penn is not often acknowledged for his role in the Trinitarian debates, but rather for his role in the discourse on authority. I therefore tried to focus on those aspects that were most salient to the combined study of both. Penn was noted by Cotton Mather in his writings that warned against the Friends doctrine relating to the Trinity, and he is of course also relevant due to his subsequent colony of Pennsylvania known for its religious pluralism that later hosted the Presbyterian’s Hemphill Affair.

The son of Sir William Penn (1621-1670) of the admiralty, Penn was educated at Christ Church, Oxford but was dismissed when he refused to deny his newly found faith and declared his membership in the Religious Society of Friends. He was imprisoned multiple

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<sup>52</sup> Appleby, *Black Bartholomew’s Day*, 33.

<sup>53</sup> As quoted in Watts, *Dissenters*, 226.

<sup>54</sup> See Watts, *Dissenters*, 223-26; and Spurr, *Post-Reformation*, 151.

<sup>55</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, 225-26.

<sup>56</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, 251-52.

times in the Tower of London because he “attacked the contemporary understanding of the Trinity as ‘a fiction’”, furthermore, he “denied the orthodox Calvinist doctrines of the vicarious atonement ‘and the justification of impure persons by an imputative righteousness’.”<sup>57</sup> These views were expounded in his *The Sandy Foundation Shaken* (1668), wherein he reminded his readers that neither “the Authority of Scripture Testimonies” nor “right Reason” could support the Athanasian Trinity.<sup>58</sup>

Penn spoke for hundreds and thousands of Nonconformists of every persuasion persecuted during the royal restoration when he rested his case on the authority of his conscience. In 1668, Penn wrote in prison a treatise, titled *No Cross, No Crown*, where he stated that, “As receiving of Christ is the means appointed by God to salvation, so bearing the daily cross after him is the only true testimony of receiving him.”<sup>59</sup> And, therefore, when he was told “that the Bishop of *London* was resolved he should either publicly recant, or die a Prisoner” he replied: “That my *Prison* shall be my *Grave*, before I will budge a Jot; for I owe my *Conscience* to no Mortal Man: I have no need to fear, *God will make amends for all*”.<sup>60</sup> Penn wrote of the Athanasian Creed that he had “never seen one Copy void of a suspicion, rather to have been the results of Popish School-men”. He warned his readers “not to imbrace the determinations of prejudic’d Councils, for Evangelical Doctrine; to whom the Scriptures bear no certain testimony, neither was believ’d by the Primitive Saints, or thus stated by any I have read in the first, second or third Centuries”. Instead, he enjoined them to “be admonish’d to apply thy mind unto the Light and Grace which brings Salvation; that by obedience thereunto, those mists Tradition hath cast before thy eyes, may be expel’d, and thou receive a certain knowledge of that God, whom to know is Life Eternal”.<sup>61</sup> Obedience to Grace, not Conciliar Tradition, was Penn’s adamant exhortation, that yet he supported with claims to have searched primitive Christianity for evidence.

The next year Penn published *Innocency with Her Open Face*, wherein he subsequently defended his belief in “*Christ the Saviours being God*”. He admitted of having “read of one *Socinus*” who “became a *perpetual Exile* for his *Conscience*” but denied “that reproachfull Epithite” of Socinian because he “*was never baptized into his [Socinus] name,*”

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<sup>57</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, 241. See also Mary K. Geiter, “William Penn (1644-1718)”, in *Oxford DNB* (04 January 2007), 5.

<sup>58</sup> William Penn, *The Sandy Foundation Shaken* (London: 1668), 1 and 14-15.

<sup>59</sup> As quoted in Watts, *Dissenters*, 241.

<sup>60</sup> William Penn, *A Collection of the Works of William Penn, In Two Volumes. To Which is Prefixed A Journal of His Life*, compiled by Henry Portsmouth (London: J. Sowle, 1726), 6.

<sup>61</sup> Penn, *Sandy Foundation Shaken*, 14-15

and therefore holding as much resemblance to the Socinians in his doctrine of the Godhead as he did “the *English-Church*” due to his support of the Reformation principles embraced as such “against the *Roman Church*.” Penn nonetheless owned that, regarding Socinus “if in any thing I acknowledge the verity of his Doctrine, *it is for the Truth’s sake*, of which, in many things, he had a clearer prospect then most of his Contemporaries”.<sup>62</sup> It is significant to note that Penn understood his explication of the Godhead to be the chief reason for his imprisonment: “That which I am credibly inform’d to be the greatest reason for my Imprisonment, and that noise of Blasphemy...*is, my denying the Divinity of Christ, and divesting him of his Eternal Godhead*, which most busily hath been suggested as well to those in *Authority*, as maliciously insinuated amongst the *People*”.<sup>63</sup> The young Penn clearly identified with Socinus, “*a young man*” within a noble family who “voluntarily did abandon the glories, pleasures and honors of [Florentine court life]...and became *a perpetual Exile* for his *Conscience*”.<sup>64</sup> Andrew Murphy relates that “Vincent Buranelli [has pointed] out...that Quakers denied the Trinity to equate Christ with God, whereas the Socinians denied the Trinity to deny the divinity of Christ. In time, the difference became apparent, and Penn soon repudiated Socinian ideas.”<sup>65</sup>

Penn’s exacting and courageous conscience was indicative of the Society’s resilience against the combined institutional authority of Church and State, but Friends also overrode the ultimate authority of Scripture. Michael Watts reports that “the Quaker exaltation of the Spirit over the letter” for many nonconforming Protestants was “a heaven-sent release” from “the legal requirements” of a strict adherence to Scripture.<sup>66</sup> For such as these, their relation to God was strongly associated with liberty and a human capacity to realize perfection while yet mortal:

In January 1652 John Offley and his wife were excommunicated ‘for denying all the ordinances of the Lord’, claiming ‘that they were grown to perfection’, ‘sighting of the Scriptures’, ‘for saying that all things are God, yea, that they are gods’, and for maintaining ‘that there is no sin’. Two months later four more members were excommunicated ‘for denying to be guided and ruled by

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<sup>62</sup> William Penn, *Innocency with Her Open Face Presented By Way of Apology for the Book entituled the Sandy Foundation Shaken* ([London], 1669), 11-14.

<sup>63</sup> Penn, *Innocency*, 5-6.

<sup>64</sup> Penn, *Innocency*, 13.

<sup>65</sup> Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, 169, 169n11. See also Christopher J. Walker, *Reason and Religion in Late Seventeenth-Century England: The Politics and Theology of Radical Dissent* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2013), 147-49.

<sup>66</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, 206-207.

the Scriptures; saying, that they were in liberty, and they would not be brought into bondage again'.<sup>67</sup>

Penn's Pennsylvania colony of persecuted Friends would become a haven for religious refugees, providing a constitutional guarantee of religious liberty. Sally Schwartz notes that Penn's desire that inhabitants only be required "to be believe in God and consider themselves conscientiously obliged to live peaceably under civil government" was given "one significant restriction" in 1701 (by the Pennsylvania Assembly in his absence) that remained until the American Revolution: "only Christians could serve in the executive or legislative branches of the government." Schwartz concludes that "it appears that [Penn] was forced to acquiesce in the distinction between personal and political rights in his province."<sup>68</sup> Even so, Penn's adherence to his individual conscience led him to successfully carve out institutional protections for similarly principled religionists.

Much of the attention in the 1670s was turned to the fears of Catholic plots against English Protestantism and the related possible succession of James II, a Catholic, to the throne. The persecution waned in the 1680s as the unpopular James II courted the support of Dissenters to bolster his hold on the crown to advance his religious policies. But the olive leaf to Dissent came too late and from the wrong hand (because royal and/or Catholic) to reverse the machinations of Protestant England to effect its own deliverance in the persons of William of Orange and Mary, the Protestant daughter of James. In fact, the 1689 Act of Toleration began as the parliamentary counter-attack in response to James II's 1687 Declaration of Indulgence. The Act was specifically drafted in 1688 (prior to the Glorious Revolution) to prevent the formation of a Roman Catholic and Protestant Dissenter alliance. The 1687 Declaration "suspended both the penal laws and the Test Acts" for Dissenters, in the hopes that this would weaken the Protestant opposition to toleration for Roman Catholics. The 1688/89 Act, therefore, was intended to keep Dissenters firmly attached to the Protestant cause, as some worried that they would not perceive, as one Presbyterian worded it, the threat to "the liberties of their country".<sup>69</sup> For it was only in 1685 that across the channel Louis XIV

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<sup>67</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, 206.

<sup>68</sup> Sally Schwartz, *"A Mixed Multitude": The Struggle for Toleration in Colonial Pennsylvania* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), 32-33; see also pages 29-35 and 22-23. As will be discussed later, the resulting religious and theological diversity played no small role in the later debate over subscription in the Hemphill affair within the Presbyterian Synod at Philadelphia, where religious societies regulated themselves without recourse to civil coercions.

<sup>69</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, 258.

had revoked the Edict of Nantes, and many Dissenters could only hope that James II did not have a similar scheme in mind.

Michael Watts has stated that “there were many Dissenters who disliked a toleration granted by royal prerogative, and more who distrusted the motives of a Catholic king”, who they suspected would do away with all Protestants if only given the chance.<sup>70</sup> James fled to France in December 1688 and in May, with the Glorious Revolution successfully completed in England, William and Mary’s royal assent to the Act of Toleration served to strengthen their rule by officially recognizing the broad Protestant basis and support for their claim to the throne.<sup>71</sup> The days of combined Church and State sponsored persecution of Dissenters’ religious worship were effectively over, though civil disabilities continued with the failure of William’s larger aims in the Comprehension Bill. Nonetheless, the most consequential result of William’s 5 November 1688 landing, at least for nonconformists, was his and Mary’s subsequent approval of toleration enacted by Parliament—not by mere monarchical decree.

Comprehension, however, was William’s full intention. Toleration was only half of the endeavor. The complimenting bill for Comprehension that would have allowed Presbyterians (by far the greatest number of Dissenters) to join the national religious establishment was defeated by the Church and Parliament, who refused to alter the Anglican liturgy to address their concerns. Ralph Stevens succinctly relates the situation, “Despite widespread expectations...the Toleration Act became law alone.”<sup>72</sup> As a result, William Gibson explains, “This left the Toleration Act...to apply to all Trinitarian Dissenters” that otherwise would have been largely comprehended within the established Church.<sup>73</sup> As a pragmatist, William had left the details on Comprehension to the Church and therein (in part) the program failed and yet therein also his ideal of it lived on to inspire a number of churchmen in the next generation, such as Benjamin Hoadly.<sup>74</sup> Even so, the resulting

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<sup>70</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, 258.

<sup>71</sup> For other motives, more particularly regarding the international situation, see Jonathan I. Israel, “The Dutch Role in the Glorious Revolution,” in *The Anglo-Dutch Moment: Essays on the Glorious Revolution and its World Impact*, ed. Jonathan I. Israel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 136-141.

<sup>72</sup> Ralph Stevens, *Protestant Pluralism: The Reception of the Toleration Act, 1689-1720*, NED-New edition (Boydell & Brewer Press, 2018), 13-15

<sup>73</sup> Gibson, *Unity and Accord*, 36; Stevens, *Protestant Pluralism*, 13-18; and Hugh Trevor-Roper, “Toleration and Religion after 1688,” in *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, edited by Old Peter Grell, et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Oxford University Press, 1991), 390-91; See also Watts, *Dissenters*, 260; and Jonathan I. Israel, “William III and Toleration,” in *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, edited by Old Peter Grell, et al. (Oxford: Clarendon Oxford University Press, 1991), 150-57. Israel relates the continental factors that impelled William’s concern for toleration and argues for his desire to weaken the Church of England via comprehension.

<sup>74</sup> Gibson, *Unity and Accord*, 49.

compromise, that became known as the Act of Toleration, had sought “some Ease to Scrupulous Consciences in the Exercise of Religion” as “an effectual means to Unite Their Majesties Protestant Subjects in Interest and Affection”.<sup>75</sup> Despite the failure to achieve or enact comprehension, the Parliament had firmly defined the Protestant cause as apart from the “radical” Reformation. The budding empire needed religious unity, and like Constantine, William and Mary believed that the doctrine of the Trinity as articulated by the ecumenical creeds would provide that basic unity. In relation to the Athanasian Creed, Sirota identifies the nominal support that that creed had in 1689 among some of the episcopal clergy, when William and Mary’s ecclesiastical commissioners discussed both its antiquity and, therefore, authority. However, he acknowledges that rural and non-London churchmen were very much displeased with the selection of so many “latitudinarian” divines for the commission.<sup>76</sup>

The Act of Toleration provided a wide berth for doctrinal controversy to be publicly displayed on multiple fronts rather than from the vantage of the singular establishment. This situation became more clear when doctrinal dispute was largely left unchecked as Parliament allowed the Licensing Act (for printed works) to lapse in 1695, while the first Trinitarian controversy flourished in the mid-1690s, thus allowing even non-tolerated views to be published with impunity. The lapse occurred only weeks after the royal plea to clergy to not print on the subject of the Trinity, and it was quickly followed later in the year with the publication of Locke’s *The Reasonableness of Christianity, As delivered in the Scriptures* (1695) that further inflamed the public debate, with John Edwards in particular subsequently accusing Locke of Socinianism.<sup>77</sup>

The Act of Toleration granted freedom to worship to Presbyterians, Baptists, Congregationalists, Quakers, and, in short—all Protestants, specifically excluding Roman Catholics and Non-Trinitarians. And, again, as an act of toleration rather than comprehension, it did not grant full civil liberties to Dissenters.<sup>78</sup> This civil disability was a particular point of contention between (primarily) High Church Anglicans and the Presbyterians and

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<sup>75</sup> 1689 Act of Toleration, Preamble.

<sup>76</sup> See Sirota, “Trinitarian Crisis,” 38.

<sup>77</sup> See Raymond Astbury, “The Renewal of the Licensing Act in 1693 and its Lapse in 1695,” *The Library*, Vol. 33, No. 4 (December 1978), 296-322, see particularly page 313 regarding Locke’s concern for publishing works deemed heretical; William III, *Directions to our Arch-Bishops and Bishops, for the Preserving of Unity in the Church, and the Purity of the Christian Faith, Concerning the Holy Trinity* (London: Charles Bill, 1695); and Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 162: “Henceforth [Locke’s] orthodoxy was suspect...” See also, Mark Goldie, ed., *Locke: Political Essays* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 329-39.

<sup>78</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, 260: “The ‘Glorious Revolution’ thus gave orthodox Dissenters statutory freedom to worship in their own way, but it did not give them civil equality.” See also Spurr, *Post-Reformation*, 189.

Congregationalists who held that “occasional conformity” (participating in Anglican communion while maintaining their Dissenting membership) was theologically permissible. Some Anglicans saw this as a latitudinarian approach, while others, particularly in the High Church circles, viewed it as unconscionable duplicity.<sup>79</sup> This tension was of particular interest to Congregationalists in New England, such as Cotton Mather (and later Jonathan Mayhew), who viewed themselves still as part of the Church of England (not merely opposed to episcopacy, and in fact the truest expression and purest manifestation of the English Reformation). Such were anxious for the maintenance of their religious and civil liberties.<sup>80</sup>

In the drafting of both the Declaration of Indulgence and the Act of Toleration we can see the larger Church and State factions of an Anglican parliament and a Catholic monarch vying for the political support of Nonconformists, who, for the most part, were more wary of a Catholic Church-State alliance than an Anglican Church-State establishment. The English Presbyterians, who had earlier been so powerful under the Protectorate, had now “completed the metamorphosis...from the religion of a national church to that of a Dissenting sect.”<sup>81</sup> The concept of toleration had triumphed over that of comprehension, and not without consequence for the crisis of authority’s disputes and mediations over jurisdiction and domain between Church and State, along with the Renaissance’s recovery of historical scholarship and the Reformation’s core assertions of the primacy of Scripture and adherence to individual Conscience. With toleration now firmly ensconced in the legal sphere of both the State and its established Church,<sup>82</sup> disputes over the sole, explicitly doctrinal feature limiting that toleration (the doctrine of the Trinity) once again began to carve into the institutions of empire and to refine the grounds of sound argument and legitimate (or moral) authority. Such a situation had scarcely been seen since the Constantinian era of empire, disquieted by the same pronounced dispute. However, contrary to the aptly named Patristic era, the debate this time contributed toward a lessening of formal ecclesiastical power and, instead, tended toward greater adjudication by individuals via the State protection of God-given, and therefore sovereign,

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<sup>79</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, 265.

<sup>80</sup> See Robert Middlekauf, *The Mathers: Three Generations of Puritan Intellectuals, 1596-1728* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), 220-24.; Mullins, *Father of Liberty*, 130-32. See also Cotton Mather, *Eleutheria: Or, An Idea of the Reformation in England and A History of Non-Conformity in and since that Reformation* (London: F.R., 1698), 35, 57, and 63. Michael Watts provides further background to this point on the Congregational outlook, even during the Restoration: “...Puritans had always upheld the concept of a national church” (*Dissenters*, 243).

<sup>81</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, 260.

<sup>82</sup> This was only further strengthened by the de-facto bi-confessional monarchy later created by the Acts of Union.

Conscience.

### 1.3 – American Background: Disquiet in Seventeenth-Century New England, Pennsylvania, and New York

“Zion is not a City of Fools” insisted Cotton Mather in the introduction to the third book of his *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702). This third book sought to eternally reproach those that mocked the “*sort of Men sometime called Puritans*” in the same way that early Christians were said to be “all poor, weak, unlearned Men.” Mather warned of the absurdity of a person to “*form his Ideas of the Primitive Christians, from the monstrous Accusations of their Adversaries*” and applied the same illogic to understanding the “Puritan Christians in our Days...[via] the Tory-Pens”.<sup>1</sup> Listing seventy-seven of New England’s “First Good Men”, those who were active ministers at the time of their leaving England, “the first that *enlightened* the dark Regions of America with their Ministry”, Mather then appended the name “of that Great Man, Dr. *William Ames*”. According to Mather, Ames was “One of the most Eminent and Judicious Persons that ever lived in this World,” and “was *Intentionally a New-England Man, tho’ not Eventually*”. Mather explained that Ames had died before his plans to join the New England godly could be carried out, however, his widow and their three children did eventually see his intentions through.<sup>2</sup>

Orphaned at a young age along with his sister, through the beneficence of his uncle William Ames was educated at Christ’s College, Cambridge where he proceeded MA and was elected a fellow and ordained in 1601. While there, Ames was a disciple of William Perkins and his “fervent religion”. Keith Sprunger described Perkins as “the mightiest preacher of Elizabethan times.”<sup>3</sup> However, Perkins was a “moderate Puritan” who with pious intent conformed to the practices and ceremonies of the established Church, whereas Ames staunchly sought a further Reformation. His forthright intransigence in a late-December sermon before the master of the college in 1609 swiftly led to his suspension from the university by the vice-chancellor’s court in February 1610.<sup>4</sup> After he was refused a preaching

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<sup>1</sup> Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana: or, the Ecclesiastical History of New-England [1620-1698]* (London: Thomas Parkhurst, 1702), 1 (hereafter cited as *Magnalia Christi Americana*).

<sup>2</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Book III, 2-3. Mather claims that Ames’ library also came to New England, though more recent scholarship “indicat[es] that the family sold his library in the Netherlands” where they were “nearly destitute” before they were able to remove to England and thence to America (see Keith L. Sprunger, “William Ames (1576-1633),” *Oxford DNB*. See also, Keith L. Sprunger, “William Ames and the Settlement of Massachusetts Bay,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Mar., 1966), 69-70.

<sup>3</sup> Keith L. Sprunger, *The Learned Doctor William Ames: Dutch Backgrounds of English and American Puritanism*, (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 6. This source was first published in 1972 by the University of Illinois Press.

<sup>4</sup> See Margo Todd, “Providence, Chance and the New Science in Early Stuart Cambridge,” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (September, 1986), 697, ft.1.

license from the Bishop of London, Ames left England and resided in the Netherlands for the remaining 23 years of his life. At first Ames was employed as the personal chaplain to the commander of English forces in the Netherlands, a position which included presiding over the English congregation at The Hague, as well as accompanying troops in military campaigns. With the commander's support, Ames was safe from the calls emanating from London for his dismissal. When the Synod of Dort convened, Ames, who had published notable defenses of Calvinism in the preceding Arminian controversy, was appointed a paid advisor to the synod president. However, following the conclusion of the synod, James I blocked an imminent offer for Ames to become professor of theology at the University of Leiden. And with a new English commander at The Hague, Ames had to leave his post as chaplain. Accordingly, Ames accepted an offer to be professor of theology at the University of Franeker in Friesland.<sup>5</sup>

From Franeker, Ames was able to publish his two works that are the most notable basis for Cotton Mather's assessment of him: *Medulla theologiae* (or, *Marrow of Theology*, 1627) and *De Conscientia, et eius jure, vel casibus* (or, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof*, 1630). These works remained highly valued in New England (and its colleges), particularly his *Marrow of Theology*, throughout the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.<sup>6</sup> In *Medulla theologiae*, Ames defined "Divinity" as "the doctrine of living to God." But since the principle of Divinity was not "inbred in us...not in us from Nature" it was important to see God as "the living and life-giving God" by whom humans gained life as they came near to him. With regard to the Trinity, Ames offered a straight-forward acceptance of the coequal, coessential, and coeternal Godhead. The connection to his overall point was, that "...God is the object of our Faith, is in every way sufficient to impart salvation to us. For all love, grace, and the communication of those things which pertain to living well, doe flow from the Father, Sonne, and holy Spirit, 2 Cor 13.13."<sup>7</sup> The Trinitarian debates in New England focused heavily (though by no means exclusively) on this aspect of piety, of living well to God *through* God, as Cotton Mather would later explicate so well.

And in his *De Conscientia*, Ames formed a bulwark around the authority of individual Conscience that reflected Luther's stance in Worms that perpetuated a pattern for the later discourse. There were two distinctions by which Conscience could be understood: "that which

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<sup>5</sup> For this paragraph, see Sprunger, "William Ames," *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>6</sup> Sprunger, "William Ames and the Massachusetts Bay Colony", 73.

<sup>7</sup> William Ames, *The Marrow of Sacred Divinity, Drawne Out of the holy Scriptures and Interpreters thereof [or, Marrow of Theology]* (London: Edward Griffin, [1639]), 19. My underline.

is *Naturall*, and that which is *Inlightened*.” Natural Conscience acknowledged “for law the principles of nature, and the conclusions arising from them.” Whereas, Enlightened Conscience “is that which doth beside [the principles of nature], acknowledge whatsoever is prescribed in Scriptures.” Therefore, “the perfect and only rule of Conscience is the revealed will of God [as it containeth both of the natural and enlightened], whereby a mans duty is both showne and commanded. . . the *Law* of God onely doth bind the Conscience of man.”<sup>8</sup> In juxtaposing the duties of conscience in relation to the “lawes of men” and of those of God, Ames clearly elevated the role of individual Conscience (in the pattern of Luther) in such an arbitration: “Hence it is, that though men be bound in Conscience by God to observe in due and just circumstances the lawes of men, yet the same lawes of men so far as they are mans lawes, doe not bind the Conscience.” He continued, “The Conscience is immediately subject to God, and his will, and therefore it cannot submit itself unto any creature without Idolatry.”<sup>9</sup> Ultimately, it is “the will of God” in any duty or promise that binds the Conscience. Though Ames would infuse this subjection of Conscience to the Law of God *into* Conscience itself— “Conscience bindeth according as it is informed of the will of God: for in it selfe it hath the power of a will of God, and so stands in the place of God himself.”<sup>10</sup> In essence, an appropriately informed Conscience binds (i.e., “[has] such an authority” over)<sup>11</sup> an individual as God does. This discourse on the authority of conscience in relation to laws of men, or the civil magistrate, continued with John Cotton and Roger Williams, one that fused the question of authority in relation to conscience with concern for the covenantal piety of a church and commonwealth in practice. Both drew on the fourth and fifth century’s Arian controversy to identify the principles they sought to apply.

John Cotton (1585-1652) was also educated at Cambridge (a student at Trinity College, but later fellow, head lecturer, and dean of Emmanuel College) and influenced by the preaching of William Perkins. Cotton proved an able and articulate minister who abhorred separatism yet sought reform in the Church of England. For more than twenty years he preached at St. Botolph’s in Boston, Lincolnshire, with great effect. With the lessening prospects for reform in the reign of Charles I, Cotton decided he could do more in the New

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<sup>8</sup> William Ames, *Conscience with the Power and Cases Thereof Devided into V. Bookes. Written by the Godly and Learned, William Ames, Doctor, and Professor of Divinity, in the Famous University of Franeker in Friesland. Translated Out of Latine into English, for More Publique Benefit* (London, Leiden: Imprinted [W. Christiaens, E. Griffin, J. Dawson], 1639), 5-6. <https://www.proquest.com/books/conscience-with-power-cases-thereof-devided-into/docview/2264187606/se-2?accountid=11359> (hereafter cited as *Conscience*).

<sup>9</sup> Ames, *Conscience*, 6.

<sup>10</sup> Ames, *Conscience*, 7.

<sup>11</sup> Ames, *Conscience*, 6.

England Plantation to offer a witness of the Gospel than in enduring a prospective prison sentence for nonconformity. He sailed for Massachusetts Bay in July 1633 and became a member of the Boston church on 8 September, along with his second wife, Sarah, with his first-born son, Seaborn, presented for baptism. He has been noted as most likely “the leading theologian of [New England’s] founding fathers.”<sup>12</sup>

Roger Williams (c.1606-1683) had arrived in the colony in February 1631. Prior to that, under the patronage of Sir Edward Coke, Williams had been educated at Pembroke College, Cambridge, graduating BA in January 1627. He had expressed strong separatist leanings early in his career, untampered by (or heedless of) a clerical living or concern for the national communion. Williams had been initially welcome in the colony but his insistence on congregational separation from communion with not only the Church of England—the entire venture sought to provide a pattern *for* the Church of England—but also the Churches of New England, proved too much for the colonial authorities.<sup>13</sup> The Salem congregation that had called him to be their minister were pressured into rescinding the call, and were subsequently favored with Hugh Peter as their pastor, a close friend of William Ames. Williams was banished from the colony, which led to his founding the settlement of Providence in what would become a newly chartered colony, Rhode Island, where he would hold forth “Liberty of Conscience” as the reigning principle in the parallel existence of any religious association alongside (yet still within) civil society.<sup>14</sup>

Whereas Cotton identified (in a manner that followed the Athanasian Creed) that “in Points of Doctrine some are fundamental, without right believe whereof a Man cannot be saved”, thus demarcating the role of a Christian magistrate,<sup>15</sup> Williams declared that such a “doctrine of persecution for cause of Conscience” was “guilty of all the blood of the Soules crying for vengeance under the Altar” described in the Book of Revelation.<sup>16</sup> In his *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution for Cause of Conscience* (1644), Williams openly opposed not only John Cotton, but John Calvin and Theodore Beza in their misguided practice of

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<sup>12</sup> See Bremer, “John Cotton (1585-1652),” *Oxford DNB*; and, H. Shelton Smith, Robert T. Handy, and Lefferts A. Loetscher, *American Christianity: An Historical Interpretation with Representative Documents, Volume 1, 1607-1820* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1960), 103.

<sup>13</sup> See Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, 36.

<sup>14</sup> See Bremer, “Roger Williams (c.1606-1683),” *Oxford DNB*; Smith, et. al., *American Christianity, Vol. 1*, 151; and Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 63-65. Concerning a National Church or a State Church, see also Roger Williams, *The Bloody Tenent, of Persecution, for cause of Conscience, discussed, in A Conference betweene Truth and Peace* ([London], 1644), 104.

<sup>15</sup> As quoted in Williams, *Bloody Tenant*, 7.

<sup>16</sup> Williams, *Bloody Tenant*, fourth in his introductory list of arguments.

protecting the faithful in a manner that employed something other than the Sword of the Spirit.<sup>17</sup> The “Arrians” made the same mistake of wielding the civil sword to advance their view of the gospel, so likewise their enemies.<sup>18</sup> It is uncertain from the text what Williams meant by this reference to “the Arrians”, whether he meant it to reference their treatment toward others or the treatment they received. From the paragraph just prior, it seems to indicate the former, whereas later references would seem the latter. Either way, the use of the civil sword is condemned.

At one point, Cotton justified his non-toleration, in a factual yet brief statement, perhaps intended to frame Williams’ own treatment in the Massachusetts Bay Colony (in which he had a hand), by appealing to the example of “more and greater” magistrates who did not abide “Heretickes and Schismatickes”. Cotton stated: “*Constantine* the Great at the request of the *Generall Councill* at *Nice* banished *Arrius*, with some of his Fellowes”.<sup>19</sup> Of course, Winthrop at the request of the General Court had banished Williams. Williams paid no heed to the potential personal reference, but countered by agreeing with what “Mr. Cotton” had purportedly affirmed, “that *Christianie* fell asleep in *Constantines* bosome, and the laps and bosomes of those Emperours professing the name of *Christ*.” For, Williams continued, “[t]he unknowing zeale of *Constantine* and other Emperours, did more hurt to *Christ Jesus* his Crowne and Kingdome, then the raging fury of the most bloody *Neroes*.”

...But those *good* Emperours, persecuting some erroneous persons, *Arrius*, &c. and advancing the professours of some Truths of Christ...and maintaining their Religion by the material Sword, I say by this meanes Christianity was eclipsed, and the Professors of it fell asleep...Doubtless these holy men, *Emperours* and *Bishops*, intended and aimed right, to exalt *Christ*: but not attending to the Command of *Christ Jesus*, to permit the *Tares* to grow in the *field* of the *World*, they made the *Garden* of the *Church*, and *Field* of the *World* to be all one...<sup>20</sup>

Cotton had advanced (per Jerome) that the Emperors “*Julian* [the Apostate] and *Valens* the *Arrian*” sought to strangle “the vitals of Christianity” by allowing “all *weeds* to grow” and thereby demonstrated the principle (summarized by Williams) that “the weeds of *false* Religions tolerated in the world, have a power to choake and kill true Christianity in the Church.” To this, the separatist Williams responded, that “if the weeds be kept out of the *Garden* of the *Church*, the *Roses* and *Lilies* therein will flourish, notwithstanding the weeds

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<sup>17</sup> Williams, *Bloudy Tenant*, third in his introductory list of arguments. In contrast, Cotton relied on the example of Calvin’s burning Michael Servetus (see the relevant quotation of Cotton in Williams, *Bloudy Tenant*, 14).

<sup>18</sup> Williams, *Bloudy Tenant*, 4.

<sup>19</sup> Williams, *Bloudy Tenant*, 92. See also Smith, et. al., *American Christianity*, Vol. 1, 152.

<sup>20</sup> Williams, *Bloudy Tenant*, 95-96.

abound in the *Field of the Civill State*.”<sup>21</sup> For Williams, Civil obedience was the aim of the magistrate, and subjects that met that aim were to be protected instead of persecuted on account of their conscience.<sup>22</sup> For Cotton, a godly society was the equal aim of the magistrate as well as the church, and subjects that endangered that aim were banished despite claims of conscience.<sup>23</sup>

In an ironic paradox, it was Williams who was seen as illiberal in Massachusetts, demanding purity in the church. Yet, it was Williams’ insistence on purity for the church that led to his liberal views with regard to the civil state. He accomplished his vision by separating the church from the state, which combination otherwise had to prove capacious enough to include the “wheat and tares” in the sacred body of the church, but heavy handed enough to ensure uniformity in practice and unity in doctrine. By insisting on purity in the church he allowed for religious plurality in the state.<sup>24</sup>

In 1646, Cotton and his ministerial colleagues were invited by the Massachusetts General Court to assemble in a synod for the purpose, in the words of Bremer, of producing an “authoritative settlement of ecclesiastical practices”. This was necessitated by the fact that a “numerous” variety of religious sects had emerged during the English Civil Wars, resulting in part from an episcopacy on the cusp of disincorporation and Presbyterians and Congregationalists divided on the way forward.<sup>25</sup> Likewise, David Hall has noted that “more ‘new doctrines’ sprang up during the opening months of the new decade than in the previous eighty years”. This was, Hall continues, “a process facilitated by the abolition of Star Chamber and the Court of High Commission, the two most powerful instruments for curtailing heterodoxy and unauthorized versions of voluntary religion.”<sup>26</sup> The necessity of Parliament to at least attempt to stanch the proliferation was noted by Hall in their ordinance of 1648 “that authorized the execution of anyone who rejected the Trinity, the divine origins of Scripture, the existence of God” and other fundamental doctrines.<sup>27</sup> The sectarian threat

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<sup>21</sup> Williams, *Bloudy Tenant*, 96-97.

<sup>22</sup> Williams, *Bloudy Tenant*, 98.

<sup>23</sup> See also Bremer, “John Cotton (1585-1652),” *Oxford DNB*: In New England, “Unity was expected but not uniformity...Those who kept their dissent quiet were undisturbed, and those who proselytized fundamental errors were subject to efforts to persuade them before action was taken to rid the colony of their presence.”

<sup>24</sup> For a fuller exposition on Williams and Massachusetts in the 1630s and 1640s, see Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, chapter 2.

<sup>25</sup> Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 135-36. The Cambridge Synod’s first meeting was on 1 September 1646, “that October, [Parliament] finally voted to abolish episcopacy” (Hall, *Puritans*, 273).

<sup>26</sup> Hall, *Puritans*, 275.

<sup>27</sup> Hall, *Puritans*, 273-74. The relation of this ordinance to Paul Best and John Biddle was conveyed in the previous section, see footnote 44.

wafting into New England that most alarmed the members of the General Court were rival Baptist doctrines, most immediately their condemnation of infant baptism.<sup>28</sup> The synod was to provide clarity for the New England churches amidst this increasing sectarian diversity. It was also intended to re-signal to a painfully fractured England their own model of (and firm adherence to) the Congregational form of ecclesial government,<sup>29</sup> one that was neither Presbyterian nor separatist.

In relation to doctrine, the Cambridge Synod concluded in 1649 that the “confession of Faith, agreed upon by the Reverend Assembly of Divines at *Westminster*” in 1646 was in fact “the Sum and Substance... (in matters of Doctrine)” of the “Faith which is constantly taught, and generally professed amongst us”. The New England clergy differed with their English Brethren only in a few points concerning Church Discipline, perhaps the reason for their own document’s title: *A Platform of Church-Discipline*.<sup>30</sup> The Westminster Assembly who produced the *Confession of Faith* in 1646, like the *Thirty-Nine Articles* of 1571 that was put forth by the authority of the Queen, point to the Parliamentary authority that undergirds their statement: “Now by Authority of Parliament sitting at Westminster”. The Cambridge Platform, however, highlights the scriptural basis of their work: “Gathered out of the Word of God, and agreed upon by the Elders and Messengers of the Churches assembled in the *Synod* at Cambridge in New-England”. This evolution in the title pages may be illustrative of a nascent shift from State establishments of religion to voluntary religious societies vying for an authoritative corner in the market. In the case of Massachusetts, it was more so a claim to a corner of the “model church” market, wishing to be adopted by a State, more than any denunciation of establishments. This seems to align with Andrew Murphy’s perception that “both the congregation and the civil community were conceived as based in the voluntary, consensual relations of believers.” Murphy continues, “Under this understanding of community and authority, civil magistrates were permitted and indeed required, by God as well as the welfare of their subjects, to rule on public issues that threatened either the civil covenant that formed the basis of the Massachusetts settlement, or the covenant with God that

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<sup>28</sup> Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 135.

<sup>29</sup> Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 137. See *A Platform of Church Discipline* (London: Peter Cole, 1653 reprint), preface: “The more we discern (that which we do, and have cause to do with incessant mourning and trembling) the unkind, and unbrotherly, and unchristian contentions of our godly Brethren and Country-men in matters of Church-Government...” See also Williston Walker, *The Creeds and Platforms of Congregationalism* (Philadelphia: Pilgrim Press, 1969), 159: “...it might well be anxiously questioned by the Congregationalists of New England whether a Parliament which had seemingly brought the ecclesiastical institutions of England into conformity with those of Scotland might not next proceed to enforce a similar uniformity in New England.”

<sup>30</sup> *A Platform of Church Discipline*, preface.

provided rulers with a concrete set of social goals for a specifically *Puritan* society.”<sup>31</sup> In contrast, such a view contradicts David Hall’s more recent point about “a postimperial church coming into its own” with the Congregational State: “Instead of reproducing a Christendom in which church and nation or empire were indistinguishable, it took for granted that the true church was akin to the church of the earliest Christian centuries: possibly persecuted, never itself an instrument of persecution, and ‘free’ in the sense of embracing voluntary membership and divine law.”<sup>32</sup> Hall’s point is only half-true. Indeed, the New England Congregationalists separated church and civil offices, but they maintained indistinguishable boundaries of doctrine and practice to the point of cooperative persecution of all who threatened the de-facto church-state body politick. The church was still the nation, with mutual laws and shared spiritual and physical borders.

The Westminster Confession adopted by the Cambridge Synod is brief in its exposition of the Trinity:

In the Unity of the God-head there be Three Persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost. The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding: The Son is eternally begotten of the Father: the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son.<sup>33</sup>

Each person is God, and later the name of God is not personally repeated but wholly applied to all three persons: “God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost”.<sup>34</sup> And though the Father is the principle of the Son and they the principle of the Holy Spirit, each is vital to God’s “all-sufficient” being.<sup>35</sup> There was seemingly no dispute between transatlantic Puritanism on the doctrine of the Trinity. The sole dispute, that of Church Discipline, flowed from different ecclesial readings and injunctions from the Bible, the one was Presbyterian while the other Congregational. However, beyond “mainstream”<sup>36</sup> Puritanism on both sides of the Atlantic

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<sup>31</sup> Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, 36-37.

<sup>32</sup> Hall, *Puritans*, 228.

<sup>33</sup> *The Humble Advice of the Assembly of Divines, Now by Authority of Parliament Sitting at Westminster, Concerning a Confession of Faith, Presented by them Lately to both Houses of Parliament. A Certain Number of Copies are Ordered to be Printed Only for the use of the Members of both Houses and of the Assembly of Divines, to the End that they may Advise Thereupon* (London, Printed for the Company of Stationers, 1646), 8 (hereafter cited as Westminster Confession).

<sup>34</sup> Westminster Confession, 10.

<sup>35</sup> Westminster Confession, 7.

<sup>36</sup> Hall, *Puritans*, 275.

were those who disagreed, and their existence was well known to the clerical and magisterial arms of the movement.<sup>37</sup>

One such example is provided in the person of William Pynchon. Pynchon appears to have adopted views on the atonement of Christ that placed him among radical Puritanism and next to Socinian beliefs that emphasized Christ's exemplary obedience rather than his suffering for the imputed sins of humankind. Pynchon, founder of Springfield in western Massachusetts and a trusted leader in the colony since his arrival in 1631, was particularly significant in that his views became known in 1650, only as the relations with Cromwell's England were not what the colony had hoped. Cromwell had not adopted New England's model of church and civil governments, but, rather, generally tolerated many if not most of the proliferating sects in England. In the words of Philip Gura, "English Puritanism was turning, and turning decidedly, toward an accommodation with sincere dissenters".<sup>38</sup> In contrast, "New England authorities were drawing a hard line against toleration" wherein Pynchon served to highlight the threat of latitudinarianism, just as Rhode Island sounded and re-sounded the alarm of "radical spiritists".<sup>39</sup> Recognizing that he would not be able to stay in Massachusetts, Pynchon returned to England in 1652. Gura summed up the impact of Pynchon's dispute with New England's leaders as a reminder to them "that the revolution of the saints could not be restricted to nonseparating congregationalists, even if they were convinced that they had both reason and revelation on their side."<sup>40</sup> More mundane, but also notable, is another aspect of Pynchon's legacy: the division of the Connecticut River Valley between the Massachusetts and Connecticut colonies. When the two colonies met in 1638 to settle their boundaries, Pynchon let it be known that he desired to be under the jurisdiction of Massachusetts rather than Connecticut whose General Court had for the previous two years received delegates from his settlement of Agawam. The settlement was renamed Springfield the year after the change was made official.<sup>41</sup> Nearly a hundred years later, when the first Church of Springfield called Robert Breck to be its pastor, this division greatly inhibited the

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<sup>37</sup> See Philip F. Gura, *A Glimpse of Zion's Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England, 1620-1660* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1984); Hall, *Puritans*, 275-87; Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, 56-73; and Walker, *Reason and Religion in Late Seventeenth-Century England*, 147-55. See also the earlier version of Gura's chapter on Samuel Gorton in Philip F. Gura, "The Radical Ideology of Samuel Gorton: New Light on the Relation of English to American Puritanism," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 36, No. 1 (Jan., 1979), 78-100.

<sup>38</sup> Gura, *Glimpse of Zion's Glory*, 322.

<sup>39</sup> Gura, *Glimpse of Zion's Glory*, 321.

<sup>40</sup> Gura, *Glimpse of Zion's Glory*, 322.

<sup>41</sup> See Gura, *Glimpse of Zion's Glory*, 307.

region's ministerial association—still naturally more connected to subsequent developments in Connecticut—that sought to block his installment (see Chapter 4).

Francis J. Bremer, when summing up the New England Puritan's approach to "separate spheres" for Church and State, proffered the separate but equal responsibility of both the magistrate and the minister to "uphold the true religion". The state had a solemn duty to ensure that no public heresy threatened "the stability and purity of the commonwealth." Bremer argues that in comparison to the norm in Europe, "the Puritans were less rigorous...in that they did not search out the secret thoughts of men but contented themselves with taking action against public expressions of heresy." The banishments of Roger Williams and Anne Hutchinson were for proselyting error, not for believing it. The entire aim of these Protestants establishing "Bible Commonwealths" in America had been "to institute and practice what they believed to be the one true faith." Yet they sought to avoid "combinations of authority" such as had existed in England, where "[t]he king was head of church and state, bishops sat in Parliament and on the Privy Council, and at the parish level church officials were burdened with numerous secular tasks." In New England, church officials were prohibited from state office, yet they worked closely as a ready resource for consultation for magistrates seeking biblical models and, to that purpose, legislation for a "godly society".<sup>42</sup>

Significant to the New England legacy and intertwined in its establishment is the Puritan and Parliamentary revolt and rule in England from 1641-60. However, in juxtaposing the events of the Glorious Revolution from 1688-89 and subsequent settlement of the 1690s with those of the earlier rejection of Stuart rule, one finds a greater pan-Protestantism at play in the latter that fundamentally shifted New England's trajectory and, according to many, effectively ended the Puritan experiment. As such, the Glorious Revolution and the subsequent Act of Toleration ushered in a marked period of inclusiveness for New England as it joined the officially Protestant project of the British Empire and took definite steps toward tolerating the official presence of other nonconformist denominations. At the same time, its ministers began to rely more heavily on the ecclesial supports for their office in the form of ministerial associations to maintain a firm adherence to New England's doctrinal orthodoxy. However, that orthodoxy would itself become more focused, in part via Cotton Mather's "maxims", in the aims of the Protestant project to unite pure, Reformed churches against the reality of a resurgent Roman Papacy.

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<sup>42</sup> Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 92-93.

In Pennsylvania, founded in 1681, William Penn sought to establish a haven for the principle of religious liberty and the liberty of conscience. Like the Puritan founders of New England, Penn's project was conceived via the persecutions of the established Church of England. As an English gentleman, Penn believed that the civil magistrate had a duty to enforce "standards of civil behavior" but not to require uniformity in religious belief or practice.<sup>43</sup> And similar to Roger Williams, Penn recognized the separate roles civil and spiritual jurisdictions that Christians ought not to confound by formal or de-facto combinations.<sup>44</sup> However, the existence or not of an established church was no guarantee of religious freedom. In Pennsylvania, the dominant cultural and political influence by the Society of Friends was the mechanism for maintaining civil order, not the enforcement of their specific religious requirements.<sup>45</sup> That said, moral vices (such as dice and card games) and the establishments that encouraged them (such as taverns and alehouses) were to be heavily regulated if not outlawed.<sup>46</sup> Still, Penn's Pennsylvania represented a major departure from the norms of Christendom by not adopting a specific denominational establishment within the Christian religion.<sup>47</sup> If Penn had arranged for the Society of Friends be legally established in Pennsylvania, the colony would have been the first to prescribe a non-Athanasian, non-creedal religion in Europe or its New World colonies since the Arian emperors.

The "Keithian Schism" that vexed the Friends' colony in the 1690s had its roots in the particular Christological doctrine of "the man Christ Jesus" espoused by George Keith. Keith was concerned about "the church's purity" which in turn "led to debates over the Inner Light and its relationship to the Christian faith more generally".<sup>48</sup> And while the theological controversy may have instigated a crisis in Pennsylvania's established magistracy in the Society of Friends, it was, per Andrew Murphy, the external pressures on the colony from England that prompted its further development and conclusion. "As with the...cases of Williams and Hutchinson in Massachusetts, the larger context of relations with, and political developments in, England set the backdrop for a rigorous defense of authority and the political suppression of religious dissent." By subsequently denying to Christians (i.e., fellow

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<sup>43</sup> Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, 176-77. "Since the sects that had emerged from the English Civil War were often accused of...anarchic tendencies (and since, as an English gentleman, he valued social order), Penn hastened throughout his writings to clarify the magistrate's role in suppressing vice and dangerous behavior."

<sup>44</sup> Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, 177.

<sup>45</sup> Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, 182-84 (in particular, see footnote 75 on page 182).

<sup>46</sup> Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, 183.

<sup>47</sup> Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, 182.

<sup>48</sup> Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, 201.

members of the Society of Friends) the role of magistrate, Keith (like Williams in Massachusetts) had challenged what was ultimately fundamental to the colonial project of Pennsylvania and had to be anathematized, though with less severity.<sup>49</sup> Even so, Pennsylvania remained “probably the colony most hospitable to religious dissenters.”<sup>50</sup>

Elsewhere in England’s North American empire, Francis Makemie (c.1658-1708) endured the sometimes arbitrary (non-)application of the Act of Toleration. Makemie was born in Ireland to parents of Scottish descent and educated from February 1676 at the University of Glasgow and was ordained a Presbyterian minister in 1682. Owing to a ministerial need among Presbyterians, he subsequently itinerated in Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, and Barbados, where in 1690, following the passage of the Act of Toleration, he received a dissenting license from the governor of Barbados to preach. Over the next decade and a half the license was recognized by all English and colonial authorities. However, in 1705, Makemie was arrested along with another itinerant, John Hampton, in New York for preaching illegally. The governor, Lord Cornbury (grandson of the Earl of Clarendon), refused to recognize both Makemie’s license to preach as well as the extension of the Act of Toleration to the colony. Makemie was eventually acquitted, but forced to pay a substantial sum for the trial’s proceedings.<sup>51</sup> The episode is indicative of not only the longstanding antipathy between conformity and nonconformity—of course, despite the royally mandated shared Protestant belief about the Trinity—but of the discretionary fog surrounding implementation of imperial policy following the Act of Toleration.

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<sup>49</sup> Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, 206-07. See also, J.S. Chamberlain, “George Keith (1638?-1716),” *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>50</sup> Murphy, *Conscience and Community*, 205.

<sup>51</sup> See Boyd Stanley Schlenker, “Francis Makemie (c. 1658-1708),” *Oxford DNB*; Smith, et. al., eds., *American Christianity, Vol. 1*, 256-61.

## 1.4 – John Locke’s *Letter Concerning Toleration*

In the aftermath of the Glorious Revolution and Act of Toleration, a new national and, at least notional, Protestant boundary had formed around the doctrine of the Trinity. No longer were Dissenters hounded from their meetings or academies, and for a good number their “occasional conformity” even allowed them to serve in civil offices. However, among Anglicans and Dissenters alike, those who denied the received doctrine of the Trinity were a declared threat to the safety and security of England. Immediately, this new boundary began to weather the storms of controversy. The question was not only whether the doctrine merited such a status within (Protestant) Christianity, but also regarded what was and was not “Trinitarian”. In addressing the question of exclusion from the religious settlement, an early rejoinder offered a different demarcation of the Christian religion—toleration itself, though tempered to accommodate the security of the State. The definitional and practical aspects of Toleration thus enjoined became an indelible aspect of the ensuing trials and controversies (covered in chapters two, three, and four) in the first decades of the next century that sought to defend and (in process) to better identify, or for some to reform and redefine, the British understanding of the Trinity.<sup>1</sup>

In late 1689, William Popple, a close friend of William Penn, published his translation of *Epistola de Tolerantia*, John Locke’s unacknowledged and belatedly published response to Louis XIV’s revocation of the Edict of Nantes (written during 1685-86 in Latin). Popple entitled his translation *A Letter Concerning Toleration* and kept Locke’s authorship anonymous.<sup>2</sup> Popple had written *A Rational Catechism* (1687), which Locke had read at the time.<sup>3</sup> He had been educated under the direction of his uncle, Andrew Marvel (a poet of prominence connected to Milton), and was a friend of William Penn. His friendship with Penn chiefly concerned religious freedom. Popple had been a successful wine merchant, but was obliged to leave his business based in Bordeaux due to the religious policies of Louis XIV. Popple would later serve as the secretary to the Board of Trade during Locke’s tenure and continue until 1707. As secretary he demonstrated his conformity to the established church in

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<sup>1</sup> Again, Paul C.H. Lim, spoke of the same process in relation to Paul Best in 1646: “...the degree of divisiveness and debate over the question of heresy, toleration, and the prickly issue of defining orthodoxy” (*Mystery Unveiled*, 23).

<sup>2</sup> Locke, who had only recently become acquainted with Popple, though he had read his *A Rational Catechism* in 1687 (the same year it was published), was aware of but did not actively assist in the translation or publication in England. See Marshall, *John Locke*, 337 and 369.

<sup>3</sup> John Marshall, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion, and Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 337.

fulfillment of the Test Act requirements. He also became secretary to Locke's "Dry Club" and began, with Anthony Ashley, the third earl of Shaftesbury, the generational association between the Ashley and Popple families. Popple enjoyed a degree of the anonymity that Locke would have liked, though it is an anonymity that has continued to a good degree since.<sup>4</sup> Both maintained membership in the Church of England and sought a program of improvement (in their eyes) for the religion of their country.<sup>5</sup> Caroline Robbins places Popple among the "Rational Christians" and "Pious freethinkers" in the late seventeenth century.<sup>6</sup> And though Popple and Locke knew each other at the time of the translation, it is not thought that Locke actively participated.<sup>7</sup> In the preface, Popple advocated against the continued use of "Declarations of Indulgence" (toleration) and "Acts of Comprehension" (the continuity of establishments) and said it was "time to seek for a thorow Cure"—"Absolute Liberty, Just and True Liberty, Equal and Impartial Liberty, is the thing that we stand in need of." Locke's *Letter*, he said, was the most exact demonstration of "the Equitableness and Practicableness" of that liberty and was "highly seasonable". Among the "seasonable" events to which the *Letter* may be addressed, one can easily think of the specific exclusion of non-Trinitarians from the Act of Toleration, among whom was, if not Popple, many of his friends.

The *Letter* was published just six months after the royal assent of William and Mary to the Act of Toleration in May 1689, though the original Latin version had been published in the Netherlands the month before. In the *Letter* (published anonymously), Locke argued for the complete separation of Church and State, not only on the grounds of reason, but for the reality (in his view) that an individual's sincere conformity to their conscience was the ultimate and only measure of their salvation. Marshall has pointed out that Locke wrote the *Epistola* when James II had ascended to the throne in England and Louis XIV had ended toleration in France: "The *Epistola* was written against Catholic kings forcing their subjects to the worship of Catholicism and taking their property because of religion."<sup>8</sup> However, the late publication (after the Glorious Revolution) would indicate that the impetus for writing was not necessarily the same for publishing. The debates over comprehension or toleration are noted by Popple in the preface and Locke was clearly not writing against Catholic oppressions

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<sup>4</sup> Caroline Robbins, "Absolute Liberty: The Life and Thought of William Popple, 1638-1708", *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 2 (April 1967), 222.

<sup>5</sup> See Robbins, "Absolute Liberty," 191, 222.

<sup>6</sup> Robbins, "Absolute Liberty", 222.

<sup>7</sup> See Marshall, *John Locke*, 369. See also Mark Goldie, ed., "Introduction" to *A Letter Concerning Toleration and Other Writings* by John Locke (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2010), xxix. <https://oll.libertyfund.org/titles/2375>.

<sup>8</sup> Marshall, *John Locke*, 366.

alone, spending much of his time in an effort to persuade “Ecclesiastical men” (of all faiths) to act in accord with their salvific aims (or, the propagation of morality) rather than “Ecclesiastical Dominion”.<sup>9</sup>

Locke separated Religions along the exact lines of a group’s standard, or rule of faith, and thereby designated “Toleration” as the “Chief Characteristical Mark of the True Church.” He then offered a rapid list of the methods of determining “orthodoxy”, all (and each) of which he saw as inappropriate to any religion within Christianity:

For whatsoever some People boast of the Antiquity of Places and Names, or of the Pomp of their Outward Worship; Others, of the Reformation of their Disciplines; All, of the Orthodoxy of their Faith; (for every one is Orthodox to himself:) These things, and all others of this nature, are much rather Marks of Men striving for Power and Empire over one another, than of the Church of Christ.

Locke then replaced these “Marks of Men” with the behavioral characteristics and attitudes that he asserted ought to be the measure of a “true Christian”, ending with a scriptural injunction that prohibits the exercise of “Lordship” among the disciples of Christ.

Let any one have never so true a Claim to all these things [listed prior], yet if he be destitute of Charity, Meekness, and Good-will in general towards all Mankind, even to those that are not Christians, he is certainly yet short of being a true Christian himself. *The Kings of the Gentiles exercise Lordship over them*, said our Saviour to his Disciples, *but ye shall not be so* [Luke 22: 25-26].<sup>10</sup>

Locke argued that “True Religion” had nothing to do with “external Pomp”, “Ecclesiastical Dominion”, or “the exercising of compulsive Forces” but rather consisted in “the regulating of Mens Lives according to the Rules of Vertue and Piety.” However, rather than relegating that regulation to a tolerant or even comprehensive Church-State establishment, or to either institution separately, he insisted on placing the regulatory key (Religion, or at least its fundamental component) with each individual’s quest for salvation, i.e., to the sole proprietor of a soul’s accountability. This regulation, according to Locke, is founded in “Charity” and “*that Faith which works, not by Force, but by Love.*”

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<sup>9</sup> See [John Locke], *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, [trans., William Popple] (London: Awnsham Churchill, 1689), 18, 56-57, and 2 (hereafter cited as *Letter*).

<sup>10</sup> Locke, *Letter*, 1. Thomas Barlow (Bishop of Lincoln) had earlier made a similar point concerning the relative nature of “orthodoxy” when he stated that “what is heresie to one is Catholick verity to another” (as quoted in J.A.I. Champion, “Hobbes, Barlow, and the Restoration debate over ‘heresy’,” in *Heresy, Literature, and Politics in Early Modern English Culture*, ed. David Loewenstein and John Marshall (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 242, see also 241). See also John Spurr, “Thomas Barlow (1608/9-1691),” *Oxford DNB* (2004); and Jacqueline Rose, “John Locke, ‘Matters Indifferent’, and the Restoration of the Church of England,” *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 48, No. 3 (Sep., 2005), 619).

Whosoever will list himself under the Banner of Christ, must in the first place, and above all things, make War upon his own Lusts and Vices. It is in vain for a Man to usurp the Name of Christian, without Holiness of Life, Purity of Manners, and Benignity and Meekness of Spirit. ...For it is impossible that those should sincerely and heartily apply themselves to make other People Christians, who have not really embraced the Christian Religion in their own Hearts.<sup>11</sup>

Locke then commenced to appeal to the “Consciences” of those (clergy and princes) who, with great hypocrisy, seek the salvation of Souls via deprivation of property, corporal punishment, imprisonment, and ultimately capital punishment, without the moral amendment or even chastisement of their own “Flocks and People”. Locke complained that these, who would feign advance the “Profession of Christianity”, instead, “bend all its Nerves either to the introducing of Ceremonies, or to the establishment of Opinions, which for the most part are about nice and intricate Matters, that exceed the Capacity of ordinary Understandings” (perhaps a direct reference to the doctrine of the Trinity). And it is at this point that Locke then begins to problematize “orthodoxy” (introduced earlier “everyone is Orthodox to himself”) by advancing the notion that no one is either divinely authorized or truly capable of judging who is “an Heretick”, and, in the process, he seeks to demonstrate the civil practicality and pious rationality of religious toleration.<sup>12</sup>

Locke here demarcated (similar to elsewhere in his oeuvre) the bounds of Christianity as encompassing all and each who “follows Christ, embraces his Doctrine, and bears his Yoke”. He insisted that far more destructive to the Salvation of Souls than divisions among Sects are the immoral vices “concerning which the Apostle expressly declared, *they who do them shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.*” The division among Sects is caused by difficult nuances resulting in differences of “Opinion” while “Immoralities” are plainly demonstrable. Locke, therefore, declared that, “Whosoever...is sincerely solicitous about the Kingdom of God...ought to apply himself with no less care and industry to the rooting out of these Immoralities, than to the Extirpation of Sects.” However, “if...whilst he is cruel and implacable towards those that differ from him in Opinion, he be indulgent to such Iniquities and Immoralities as are unbecoming the Name of a Christian...he plainly demonstrates by his Actions, that ‘tis another Kingdom he aims at, and not the Advancement of the Kingdom of God.” As such, a more specific understanding of “the Kingdom of God” and its relation to the world would be of utmost concern. Locke chose to pursue only a part of that question by focusing on the then present predicament (and harm) caused by confusing temporal kingdoms

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<sup>11</sup> Locke, *Letter*, 2

<sup>12</sup> Locke, *Letter*, 2-3.

with or even for that loftier designation (and discipline): “I esteem it above all things necessary to distinguish exactly the Business of Civil Government from that of Religion, and to settle the just Bounds that lie between the one and the other.”<sup>13</sup>

In the relation between Church and State, Locke was primarily focused on the authority of the person of the Civil Magistrate. The Civil Magistrate, for Locke, was an individual like other individuals, and therefore under a duty to persuade others (but not to compel them) of the rightness of his religious views.<sup>14</sup> But more specifically, Locke was concerned about when a Civil Magistrate agreed that “infallible Judgement...in the Affairs of Religion” are not in him “but in the Church” and “provides by his Authority that no body shall either act or believe, in the business of Religion, otherwise than the Church teaches.”<sup>15</sup> To this Locke stated plainly, “What difference is there whether he lead me himself, or deliver me over to be led by others? I depend both ways upon his Will, and it is he that determines both ways of my eternal State.” He continued his queries: “If the Religion of any Church become therefore true and saving, because the Head of that Sect, the Prelates and Priests, and those of that Tribe, do all of them, with all their might, extol and praise it; what Religion can ever be accounted erroneous, false and destructive?” He added another query: “I am doubtful concerning the Doctrine of the *Socinians*, I am suspicious of the way of Worship practised by the *Papists*, or *Lutherans*; will it be ever a jot the safer for me to join either unto the one or the other of those Churches, upon the Magistrates Command, because he commands nothing in Religion but by the Authority and Counsel of the Doctors of that Church?”

For our question, the more interesting moment in this concern comes when Locke stated that “to speak the truth, we must acknowledge that the Church (if a Convention of Clergy-men, making Canons, must be called by that Name) is for the most part more apt to be influenced by the Court, than the Court by the Church.” He then offered two examples, one ancient the other from (what was then) relatively recent history. First, “How the Church was under the Vicissitude of Orthodox and Arrian Emperors is very well known. Or if those things be too remote,” second, “our modern English History affords us fresh Examples, in the Reigns of *Henry the 8th*, *Edward the 6<sup>th</sup>*, *Mary*, and *Elizabeth*, how easily and smoothly the Clergy changed their Decrees, their Articles of Faith, their Form of Worship, every thing, according

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<sup>13</sup> Locke, *Letter*, 3-4, 6.

<sup>14</sup> Locke, *Letter*, 23: “Princes indeed are born Superior unto other men in Power, but in Nature equal. Neither the Right, nor the Art of Ruling, does necessarily carry along with it the certain Knowledge of other things; and least of all of the true Religion.”

<sup>15</sup> Locke, *Letter*, 24.

to the inclination of those Kings and Queens.”<sup>16</sup> Locke reiterated his conclusion: “It is the same thing whether a King that prescribes Laws to another mans Religion pretend to do it by his own Judgment, or by the Ecclesiastical Authority and Advice of others”. However, he returned to “the principal Consideration... which absolutely determines this Controversie”:

Although the Magistrates Opinion in Religion be found, and the way that he appoints be truly Evangelical, yet if I be not thoroughly perswaded thereof in my own mind, there will be no safety for me in following it. No way whatsoever that I shall walk in, against the Dictates of my Conscience, will ever bring me to the Mansions of the Blessed... Faith only, and inward Sincerity, are the things that procure acceptance with God....How great soever, in fine, may be the pretence of Good-will, and Charity, and concern for the Salvation of mens Souls, men cannot be forced to be saved whether they will or no. And therefore, when all is done, they must be left to the own Consciences.<sup>17</sup>

Locke was attempting to persuade princes that establishments are vain. Only faith, sincerity, and conscience form the key to Heaven’s approbation, and these—by divine designation—are the property of each individual.

Concerning Church authority, Locke was again narrowly focused on its separation and distinction from Civil Power. He asked readers to consider “how pernicious a Seed of Discord and War, how powerful a provocation to endless Hatreds, Rapines, and Slaughters” is the “Opinion... That *Dominion is founded in Grace*, and that Religion is to be propagated by force of Arms.” Following this specific backhanding of Divine Right (a doctrine shared by many Civil Magistrates and Clergy), Locke claimed that “It is not my Business to inquire here into the Original of the Power or Dignity of the Clergy. This only I say, That Whence-soever their Authority be sprung, since it is Ecclesiastical, it ought to be confined within the Bounds of the Church, nor can it in any manner extend to Civil Affairs; because the Church it self is a thing absolutely separate and distinct from the Commonwealth.”<sup>18</sup> This statement by Locke and its argument would later be more particularly disseminated by Benjamin Hoadly in the Bangorian controversy a quarter century later, as well as his (Locke’s) emphasis on sincerity and conscience in salvation.

Locke’s *Letter* also offered a different boundary than the Trinitarian one proscribed in the Act of Toleration, which had particular implications for church discipline. Locke argued

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<sup>16</sup> Locke, *Letter*, 26. Goldie notes that “Locke is scarcely fair in overlooking those [clergy] who endured martyrdom for their beliefs” during each of these “religious revolutions” (see footnote 70 in Locke, *Toleration and Other Writings*, 31).

<sup>17</sup> Locke, *Letter*, 26-27.

<sup>18</sup> Locke, *Letter*, 18.

that schism and heresy would be greatly reduced if not wholly averted by measuring Christianity by Scripture alone: “He that denies not any thing that the Holy Scriptures teach in express words, nor makes a Separation upon occasion of any thing that is not manifestly contained in the Sacred Text...in truth this Man cannot be either a Heretick or a Schismatick.”<sup>19</sup> Accordingly, Locke published in 1695 *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, with the notable (and prominently displayed) subtitle *As delivered in the Scriptures*. This particular Lockean framework of Scripture and Reason set the stage and furnished the arguments at Salter’s Hall and the Hemphill and Breck Affairs. Furthermore, the methodology of Samuel Clarke’s exegetical work on the doctrine of the Trinity is a prime exhibition of Locke’s later (posthumously published) call to “compare together Places of Scripture treating of the same Point.”<sup>20</sup> Locke was not alone in espousing the Protestant assertion of the sufficiency and perspicuity of Scripture, and some would go further with a clear elevation of reason as the pure measure of Christianity. But by the beginning of the next decade (and century) the blanket assertion of Scripture sufficiency allowed for non-Trinitarian arguments to surface more prominently. Besides that, the Glorious Revolution and Act of Toleration would have a considerable impact on the career of Thomas Emlyn.

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<sup>19</sup> Locke, *Letter*, [61].

<sup>20</sup> John Locke, *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St. Paul to the Galatians, Corinthians, Romans, and Ephesians. To which is Prefix’d, An Essay for the Understanding of St. Paul’s Epistles, by Consulting St. Paul Himself* (1707), (London: A. Bettesworth et al., 1733, Third Edition), xvii. Clarke conducted his exegesis on this same principle. See, for example, the Preface to *The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* (1712).

## Chapter 2

### English and Episcopal Establishment: Trials of Separation

The varied trials by the establishment that took place in the first two decades of the eighteenth century following the death of William III provide a strong basis by which to approach the discourse on authority. The trials at once offer a view of both the institutional claims of Church and State in relation to that of individual Conscience, as well as ready demonstrations for assessment of the argumentative authority of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason.

#### 2.1 – The Queen’s Bench: Thomas Emlyn

Thomas Emlyn (1663-1741) was the son of a former municipal councilor of ten years, who had been disqualified under the 1661 Corporation Act the year previous to his (surviving) son’s birth. Emlyn was educated in the academies of ejected ministers, supplementing their meager libraries with visits to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, before transferring to an academy in London. Even so, like his father, he was on good terms with the episcopal-established clergy. In 1684, Emlyn moved from London to Belfast. The year previous he had become domestic chaplain to Letitia, the widowed countess of Donegal and a presbyterian, who then remarried Sir William Franklin. In Belfast, he attended the parish church twice a day and preached at the castle in the evening, where he impressed the Anglican vicar. Emlyn was subsequently given a preaching license by the local bishop, granted without either ordination or subscription. Prior to 1689, the talented young preacher was offered multiple livings (which he refused) that would have required his subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles, though the precise reason for this reticence is uncertain.<sup>1</sup> William Gibson notes that in 1688 Emlyn is on record prizing his license that was given “without any condition”.<sup>2</sup> To this, Gibson appended a summative if unspecific conclusion that Emlyn “hoped to be able to exercise a ministry without shackling his conscience by committing himself to articles in which he did not believe.”<sup>3</sup> However, after 1689, more precise and even more consequential

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<sup>1</sup> Alexander Gordon, “Thomas Emlyn (1663-1741)” revised by H.J. McLachlan, *Oxford DNB* (2004). See also Gibson, “Persecution of Thomas Emlyn,” 526-527. While the Glorious Revolution may have been “bloodless” in England, such was not the case in Ireland where James II had widespread Catholic support.

<sup>2</sup> As quoted in Gibson, “Persecution of Thomas Emlyn,” 527.

<sup>3</sup> Gibson, “Persecution of Thomas Emlyn,” 527.

scruples appeared as he and another nonconformist minister delved into William Sherlock's *Vindication of the Trinity* (1690).

In 1688 Emlyn (age 25) left Belfast, as domestic differences and the Glorious Revolution had served to put the household of his benefactor into disarray.<sup>4</sup> Emlyn returned to England via Liverpool, where his preaching was heard and praised and he was subsequently employed as a minister in a leading Presbyterian congregation. While there Emlyn enjoyed the company of William Manning, an elderly Independent minister,<sup>5</sup> together they read Sherlock's (self-explanatory title) *A Vindication of the Doctrine of the Holy and Ever Blessed Trinity and the Incarnation of The Son of God, Occasioned By the Brief Notes on the Creed of St. Athanasius, and the Brief History of the Unitarians, or Socinians, and containing an Answer to both* (1690). The *Brief Notes* (1690) and *Brief History* (1687) were both written and published anonymously by Stephen Nye, a Church of England clergyman who held the view that God was a single being manifest at different times in the different modes/persons of the Trinity.<sup>6</sup> As a result of their reading of Sherlock (and opposite to that author's intention), Manning came to the conclusion that Christ had not existed prior to his birth, a position that aligned with Socinianism, giving Manning the (apparent) distinction of being the only minister ejected at the Restoration to have gone on (nearly thirty years later) to reject the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>7</sup> Emlyn on the other hand, though troubled, continued to study the doctrine for the next several years.<sup>8</sup>

Shortly after this reading of Sherlock, and with William III's successes against the remaining Jacobite resistance in Ireland, Emlyn accepted a renewed invitation in September

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<sup>4</sup> See Gibson, "Persecution of Thomas Emlyn," 527. See also, Gordon, "Thomas Emlyn", DNB. Prior to leaving for England, Emlyn declined an invitation to minister to the Wood Street Presbyterian congregation in Dublin, perhaps due to the uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the Glorious Revolution in Ireland.

<sup>5</sup> See Alexander Gordon, "William Manning (1630x33-1711)" revised by H.J. McLachlan, *Oxford DNB* (2004). It is perhaps interesting, if limited in scope, counterfactual history that without the Glorious Revolution Emlyn may have never met Manning, and may have remained in Ireland as either a domestic chaplain or accepted the offer of a Dublin ministry the first time.

<sup>6</sup> H.J. McLachlan, "Stephen Nye (1647/8-1719)", *Oxford DNB* (2008).

<sup>7</sup> See Gordon, "William Manning", revised by H.J. McLachlan, *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>8</sup> See Thomsa Emlyn, *A True Narrative of the Proceedings of the Dissenting Ministers of Dublin against Mr. Thomas Emlyn* (London: John Darby, 1719), xiv-xv. Emlyn wrote about his concern, during this period, of "how far many were gone back toward Polytheism; I long tried what I could do with some *Sabellian* Turns, making out a Trinity of Somewhats in a single Mind." Later, he stated, that "after much serious Thought, and Study of the holy Scriptures, with many concern'd Addresses to the Father of Lights, I found great reason, first to doubt, and after by degrees, to alter my Judgment, in relation to the formerly received Opinions of the Trinity, and the *Supreme Deity* of our Lord Jesus Christ."

1690 to minister to a Presbyterian congregation in Dublin.<sup>9</sup> By 1697, after years of close scriptural study and contemplation, Emlyn had concluded that somewhere between contemplating the unity and separation of persons in the Godhead, (that is, between Sabellianism and tri-theism) he had “lost a Trinity, such as the Scripture discovers, so that I could never keep both [the Unity and Trinity] in view at once”,<sup>10</sup> though (unlike Manning) he maintained the pre-existence of Christ. Emlyn recounted that “I could not imagine it should be necessary to say my Prayers *with understanding*, and my Creed without it....I did not make my Reason the Rule of my Faith, but employ’d it to judge what was the meaning of that written Rule [i.e., Scripture] or Word of God”. This reliance on Scripture via Reason led him “to form Notions different from what others had taught me, without regard either to *Arius* or *Socinus*, not agreeing wholly with either.” From this point, he was careful to not “speak against my own Judgement...that I might not act against Christian Sincerity”, but he did not contradict others in their professions, since he was determined to “profess my Mind” when “a more particular and direct Occasion” presented itself.<sup>11</sup>

That moment came in June 1702, when he was confronted in a private conference by his ministerial colleague, and another member of the congregation, over the lack of references to the Trinity in his preaching. Emlyn felt bound to share his conclusion with them “that *the God and Father of Jesus Christ* is alone the supreme Being, and superior in Excellency and Authority to his Son...who derives all from him.”<sup>12</sup> He immediately offered his resignation, but his ministerial colleague insisted that the matter should be raised before “the Meeting of the *Dublin* Ministers”, which Emlyn accepted, despite his knowing “well the Narrowness of their Principles.” At the subsequent meeting of the ministers, Emlyn later recorded that he “profess’d myself ready to give my Assent to the Scriptures, tho not to their Explications; judging I might justly use my Reason where they so much used theirs, or other Mens. And I would have done any thing that with a good Conscience I could, rather than have broken off from them...” The ministers did indeed decide to “cast me off” (as Emlyn put it) that same day.<sup>13</sup> The above manifest categories of Emlyn’s thought—Scripture,

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<sup>9</sup> See Alexander Gordon, “Thomas Emlyn (1663-1741)”, revised by J.J. McLachlan, Oxford DNB, 2004. This offer of 23 September 1690 would have been extended only a few months after William III had secured Dublin from the Jacobite forces following the Battle of the Boyne on 1 July (at the cost of his Heidelberg born Field Marshall, the Duke of Schomberg).

<sup>10</sup> Emlyn, *Narrative*, xiv-xv.

<sup>11</sup> Emlyn, *Narrative*, xv-xvi.

<sup>12</sup> Emlyn, *Narrative*, xvi. See Gibson, “Persecution of Thomas Emlyn,” 528.

<sup>13</sup> Emlyn, *Narrative*, xvii.

Reason, Sincerity, and Conscience—are persistent throughout the Trinitarian debates. Every individual and party vantage in the Trinitarian debates claimed some formulation of these same authoritative categories for their side, it was the placement of any additional categories beside them, such as apostolic succession and conciliar tradition, that was contested. However, the civil and ecclesiastical methods of dealing with such theological differences and conflicting claims to authority (without recourse to execution) were still being worked out.

To allow the situation to quietly defuse, Emlyn left Dublin for London immediately, but ten weeks later he returned to a great uproar that had been made in his absence, in part from the pulpits. To defend his reputation and to explain “my Opinion” on the matter involved, he published *An Humble Inquiry into the Scripture Account of Jesus Christ* (1702), with the intention to leave for England a few days later. However, Emlyn wrote later, “some zealous Dissenters...resolved to have me prosecuted” and obtained from the Lord Chief Justice a Special Warrant to seize him and the publication.<sup>14</sup> His publication became a significant resource in the Trinitarian debates on both sides of the Atlantic, as we will see with particular regard to Jonathan Mayhew and to Aaron Burr, Sr. Burr responded to Emlyn’s arguments over a half-century later when the *Scripture Account* was anonymously reprinted in 1756 Boston. I will highlight a few points relevant to ascertaining Emlyn’s precise theological position, as well as his approach to the categories of authority, including recourse to Old and New Testament Scripture, as well as to the Church Fathers and to Reason.

Before doing so, I would like to note that what is particularly unique about Emlyn is his forthright explication about the role and use of Scripture relative to the Trinitarian debates considered within the context of the (post-)Reformation’s priorities. He does not question the historicity of the sacred texts, but the interpretive integrity of its readers who uphold the co-equal Godhead: “’Tis astonishing to see what Violence is Offered to the Sacred Text, by such as Maintain the *Equality* of Jesus Christ to God His Father”.<sup>15</sup> The historicity of biblical texts had been increasingly questioned since Erasmus had published his Greek New Testament without the Johannine Comma (1 John 5:7) in 1516, widely perceived to be an important proof text for the doctrine of the Athanasian Trinity. Such analyses relied on both textual

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<sup>14</sup> Emlyn, *Narrative*, xxiii: It was “a Baptist Church-Officer, being then upon the Grand Jury of the Queen’s Bench” who obtained and served the warrant.

<sup>15</sup> Thomas Emlyn, *An Humble Inquiry into the Scripture-Account of Jesus Christ: or, a Short Argument Concerning His Deity and Glory, According to the Gospel* ([Dublin], 1702), 6 (hereafter cited as *Scripture Account*).

comparisons and an understanding of the extratextual history surrounding the life of the text (i.e., scribes and preservation) but also the life of the original human writer(s) of Scripture. Early modern writers such as Anthony Collins would become very exercised by historicist claims against the widespread clerical interpretive paradigm of Scripture that often held that God would not allow for such textual corruptions, or that he would allow for sufficient evidence to correct corruptions.<sup>16</sup> At the turn of the eighteenth century, physical evidence for biblical narratives and claims was only just beginning to become an authoritative currency in religious and theological disputes. This occurred as the shares of Baconian and Newtonian science grew in the curriculums of British and American schools and alarm over Deist and Pantheistic theologies increased. The “New Learning” and skepticism of Christian claims thereby influenced the priorities and relative prioritization of traditional biblical exegesis (most commonly combinations of literal, allegorical, typological, and/or mystical approaches) for scholars, clergy, and laity alike, eventually shifting toward a heavily moral priority in interpretation in response. As the New Testament became a favorite source for non-Athanasian readings of the Godhead, the Old Testament was increasingly appealed to by Athanasians to demonstrate the consistency of Scripture and the verity of their doctrine. The Johannine Comma continued to play an important role in this debate over the authority/reliability/nature of Scripture, often signaling loyalties and priorities for the interlocutors. Scripture as an authority had been elevated by the Reformation but destabilized by the Renaissance.

In his *Scripture Account*, Emlyn relied on the counterfoil of Reformation arguments against Catholic claims to bolster his own: “Upon Protestant Principles the *Unitarians* think they can stand their ground, and defend themselves in these Matters, as easily as the *Protestants* can against the *Papists*.”<sup>17</sup> He equated the divine supremacy of Jesus Christ to the doctrine of Transubstantiation, referencing the Protestant-Catholic disputes over the latter, and then pointedly declared: “But indeed nothing is more obvious than the unsteadiness of many Protestant Writers, when they write against the *Papists* and the *Unitarians*: How do they go backwards and forwards?” For “when they [i.e. many Protestants] have triumphantly and fully beaten off the vain Assaults and Objections of the *Papists*, they take up their [i.e. the Catholic’s] baffled Arguments, and urge them the same way (as others did against them)

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<sup>16</sup> See Reventlow, *Authority of the Bible*, 358-59. For further discussion of Cotton Mather and William Whiston in relation to biblical criticism, see Stievermann, Introduction to Cotton Mather’s *Biblia Americana*, Vol. 10, 68-70.

<sup>17</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 20.

against the *Unitarians*...[and] in the point of the Trinity...they betake themselves to like Shifts and Evasions” as were previously offered by the Catholic writers. Similarly, Protestants claimed that “their Religion was in the Bible, and their Church among the Primitive Christians...[that] lay hid in the time of common Apostacy” and *per* the Bible prove that “[Saint] *Peter* was inferior to the Church, and the rest of the Apostles, (tho’ not singly to each) because he was *sent* up and down by them”. Their Catholic opponents argued that “by the same reason, they must grant the *Arians* Argument to be good, *viz.* That the *Father* is greater than the *Son*, because the *Son* is *sent* by him”. But when a Unitarian made the same point, many Protestant writers maintained the equality of the Father and the Son, even though the former sends and the latter is sent.<sup>18</sup> This double standard of exegesis among Protestants in debate became perhaps somewhat mundane when Emlyn delivered his last complaint on this score about discrepancies in the overall approach (claimed by Protestants) regarding the use of Scripture:

*Against the Papists* they will boast, that they don’t hoodwink the People in Ignorance; but bid them inquire and examine, and the more the better, while ’tis ground of Suspicion, that the *Papists* cheat Men, by their keeping them from the Light; but now having to do with the *Unitarians*, they tack about, and bid beware of Reading and Disputing; they are for an *implicite Faith*, without examining into deep Mysteries; they bid us believe, not pry into them; tho’ we only desire to examine whether the *Scriptures* do reveal any such Mysteries at all; the rest we will believe if we cou’d see that, and desire no other liberty in interpreting Scripture, than they take so justly, in interpreting Christ’s words, *This is my Body*.<sup>19</sup>

At various points throughout, Emlyn acknowledged various interlocutors per the Reformation and post-Reformation context: the Lutherans, the School-Men (“both Thomists and Scotists”), and Reformed Divines as groups, and referenced Martin Luther, John Calvin and Theodore Beza, along with the later Thomas Goodwin, Meric Casaubon, Richard Baxter, John Tillotson, Edward Stillingfleet, Daniel Whitby, and Philipp van Limborch to demonstrate his exegetical arguments or to situate them appropriately.<sup>20</sup> He referred to Calvin as interpreting John 10:30 (“I and *my* Father are one”) to mean “by Unity of Consent and

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<sup>18</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 19-20. This argument is addressed by Burr on pages 83 and 84 in *Supreme Deity* (1757), with him asserting that the argument falsely compares Peter’s “*Office and Authority*” and the Son’s “*Nature and Essence*”.

<sup>19</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 19. Burr only briefly responded to this accusation on page 84 of *Supreme Deity* (1757).

<sup>20</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 5, 15-16, 19, 21-22.

Will” and additionally, Emlyn noted that Christ was “One in testimony with the Father and Spirit, as *Beza* and many others understand that in 1 *John* 5:7.”<sup>21</sup>

Emlyn favored the received historiography but not apology of the Church Fathers and accordingly applied to them for support of his arguments and position. He asserted that both “*Romish and Reformed Writers*” have testified that “Primitive Antiquity...runs for *Arius’s Doctrine*”, but that they “have made such poor Apologies for those *Fathers*, as tho’ they [i.e. the Fathers] knew not, or were not careful of their fundamental Articles of Faith, till they came to be bandied about in General Councils”. And when the Fathers speak discordantly, the “higher Expressions” concerning Christ should be judged against those “sometimes plainly declaring Jesus Christ inferior to, and the *Servant* of the Father, *before his Incarnation*”. Emlyn’s reasoning is that when speaking of Christ, “a *beloved* admired Object...’tis very easy and natural to run into strains of Eloquence, and lofty *flights* of Praise, which must be interpreted not with strict Rigour”. Yet “*on the contrary*...[Men] cou’d not have a thought to lessen their Master’s Glory; and therefore if they ever represent him as not the Supreme God; nor equal to him, we have all reason to think they then spake only the Words of Truth and Soberness, what the exact Matter required.”<sup>22</sup> Such is Emlyn’s method of interpreting the conflicting statements of Christian Antiquity. Furthermore, in the same general complaint again how many Protestants will only allow their arguments against the Catholics but not against themselves, Emlyn refers to the use of the Church Fathers, relative to the arguments against transubstantiation: “Against the Papist [many Protestants] will prove that the *Fathers* did not hold the Elements to be Christ’s real Body and Blood, because they oft call them the *Images* thereof” then complained that “But let the *Unitarian* argue that Christ is not the supreme God, because the Scripture stiles him the *Image* of God, and therefore not the God whose Image only he is; then, the thing it self and its image must be the same thing.”<sup>23</sup> Interestingly, this sort of argument about the nature of the Image of God would be echoed in Jonathan Edwards (most likely per Berkeley) in the (perfect) Idea of God.

Further toward the end of his *Scripture Account*, Emlyn appealed to the example of modesty in Justin Martyr, “one of the earlier Writers for Christianity since the Apostles”. This Church Father called Jesus Christ “*a God by the Will of the Father*, and one who

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<sup>21</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 21. I do not know which works of Calvin and Beza are those that Emlyn referenced.

<sup>22</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 20. Earlier, on page 11, Emlyn similarly related how “Admiration and Praise naturally inclines to run out into *Hyperboles*...”

<sup>23</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 19-20.

*ministered to his Will, before his Incarnation*". When disputing with "some who confessed [Jesus] to be Christ, and yet denied *those Points* of his Præexistence and his miraculous Birth of a Virgin, that Father [Justin Martyr] calmly says to his Adversary, *If I shall not demonstrate these things...yet still, the Cause is not lost, as to his being the Christ of God.*" Emlyn continued by praising the response of Justin Martyr to those who disagreed with him on this point,

And as for those *Christians* who denied the abovesaid things, and held him to be only a Man, born in the ordinary way he only says of them; *to whom I accord not*. He does not damn them who differed from him, nor will say the *Christian Religion* is subverted and Christ is an *Imposter*...if he be not the very supreme God, (the ranting *Dialect* of our profane Age) no, but still he was sure he is the true Christ, whatever else he might be mistaken in: 'Tis desperate wickedness in Men to hazard the Reputation of the Truth and Holiness of the blessed Jesus upon a difficult and disputable Opinion...<sup>24</sup>

Emlyn thus utilized Justin Martyr to both create elbow room for his own beliefs in the present context and as an example from "Primitive Antiquity" of temperance in disputes where both parties uphold Jesus as the Christ, though they differ about particulars.

More conceptually (and exhibiting a greater reliance on Scriptural exegesis), Emlyn is critical of those who assert Christ's role as mediator for mankind while maintaining that he is the supreme Deity to whom mankind is reconciled. For, "to assert Jesus Christ to be the supreme God, subverts the Gospel Doctrine of Mediation".<sup>25</sup> As such, "[t]o say he Mediates with himself, is the same as to say, that I must go to him without a Mediator, and turns the whole Business of Mediation into a Metaphor, contrary to the common sense of things, as well as against the Scripture". Note the priority of "common sense" as well as Scripture—for "who is this Mediator, when we go to Jesus Christ as the ultimate Object?" Furthermore, he dismisses the explanation of Christ's possessing dual natures as both God and Man ("the pretended *two* Natures of the Son").<sup>26</sup> This was particularly the case when such a distinction was used to uphold Christ's supreme omniscience, despite his own plain statement found in Mark 13:32 that, "of that Day [of Judgement] knows no Man, no, not the Angels in Heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only." Recourse to a dual-nature distinction here, where "the Son professes His knowledge to be *limited*, and Inferior to the Fathers, i.e. the Son of the *Father*, or Son of God" and where the plain context (per Emlyn) was that of "the *Son as above*

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<sup>24</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 21.

<sup>25</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 17.

<sup>26</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 3.

Angels in Knowledge, the Son in the most *Eminent* Sense”, thereby opened the Savior to the charge of duplicity. Indeed, “to make Him say what is most False, and to Equivocate in the most deceitful manner”. Even granting that “we shou’d suppose he consisted of two Infinitely distant Natures, and so had two Capacities of Knowledge, &c. Yet”, Emlyn continued, “since *Himself* includes them both, it follows, that the denying a Thing of Himself in absolute Terms, without any Limitation in the Words, or other obvious *Circumstances*, does plainly imply a denial of its belonging to any part of His Person, or any Nature in it”.<sup>27</sup> He likens this to a person who views another man with one eye shut, seeing him “well enough” with the other eye, yet claiming when asked “that I saw him not with the Eye which was shut”.<sup>28</sup> Emlyn then complains that when it becomes plain that “only the Father” truly knows, some will claim “That by the Father is meant all Three Persons...Father Son and Holy Ghost: What! can the Father as opposed to the Son, be put for the Father and the Son?” The baptismal form would result in a similar confusion, where by “the Father is meant, Father, Son, and Spirit, tho’ he be distinguished from the other two”. Emlyn laments this interpretive paradigm: “What woful work will this make with Scripture...I shou’d despair of ever understanding the Scriptures above all Books that ever were written, at this *Rate* of Interpretation”.<sup>29</sup> Here he employed reason as a category of authority as well: “I think ‘tis beyond all reasonable doubt, and as this Doctrine [of Christ as Man possessing vast and universal Knowledge whereby to Judge the whole World] has appeared Rational enough, and escaped all Censure, as far as I know, when delivered by others than the *Unitarians*: So I hope it must not be counted *Heretical* in them, for which others never Forfeited the Glorious Title of *Orthodox*”.<sup>30</sup>

Emlyn appealed to supporting passages from the Old and New Testaments throughout, particularly utilizing the Old when identifying (at length) the divine perfection or attribute of “Absolute Omniscience” reserved to the Father alone.<sup>31</sup> For “the knowledge of the heart attributed to [Christ], must be such as in consistent with His Subordination to the Fathers *greater* Knowledge.”<sup>32</sup> Additionally, Emlyn augmented his New Testament readings with Old Testament supports. For example, in response to those who would elevate Christ to supreme God on the basis of John 5:23, “That all men should honour the Son, even as they

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<sup>27</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 7-8.

<sup>28</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 8.

<sup>29</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 9.

<sup>30</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 16.

<sup>31</sup> See Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 7, 12-13.

<sup>32</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 13.

honour the Father”, Emlyn countered with the preceding verse for context John 5:22: “we must honour the *Son* as (truly not as greatly as) we honour the *Father*, because the *Father hath committed, or given, all judgment to him*”. He subsequently pointed to Malachi 1:14 to warn about offering inferior worship to “the Infinite Self-originate, Independent Deity”. He acknowledged that “*at the Name of Jesus must every Knee bow, and every Tongue confess him to be Lord*” but the Old Testament demonstrated,

...that however there may be the same common *external* Acts, or Words; (such as bowing the Knee, and saying *Glory and Praise, &c.*) used to God and the *Mediator*; as also in some Instances, they are given in common to *ordinary* Men, yet the Mind of a rational Worshiper, will make a Distinction in his inward *Intention*, as no doubt but those devout Jews did, who in the same act, *bowed their Heads, and worshipped both God and the King*, 1 Chron. 29.20....

Note the emphasis on “the Mind of a rational Worshiper”. Like Samuel Clarke would later argue, Emlyn enjoined that “there is no Instance of supreme Divine Worship given ultimately to [the Son] in Scripture”, but that “all this Homage is ultimately to the *Glory of the Father*.”<sup>33</sup> (Clarke agreed on the significance of the *original* but more so in the fact of its relational status as *First Cause*. He relied on the respective readings of Irenaeus and Basil regarding the passage in Mark 13:32, that (in some contrast to Emlyn) did not exclude Christ from the divine nature, but from its cause).<sup>34</sup> Another instance of this sort of use of the New and Old Testaments together by Emlyn is near the end of the *Scripture Account*. Emlyn hoped that Christ “will never be offended...with any who stand by his own Words, *viz. The Father is greater than I, Joh. 14.28.*” He then added, “I think it a dangerous thing to say God is not greater than he, or is not the Head of Christ; for, *whom will ye equal to me, saith the Holy One? Isa. 40.25.*”<sup>35</sup> For Emlyn, the supreme God of the Old and New Testaments is the Father who is without equal and who, above all, must not be offended. Where others would search the Old Testament for signals of the Triune God, Emlyn saw only the Father and his promise of the Son.

Like Locke, Emlyn equated the terms *Being* and *Person*, that (helpful to us) allowed him to map the theological topography of Christianity as containing “two principal *distinguishing* Doctrines...relating to the *Unity* of the supreme God, and the *one* Mediator with him”: Trinitarians and Unitarians (definitions and distinctions with which someone like

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<sup>33</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 17,

<sup>34</sup> See Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), 146-49.

<sup>35</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 21.

Clarke disagreed). The “*Trinitarians* have lost [God and Christ] both among their several Parties” according to Emlyn, and could be “divided into two principal Parties (besides several Sub-divisions)...one part holding *three* real Persons, or *infinite Beings*, the other but *one* (for they are not yet agreed whether they worship *three* infinite supreme Beings or but *One*)”. In short, either Tritheism or Sabellianism, with each corrupting one of the requirements of the Gospel: Mediation or the Divine Unity. Emlyn cautioned that “to keep the Gospel Faith whole and *undefiled*, ’tis necessary that we avoid both these Rocks, by believing in God and his *Christ* to be Two Beings, that so there may be room for One to Mediate with the Other” and yet believe “that these Two are not two equal or supreme Beings, but one *subordinate* to the other, that so we may preserve the *Unity* of the Supreme God.” There is no mention or attention given to the Holy Spirit within Emlyn’s particular choice here between “the two principal distinguishing Doctrines of Christianity” relating to God and Christ, he seems to take the Spirit either for granted within the Godhead or does not believe it to have any significant bearing on understanding the other members of the Godhead.<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, Emlyn aptly summed up his entire endeavor with the words of Paul (that could soon be somewhat likened to Emlyn himself) after he had been forcefully taken by the Roman authority (establishment Anglicans) due to an increasingly heated dispute among the Jews (the Dissenters) who saw him to as “a pestilent *fellow*, and a mover of sedition”. Before the governor, Paul declared “*that after the way which they call Heresy, so Worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets, Acts 24.14.*”<sup>37</sup> This could be construed to represent Emlyn’s belief that the Church Fathers, as well as the New and Old Testaments supported him in his belief that Christ (per Paul in 1 Timothy 2:5) was “only a Man; who also is by Office a God, or Ruler over all; made so by him who puts all things under him.”<sup>38</sup> To be clear, Emlyn insisted that his Unitarian views were neither Arian nor Socinian, “not agreeing wholly with either”.<sup>39</sup> While there is a great degree of truth to Wiles’s statement that for Emlyn “it was the scriptural witness only that counted”<sup>40</sup> it is clear that he relied on Patristic, Reformation, and post-Reformation sources to augment his arguments and make them more palatable and convincing to his contemporaries. Scripture

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<sup>36</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 18.

<sup>37</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 22. Acts 23 and 24: 5, 14.

<sup>38</sup> Emlyn, *Scripture Account*, 18. Of course, this is Emlyn’s interpretation of Paul’s epistolary statement in 1 Timothy 2:5, which reads: “For *there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*”. This passage of scripture (as used by Emlyn) is addressed by Burr on pages 74 to 79 of *Supreme Deity* (1757).

<sup>39</sup> Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 136.

<sup>40</sup> Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 136.

needed supports. For Emlyn, that was found in rational exegesis and, where available, recourse to traditional and historical sources. But in any case, and at the very least, Emlyn did not believe in a co-equal Trinity and did not believe that the Son was an infinite Being, the latter position placing him firmly among those identified at the Council of Nicaea who say that there was a time when the Son was not. He can safely be placed among the Arians (proper) in Christian history.

Following his arrest, Emlyn was able to obtain bail (two “sufficient Persons” had to guarantee £800 if he did not appear for trial). When the trial (which had earlier been postponed) began 14 June 1703 (a year from the initial confrontation), Emlyn found himself charged with “writing and publishing a Book, wherein...I had *Blasphemously and Maliciously* asserted, &c. That *Jesus Christ was not equal to God the Father, to whom he was subject*;—and this with a *seditionous Intention, &c.*” Emlyn was not allowed to speak at the trial and, according to his account, the jury was instructed that the “strong *Presumption*” of his authorship of the book “*was as good as Evidence*” and that the more important question of the book’s blasphemy was never addressed. In the presence of six or seven bishops (two of whom were Archbishops), the (according to Emlyn) “unfit jury of Tradesmen [set] to judge of abstruse Points of Divinity” were threatened by the Lord Chief Justice that if they delivered an acquittal “*my Lords the Bishops were there*”. The jury deliberated too long so the Court sent someone to “hasten ‘em” and they returned with a guilty verdict.<sup>41</sup> Emlyn was sentenced to one year in prison, but then was to remain there until he had paid a (near impossible) £1,000 fine. He was spared the pillory on account of his status as “a Man of Letters” and was instead led around the Four Courts with a paper on his breast exposing him for his crime. Two years later, with the intervention of some sympathizers, the fine was reduced to £70 (with an additional £120 going to the Archbishop of Armagh) and Emlyn was released from prison 21 July 1705.

Thomas Emlyn can be considered a sort of early eighteenth-century equivalent to the mid-sixteenth century Servetus (not unknown to the English debates), the former caught between the zeal of both the Dissenter and the Establishment’s common claims to orthodoxy (and its defense) as the latter had between the zeal and those same claims of both Reform and Catholic. The intervening period had evolved considerably in the recourse of punishment for perceived heresy. While Servetus was burned at the stake, Emlyn was publicly shamed, fined,

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<sup>41</sup> Emlyn, *Narrative*, xxv-xxx. See also Gibson, “Persecution of Thomas Emlyn,” 530.

and imprisoned. However, this slow evolution was acknowledged to be not universally achieved, for in “passing this rigorous Sentence [on Emlyn], the Lord Chief Justice did not scruple to magnify the Mercy of it, because, forsooth, in [Catholic] *Spain*, or *Portugal*, as he said, it would have been no less than burning. . . .as if it was such a mighty matter to boast of, that we are not quite so miserable as they who live under the Cruelty of the *Inquisition*, or as our *Forefathers* were in Queen *Mary*’s Reign.” Emlyn speculated that he missed being “put to the fiery Trial” by about seven or eight years.<sup>42</sup> In fact, the last person to be burned for charges of heresy in England was the Anabaptist Edward Wightman in 1612, though in Scotland the last to be executed (by hanging) was Thomas Aikenhead in 1697.

This comparative mercy was no merit in the opinion of others. The Low-Church clergyman, Benjamin Hoadly (discussed later in the chapter) sardonically summarized the trial and prosecution of Thomas Emlyn thus: Because he “could not see exactly what They saw, about the Nature of *Christ* before his Appearance in this World. . . .The *Nonconformists* Accused him, the *Conformists* condemned him, the *Secular Power* was called in, and the cause ended in an imprisonment and a very great fine, two methods of conviction of which the gospel is silent!” Given the Protestant anti-Inquisition context that the Chief Justice enjoined Emlyn to be grateful for, it is appropriate to note that Hoadly wrote his satire in dedication to the Catholic Pope Clement XI, but with biting commentary meant for Anglicans. Hoadly explained: “For, as with *You* [Catholics], a Man had better blaspheme Almighty God, than not Magnifie the Blessed Virgin; so, with many of us, it is much more innocent and less hazardous, to take from the Glory of the Father, than of his Son.” He continued: “Nay, to bring down the Father to a level with his own Son, is commendable Work. . . .But to place the Son below his own Father, in any Degree of real Perfection, this is an unpardonable Error”. In fact, Hoadly hyperbolized Emlyn’s situation to be such that “he [i.e., Emlyn] found at length, that he had much better have violated all God’s Commandments, than have interpreted some Passages of Scripture differently from his Brethren.”<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Emlyn, *Narrative*, xxxiii-xxxiv. This comparison by the Lord Chief Justice was related earlier in the *Narrative* as well, on page viii.

<sup>43</sup> Benjamin Hoadly, “The Dedication to Pope Clement XI. Prefixed to Sir R[ichard] Steele’s *Account of the State of the Roman Catholick Religion throughout the World*” in *The Works of Benjamin Hoadly, D.D., Volume 1* (London: W. Bowyer and J. Nichols, 1773), 537.

John Locke, who knew the events of Emlyn's deprivation very well, concurred.<sup>44</sup> In fact, Emlyn echoed Locke directly when he stated in a more reflective moment of the *Narrative* (worth quoting extensively), that

This, if any thing, is the universal Right of Mankind, to exercise a liberty of Judgment and Conscience, in matters of Faith and the Worship of their great Creator; and to lay the Reasons of their Faith and Worship soberly and honestly before others, that they may mutually impart and receive Instruction in so important a Concern: and so long as there is no Violation of natural Religion, of common Justice, and other social Virtues on which civil Societies are founded, what harm can this Liberty do?

Emlyn then (retrospectively)<sup>45</sup> offered a very Lockean account of the origin of Government and argument for Religious Liberty: "It was for the Preservation of Mens Temporal and Civil Rights alone, that they came into Communities under Government; and not to submit their Consciences to any mortal Rulers, in the matters of positive Revelation and Institution". He added significant perspective to the limits of institutional authority over individual Conscience, explaining that "where they [i.e., Consciences] are already under the determination of an higher Authority, not to be superseded or limited by any Combination or Agreement of Men, no, not of all the Men on Earth." He continued by juxtaposing societies enduring "secular Terrors" rather than "a settled Calm of secure Liberty":

I know 'tis pretended, that the Peace of Societies is oft disturbed by different Opinions and Ways of Worship, openly professed and practis'd: but, tho any thing may prove an occasion of private Jars between Man and Man, I can't see that different Opinions in Religion, unarmed with secular Terrors, should ever affect the Publick, more than Differences in many other Points; in which, tho of less importance than the matters of Religion and Salvation, we could not without the highest Injury have our liberty restrain'd by force. / 'Tis Violence and Restraint makes the Struggle, and raises those Enmities, which die away in a settled Calm of secure Liberty...

Emlyn concluded these Lockean prescriptions of contract communities and religious liberty by proffering a warning via the (to his mind) apposite biblical example of Elijah, described as "at that time a Dissenting persecuted Prophet" who "told the persecuting King *Ahab*, *I have not troubled Israel, but Thou, and thy Father's House have.*"<sup>46</sup> Accordingly, the light of his experience shone on that of his prior expectation, revealing (from his vantage) a sad disappointment in the current state of the Reformation.

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<sup>44</sup> Gibson, "Persecution of Thomas Emlyn," 533. See also, Gilbert, "Thomas Emlyn", *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>45</sup> Emlyn's *Narrative* was published in 1719 though he claims most of it was written much earlier "when the Facts were new". As such, it appears that the "substance" of that earlier portion begins on page xiv, with extensive later ruminations added prior and again at the conclusion, perhaps at page xl.

<sup>46</sup> Emlyn, *Narrative*, ix-x.

In fact, Emlyn was astonished by the (apparent) Protestant shift that celebrated Luther's reliance on scripture and adherence to conscience but condemned his own. And while his lecturing the Church of England in this vein is contextually relevant, it seems that for Emlyn this noted shift was of more particular concern with regard to Dissent and their sudden warmth and ready recourse to "the Laws of the State". Emlyn placed himself squarely in the foundation and pattern of Reformation piety in response to claims of infallibility.

Having been brought up in the Protestant Religion, I did sincerely embrace the Principles of that Profession; and accordingly thought (what all true Protestants profess) that I ought not to take my Religion upon the credit of the common Vogue, the Authority of Doctors and Synods, or the Laws of the State; but that I ought to search the holy Scriptures, as the safest and unerring Guide of Faith, Worship and Practice. I had often heard and read, that the Reverend Prelates and Doctors of the Church of England, have glory'd in allowing to Christians a Judgement of Discretion in Matters of Religion; and I knew the Reformation from Popery had been founded on that Principle.<sup>47</sup>

He then asked a series of questions indicative of his post-Reformation context: "Might not any Protestant then, all these things considered, venture upon a serious Examination of modern Creeds by the Light of Revelation, the Words of Christ's own Mouth, and the Writings of his inspired Apostles?" He continued: "Or might not I, who had been brought up in a diligent Study of the Scriptures, and admitted to be a Teacher of others, justly expect the liberty of declaring what I judged to be the Doctrine of the Gospel, tho rejected by others not more infallible than myself?"<sup>48</sup> He stated his belief that "I might well think it was really intended by Protestants, that a Man should be encouraged in an honest Search after Truth, and a sober Profession of what he sincerely judged to be so; and not suffer the loss of his Liberty and Livelihood for doing what he is required by God, and even directed to do by themselves." He then leveled the charge of hypocrisy against the Protestants that he had been warming up to: "...to have thought any so hypocritical, as to cry up the People's Liberty to search the Scriptures, and to see, with the noble (and so oft applauded) *Bereans*, whether what their Teachers say be conformable thereto; and at the same time to carry an Intention to ruin them, if they dare tell the World, especially if they bring strong Proofs, that they find the Scriptures say otherwise."<sup>49</sup> In fact, he argued, the courageous profession and propagation of

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<sup>47</sup> Emlyn, *Narrative*, v.

<sup>48</sup> Emlyn, *Narrative*, xi.

<sup>49</sup> Emlyn, *Narrative*, vi. Bereans refers to those of the city of Berea (taught by Paul and Silas as recorded in Acts 17:10-12, just prior to Paul's preaching in Athens) who "were more noble" than the Thessalonians because they "received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so. Therefore many of them believed; ..."

the “Christian Faith... Truth and Knowledge” was required of “a good Christian... at the peril of our eternal Salvation.” By drawing such comparisons, Emlyn was not just claiming adherence to what he judged to be the doctrine of the Primitive Church but the true mantle of the Reformation as well.

Emlyn’s insistence that the last judgement of a Christian would accord with one’s reliance on Scripture as understood by their Reason helped to further emphasize the role of both categories in the Trinitarian debates to follow. This combination of scriptural understanding via one’s reason, coupled with an absolute sincerity to one’s individual conscience—a conformity to God-given conscience rather than man-made creed—was to prove important to the discourse on liberty. Moreover, Emlyn’s trial showed the lack of nuance allowed in such courts as the Queen’s Bench to address, let alone appropriately punish, differences of doctrinal opinion regarding the Trinity. As such, Emlyn’s case also demonstrated the new boundaries of civil and religious toleration following the Act of Toleration, as well as the continued impulse for joint Church-State action to punish (specifically) religious opinions in the minority.<sup>50</sup> Gibson has noted the need for historians to “redraw our topography of toleration” that (too) often ends with the Act of Toleration since (the then tolerated) “dissenters themselves were those who sought the prosecution of Emlyn.”<sup>51</sup> Emlyn’s prosecution served to identify the Nonconformists with the established Church in their devotion to Creedal Trinitarianism.<sup>52</sup> At least one continuing perplexity for both was the question of *what* the doctrine of the Trinity actually was and *who* could (and *how* could they) define deviations from it. Emlyn’s trial was the first test of the continued Church-State settlement from 1689 and its new but limited toleration, which framework and themes would set the basis for the subsequent episodes of the ongoing debate. Accordingly, another prominent case would involve a noted Cambridge University scholar, the outspoken William Whiston.

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<sup>50</sup> See Gibson, “Persecution of Thomas Emlyn,” 538.

<sup>51</sup> Gibson, “Persecution of Thomas Emlyn,” 538.

<sup>52</sup> Gibson, “Persecution of Thomas Emlyn,” 538: “It was not a fissure that divided Anglicans from dissenters; it was one which divided Trinitarians from Arians and “orthodox” from “heterodox.” As will be discussed later, with the later events of Salter’s Hall of particular note, this doctrinal fracturing, rather than fissuring of ecclesial governance, would become a marked feature of this period.

## 2.2 – University Consistory and Parliamentary Impeachment: William Whiston and Henry Sacheverell

William Whiston<sup>1</sup> (1667-1752) was the second son of a presbyterian rector who retained his parish living at the Restoration. Educated by his father until 1684 (when he attended grammar school), he was intended to become “an able minister of the New Testament”.<sup>2</sup> In 1685, the year of his father’s death, Whiston inherited the family library and provision for a university education. Accordingly, in 1686 Whiston entered Clare College, Cambridge, where he graduated BA in 1689 and received his MA in 1693, the same year he took holy orders and was ordained a deacon (by William Lloyd, the latitudinarian bishop of St. Asaph and later bishop of Worcester). An excellent student he became a tutor at the college, but, indicative of his wide interests and ranging competency, he subsequently resigned the next year to become a chaplain to the bishop of Norwich, John Moore (later translated to the wealthier see of Ely), who had been acquiring an extensive library in his effort to be “a Patron of Learning, and learned men”.<sup>3</sup> Whiston then returned to Clare (while retaining his chaplaincy) to study mathematics, for which he had received honors in his undergraduate studies. He began by grounding his studies in “the Cartesian Philosophy” but subsequently switched to the Newtonian, hearing Newton lecture publicly and then gaining his acquaintance in 1694.<sup>4</sup> Whiston quickly acquired a competency and zeal for Newton’s natural philosophy and soon produced *A New Theory of the Earth* (1696) that would sell 1500 copies over the next decade, be translated into German and summarized in French, and go through five further editions from 1708 to 1755. Noting praise from John Locke, Stephen Snoblen has stated that the work was “the first-full length popularization of Newtonianism

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<sup>1</sup> This section adds greater detail to that offered by Eamon Duffy in “‘Whiston’s Affair’: the trials of a Primitive Christian 1709-1714,” (*Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 27, No 2 (April 1976), 129-50) particularly regarding the University Consistory that expelled Whiston from Cambridge. Duffy correctly assigns to Whiston’s work a notable role in the Sacheverell impeachment trial and the subsequent concern over Convocation in the later years of Queen Anne, and the growing interest in the difficulties surrounding the received doctrine of the Trinity for Anglican and Dissenting clergy. Duffy does not focus on Whiston’s method or argument, or the place of such in the discourse on authority relating to Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. Duffy comments only lightly on the relationship between the institutional authority of Church and State and individual authority of Conscience, primarily drawing attention to the “internecine strife” in the Church and how “the increasing complexity of English society had vitiated the effectiveness of the church’s traditional machinery” had thwarted a successful condemnation of Whiston himself (p. 150).

<sup>2</sup> As quoted in Stephen D. Snobelen, “William Whiston (1667-1752)”, *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>3</sup> Whiston’s words as quoted in Peter Meadows, “John Moore (1646-1714)”, *Oxford DNB*. See also William Whiston, *Historical Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Samuel Clarke* (London: Fletcher Gyles, J. Roberts, 1749), 6.

<sup>4</sup> William Whiston, *Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Mr. William Whiston* (London: Mr. Bishop, 1749), 36. See also, Maureen Farrell, *The Life and Work of William Whiston* (New York: Arno Press, 1981), 21.

and the most direct cause of Whiston's meteoric rise."<sup>5</sup> And it was perhaps this publication (Whiston's first) that put him in contact with another budding Newtonian, Samuel Clarke. When Whiston left his chaplaincy at Norwich for a living at Kessingland in 1698, it was Clarke that took his place. Whiston's pastoral care of two-thousand parishioners included regular sermons and catechetical lectures. In 1699 Whiston married the daughter of his former headmaster and though he had to resign his fellowship at Clare, Newton subsequently invited him to lecture as his deputy, receiving the whole of Newton's salary for the position (Newton had been appointed to the lucrative post of overseeing the Royal Mint). Whiston started to lecture in February 1701 and by May 1702, and with Newton's backing he was elected his successor in the Lucasian chair for mathematics.<sup>6</sup>

At the age of 34, Whiston appeared to be secure in what would have been a comfortable university life, but such was not the outcome. While Lucasian professor he published on mathematics, physics, and astronomy. In 1705, Whiston preached the inaugural sermon at Trinity Church in Cambridge, published an essay in 1706 on biblical prophecy, and continued this theme in his role as the Boyle lecturer in 1707 (published as *The Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecies* in 1708). However, toward the end of these five years he had come to view the doctrine of the Trinity as alien to Primitive Christianity, in another two years he insisted on publishing his views, and the year after that he was expelled from the university. The steady rise and precipitous fall of an able academic's inside-track career was painful to witness by friends and colleagues. When Whiston wrote to the archbishops of York and Canterbury he was advised to not publish his sentiments that would certainly disrupt the churches. The latitudinarian bishop that had ordained him a deacon, William Lloyd, wrote to John Sharp (Archbishop of York), in a telling depiction that observed a newly intractable Whiston, that

having known [Whiston] many years, I always took [him] to be an humble, modest good man; and was pleased with his more than ordinary inquisitiveness; till, I found that by the discoveries he had made, some true, and other only imaginary, he was shot up to a such a pitch of self-conceit that now everything he fancies he takes to be true, and thinks himself as certain in every little of it, as if he had it all by divine revelation. And, as being such, thinks himself obliged to go on with them and to publish them whatsoever it may cost him.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Snoblen, "Whiston", *Oxford DNB*. See Whiston, *Memoirs*, 44.

<sup>6</sup> This paragraph is largely a summary of parts of Snoblen, "William Whiston," *DNB*.

<sup>7</sup> As quoted in Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 95.

Another ascribed to Whiston a “Love of Novelty”, adding, “It is plainly Natural to you, as all your Friends too well know. But to our greater sorrow it is visibly grown, and daily increases, by indulging your self so much in it.”<sup>8</sup> More than likely fostered by his association with Newton and his circle, Whiston’s primary source, however, for the shift in his views regarding the Trinity, was his decided belief in the antiquity and genuine composition of the Apostolic Constitutions, which, Wiles states of Whiston, “was a matter of paramount importance to him”.<sup>9</sup>

In a letter to the vice chancellor of Cambridge University, dated 22 February 1710, Whiston related that the results of his studies had made him aware of the need for “the Correction” of doctrines and practices within the Church of England. However, church reforms were not the only or even “the main thing that I labour for. The Discoveries I have made are of still a higher Nature.

For I have, I think, certainly found that those *Apostolical Constitutions*, which the Anitchristian Church [i.e., Roman Catholic] has so long laid aside as Spurious or Heretical, are no other than the Original Laws and Doctrines of the Gospel: The *New Covenant*, or most Sacred Standard of Christianity; equal in their Authority to the Four Gospels themselves; and superior in Authority to the Epistles of single Apostles: some parts of them being our Saviour’s own *Original Laws* deliver’d to the Apostles; and the other parts the *Publick Acts* of the Apostles themselves met in Councils at *Jerusalem* and *Caesarea* before their Death: and this was the constant Opinion and Testimony of the earliest Ages of the Gospel.<sup>10</sup>

Whiston went on to also state that the Epistles of Ignatius that were often assumed to be “Interpolated” were “alone the Original and Genuine Epistles of that Apostolical Bishop”.<sup>11</sup> It appears then that what Whiston sought, in addition to reform, was a correction of the scriptural canon (to recognize the Apostolical Constitutions within it), as well as a correction of the accepted texts of Christian antiquity (to reverse the received places of middle and long recensions of Ignatius’s epistles).<sup>12</sup> He was convinced of the “Truth and Divine Authority” of

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<sup>8</sup> As quoted from a letter to Whiston included in William Whiston, “An Historical Preface,” in *Primitive Christianity Reviv’d, Volume I* (London, 1711), xxxii.

<sup>9</sup> Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 106.

<sup>10</sup> Whiston, “Historical Preface,” cii. My underline.

<sup>11</sup> Whiston, “Historical Preface,” ciii. See also page xcvi, it appears that his interest in the “larger” letters of Ignatius began in January 1710, relatively much later than his interest and devotion to the Apostolical Constitutions that he wrote to the Archbishops about in 1708.

<sup>12</sup> For further discussion on Whiston’s insistence on the authenticity of the Apostolical Constitutions and the Ignatian long recension in relation to recent scholarship, see Paul R. Gilliam, “William Whiston: No Longer an Arian” in *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 66, No. 4, October 2015 (Cambridge University Press), 758, n14. In part, Gilliam states: “Although subsequent scholarship has proved Whiston erroneous on significant issues such as the authenticity of the Ignatian long recension as well as the *Apostolic constitutions*, in other areas of

these texts and declared himself “willing and ready to hazard all I have or hope for in this World for their Reception and Establishment.” Whiston, who was certainly familiar with the case of Thomas Emlyn, fully accepted the possibility that “Violence and Persecution” could come his way, but hoped that “the Churches of Christ, especially the Reformed Churches, begin to lay aside that *Antichristian Spirit of Persecution* which has so long prevented the free Enquiries of Christians into the Original Doctrines and Duties of the Gospel.”<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, Whiston formally asked (but in effect challenged) the University and the body of English clergy to “a fair, a publick, and a careful Examination” of his findings; hence his writing to the vice chancellor, whom he informed that he had already written to the Archbishops. He made certain to declare that he had “sincerely discharg’d my Duty and Conscience in this serious and weighty Concern.”<sup>14</sup>

In essence, Whiston’s aim was an entire revolution in Christianity through reversion to a corrected textual antiquity outside the traditional biblical canon. From this vantage it is possible to contemplate Whiston’s rejection of the accepted doctrine of the Trinity as a mere byproduct of his devotion to a historicism applied to the texts of Christian antiquity.<sup>15</sup> However, the converse may also be the case that Whiston judged the antiquity of the texts according to their alignments with his own, already arrived at views of what beliefs were held in antiquity. (Anthony Collins would later denounce Whiston’s project for this reason).<sup>16</sup> But in ascertaining the motive for Whiston’s stance on the received Trinitarian dogma, this notion of a preconceived reading and rejection does not seem to be the case. Paul R. Gillium has noted that the initial study whereby Whiston arrived at his views commenced with the canonical New Testament and continued on with “the known Catholick Books and Fragments, till near the conclusion of the second Century.”<sup>17</sup> So, the textual corpus of evidence Whiston studied to arrive at his views included (it appears) both canonical *and*

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fourth-century scholarship he was well ahead of his time.” And also: “...none the less, Whiston was absolutely correct that there are later fourth-century concerns reflected in the Medicean manuscript of the Ignatian middle recension”, the only copy to which he had access.

<sup>13</sup> Whiston, “Historical Preface,” ciii. To this he added in a manner indicative of his interest in Biblical prophecy: “And I do also believe, that our Saviour Christ is bringing on soon his Kingdom of Peace and Holiness, when all such Designs shall be vain and fruitless for ever.”

<sup>14</sup> Whiston, “Historical Preface,” cv.

<sup>15</sup> See also Gillium, “No Longer an Arian,” 761: “Herein lies the heart of Whiston’s method for achieving unity and restoring primitive Christianity: the primacy of primary texts over ‘Modern writers, and the darling Notions of any Church or Party whatsoever’.”

<sup>16</sup> See Force, *William Whiston*, 81: “Collins charges “that a *Bible restored*, according to Mr. W.’s Theory, will be a mere WHISTONIAN BIBLE...”; O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 170; and Anthony Collins, *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (London: 1724), 225.

<sup>17</sup> As observed and quoted in Gillium, “No Longer an Arian”, 761.

primitive texts. Of these, the Apostolical Constitutions seem to have been the most important. A telling example of this is displayed in Whiston's commentary on Romans 9:5, wherein he noted that "This known Phrase, *the God over all*, both in the Scripture, and most Primitive Antiquity, directly and singly means *God the Father*: And 'twas thought in those ancient Days that to say the Son was *the God over all*, was little less than Ignorance, Heresy, and Blasphemy.; as we shall see presently." His following note then quoted the Apostolical Constitutions: "*But others of them suppose that Jesus himself is the God over all, and glorifie him as his own Father, and suppose him to be both the Son and the Comforter; than which Doctrines what can be more detestable?*"<sup>18</sup> He then alleged Ignatius's support but quoted "the Testimony of Origen". Whiston begins with scripture, confirms with the Apostolical Constitutions, and supports with a primitive writer. The Apostolical Constitutions acted as the standard by which to judge the (received) canon.

Before continuing this discussion of the Apostolical Constitutions, Whiston's approach to utilizing the received Scriptural canon in the debate, as well as the Church Fathers, is demonstrated in this same publication, entitled *An Account of the Faith of the Two First Centuries, Concerning The ever-blessed TRINITY*, included in his fourth volume of *Primitive Christianity Reviv'd* (1712). Whiston treatment of the first of twenty-three article will suffice as a representation of the whole. He begins by quoting forty-seven passages from "the Testimonies of our Saviour himself, out of the Gospels" that either prove or illustrate that "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" is the "One, Supreme...God".<sup>19</sup> He added to these sixty-seven passages from the rest of the New Testament to the same purpose. Accordingly, he concluded that "[t]here is no certain Instance of any of the known and peculiar Epithets of the Supreme God, given to the Son, in the whole New Testament." And he only allowed the possibility of "one Text of the Old Testament" to achieve this, where "we render the words *the mighty God*" (Isaiah 9:6) as "plainly belong[ing] to the Messiah." But the certainty of this passage was undercut, according to Whiston, by "the Learned [Thomas] Gataker" (1574-

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<sup>18</sup> William Whiston, *Primitive Christianity Reviv'd, Volume IV: An Account of the Faith of the Two First Centuries, concerning the ever-blessed Trinity, and the Incarnation of our Lord; in the Words of the Sacred and Primitive Writers themselves* (London, 1712), 6-7. This same discussion on Romans 5:9 is referenced again (and second) in Whiston's collection of "The Primitive Doxologies" in the appendix on page 184. The Apostolical Constitutions further condemned those who "do not confess Christ to be the Son of God: For they also deny his Generation according to the Flesh...and they take away his Generation before all Ages." See William Whiston, *Primitive Christianity Reviv'd, Volume II: The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, By Clement* (London, 1711), Book VI, Section LVII, Article XXVI.

<sup>19</sup> Whiston, *Faith of the Two First Centuries*, 1-2. Samuel Clarke stated similarly that the "Testimonies...of the Antient Writers, both before and after the Council of Nice...are not alleged as *Proofs*... (for *Proofs* are to be taken from the *Scripture alone*,) but as Illustrations only" (see *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), xvii).

1654), who observed that the phrase would “warrant no more than *a mighty God*.”<sup>20</sup> Understandably, he does not here mention 1 John 5:7, but instead discusses his omission of “the celebrated Text” when addressing “Article XXII” that sought to gather the New Testament passages demonstrating that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit “are Beings, or Persons really and *numerically* distinct from each other.” He explained that “the plain reason” for his omitting it is “that I believe ‘tis certainly spurious, and inserted by some bold Transcribers from a marginal Gloss on the next Verse.” He then provided a lengthy series of reasons for believing so (which I discuss in greater detail in the Clarke section).<sup>21</sup>

Returning to the “Article I” of Whiston’s *Account of the Faith*, he then continued with quotations from Peter, Clement, the Apostolical Constitutions, and then Ignatius, Justin [Martyr], Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus, and, lastly, Irenaeus (quoted most of all). This pattern matches Whiston’s chronological or historical mindset in approaching the question of the doctrine of the Trinity as necessarily extending from the purity delivered by “Christ and his Apostles...in the first Ages of the Gospel” to the corruptions of the “*Athanasian Mysteries*”.<sup>22</sup> He claimed that Athanasius “at first asserted the ancient Doctrine; but afterwards,” similar to how many discuss Augustine after Pelagius, “in his disputes with the *Arians*, ventur’d to affirm, that there was *one Divinity in all three*; and that the Father, Son, Son, and Holy Ghost were *one God*, as did others about the same time soon follow him therein.” Instead, Whiston confidently asserted, based on “the foregoing Testimonies, as from all the most ancient Creeds, that all the first Christians knew of no other *one God* than the *Father of our Lord Jesus Christ*...’till about three Centuries and an half after our Saviour’s Incarnation.”<sup>23</sup> In his basically linear treatment of his sources, from the Saviour’s words to those of Irenaeus, one has the sense that the value of Scripture for Whiston, rather than as an inspired account, had become primarily historical. The texts were sacred because of their relative proximity to Christ’s personal ministry and then that of his Apostles, with each successive generation becoming more corruptible until ultimately corrupted. Hence his endeavor to “revive” Primitive Christianity, and the significance of the Apostolical Constitutions (as he received them) as ready ecclesiastical and doctrinal guides in that endeavor.

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<sup>20</sup> Whiston, *Faith of the Two First Centuries*, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Whiston, *Faith of the Two First Centuries*, 171-73. See also Snobelen, “Antitrinitarian Textual Criticism,” 133-34.

<sup>22</sup> Whiston, *Faith of the Two First Centuries*, 21.

<sup>23</sup> Whiston, *Faith of the Two First Centuries*, 20-21.

That the Apostolical Constitutions were the most important support and likely source of Whiston's final departure from the accepted doctrine of the Trinity is significant when compared with Emlyn, whose primary source was the canonical scripture (of course coupled with the rational faculty he possessed). By giving equal weight in his method of inquiry to "the Texts of the Scripture *and* Testimonies of Antiquity" Whiston was an anomaly within an otherwise rather strict (at least rhetorically) *sola scriptura* approach by those who came to oppose or modify traditional understandings of the Trinity.<sup>24</sup> Still, Whiston maintained the same critique as that of the Reformation against Roman Catholicism to support his position and endeavors. For example, in August 1708, he wrote in reply to a deeply concerned friend, William Lloyd (who had ordained him), now the Bishop of Worcester: "...let us act like Christians, concern'd for the *Faith once delivered to the Saints* by our Saviour and his Apostles; and not like Men ready to maintain all the Corruptions which *Pagan Philosophy* and *Antichristian Tyranny* have brought in and impos'd upon the Church since the first Ages."<sup>25</sup> As demonstrated in the same letter, besides the significant weight given to extracanonical texts he deemed genuine, Whiston's method otherwise followed Emlyn's approach. However, while Emlyn, a dissenter, was content to make his private study his own affair, Whiston, an ordained clergyman of the established church and prominent professor and academic, sought to instigate a crusade for broad scriptural, doctrinal, and practical reforms within the established Church.

...I have made an Extract of almost all the Texts of Scripture, and most Ancient testimonies relating to the Trinity and Incarnation, under their several Heads, and, without any Hypothesis of my own, have exactly followed those Ancient Testimonies. ...If the common Doctrines disagree with those Texts and Testimonies, they ought certainly to be discarded. If they agree, my Book will be an unanswerable Vindication of them.<sup>26</sup>

Before closing his letter, Whiston asserted that "the Notions that pass current among us...have been deriv'd to us from the Antichristian Church without Examination". And with such an indictment hanging over the head of his mitered correspondent, Whiston owned the imputations that his friends had feared and sought to warn him against. However, at the same moment, he placed himself firmly within the Reformation tradition of private judgement, with the added sense of certainty that his consciously relying on "Original Evidence"

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<sup>24</sup> I will note here a meeting that Whiston recorded in his memoirs of Samuel Clarke that took place in 1711, involving both Clarke and Hoadly and the degree and nature of their openness to the Apostolical Constitutions. See *Historical Memoirs...Clarke* (1730), 18-19.

<sup>25</sup> Whiston, "Historical Preface," xxiv.

<sup>26</sup> Whiston, "Historical Preface," xxiv.

brought; thereby, in part, demonstrating the deep inroads that principles of historicist humanism had made among some circles of academic clergy:

Your Lordship must allow me to govern my own Sentiments and Practices by my own Judgement and Enquiries; and not expect that Modern Authority must serve instead of Original Evidence with me, whatever it does with others in most Cases. And if this be esteem'd Pride, and Vanity, and Obstinacy, and Heretical Pravity, I must be contented with those Imputations; having an assured Hope that the just Judge of all the Earth will one Day acquit me, whatever the Passion or Prejudice of Man may now think of, or do to me.<sup>27</sup>

He concluded the letter by reiterating his insistence on prioritizing Scripture and the first texts of primitive Christianity (with corrections). His concern for proper authority is apparent, especially concerning “the ancient Records of our Religion”, as is his hinted belief in Christ’s imminent return.

I sincerely enquire after, and honestly embrace all the Truths of God, which I find either in Scripture, or the first Writers. But when I see Corruptions plainly *come in*; when I saw *how* they came in, and *when* they came in; when I see *by what Authority* they were establish'd; and by what *forbiding*, or *dropping*, or *corrupting* the ancient Records of our Religion they have been so long continued, I cannot hold my Peace, lest I my self be condemned for my Silence and Hypocrisy another Day. ...I hope the Apostolical Constitutions, *Novatian's* Account of the Ancient Doctrines of the Trinity and Incarnation, and the most Primitive Fathers in particular, are by Providence preserv'd on purpose to retrieve to the Church the truly Primitive Faith, and Practice and Discipline; that when our Saviours, Kingdom begins, it may be establish'd upon the very same Foot whereon it was Originally settled in the first Times of the Gospel.<sup>28</sup>

One can almost see Luther and Erasmus knotted into one in Whiston, boldly denouncing “Modern Authority” (as Luther) while deriving his mettle before that authority from the historicity of texts (as Erasmus). Also, the Protestant telos that permeated Whiston’s thinking and scholarship is displayed in his exultant hope that these ancient writings had been preserved, amidst (to his view) the unrelenting march of textual corruptions, for the very purpose of establishing Christ’s Kingdom on earth in its pristine and millennial glory.<sup>29</sup>

Whiston’s efforts to reform the Church of England from a position within the establishment ended with his expulsion from the University of Cambridge. He was never granted the public hearing and vetting of his papers as he had repeatedly requested. Instead,

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<sup>27</sup> Whiston, “Historical Preface,” xxv.

<sup>28</sup> Whiston, “Historical Preface,” xxv-xxvi.

<sup>29</sup> As mentioned previously, Whiston was keenly interested in Biblical prophecy and the timing of Christ’s second coming.

he was brought to a very non-public trial at the lodgings of the vice chancellor on 23 October 1710. Whiston recorded that he was “all alone before my Judges” who were the vice chancellor and nine other heads of colleges. Something to note is that the Regius Professor of Divinity and Master of Queen’s College, Dr. Henry James, who was present, was the same that had examined Samuel Clarke in his defense for the degree of Doctor of Divinity the previous year.<sup>30</sup> He was charged with violating the “45<sup>th</sup> Statute of the University”, of which the relevant and final paragraph reads with particular potency and underscores the marriage of civil and ecclesiastical authority and their combined reach within state-sponsored academic institutions.

We forbid that any, in any sermon, in expounding any commonplace in public lectures, or otherwise in public, within our University, teach, treat of, or defend, anything against religion, or any part of the same as received and established by public authority in our realm; or against any state, authority, dignity, or degree, ecclesiastical or civil, of this our kingdom of England or Ireland: whosoever shall have done otherwise shall, on the being ordered to do so by the chancellor, with the assent of the majority of the heads of colleges, recant and publicly confess his error or rashness: which if he shall have refused to do, or shall not have done humbly, in the manner in which he is ordered, he shall, by the same authority, be for ever expelled from his college, and banished from the University.<sup>31</sup>

The statute had been drawn up during the reign of Queen Elizabeth in 1570. When asked, Whiston refused to declare his ownership one way or the other of his *Sermons and Essays upon Several Subjects* (1709) wherein he appended an “Ancient Piece”, the book *De Trinitate*, which was Novatian’s or the work of “some other unknown Person, a little after the middle of the Third Century”, an ante-Athanasius assertion of God the Father as the supreme God.<sup>32</sup> Whiston was then confronted with affidavits written under oath that he had taught in the “Parish-Church of St. *Clement*’s” and in other Cambridge settings against the doctrine of the Trinity, wherein (as one put it) “he asserted, There was but One God, and that God the Father only was that one God; That the father was in all the Ancient and Primitive Creeds mentioned to be the Only God: That the Son was indeed exalted above all Creatures, and

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<sup>30</sup> William Whiston, “Appendix. An Account of the Author’s Prosecution at, and Banishment from the University of Cambridge” in *Primitive Christianity Reviv’d, Volume I* (London, 1711), cxxxvii.

<sup>31</sup> University of Cambridge, “Chapter XLV. Of the Sermons.” in *The statutes of Queen Elizabeth for the University of Cambridge (12<sup>th</sup> Elizabeth, A.D. 1570): translated from the original Latin statutes, which were published by Mr. George Dyer, in “The privileges of the University of Cambridge.”* (London: W. Clowes & Sons, 1838), 29. See also Whiston, “Appendix”, cxliii-cxliv. The statute was crafted by John Whitgift (d.1604), the master of Trinity, with the intent to evict Thomas Cartwright (d.1603) from his position in the University, the Lady Margaret chair of Divinity, following his preaching against the episcopal hierarchy of the Church of England (see Patrick Collinson, *Thomas Cartwright (1534/5-1603)*,” *Oxford DNB*). See also Hall, *Puritans*, 52-58.

<sup>32</sup> See William Whiston, Preface to *Sermons and Essays Upon Several Subjects* (London: Benj. Took, 1709), i.

made a Partaker of many Divine Excellencies and Perfections, and as such he was to be worshipp'd with a sort or degree of Divine Worship."<sup>33</sup> Another affidavit swore that when Whiston was charged by the signee with the "Denial of the Divinity of the Son. He [Whiston] said, He own'd him as God. I [the signee] ask'd, whether as God *ab eterno*? He answered, No: Nor had any of the Fathers for the first Three Centuries."<sup>34</sup> Whiston was unprepared for this sort of legal prosecution and asked for time to prepare a defense wherein he could show that his "Doctrines were either not truly and completely represented, or were not so contrary to the Doctrine of the Church of *England* as the Vice-chancellor and some others imagin'd."<sup>35</sup>

Whiston asked for six weeks, but was answered that "this Consistory-Court used not to allow so long Time as those at Westminster".<sup>36</sup> This initial meeting took place on Monday, 23 October, and when they met again on Wednesday the 25<sup>th</sup>, Whiston expected the grant of at least some time. He was instead summarily given a paper with the charged "*positions published and spread about in the University [by him]...contra Religionem*". The positions were as follows:

1. That the Father alone is the One God of the Christian Religion, in opposition to the Three Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, being the One God of the Christian Religion
2. That the Creed, commonly call'd the Creed of St. *Athanasius*, is a gross and Antichristian Innovation and Corruption of the Primitive Purity and Simplicity of the Christian Faith among us.
3. That the Canon of Scripture, the Rule and Guide of a Christian's Faith and Practice is that contain'd in the last of the Ecclesiastical Canons, ordinarily stil'd Apostolical: Which all along appears to have been the Standard of the Primitive Church in this matter. ...
4. That the *Doctrine of the Apostles* appears to be a Sacred Book of the New Testament, long lost to the Christian Church. ...Mr. *Whiston* undertakes to prove clearly, that the Apostolical Constitutions are the most Sacred part of the Canonical Scriptures of the New Testament. [And] that the Doxology, current in all these latter Ages, *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost*, was not the true Christian Doxology.

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<sup>33</sup> Whiston, "Appendix", cxl.

<sup>34</sup> Whiston, "Appendix", cxli-cxlii.

<sup>35</sup> Whiston, "Appendix", cxlv.

<sup>36</sup> Whiston, "Appendix", cxlv.

These were respectively listed as contrary to Articles 1, 2, 5, 6, and 8 of the Thirty-Nine Articles, as well as to the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds, and the “receiv’d and establish’d” Doxology in the “publick Liturgy”. Whiston then received “a solemn Admonition therewith to leave my Errors, and return to the Doctrine of the Church of England”. It was stated that he would have until the following Monday to decide.<sup>37</sup>

At this same Wednesday meeting, however, Whiston was prepared to give a formal reply to (and lengthy complaint of) the sudden proceedings against him. Whiston first stated his “Surprize” that

after an uncommon Search after, and Zeal for the pure, original, uncorrupt Doctrines and Duties of Christianity, as they appear in the Sacred Books of the Old and New Testament, and in all the most Ancient and Primitive Fathers; ...after my earnest Endeavours to recover and retrieve several of the Original Sacred Books of our Religion, long lost or despis’d, or neglected in these latter Ages, at least in these Western Parts of *Christendom*; and after such great Success in those and my other Enquiries, that of all the many Learned Persons who have perus’d my Papers, not any one of them has undertaken to write an Answer to them: After all this, I say, I cannot but be Surpriz’d, that without sending for any of those Papers, or at all examining them; and without allowing me any publick Conference or Disputation about the Notions contained in them; while every one else is permitted, if not encouraged to preach and dispute against me upon all occasions, I am forced to stand here as an Offender, and a Criminal on Account of them.

Whiston then condemned the proceedings, stating that the denial of his request for the “Method of Conference and Examination” (“the only way to influence reasonable Men in such Matters”) to be followed was akin to “the Popish Inquisition itself.”<sup>38</sup> Whiston wanted evidence—“but one Tenth Part of that Evidence, that Original Evidence” of antiquity—to be arraigned against his positions. He further complained of the successive and clandestine (“clancularly”) attempts to “procure some Censure upon me; as if I were such a publick Enemy”. According to Whiston, these efforts began with attempts to use procedures of the University’s Senate House, then threats of ecclesiastical court, the assizes, the possible use of the statutes of his professorship, and, finally, the actual use of an inapplicable (and “remote”) university statute.

The University’s statute, Whiston argued, was not applicable in his case since all the witness accounts did not concern any public sermon or lecture “before the University”. This particular complaint against the use of the university statute due to jurisdiction is a bit

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<sup>37</sup> Whiston, “Appendix”, cxlvi-cxlviii.

<sup>38</sup> Whiston, “Appendix”, cl.

obscure, since the statute may read as pertaining to any member “within the university” (i.e., member of such) in public, or as pertaining to any person “within the university” jurisdiction (or “in a Place belonging to the University”, placing a parish-church outside the jurisdiction). The vice chancellor chose the former reading with its overlapping jurisdictions, Whiston the latter. Whiston assured the vice chancellor and the assembled Heads that this reading of his “Surprize and Complaint” was not “all directly affect[ing] your selves...but because [the complaints] all belong to some Members of this University.”<sup>39</sup> Even so, Whiston was upset that while it had been known for more than two-and-a-half years about his studies, that not one of his university colleagues and “not any one of those in Authority here” had ever given him even so much as “a Friendly Caution about them.”

Following the hearing of Whiston’s complaint, an unintended discussion of his views ensued wherein his judges saw samples of the defense he wanted to mount. For instance, when pressed about his affirmation of the Apostolical Constitutions as “Sacred Books of the New Testament” (charged against him as contrary to the sixth of the Thirty-Nine Articles), Whiston replied that “’Tis plain that this Article owns the present Sacred Books, being all the Church then knew, and that had they known of more, they would have set them down also”. He accordingly added, “’tis not affirmed in that Article that there are no other than those, and so my Assertion is not contrary thereto.” When (according to his account) in the midst of a further discussion of his views he “began to draw some of the Heads into Arguing and Reasoning” about the charges and whether they were really against the doctrine of the Church of England, particularly whether the Nicene Creed (that begins with the statement “*I believe in One God the Father, Almighty*”) in fact affirmed his position, the vice chancellor interrupted and asked then and there whether he would recant. Whiston said he could not do so “with a safe Conscience”.<sup>40</sup>

The next Monday, 30 October 1710, “at three a Clock” Whiston again appeared before his judges and again offered a complaint of the proceedings and refused to retract the positions charged against him. He did so on the basis that he had not had “considerable Time, nor any proper Motives for Conviction afforded me” (i.e., no one had refuted him through argument) to effect such a disposition.<sup>41</sup> Whiston then left the proceedings and the vice chancellor and assembled heads of the colleges formally resolved to banish or expel him for

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<sup>39</sup> For Whiston’s reply, see “Appendix”, cxlviii-clvii.

<sup>40</sup> Whiston, “Appendix”, clxii.

<sup>41</sup> Whiston, “Appendix”, clxiii.

having “asserted and spread about in Cambridge, since the 19<sup>th</sup> Day of April, 1709. divers Tenets against Religion, receiv’d and establish’d by Publick Authority in this Realm.” All within one week, William Whiston “Mathematick Professor of this University” had been censured and expelled from the University of Cambridge.

The date listed, 19 April 1709, is particular to the Act of Pardon, issued by Queen Anne, which Whiston had reminded them (before he left the proceedings) covered any possible infractions prior to that day. For Whiston this meant that all the affidavits and prior publications were of no consequence and that since he had not published anything since in Cambridge itself (and, thus, outside the jurisdiction of the University), he was only left to conclude that he had been banished for his beliefs and not his actions.

1. My affirming with our Saviour, St. *Paul*, the *Nicene*, and all the Original Creeds, and most Ancient Fathers, that the *One and Only God of the Christians, is God the Father*.
2. My Asserting an undoubted Matter of Fact, that the Original Christian Doxology was not the Common One, but *Glory be to the Father, through the Son, or, and the Son, in the Holy Ghost*.
3. *My Proposing* to prove that the *Constitutions and Doctrine of the Apostles*, are Sacred Books of the New Testament; and the former of them, the *most Sacred of the Canonical Books*, which in time will appear to be undoubtedly true also.

Of the terms “affirming”, “Asserting”, and “*Proposing*”, note the emphasis placed on the last.<sup>42</sup> Still Whiston wondered, “who should be the secret Movers, or what should be the secret Reasons why, after so long a Forbearance, the Vicechancellor and the Heads should all on a sudden, in this violent manner, resolve to Censure and Expel me, is too deep a Mystery for me authentickly to dive into, and so I must leave it to another Tribunal.”<sup>43</sup> In fact, the Parliamentary elections a month previous had swept the Tory and High Church party into power in both Parliament and Convocation. Whiston’s precipitous fall followed that of the Whigs, the backers of the latitudinarians. That fall was therefore due in no small part to the impeachment of the High Church clergyman, Henry Sacheverell, who had noted Whiston’s work in his trial before Parliament.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Whiston, “Appendix”, clxvi-ii.

<sup>43</sup> Whiston, “Appendix”, clxvii.

<sup>44</sup> See Whiston, “Historical Preface,” xcvi-iii; or, William Whiston, “Postscript” in *An Essay upon the Epistles of Ignatius* (London: Benj. Cooke, 1710), 46-47.

Henry Sacheverell<sup>45</sup> had been educated at Magdalen College, Oxford, where he received a doctorate of divinity in 1708. He was the grandson of both a signatory to the death warrant of Charles I and of a Presbyterian minister that had been imprisoned for continuing to preach despite the penalties of the Clarendon Code and died while serving his sentence. His own father had been educated at Cambridge, conformed and was a rector in the Church of England.<sup>46</sup> Sacheverell was a tremendously popular preacher who gained his greatest fame for delivering the 5 November 1709 sermon (anniversary of the Gunpowder Plot) at St. Paul's Cathedral in London at the request of the Lord Mayor. For the occasion, he dusted off a sermon he had delivered four years previous and reworked it such that the effect was in words comparable to what Guy Fawkes had purposed to do but failed; it surely was beyond what any of those congregated could have anticipated, or what many (especially the government's magistrates) liked or could even legally tolerate. In the words of Gordon Rupp, "If ever a sermon could have set the Thames on fire this would have done it. A four-year-old sermon is generally extinct, but this renovated diatribe breathed fire and slaughter from the beginning to end."<sup>47</sup> The published sermon (including "reprints and pirated editions") is estimated "to have reached 100,000 copies, and may have been read by as many as a quarter of a million people," or "the equivalent of the entire electorate at the time."<sup>48</sup>

Whiston owned in a "Postscript" (written on 25 March 1710) to *An Essay upon the Epistles of Ignatius* (1710) that "Among the Passages of *Blasphemy, Irreligion, and Heresy*, reffer'd to by Dr. *Sacheverell* at his Tryal, some of mine are thus enumerated, viz.

*When the Scriptures speak of One God, they mean thereby One Supream God the Father only. — The Moderns call'd these three Divine Persons but One God; and so introduc'd at least a new, and unscriptural and inaccurate, if not a false way of speaking into the Church... To whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, [and] in the Holy Ghost, and Dele Three Persons and One God.*

Whiston insisted that his examination of "that Matter in the Scriptures, and the most Primitive Writers" was correct: "And I here venture solemnly to challenge Dr. *Sacheverell* himself, and all his more Learned Friends to produce *one single direct Testimony* of any

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<sup>45</sup> See Geoffrey Holmes, *The Trial of Doctor Sacheverell* (London: Eyre Methuen, 1973).

<sup>46</sup> W.A. Speck, "Henry Sacheverell (bap. 1674, d. 1724)", *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>47</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 66. See also Holmes, *Trial of Doctor Sacheverell*, 79.

<sup>48</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 66. Also Speck, "Henry Sacheverell" *Oxford DNB*.

Christian and Catholick Writer...who said these *Three Persons* were *One God*, or the *One God*, before the days of *Athanasius* in the Fourth Century”.<sup>49</sup>

Sacheverell, appropriate to the day’s festivities, first directed his ire at the “Papists” who had attempted to effect “a *Fatal Conspiracy*” such “as only could be *Hatch’d* in the *Cabinet-Council of Hell*”. However, he quickly combined into “*One United Proof*” both November 5 and January 30 as the bookends of peril and caution to the English Church and nation: “both the *Popish*, and *Fanatick* Enemies of Our *Church and Government!* For,” he continued, “These are *equally* such Treacherous *FALSE BRETHREN*, from whom we must always expect the *utmost Perils*, and *against* whom we can never sufficiently Arm Ourselves with the greatest *Caution*, and *Security*.”<sup>50</sup> Catholic conspirators were thus equated to Regicidal Puritan Dissenters and their (even more treacherous) latitudinarian Anglican allies as all “false brethren” to the Church of England.<sup>51</sup> It was his perorated attack on “False Brethren with relation to the State, Government or Society” that caused the immediate furor. He included a particularly unveiled censure of Sir Godolphin, referred to in the phrase as “the *Crafty Insidiousness* of such wilely *Volpones*” the then First Minister’s well-known nickname.<sup>52</sup> Rupp also notes Sacheverell’s declaration that “the very pillar of government was ‘obligation to an absolute and Unconditional obedience to the Supreme Power and the utter Illegality of Resistance upon any Pretence whatsoever’...he could hardly avoid [then giving] a reference to the Glorious Revolution” and William III’s own disclaimer of the doctrine of Resistance.<sup>53</sup> In a particularly telling passage that appears to attack the 1689 Act of Toleration and where he compares Dissent to a plague, Sacheverell asserted the High Church understanding that since the basis of government is the gospel, no compromises can be made:

As it is a *Maxim in Politicks*, that *All Governments are best supported by the same Methods, and Counsels upon which they were Founded*; so it will appear undeniably

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<sup>49</sup> William Whiston, *An Essay upon the Epistles of Ignatius* (London: Benj. Cooke, 1710), 46-47. Whiston’s role in Sacheverell’s sermon is acknowledged by Rupp, as well as the roles of “Tillotson, Burnet, and Stillingfleet” (see *Religion in England*, 66).

<sup>50</sup> Henry Sacheverell, *The Perils of False Brethren Both in Church, and State* (St. Paul’s Church-Yard, Henry Clements, 1709), 1-3

<sup>51</sup> Sacheverell, *Perils of False Brethren*, 6, 13. On page 6 he explicitly alluded to Dissenters in this way in his description of the situation of Paul in Corinth, where there were “several *False Apostles*, and *Seducers*...under the Pretence of *More Purity*, and *Holiness*, (like *Our Modern Sectarists*) to raise a *Schism* amongst ‘em...” On page 13, in reference to those who would “*lay open* all those *Sacred Boundaries* of the *Church*, to let in all *Sectarists*, and *Schismatics*...” he asks: “Should we cover such a *False-Apostle* under the *Sacred Umbrage* of a *True-Church-Man*?” See also Rupp, *Religion in England*, 66.

<sup>52</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 67. Also, Sacheverell, *Perils of False Brethren*, 40.

<sup>53</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 67.

True in it's *Application to Our Constitution*, which can be *Maintain'd by no Other Principles*, but *Those* on which it is *Built*, and like their *Basis*, the *Gospel*, if there's any *Violation*, or *Breach* made in any *Branch* of it, it *Shakes* and *Endangers* the *whole Frame*, and *Body*....*Schism*, and *Faction*, are *Things of Impudent*, and *Incroaching* Natures; they *Thrive* upon *Concessions*, take *Permission* for *Power*, and *Advance* a *Toleration* immediately into an *Establishment*; And are therefore to be treated like *Growing Mischiefs*, or *Infectious Plagues*, kept at a *Distance*, lest their *Deadly Contagion* spread.<sup>54</sup>

He seems to have then invoked Divine Right in both Church and State, and to claim the cause of conscience for his "Church Militant":

*Let us therefore have no Fellowship with these Works of Darkness, but rather Reprove them. Let Our Superior Pastors do their Duty in Thundr'ing out their Ecclesiastical Anathama's, and let any Power on Earth Dare Reverse a Sentence Ratify'd in Heaven....I say Conscience, and Courage, for the One without the Other, is like Faith without Works, Dead, and Insignificant. A Christian, and a Coward, are such Contradictions, as were never found in the Church Militant...*<sup>55</sup>

Accordingly, as he concluded, he invoked Paul's parting exhortation to the Ephesians, taking another swipe at Godolphin (this time more veiled, but perhaps more libelous) and at the government (more clear): *My Brethren be strong in the Lord, and in the Power of his Might. Put on the whole Armour of God, that Ye may be able to stand against the Wiles of the Devil* ['wilely Volpones']. *For we Wrestle not only against Flesh and Blood, but against Principalities, against Powers, ...against Spiritual Wickednesses in High-Places* [the government's ministers].<sup>56</sup> The political effect could not have been more explosive. The censures on the government forced it to conduct an impeachment trial in 1710 from February 27 to March 20, which the Tories successfully placed in Westminster Hall with both Houses of Parliament and all members participating—and more than a thousand spectators in attendance.<sup>57</sup> The House of Commons had censured his sermon as seditious and brought four articles of impeachment wherein Sacheverell had libeled the Glorious Revolution and Act of Toleration, and undermined the Church-State establishment and constitution then under "her Majesty's administration".<sup>58</sup> Notably, a pro-Sacheverell mob rioted in London, attacking

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<sup>54</sup> Sacheverell, *Perils of False Brethren*, 44-45.

<sup>55</sup> Sacheverell, *Perils of False Brethren*, 45-46.

<sup>56</sup> Sacheverell, *Perils of False Brethren*, 47. Sacheverell only uses the term "Wiles" and "Wiley" twice in the whole sermon, and this just moments after his surely unforgotten (because unforgiveable) phrase in reference to the First Minister.

<sup>57</sup> Speck, "Henry Sacheverell", *Oxford DNB*. See also Rupp, *Religion in England*, 67-68: he describes it as "a great spectacle, as they say, pure theatre."

<sup>58</sup> As quoted in Speck, "Henry Sacheverell", *Oxford DNB*. For more on Sacheverell's impeachment trial, see William Gibson, *The Church of England 1688-1832: Unity and Accord*, (London: Routledge, 2001), 60-62.

dissenting chapels and even threatening the Bank of England until the cavalry brought order.<sup>59</sup> In New England, in a letter to Samuel Penhallow dated 22 May 1710, Cotton Mather gave a brief account of the trial and this “High Church Mob... who did horrid Things, and pull’d down six Presbyterian Meeting-houses (*Burgesses, Bradburies, etc.*) and were proceeding to pull down the Bishop of *Salisburies* House, and endless Outrages; But the City Trained Bands suppressed the formidable Tumult.” Mather added, showing the close link contemporaries perceived between intra-national Protestant infighting and international relations with Catholic France, that “Almost all Men of Thought, expect a Civil War; at least, as soon as Opportunity shall be given for it, by a Peace with *France*; which now is diverted, until some further Decisive Action.”<sup>60</sup> Sacheverell was found guilty by the House of Lords: sixty-nine votes to fifty-two.<sup>61</sup> His sermon was, of course, to be burned, but surprisingly, he was only barred from preaching for a mere three years. This incredibly light sentence, was apparently at the request of Queen Anne, who recognized his guilt but thought the punishment sufficient. In 1713, he obtained and, due to the Hanoverian succession, remained at the rectory of St. Andrew’s, Holborn until his early death in 1724.<sup>62</sup> Incidentally (or perhaps not), this was also by then the parish attended by Whiston, the expelled Lucasian Professor.

Following the sentence, the Tories celebrated their persecuted hero’s deliverance throughout the nation and Sacheverell was paraded around the country throughout the spring and summer.<sup>63</sup> When parliament was dissolved in September, the election swept in a Tory majority for Parliament. Queen Anne dismissed Godolphin and the Whig ministry. The ascendant High Church-Tory government of 1710 was quick to enact the Occasional Conformity Act, outlawing the practice and thereby depriving Nonconformists of any civil office. The severe civil disability on Dissenters was successfully tempered by assurances from their Whig supporters with assurances of its repeal.<sup>64</sup> There was a further distrust of

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<sup>59</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 69.

<sup>60</sup> Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Volume II: 1709-1724* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1957), 36.

<sup>61</sup> See Speck, “Henry Sacheverell,” *Oxford DNB*. For how the bishops voted, see Gibson, *Unity and Accord*, 61.

<sup>62</sup> See Speck, “Henry Sacheverell,” *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>63</sup> See Speck, “Henry Sacheverell,” *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>64</sup> See Watts, *Dissenters*, 265-66. See also Gibson, *Unity and Accord*, 63; and Hugh Trevor-Roper, “Toleration and Religion after 1688,” in *From Persecution to Toleration: The Glorious Revolution and Religion in England*, eds., Old Peter Grell, Jonathan I. Israel, and Nicholas Tyacke (New York: Oxford University Clarendon Press, 1991), 392-94.

Dissenting academies, where their ministers were trained and educated.<sup>65</sup> Rupp noted the example of the Archbishop of York, John Sharp, who “feared the menace, as it seemed to him, of the incorrigible Dissenters with their ominously successful seminaries.”<sup>66</sup> The Schism Act of 1714, that would have penetrated these founts of Dissent by requiring all heads of the academies to subscribe, was averted only with the death of Queen Anne (providentially so, from the perspective of Dissent, on the very day she was to have signed the Act). With the subsequent Hanoverian succession, the hopes of Latitudinarian and Dissenter alike began to rise.<sup>67</sup>

As a significant aside, the friction between Whiston the ordained congregant and Sacheverell his parish rector did not ebb but occasionally flared, as seems to be the case from Whiston’s account of Sacheverell’s efforts to exclude him from the congregation and force him to go elsewhere. In 1719, Sacheverell was particularly upset over Whiston’s insistence that the doxology used in Anglican worship was inconsistent with the Primitive church. Therein, Sacheverell endeavored to follow a recent general directive of the Bishop of London to “imploy your best Endeavours to prevail with your several Flocks to have a great Abhorrence for the above-mentioned new Forms” of doxology. This the Bishop did to warn against “Some Persons seduced, I fear, by the strong Delusions of Pride and Self-conceit,” who had published “new Forms of Doxology, entirely agreeable to those of some Ancient Hereticks, who impiously denied a Trinity of Persons in the Unity of the Godhead.” Whiston took this only slightly veiled rebuff as an opportunity to write a *Letter of Thanks* to the Bishop for his unintended assistance, informing him how he was troubled that “a *New Form of Doxology* is every Day used” in the parish church he frequented and that he himself “use[s] an *Old one*”.<sup>68</sup>

At the next Friday service, the Rector demanded Whiston leave, when Whiston refused on legal grounds<sup>69</sup> he found that the “[o]n the Lord’s-Day following” he was forced to stand (as apparently had been done four years earlier “in the like case,” which Whiston did not elaborate upon). Whiston stood while a sermon was delivered on “*Luk. 1.78. Through the*

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<sup>65</sup> See William Gibson, *Samuel Wesley and the Crisis of Tory Piety, 1685-1720* (Oxford University Press, 2021), 148; see also 141-43.

<sup>66</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 70.

<sup>67</sup> See Watts, *Dissenters*, 266-67. See also Gibson, *Unity and Accord*, 63- 64.

<sup>68</sup> William Whiston, *Mr. Whiston’s Letter of Thanks To the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of London* (London, J. Senex, W. Taylor, 1719), 2-3.

<sup>69</sup> William Whiston, *Mr. Whiston’s Account of Dr. Sacheverell’s Proceedings In order to Exclude him from St. Andrew’s Church in Holborn* (London: J. Senex, W. Taylor, 1719), 5.

*Tender mercy of our God, whereby the Day Spring from on high hath visited us*” that specifically warned the congregation against Whiston and his denial of “the Divinity of our Blessed Saviour”.<sup>70</sup> Whiston subsequently wrote to Dr. Humphrey, the preacher, that this “Supposition is so intirely ungrounded, that I can hardly imagin you have ever read what I have written upon that Subject.” He denied being an “Ebionite, or Socinian” and asserted the Father’s supremacy “with Christ’s own Words, that the Father is greater than He” consistent with “all the ancient Creeds and Records of our Religion.” More significantly, Whiston wrote: “I also insist upon it, that when you call me an Arian, you explain your self so, that all may know that you [mean] thereby no other than an Eusebian, or such as had the odious Name of Arian unjustly given them by the Athanasians: for in no other sense was I ever an Arian; as you must know if you have read my Writings.”<sup>71</sup> For Whiston, the Eusebian position held the Father to be Supreme God, yet that “Jesus Christ is, in a peculiar Manner, the *Son*, the *only*, the *only begotten*, and the *most beloved Son of God*, i.e. a Divine Person, in an extraordinary and singular Manner deriv’d from, and peculiarly near and dear to the Supreme God the Father.”<sup>72</sup>

In 1713, Whiston had written that this doctrine agreed with the Athanasian doctrine, that within the Godhead the substance was not divided and the Son was “God of the Substance of the Father.”<sup>73</sup> (He held that at Nicaea there were “three Parties, *Eusebians*, *Athanasians* and *Arians*”).<sup>74</sup> It is worth quoting at length:

Both the *Eusebians* and *Athanasians* agreed in the Christian Article before us in every thing, so far as the Article it self goes. Only the *Eusebians* were always unwilling to meddle with the words *Essence* and *Substance*, as to the Supreme God; and rather chose to say, what all then agreed in, that the Son was derived, not *necessarily* but *voluntarily* from the Father; and that he, and he alone, was derived from him immediately, without the interposition of any other Being; and avoided those uncertain metaphysical Speculations about *Essence* and *Substance*, which all Sides allow’d to be utterly Unscriptural.

Whiston continued by explaining that “The Council of *Nice* indeed did here venture to say, that the Son was *deriv’d from the Essence*, or *Substance of God*, in their Creed; but this was done, not in order to establish a strict philosophick Notion, but in opposition to *Arius* and his

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<sup>70</sup> Whiston, *Account of Dr. Sacheverell’s Proceedings*, 8-10.

<sup>71</sup> Whiston, *Account of Dr. Sacheverell’s Proceedings*, 11-12. For another instance of Whiston’s request not to be identified with the “Arian heresy, strictly so called”, see Farrell, *William Whiston*, 274.

<sup>72</sup> Whiston, *Account of Dr. Sacheverell’s Proceedings*, 15.

<sup>73</sup> William Whiston, “The Council of Nice vindicated” in his *Three Essays* (London: Cross-street Hatton-garden, 1713), 6.

<sup>74</sup> Whiston, “The Council of Nice vindicated” in *Three Essays*, 8.

Followers”. And the exact claim by Arius was that Christ “was created or made, as the subordinate Creatures were, *out of Nothing*”. But Whiston believed the Council made a mistake in seeking to contradict Arius, namely, that they “ventur’d to oppose one Unscriptural Notion and Expression to another; and said [Christ] was deriv’d from God, and that not *out of Nothing*, but in some higher Manner; which knowing not how to express otherwise, they said was *out of God*, or *out of the Substance of God*.” Whiston explained that the Athanasian and Eusebian parties agreed: “Now that the manner of the Son’s derivation was some way *different from, and exalted above* that of the derivation of all other Beings, was agreed on both Sides; and the *Arian* Rashness, which denied this, and said he was made *out of Nothing*, was on both Sides condemn’d”. However, for Whiston it was “the *Eusebians* alone [who] preserv’d themselves undefiled, and their Faith unpolluted with any uncertain, unscriptural and metaphysical Notions; tho’ they did not properly deny the possibility of the same”. The Eusebians eschewed “pretending to enter into such Depths of the Divine Power, by determining *how, or after what Manner* the Son of God was deriv’d from the Father; but owning his *Generation* to be really *unsearchable* by Mankind”.<sup>75</sup>

It appears then that Whiston did not assert that “there was a time when the Son was not.” Even so, he does not expressly deny such a possibility. Ultimately, he refuses to meddle with the manner of the Son’s derivation from the Father. Furthermore, he draws a firm ontological distinction between “Subordinate creatures” made “out of Nothing” and asserts the Eusebian position that “the Son’s derivation was some way different from, and exalted above that of the derivation of all other Beings”, “that he, and he alone was derived from [Supreme God] *immediately*”, thus preferring to avoid “those uncertain [and unscriptural] metaphysical Speculations about *Essence* and *Substance*”.<sup>76</sup> Thus (per Whiston) the Eusebians upheld the intent of the Nicene Creed’s anathema’s condemning those who asserted “that our Saviour was deriv’d *from some Essence or Substance different from the Father*[’s]; or that his Origin was *out of Nothing*, as that of the subordinate Creatures was

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<sup>75</sup> Whiston, “The Council of Nice vindicated” in *Three Essays*, 6-7.

<sup>76</sup> Whiston, “The Council of Nice vindicated,” 6-7.

allow'd to be." Whiston only insists that the Son is "God by Nature"<sup>77</sup> and substance but not equal to (or to be worshipped as)<sup>78</sup> the Father, "the *One Almighty God of the Universe*".<sup>79</sup>

Whiston was eager to point out in this 1713 essay that the later, univocal application of the term *God* utilized by "the modern Athanasians" was not original to antiquity: "For while in the Days of Christ and his Apostles the Word *God* was used of Beings vastly differently, I mean both of the supreme and subordinate Heathen Deities; and so it was then easily apply'd to the supreme and subordinate Persons of the Father and the Son". He explained,

...when the Council of *Nice* it self first ventur'd to call our Saviour *very God of very God*, yet did they own at the same time that God the Father was still the *One Almighty God of the Universe*, in Agreement with all Antiquity. So that the present *Athanasian Doctrine* must be rejected not only by the Scriptures, and all other Christian Antiquity, but by the Sentiments of the Council of *Nice* it self also.<sup>80</sup>

In essence, Whiston saw in the Eusebian view the subordinationism of his own time that he helped to define and "revive". This he did in a very impolitic manner, allowing the historical application of the term *Arian* employed against the Eusebians during the later polemics of the fourth and fifth centuries rather than solely asserting the properly labeled Eusebian category and excluding altogether the Arian as he promulgated his "discoveries".<sup>81</sup> On the other hand (as will be discussed later), Samuel Clarke was able to put a better face on subordinationism by largely avoiding a direct confrontation with ancient ecclesiastical politics that Whiston seemed to prioritize. Clarke instead applied modern analytical methods onto textual revelation and (to his view) profitably utilized the discourse on first principles of metaphysical reasoning already present in the creedal explications of the Trinity. Clarke's paradigm shifted the grounds of the debate from metaphysical mystery toward a metaphysics that inherently demanded hierarchical categorization. Furthermore, he honed in on what was strictly scriptural over any apparent historical drama, albeit he did address linguistic shifts relevant to the latter. Clarke's confrontation with the gatekeepers of doctrinal purity was thereby delayed and (ultimately) a hard break was avoided. Whiston seems to have been

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<sup>77</sup> Whiston, "The Council of Nice vindicated," 8.

<sup>78</sup> See Whiston, *Account of Dr. Sacheverell's Proceedings*, 15: "God the Father, and He alone, is to be primarily worshipped and ador'd, or in the most proper Sense, and in the highest Manner: He only being the Object of the Supreme Degree of such Divine Worship and Adoration, thro' Jesus Christ."

<sup>79</sup> Whiston, "The Council of Nice vindicated," 9.

<sup>80</sup> Whiston, "The Council of Nice vindicated," 8-9.

<sup>81</sup> For political difficulties that Whiston would (or should) have been aware he was causing for the Whig ministry, see Force, *Whiston: Honest Newtonian*, 106, 109-10.

reliving the battles of the fourth and fifth centuries while Clarke moved the theological discourse to genuinely novel, and therein less certain, determinative categories. And while both arrived at what each believed to be Eusebian positions of subordinationism (thought to be basically shared, that at least until their differences became apparent following Clarke's publication of his *Scripture Doctrine*),<sup>82</sup> Clarke did so by attempting to assert bare metaphysical facts about the Trinity (meticulously supported by Scriptural data sets) while Whiston called for what appeared to be antiquated theological restraint and a historical reversion to what he believed was both ante-Nicene and Nicene Christianity. To Sacheverell, both were anathema to a united and pure Church of England that upheld the ancient and ecumenical verities of the Christian religion, the only surety for an acceptable Christian state.

To conclude, High Church efforts to break the (already at times fragile) Whig domination at court and in the government proved futile until the fiery 5 November sermon of Henry Sacheverell. The fanfare of his subsequent trial and necessitated impeachment by the Whig parliament helped turn the government over to the Tories in the election of 1710. This reversed Low Church policies and enabled the Lower House of Convocation, a hotbed of Tory and High Church angst over the Catholic purity of the Anglican Church and monarchical divine right, to become more inquisitorial in pursuit of their aims to squash Nonconformity as well as whip Latitudinarians into penance or out of the Anglican fold. It was in this immediate context and aftermath that William Whiston was ousted from his Lucasian Chair at Cambridge<sup>83</sup> 30 October 1710 and was tried and censured by the Convocation of 1710-11 for his admittedly "Arian" views,<sup>84</sup> and that Samuel Clarke was threatened with censure by the same in 1714 for his assertion of subordinationist solutions to seeming doctrinal difficulties concerning the Trinity, as published in his *The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* (1712). However, the official actions against Clarke were precipitated only following Anthony Collins's anonymous publication criticizing the clearly conflicting views held among the Anglican clergy.

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<sup>82</sup> See Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 114-15.

<sup>83</sup> Snobelen, "William Whiston," *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>84</sup> Gibson, *Unity and Accord*, 81.

### 2.3 – *In Absentia*: Anthony Collins

Though Anthony Collins was the son and grandson of lawyers, and from 1693 to 1696 he was educated at Eton College and then at King’s College, Cambridge, he never obtained his own degree.<sup>1</sup> At Kings, his tutor was Francis Hare (later the bishop of St. Asaph and of Chichester), who also tutored the future Sir Robert Walpole and John Churchill, the son of the Duke of Marlborough, associations by which Hare continued his career, resulting in his eventual nomination under a Whig government to a bishopric, but also indicative of Hare’s assumed influence on Collins’ “Notable notions about Religion and Liberty” that was referenced by at least one detractor.<sup>2</sup> Collins’ biographer described him as a man whose thought was not very original, but whose mental acuity and distilling ability, demonstrated in (and by) his oeuvre, qualify him as one who “can serve as a measure of the intellectual climate of his time”.<sup>3</sup>

This apparent lack of originality is perhaps why Justin Champion pays so little attention to Collins in *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*. Collins is mentioned a mere three times in a book dedicated to examining (according to the back cover’s description) “the intellectual confrontation between priest and Freethinker from 1660 to 1730, and the origins of the early phase of the Enlightenment in England.”<sup>4</sup> As my own study is focused on the practical confrontation between competing claims to sovereign authority and attendant appeals to Scripture, Tradition, and Reason, Collins emerges as a significant contributor to the discourse through his argumentative prowess. Collins is, therefore, a potentially quite significant lacuna in Champion’s study. This is due not only to the fact that Champion, in effect, relegates Collins’s intellectual contribution to an ornamental presence, but because he fails to account for the interplay of theory and praxis that Collins exemplified with an intellectual acuity and effect worthy and relevant to his question of the role and status of history (let alone reason) in the arguments made for and against the *ancien regime*.

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<sup>1</sup> See O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 2-3. See also, J. Dybikowski, “Anthony Collins (1676-1729),” *Oxford DNB*, 1: “He was admitted to the Middle Temple on 24 November 1694, although a career in law, in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, did not attract him.”

<sup>2</sup> See Dybikowski, “Anthony Collins,” *DNB*, 1. That said, Hare was a cautious Latitudinarian who sided against Hoadly in the Bangorian controversy. See Francis Hare, *Church-Authority Vindicated*, (London: J. Roberts, 1719), vi. Hare’s late entry into the Bangorian controversy published from a sermon he gave 5 May 1719 (following the events at Salter’s Hall) points well to the then recognized relation between the years earlier Bangorian controversy among the Anglican clergy and the events at Salter’s Hall among the Dissenters. See also O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 3.

<sup>3</sup> O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 1.

<sup>4</sup> See also Champion, *Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken*, 3, 20. Similarly, Samuel Clarke and William Whiston are mentioned by Champion only two and four times, respectively.

Furthermore, Collins' wealth and social status within that regime would not have commended him to Champion, who was ever drawn to the brilliant but impoverished John Toland, someone who was a more absolute antithesis of the old order compared to Collins's subsequent and propositional synthesis. That he (Champion) observes the Earl of Shaftesbury is true, but it is nothing near his attention and recourse to Toland. Accordingly, it appears in *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken* that Champion was not looking for compromise but clear division, and for a new world emerging despite (rather than within or through) the old. Such an arguable bias posits a significant shortcoming in an otherwise fully warranted and rightly appreciated contribution by Champion to the scholarship. In this study, Champion's contribution has particularly been looked to and relied on, both for its overarching paradigm as well as detailed analysis of the period's content.

Collins was indeed an able expositor of religious liberty and of (Protestant) private judgement within the Church of England (though he often argued from a more universal stance). He was a hated critic of the High Church faction and their religio-political doctrines that sought to avoid what seemed to him the clear consequences of the religious settlement of 1689. This stance was apparent from what had been widely thought his first publication,<sup>5</sup> *An Essay Concerning the Use of Reason* (1707), and he was particularly pointed about it in his *Priestcraft in Perfection* (1710) written in the context of the Sacheverell affair, and in his larger and "most famous" publication, *A Discourse of Freethinking* (1713).<sup>6</sup>

In 1703, at the age of 26, and just prior to the death of his first wife, Collins met Locke. His abilities were quickly apprehended by the aged Locke, who was attentive to him as a successor throughout the waning 18 months of his life. And though Collins admired the philosopher, he did not hesitate to part with him in argument when his own pursuit of truth required—an attribute both particularly noted and appreciated by Locke.<sup>7</sup> Like Locke, Collins maintained his status as a communicating member of the Church of England throughout his life, but his pronounced anti-clericalism made him a despised figure by many, including both Tory High Churchmen, as already mentioned, but also moderate Whig Latitudinarians.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> In the national biography entry, Dybikowski explains that Collins' *A Letter to the Learned Mr Henry Dodwell* was published in November 1706, prior to the March 1707 printing of his *Essay*. The *Dodwell* letter was also his first public (though anonymous) clash with Samuel Clarke.

<sup>6</sup> Reventlow, *Authority of the Bible*, 356-357.

<sup>7</sup> See Dybikowski, "Anthony Collins," *Oxford DNB*; as well as O'Higgins, *Collins*, 4-8, for Collins's particular points of departure from Locke, see page 8.

<sup>8</sup> See O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 78.

Collins published anonymously (though he was often known) and was an otherwise eminently respectable figure in eighteenth-century English society, owning over 2,000 acres of mostly agricultural property variously located in Essex, where he settled in 1715 and served as a magistrate, as well as Treasurer. O'Higgins claims that Collins's "real interest...as real and as keen as that in controversy, lay in the field of local government."<sup>9</sup> Roland N. Stromberg states that Collins was "a veritable pillar of the political Establishment even as he assailed the ecclesiastical one." Stromberg's assumption that Collins attacked the ecclesiastical Establishment ignores the context and primary texts, from which it could be argued that Collins saw himself as defending a particular reading of the Church-State settlement of 1689 (Act of Toleration) from attacks upon it by the High Church party.<sup>10</sup> Also, a further indication of Collins's social status was his marriage to Martha Child (1676-1703), the Lord Mayor of London's daughter.<sup>11</sup>

Since Collins directly addressed the crisis of authority and its competing categories in his writings, they will form the substance of this section, though (as the section title highlights) Collins was tried *in absentia* for his *Discourse* that did not long remain anonymous. The book was condemned and burned by the common hangman.<sup>12</sup> He frequently used the doctrine of the Trinity in his demonstrations against clerical authority and, accordingly, I will focus on his advocacy of reason above religious (or traditional) authority,<sup>13</sup> including Scriptural text and interpretation, and of private judgement (or conscience) over the Church's authority, as well as that of the State,<sup>14</sup> both of which were incapable (in his view) of resolving doctrinal controversy without adherence to the religious duty of freethinking.

While the grist of theological thought and discourse often provided Collins the impetus for his arguments (as well as much of the content),<sup>15</sup> the questions of authority he addressed were primarily practical. For example, there is very little of his own thought about

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<sup>9</sup> O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 113, 116-17.

<sup>10</sup> Roland N. Stromberg, review of *Anthony Collins: The Man and His Works*, by James O'Higgins, *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 78, Issue 1 (February 1973), 100.

<sup>11</sup> Dybikowski, "Anthony Collins," *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>12</sup> Dybikowski, "Anthony Collins," *Oxford DNB*. See also O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 78-79.

<sup>13</sup> See David Berman, "Anthony Collins: aspects of his thought and writings," *Hermathena*, No. 119 (1975), 51. "Collins also saw religious authority as usurping the place that reason ought to hold." Also, traditional authority here is meant to signify the authority of tradition itself, as it is housed in religion.

<sup>14</sup> David Berman, "Anthony Collins' Essays in the Independent Whig," *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Vol. 13, No. 4 (October 1975), 466-467.

<sup>15</sup> See O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 81.

the nature of God and a good amount about the inconsistencies within Scripture or of others' thoughts on the same subject. Again, Collins was opposed to the very real attempt by the High Church faction to preserve the Church-State settlement and understanding that had existed prior to the Act of Toleration. He reminded them that this attempt not only went against their own theologico-political doctrine of passive obedience (i.e., unlimited submission), but that it was contrary to the nature and duty of (Protestant) Christianity, or true religion.<sup>16</sup> According to Collins and his friends, private judgement, or free thinking, was the basic point of the Reformation. O'Higgins states of the conclusive argument of the *Discourse*: "Taken at its face value it seems to be an extreme anti-clerical protestant insistence on private judgement."<sup>17</sup> Ultimately, his was an advanced Lockean framework applied rigorously in the two and a half decades of debate and discourse following Locke's death. Collins held that any proscriptive and punitive authority the established Church held was mediated by individual and corporate agreement, maintained (or sundered) within the bounds of civil responsibility.<sup>18</sup> In 1724, Collins would state that just as a person had the "natural Right and Duty to think, and judge for himself in Matters of Opinion; so he should be allow'd *freely* to *profess* his Opinions...provided these Opinions do not tend to the Disturbance of Society".<sup>19</sup> That said, Collins recognized the need for and advocated for religion to permeate society, but, in the only way he saw as consistent with true religion: individual assent to truth, in both belief and action.<sup>20</sup>

The artillery for his criticisms (particularly in the 1713 *Discourse*) he often drew from the clergy's disputes over the nature of both God and Scripture. Not all of his criticisms stuck as well as he intended, particularly in relation to Scripture,<sup>21</sup> but his constant recourse to denigrating the clergy's incapacity to articulate the doctrine of the Trinity (or agree on subscription to the Athanasian Creed) in a united fashion had enough force that it helped to

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<sup>16</sup> Anthon Collins, *A Discourse of Free-Thinking, Occasion'd by The Rise and Growth of A Sect call'd Free-Thinkers* (London, 1713), 76-77. Discussed later in this section (and hereafter cited as *Discourse*).

<sup>17</sup> See O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 88-89. See also Reventlow, *Authority of the Bible*, 356: Reventlow claims Collins wanted to place "those who were really responsible for the Reformation under Elizabeth I in a positive light".

<sup>18</sup> See Berman, *Independent Whig*, 467: "Collins holds that the Church of England is a legal organization and anyone who belongs to it ought to obey its rules; but no one ought to be forced to join it, or suffer in any way from not belonging to it." And (see *Grounds and Reasons*, vi).

<sup>19</sup> See Collins, *Grounds and Reasons*, vi.

<sup>20</sup> O'Higgins, *Collins*, 92: "Collins might have his own ideas of what constituted the Christian religion, but, in general, he does not seem to have despised it. Socrates for example, he declared to be a true Christian. But he wanted that religion without mysteries and the authority of the priests."

<sup>21</sup> See O'Higgins, *Collins*, 93.

stop short the promising ecclesial career of Samuel Clarke. Whereby, as will be discussed in the later two sections of this chapter, Clarke's treatment by convocation itself greatly contributed to the reckoning of the religious settlement (in practice) via Hoadly and the Bangorian controversy. In relation to the Bangorian controversy and Collins, David Berman's scholarship has revealed that there is perhaps some insight that can come from the 1732 (5<sup>th</sup>) edition of *The Independent Whig*. In this edition, Thomas Gordon identified a "Mr. C" as the author of a dozen of the 54 essays, along with either himself or John Trenchard as the author of the other essays. Berman argues convincingly that "C" was Anthony Collins.<sup>22</sup> In light of this, we can consider that though Collins had died in 1729, one must assess how far he may have in fact agreed with Gordon's statement in the dedicatory preface (in the same 1732 edition) to the Lower House of Convocation. Therein Gordon recommended that that representative body encourage their wayward clergy "to turn back to the Principles of the *Reformation* (a very long Journey, I confess!) and accept of the Bishop of *Bangor's* Scheme, as much as they hate it and him." Gordon continued, "That Scheme, though it may not be altogether so palatable, yet is a safe Scheme: And though it does not entitle them to all the Power and Wealth in *England*, yet it secures to them what they have." Gordon went on to delineate that, "The first Principles of our Protestant Church, are the Principles of the *Reformation*; namely, the spiritual Supremacy of the Crown; the Right of the Laity to judge for themselves; the forming of all Ecclesiastical Polity by the Legislature; and consequently, the creating of Clergymen by the Civil Authority".<sup>23</sup> Note the lack of reference to Scripture in these "first Principles", for though Gordon stated previously that the clergy have "wild and unscriptural claims", his own arguments were "fetched from Reason, the Gospel, and the Laws of our Country".<sup>24</sup> Further exploration of these entries by Collins is necessary for any conclusive assessment of his attitude toward Hoadly and his ecclesiology.

That Collins's scriptural scholarship was attacked and found wanting in the *Discourse on Freethinking* did not deter him from a relatively more successful and careful endeavor in his later *A Discourse on the Grounds and Reason of the Christian Religion* (1724). Therein he defended Whiston's right to publish his studies and opinions while at the same time he sought to blast Whiston's insistence on the literal rather than the allegorical or typological

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<sup>22</sup> Berman, "Independent Whig," 464.

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Gordon, *The Independent Whig: Or, A Defence of Primitive Christianity, And of our Ecclesiastical Establishment, Against The Exorbitant Claims and Encroachments of Fantatical and Disaffected Clergymen, The Fifth Edition, With Additions and Amendments, In Two Volumes* (London: J. Peele, 1732), iv-v.

<sup>24</sup> Gordon, *Independent Whig*, iv. For more of the arguments connecting Collins and Gordon, see also Berman, "Independent Whig," 463-469.

fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies in the New Testament claims of Jesus to be the promised Messiah. This claim was, as Collins's biographer reminds us, Locke's single remaining article of belief to mark a Christian.<sup>25</sup> Collins's intent was therefore "to demolish what he declared was the one proof of the Christian religion."<sup>26</sup> He pointed out, for example, that the supposed fulfillment recorded at the start of the Gospel of Matthew of Isaiah's prophecy "that the virgin will conceive and bear a son" had already been fulfilled in the birth of Isaiah's own son, named Immanuel.<sup>27</sup> Whiston believed the Old Testament texts to have been corrupted by Jewish copyists in a way that no longer allowed a demonstration of the literal Christian fulfillment of relevant prophecies.<sup>28</sup> Collins countered that it would have been "incredible" that Origen would have received the Old Testament, by which he cited those passages cited by the apostles in their arguments, "from enemies [i.e., Jews], which subverted the truth of christianity".<sup>29</sup> To Collins, "it seem[ed] much more reasonable to suppose, that there has been no such corruption of the *sacred text* of the Old Testament, and no such imposition of Jews on Christians, as Mr. WHISTON (and that without just proofs) pretends".<sup>30</sup> Collins's endeavor to allow for Christian exegetes (let alone the apostles) to make allegorical readings of Jesus as the promised messiah in the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, in turn allowed for him, at the same time, to make null their claims by asserting that they had already been fulfilled prior to the life of Jesus. As we will see, this was in accord with Collins's earlier endeavors to historicize Scripture to rescue or assert a reasonable Christianity, but, by 1724, in aiming at Locke's remaining article, there seemed to be nothing left to believe except, finally, "a purified Christian theology."<sup>31</sup>

In the course of his many public debates with both High and Low Churchmen, Collins not only published against both Whiston and Clarke, but had met with them at varying times at the house of Lady Calverly in London "about the Year 1711" (shortly after Whiston's "Banishment from the University") where they, along with a Dr. Bradford and Matthew Tindal, had "frequent, but friendly Debates about the Truth of the Bible and Christian

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<sup>25</sup> O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 163-62.

<sup>26</sup> O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 171.

<sup>27</sup> Force, *William Whiston*, 84. See Collins, *Grounds and Reasons*, 40-44.

<sup>28</sup> Force, *William Whiston*, 80.

<sup>29</sup> Collins, *Grounds and Reasons* (1724), 103.

<sup>30</sup> Collins, *Grounds and Reasons* (1724), 106.

<sup>31</sup> See Holifield, *Theology in America*, 162. See Holifield's description of Collins's rejection of "the traditional Christian appeal to biblical authority" on pages 160 to 161. See also O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 171.

Religion.”<sup>32</sup> The publication that earned Collins his most enemies, and is most central to our question of the discourse on authority in relation to the doctrine of the Trinity, was his *Discourse of Freethinking*. However, to better understand that work we ought to start with an earlier publication. Six years prior to his *Discourse*, Collins published *An Essay Concerning the Use of Reason in Propositions, The Evidence whereof depends upon Human Testimony* (1707). The *Essay* and *Discourse* are both highly critical of the clerical class and ridicule the forms of authority that upheld the mystery of the Trinity, but it is the latter that moved the lower clergy to craft a formal complaint against Samuel Clarke to the bishops (as discussed below). And beyond their immediate impact, these works by Collins, that engaged with the ongoing Trinitarian debate, highlight the categorical discourse on authority that employed arguments over fundamental authorities by allocating status within the hierarchy of competing claims to institutional and individual sovereignty.

Collins’ *Essay* concerns “the relation between reason and Revelation” and while the precise impetus for the work is not certain, O’Higgins points out that the book mentions the “controversy of mysteries” and “one of Collins’ targets was Francis Gastrell’s *Some Considerations concerning the Trinity*”, itself written in response to John Toland’s *Christianity not Mysteriorious* (1696). As such, he notes that the *Essay* would have been a quite belated contribution to a debate that took place more than ten years earlier, with Toland’s book “presented by grand juries in England and Ireland, and burned by the public hangman in the latter”. O’Higgins surmises that the book was Collins’ first effort to “oblige the world” per “Locke’s exhortation” with “some of the direct paths to truth” he (Locke) had seen.<sup>33</sup>

Accordingly, in the *Essay*, Collins defined Reason as “that faculty of the Mind whereby it perceives the Truth, Falshood, Probability or Improbability of Propositions” (or, as the capacity to perceive reality and/or degree of possibility relative to claims) and then set the stage for his discussion by briefly outlining “the actions of the Mind, with relation to true, false, probable or improbable Propositions.”<sup>34</sup> This directly bears on the categorical authority of and relation between Reason and Scripture, if the latter is taken to be a “Proposition”

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<sup>32</sup> Whiston, *Memoirs* (1749), 182. See O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 77. For more on Collins and Whiston, see also Reventlow, *Authority of the Bible*, 362-69. Collins later wrote in relation to Whiston, that, despite opposing him, “I will here offer a few Particulars by Way of Apology for his Liberty of Writing; which, in my Opinion, is not only justifiable in itself, but highly becoming a *Man*, a *Christian*, and a *Protestant*; and especially a *Clergyman*, a *Scholar*, and a *Philosopher*” (*Grounds and Reasons*, iv).

<sup>33</sup> O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 52.

<sup>34</sup> Anthony Collins, *An Essay Concerning the Use of Reason in Propositions, The Evidence whereof depends upon Human Testimony* (London, 1707), 4.

based on human testimony. He posited four different mental actions that may occur to identify the (dis)agreement of ideas: (1) “immediately or intuitively”, (2) “Proof or intermediate Ideas”, (3) probable agreement, or (4) “by the Testimony of others”, the last of which, as the *Essay*’s title indicated was Collins’ focus.

Choosing between the categories of perception (“according to the different nature of the Evidence, whereby the Ideas join’d in a Proposition seem to agree or disagree”) that Collins labeled as Science, Opinion, and Faith, Collins relegated to the category of Faith the authority given to the testimony of others, including thereby the original (and subsequent) penmen of Scripture.<sup>35</sup> He subsequently explained that Reason was the faculty that could discern between true and false Revelation, or Testimony, the ultimate arbiter of Scripture: “there is still a farther use of Reason in things which merely by the Testimony of Men are suppos’d to come from God, as distinguish’d from other Facts; and that is, to endeavour to find out such a sense of a suppos’d Revelation as is agreeable to the discoveries of our Reason, if the words under any kind of Construction will bear it, tho at first view they may seem repugnant to reason, and to one another.”<sup>36</sup> Reason was the judge of Revelation, and “suppos’d Revelation” was proven through its (non-)reception. Directly following this Collins became explicit in his advocacy of this exegetical approach and measure of the status of Scripture:

And therefore we ought to examine whether the Words under any Construction will bear a reasonable Sense. Let us apply this more particularly to the Revelation that we acknowledg. [sic] It is most evident that the Authors of the Holy Scriptures had not principally in view Speculative-Instruction. They do not use their Phrases as they do who have studied the rules of Writing, that define their Words and use them always in the same sense, but adapt their Expressions to the capacity of the bulk of Mankind.

He used the prime example of the nature of God to illustrate his point and, therein implied that the doctrine of the Trinity was outside the evidently moral design and purpose of Scripture: “No doubt, had Moses or any of the inspired Writers been to write a Treatise of

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<sup>35</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 6: “When the agreement or disagreement is visible at first sight, or by the help of an intermediate Idea, which has a necessary Connexion with the Ideas join’d, our Assent is then call’d *Science*[:] When the agreement or disagreement by the intervention of intermediate Ideas that internally discover the agreement or disagreement, is but probable, our Assent is then call’d *Opinion*: and when we perceive by Testimony, our Assent is then call’d *Faith*.” Later in the century, Hume would also tie human testimony to the gospel writers and apostolic witnesses, however, Erasmus (following Jerome) had already allowed a similar attribution though still anchored to their role as chosen vessels (or conduits) of members of the Godhead, either of the Holy Spirit or of Christ, respectively. See Joseph M. Levine, “Erasmus and the Problem of the Johannine Comma”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Oct., 1997), 581.

<sup>36</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 17.

Metaphysicks wherein they had treated God, they most certainly would have spoken of him with exactness, and have elevated their Minds above all created Beings, and put nothing to appearance into their Idea of God, but what belong'd to an infinitely perfect Being.”

However, Collins argued that “in Treatises design'd principally to have a Moral effect, they make use of Expressions most likely to attain that end.”<sup>37</sup>

Collins therefore commended the common practice of accommodating scripture to our reason, rather than the other way round. He offered what was perhaps a veiled swipe at the Johannine Comma:

Sect. 6. Besides endeavouring to put a true sense on Words, which literally understood imply what is false, there is still this further respect due to Writings, which upon Human Testimony are suppos'd to come from God; not to reject the whole for the sake of some Passages which cannot be suppos'd to proceed from God, but rather to presume they have been added to the Text, out of some particular Views and Designs: Whereas merely Human Writings may be fairly rejected or deny'd to proceed from the Author whose name they bear, if there are several Passages contain'd in them inconsistent with the Character of the Authors or the Times wherein they liv'd;...<sup>38</sup>

Collins here was defending Scripture against those who would deny the whole because of a part that had been (evidently) corrupted. He offered the principle of authorial and historical *consistency* as the method or “Rule” by which to identify such parts and thereby save the whole.

We can recall that Erasmus offered the same argument to those who were concerned that calling the Johannine Comma into question put a doubt on the entire doctrine of the Trinity, as if one verse could alter the truth of an accepted doctrine of the Church. As Grantley McDonald has summarized Erasmus's response in 1528: “Heaven help the church if its doctrines are so imperilled [sic] by doubts about the authenticity of a single passage of Scripture”.<sup>39</sup> Furthermore, as James Levine has pointed out, Erasmus followed a rule of self-consistency for the biblical authors, but did not insist on the historical consistency that Collins later did: “In a larger sense Erasmus assumed (with everyone else) that the meaning of Scripture must be essentially self-consistent even if the scriptural reporters were not always so, and he tried therefore to harmonize apparent anomalies.” To this, Levine added the main point: “This preconception made it difficult for him to arrive at a completely

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<sup>37</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 18.

<sup>38</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 20-21.

<sup>39</sup> Grantley McDonald, “Erasmus and the Johannine Comma”, *The Bible Translator*, Vol. 67. No. 1 (2016), 53.

historical criticism, although his achievement was startling enough to his contemporaries”.<sup>40</sup> Collins, it seems, was startling to his contemporaries as well.

Collins continued by detailing the motive for any such additions as directly bearing on the questions of “Theory and Practice”: “because there is not that reason for either zealous or designing Men to make additions to Books that are not supposed necessary for the direction of our Theory and Practice, as to those that have or are likely to have any influence on our Lives and Opinions.”<sup>41</sup> To put it the other way round, zealous and designing persons *only* make additions to books that are supposed necessary for the directing of a society’s theoretical discourse and related practices that are most likely to influence individual lives and opinions. This is a particular example of just how directly Collins was addressing the crisis of authority, its underlying principles and related impacts on a society’s self-conception and behavior, both institutionally and individually. But to continue, the fact that authorial inconsistencies exist in “writings, which upon Human Testimony are supposed to come from God, is acknowledged necessary by several (if not all) Interpreters of the Scriptures”. This acknowledgement is made “to prevent the imputations of Falshood, which otherwise would necessarily be fix’d on them by the best dispos’d Minds.”<sup>42</sup>

Collins then sought to demonstrate “the reasonableness of the Rule, and its Application to what we esteem of Divine Revelation” by referencing the record in Exodus made by “Moses (who wrote this Book)” that the “Children of Israel did eat Manna forty Years...until they came to the borders of the Land of Canaan.” Here he noted that Huetius, the French scholar Pierre Daniel Huet (1630-1721), argued that “It is most likely that these words were added by Esdras, who, in another place...did supply the Scriptures with Additions in those places which were obscure or difficult.” And similarly, in Deuteronomy where it is related that a region had been called by a certain name “unto this day”, Collins attributed the phrase, an observation apprehended as inconsistent with Moses death, to “plainly proceed from a Modern Antiquary”. He pointed out that this passage made “Huetius confess that either Esdras added these Words, or that they have crept into the Text from the Margin.” Collins was either undermining or saving Scripture as an authority, but he was insisting that it is subject to Reason. Again, Collins was not a particularly satirical author,

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<sup>40</sup> James Levine, “Erasmus and the Problem of the Johannine Comma”, *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 58, No. 4 (Oct., 1997), 581.

<sup>41</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 21.

<sup>42</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 21

there is no reason to doubt that Collins did not see himself as saving the authority of Scripture by subjecting it to the scrutiny of Reason, which to him would also help to purify the text so as to obtain the Truth. As such, it is important to note the specific reason he gave when he could have gone on with other such instances but he chose to not “be particular beyond what is requisite to prove the necessity of the use of Reason to distinguish Falshood from Truth in matters of Revelation, in order to give all possible Authority to that which can with any reason be suppos’d to be a Revelation.”<sup>43</sup> The only way to preserve the divine status of Scriptural truth and, thereby, its social or religious authority as a text, was to apply to it the rule of consistency according to Reason, or the mental faculty that adjudicates the perceived relation of ideas (in terms) so proposed.

Collins considered objections to his argument via “the famous Distinction of *Things above, and Things contrary to Reason*”. This duality of Reason, which had been widely accepted and thereby spawned “several senses” within the discourse, was the prime rationale for which “the Divines militate in behalf of Mysterys and Contradictions, against those who say they can only believe that which they can understand.”<sup>44</sup> He contrasts first his acceptance of “Jesus Christ’s Resurrection” and rejection of “the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, in both cases they are propositions like any other “consider’d as Objects of Assent or Dissent.” Collins did not make exceptions for claims to religious truth in contradistinction to any other truth. He stated, “that all Propositions...are adequately divided into Propositions agreeable or contrary to Reason; and there remains no third Idea under which to rank them”.

Further on in the *Essay*, he again explicitly contemplates the Trinity when considering a possible objection to his analysis of reason in relation to any assent to propositions. “By *things above Reason* is sometimes understood things of which we have no Idea, and which yet may be the Objects of our Assent.”<sup>45</sup> Collins refuted the plausibility of such a statement by arguing that “Ideas and Acts of the Mind being relative, there can be no Act of the Mind where there is no Idea, or no Object...there is no ground...to apply the Distinction to Objects of the Understanding”.<sup>46</sup> In other words, something cannot be understood (as to be assented to) at the same time that it is an incomprehensible idea.<sup>47</sup> He decided to demonstrate this with

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<sup>43</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 21-23.

<sup>44</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 23.

<sup>45</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 30.

<sup>46</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 30.

<sup>47</sup> Berman discusses this same point in relation to Collins’ *Letter* (see Berman, “Independent Whig,” 468).

what he “might instance in many Divines” and their support for the “the Doctrine of the Trinity”.<sup>48</sup>

The received dogma of the Trinity, Collins stated, was “above Reason” and emphasized the rational (rather than authorial or historical) inconsistency of its explication in words to corresponding ideas. He quoted one clergyman’s teaching and then explained that “if we have Ideas to our Words when we profess to believe in the Doctrine of three Persons and one God, the ideas must be inconsistent with themselves, or with the Article of the Trinity.” He then used the authority of Scripture as a backstop: “if we define Person to be an Office or Character, we give an Idea to that Word inconsistent with what is laid down about that Doctrine in Scripture”, wherein “there is evidently a greater Distinction between the Persons than that Definition supposes”. He explained, “for the Persons, according to the Doctor, are made in Scripture to have existed from all Eternity: whereas that Definition supposes the several Persons had a beginning: for Offices or Characters being *extrinsecal*, *accessory Ideas*, must commence in some particular point of time, and consequently there was a time when there was no Trinity at all.” He had used the example of defining the word *Person* to mean “an Intelligent Being” but if not that, then either “an Office or Character”. In any of these cases, the words could not conform (to Collins’ satisfaction) to the idea or “*Doctrine of three Persons and one God*”.<sup>49</sup> In exasperation he asserted: “for what particular Doctrine can be assented to when we have no Ideas to the Terms that are suppos’d to express it?” He then stated succinctly that “All that remains is, that by those Terms in which the Doctrine of the Trinity is express’d, God meant something or had Ideas, and that those Ideas have a relation to one another.” Collins then proclaims that there is nothing less hard to understand than “that God has Ideas to such and such Words, and that those Ideas do agree to one another”.<sup>50</sup> However, with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity this would result in disbelief (or, a belief in nothing) since the words and ideas do not agree.

Collins mocked the established clergy with the imagined scenario of the Unitarians’ objections being waived by those who profess the Trinity (and then those who held in particular the Athanasian Trinity) upon the basis that there is “nothing at all” in the words (or to the ideas) for them to object to:

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<sup>48</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 30-31.

<sup>49</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 33.

<sup>50</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 34.

Gentlemen, you object as if we meant some particular Doctrine when we profess to believe in the Doctrine of the Trinity, or had Ideas to the words that we use on that occasion; but we mean no particular Doctrine at all, and therefore your Objections are not level'd against the Doctrine of the Trinity. Indeed we have thought fit to enlarge our form of words, by composing the Athanasian Creed; but we mean no more by that Creed than we did before, which was nothing at all, unless it were to give those Men a good many words that signify nothing, who were not satisfy'd with nothing in a few words.<sup>51</sup>

He continued by identifying more explicitly that the problem was with language, and subsequently the supposed necessity of salvific assent to a doctrine when no language could express it. He thereby argued that language and assent were two sides of the same coin, called belief.

So that in short, the *Trinitarians*, according to the Doctor, must believe that God himself came down from Heaven to reveal his Will to Mankind, and to require Man's Assent to a Revelation, one of the fundamental Articles, without which a Man cannot be a Christian, is express'd in such a manner, that God might as well have given us Marks or written Characters that answer'd to no one Language known among Men; and there would have been just as much matter for Belief, as there can be in Signs that we are accustom'd to, and can give no particular signification of.<sup>52</sup>

Collins (again mockingly) offered Augustine's wisdom as "an Authority" to clarify the claims of his opponents, but which in his view supported his own overall criticism. "St. Austin says, When Men ask what is meant by the Three, all Human Speech wants Power to express it; we have ventur'd to say Three Persons, not that it should be said, but that we may not be wholly silent." Collins leaves this more substantive discussion of language (words and ideas) and assent to then attack the clergy: "And truly the Clergy in all Ages, some out of Pride, unwilling to profess their Ignorance, the more Cunning to get Power and Dominion over the Minds and Consciences of Men, have agreed to talk unintelligibly, the most zealous out of Ignorance; and 'tis Charity perfectly if I rank the Doctor [Gastrell] among the last..."<sup>53</sup> For Collins, then, the Trinity was the archetypal doctrine of priestly connivance and ignorance, of their domineering and pride. The doctrine was the beating heart, or at least a vivid demonstration of the conflict between Church (religious) authority and that of individual Conscience (private judgement, or freethinking).

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<sup>51</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 35.

<sup>52</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 35-36.

<sup>53</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 36. Erasmus also wrote in favor of ignorance: "Had I had any authority at those synods where the peace of the world was at issue, I would have argued that it were better to profess ignorance of what the words *homoousion* or *homoiousion* portend with regard to the divine Persons, rather than either to maintain or attack them at the cost of such great tumult" (see James D. Tracy, "Erasmus and the Arians: Remarks on the 'Consensus Ecclesiae'", *The Catholic Historical Review*, Vol. 67, No. 1 (Jan., 1981), 5).

He then (again) attacks the notion of two separate types of reason: human and divine, stating that “The Writings of the Clergy are full of Expressions which justify the sense I have now put on the Distinction”. Collins took issue with this pattern in the discourse, where “Divines not being able to answer the Objections from Reason made to their Doctrines, will sometimes allow them to be contrary to Human Reason, but not contrary to the Divine Reason”, and while this, he says, introduces “an Equivoque in the use of the word *Reason*”, ultimately it is the same distinction as *above* or *contrary* to Reason.<sup>54</sup> In this way, Collins applied Locke’s univocal rule in the use of the term *person* to that of *reason*.<sup>55</sup> Here again, Collins approaches the doctrine of the Trinity, but this time in reference to a dispute that involved Samuel Clarke. He quoted a detractor of Clarke who believed him to be wrong when he stated “That a Man may reject the proof of Miracles, how true or great soever, if, in his reason, he thinks the Doctrine they would prove to be an Absurdity, or to imply a Contradiction, or to be of evil Tendency or Consequence.” Clarke’s detractor then accused him of, consequently, having “given up all such Explications of the Eternal Generation of the Son of God, as can be reduc’d to imply or involve any Contradiction” and, with particular relevance to the prior discussion about the authority of Scripture, the detractor discloses his

fear lest he be forc’d to give up the Truth of the Scripture it self to those that think they have, by just and necessary Consequences, reduc’d its Doctrine in this or any other Case, or the Sense wherein the Church hath understood it, to imply a Contradiction. Whether the *Socinians*, at this rate, may not form us another Gospel, and the Deists reject the whole, is a thing to be consider’d.

Collins concluded that the response to Clarke’s statement was an example of the false distinction between Human and Divine Reason employed by the clergy against the accusation of contradictions within their doctrines. For the detractor, it was clear that both the authority of Scripture and of Church tradition were both on the line if Reason became the arbiter of (seeming) doctrinal contradiction. Collins countered that “tho we have Ideas to the words contrary to Human Reason, yet we have none to the words contrary to Divine Reason; and so we distinguish Human Reason from we know not what; unless” he asserted (with perhaps a knock on the doctrine of the Trinity at the end), “we understand by Divine Reason, Reason as it is in Man, and then there is no manner of ground for a Distinction, for a thing can never be distinguish’d from it self.”<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 38-39.

<sup>55</sup> See Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 140-43.

<sup>56</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 40-41.

Still relevant to this study, the principle that “a thing can never be distinguish’d from it self” seems to have then brought to Collins’ mind “some mathematical and physical Instances...where it is pretended that Men assent upon no less evidence than Demonstration”, even though “the Propositions assented to do seem to us to involve or imply Contradictions.” He quotes from John Edwards “in his fourth Preservative against *Socinianism*” where Edwards gave such instances and then following one of them rhetorically asked his readership to consider: “And yet what Paradoxes and Absurditys flow from it, acknowledg’d even by Mathematicians themselves?” To this Collins responded that, when a demonstration is perceived to support the truth of one proposition at the same time that its perceived “Absurditys and Padoxes flow from the thing demonstrated”, a person “ought not to assent or dissent, because there is a ballance of Evidence”. Here Collins again (implicitly) addresses the foregoing discussion over and debate surrounding the doctrine of the Trinity and (explicitly) the authority of Scripture, or Revelation and the role of Reason in “Articles of Faith”:

Now if it is our Duty neither to assent or dissent in the Cases propos’d, by reason of the ballance of Evidence, they will by no means reach the Case of Articles of Faith, suppos’d to be inconsistent with some self-evident Propositions; because we have no Evidence for the truth of Revelation, equal to our Perception of the truth of those Propositions call’d self-evident: and therefore our Perceptions must be our Rule against any such pretended Revelations.

Collins may appear to be inconsistent here in relation to the understanding of faith (per the Epistle to the Hebrews) *as* the evidence of things not seen. However, one must remember that Collins’s understanding of faith consisted in propositions (things not seen) related to (the evidence of) human testimony. Thereby, it becomes clear that an Article of Faith, for Collins, is taken from human testimony (such as the resurrection of Jesus Christ), and not speculation, (such as one considering what St. Paul saw when caught up to the third Heaven, both examples Collins had used previously).<sup>57</sup> The latter was the case of the Trinity, which for Collins was a speculation, at best, otherwise it was a categorical absurdity. However, Collins remains just within the margin of neutrality on the whole, by stating that he allowed that there is a “Distinction between real and seeming Contradiction” but that the distinction “is manifestly of no use when apply’d” to what we actually understand, except “to teach us to examine with Care and Caution”: “for while things appear repugnant, we must judg them to be repugnant, if we will ever make any judgment at all.” Collins did not want any slippery

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<sup>57</sup> See Collins, *Essay*, 30.

slope to distort one's judgement "since we are liable to be deceiv'd, before we leave off Examination". While the balance of one's judgment appeared against a proposition that was not yet conclusive, then it was a person's duty to remain in examination of the proposition, and to certainly not act contrary to the present perception of imbalance.<sup>58</sup> This extensive portion of the *Essay*, with its vitriol against the clergy and refusal to assent to any formulation of words—with particular regard to the Trinity—that did not correspond to the ideas immediately available to him, set the stage for an extended work (the *Discourse*) on the solvent to clerical claims of authority in doctrinal controversy, one that had a much larger audience.

O'Higgins correctly surmises that Collins' *Discourse of Freethinking* (1713) dealt with "the autonomy of reason" but misses the effect of Collins' argument when he superadds "its freedom from authority".<sup>59</sup> For rather than declare the abolition of authority in relation to reason, Collins sought to establish the authority of God-given reason above that of the less certain origins of Divine Right in Church-State settlement. He did this by endorsing a subjection of revelation to reason. He also conveniently pointed to conflicting understandings among established clerical authorities about the doctrine of the Trinity that exhibited the necessity of *freethinking*, which was essential anyway for each individual's salvation.

Among the four publications Collins cited was Samuel Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* (1712). Richard Bentley, acknowledged as the foremost respondent to Collins, remarked that at least none of the four clergymen had been anathematized, which was indeed a failure to respond to the criticism. However, the Lower House of Convocation subsequently brought charges against Clarke in 1714. It very well may be that Clarke would have escaped the sought censure of the Lower House of Convocation and his brush with the bishops if it had not been for Collins' *Discourse* that created such a stir that it was responded to by a wide range of Church of England clergy, most prominently Bentley (Master of Trinity College, Cambridge), but also included among the published responses were William Whiston and Benjamin Hoadly. The Boyle Lectures of 1713 and 1714 by Clarke's disciple Benjamin Ibbot were dedicated to a refutation of Collins's *Discourse*, as was a series of Essays at the time

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<sup>58</sup> Collins, *Essay*, 41-43.

<sup>59</sup> O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 78.

against freethinking in the *Guardian*, of which a good number have been attributed to George Berkeley.<sup>60</sup>

After defining “Free-Thinking” (Section I) and before answering objections to it (Section III), Collins’ offered his chief argument (Section II) in the *Discourse*: “*That it is our Duty to think freely on those Points of which Men are deny’d the Right to think freely; such as [a] of the Nature and Attributes of God, [b] the Truth and Authority of Scriptures, and [c] of the Meaning of Scriptures.*” Herein, not only does Collins declare it a right and responsibility to freely contemplate God without the confines of doctrine, but he also confronts the role of Scripture and the interpretation of it *by others for others*. He argued that each of these primary points was in the dock among the clergy themselves and that they denied laity the same rights and duties they had thereby enjoined to themselves. Prior to his lengthier knocks on the clergy, Collins’ supporting arguments noted the irony of a “suppos’d Necessity” that these particular “Points” were of such significance that opinions could not differ, while yet it was clear that the very nature of opinion required “Free-Thinking”. He held aloft the specter of superstition and the “infinite number” of false prophets as evidence of the need to uphold the antidote of “thinking freely *on these Points.*” He then appropriated for the support of his argument the missionary endeavors of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts (SPG), and then, further, “*the Design of the Gospel, and the Preaching of our Saviour and his Apostles.*” What concerns us most directly is Collins’ seventh and final supporting argument, “taken from the Conduct of the Clergy”, with this supported by a further ten “instances”.<sup>61</sup>

This seventh supporting argument is more than three-quarters of the argumentative section and almost a third of the entire publication. And it amounts to a public indictment of the Clergy, similar to the Lower House’s charges against those they perceived as dangerous to religion in the realm.<sup>62</sup> So, while Collins is specifically advocating the “Right” to freethinking, or in specifically Protestant terms, private judgement, he is simultaneously denouncing the hypocrisy of the clergy and laying at their feet the errors of the Church. First, and foremost among their destructive conduct, “is their Divisions about the Nature and Attributes of God. About Scriptures, and the Authority of Scriptures. And about the Sense of

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<sup>60</sup> J. Dyblikowski, “Anthony Collins”, *DNB*; O’Higgins, *Collins*, 78-79; and Hugh de Quehen, “Richard Bentley (1662-1742)”, *Oxford DNB*. O’Higgins also noted that Berkeley’s *Alciphron* (1732) was written against the freethinkers, with the sixth *Dialogue* seeming to specifically target Collins (see O’Higgins, *Collins*, 78n8).

<sup>61</sup> Collins, *Discourse*, iii-iv.

<sup>62</sup> Such as Whiston: Collins referenced Whiston’s treatment on page 45 of the *Discourse*.

Scriptures” (i.e., his direct argument, which he addresses more specifically throughout). Further “instances” highlight his devotion to Reason in matters of doctrine and a defense of “rational Christians” over clerical detractors that would libelously label them Atheists. Other “instances” directly charge “the Clergy” with “Pious Frauds in publishing and translating Books”, with a professed aversion “to tell[ing] the Truth”, with their own “acknowledgement of Abuses, [etc.] in the Church”, and with publishing “the Arguments of Infidels...[and] the only ancient System of Atheism in English”. In short, the clergy were nearly everything they accused their supposed enemies to be. In the sixth and seventh “instances” Collins makes two claims against the clergy that strike at the foundation of the religious and political settlement: traditional Scripture. He charged the clergy with “rendring the Canon of Scripture uncertain” and with “asserting and rendring the Text of Scripture precarious.” It was the clergy, and not the freethinker, that caused the crisis of Scripture.<sup>63</sup>

It is the First instance delineated in the Second, Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh instances that are of chief concern to this study. The doctrine of the Trinity is specifically at stake with regard to the Second and Fifth with their focus on Reason, while Scripture and its status as a fundamental authority to which appeals can be made to settle controversy is clearly undercut if the canon and text are rendered “uncertain” and “precarious”. That Collins charged the clergy with creating the divisions over the doctrine of God and with causing the uncertainty in the authority of Scripture is serious and, though it can be perceived as ironic (now, as perhaps then), it should not be seen as satire. By all reliable accounts, Collins was sincere in his religious devotion, and he sought to demonstrate that where he differed was exactly where his detractors had led in their own disputes. He simply thought the very real crisis and controversy in religion should be generalized (to the laity as well as the clergy) rather than penalized (particularly) via a combined Church-State coercion.

“Free-Thinking” was no mere label that Collins had decided to embrace, it was ultimately an apt description of what he believed to be at the very heart of his form of Christianity, or his religion.<sup>64</sup> Collins understood the agreed nexus of doctrine and Scripture that had undergirded the Church-State establishment prior to 1689 and he knew that foundation had cracked. He could see that the clergy were in dispute about repairs and seeking to present a still unified front with the State but to no avail. The *Discourse* called

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<sup>63</sup> Collins, *Discourse*, iv-v.

<sup>64</sup> See O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 162-64.

their bluff by publicly disclosing clerically acknowledged breaches in Scripture and clerical disputes over fundamental doctrines. Of course, Collins highlighted what many of the clergy perceived as vastly outnumbered voices, therefore leaving many of them feeling misrepresented.<sup>65</sup> These not only sought to silence and rebut the claims of the *Discourse* but, in a continuity of denial at the irreparable state of the prior Church-State settlement, they sought to rectify some of them as well.<sup>66</sup>

Collins culled from a particularly useful (for his purposes) clerical publication his demonstration of the difficulties of Scripture and thereby sought to better found his argument of the depth and diversity of disagreements within the clerical body. He selected a dozen quotations from Jeremy Taylor (1613-1667), a “Religious Prelate” of the Church of England, known for his devotion to episcopacy and loyalty to the crown during the Civil War who had in the restoration been elevated to the Bishopric of Down and Connor in Ireland. His selected quotes came from Taylor’s *Of the Liberty of Prophesying* (1647)<sup>67</sup>, that advocated a proto-Lockean toleration albeit, in part, “on behalf of a proscribed and persecuted Anglican church.”<sup>68</sup> In his discussion of heresy, Taylor had owned that the mists of linguistic fallibility, which kept hidden “great Mysterys” in the Scriptures, were “so profound in the Matter, or so intricate in the Manner...that God may seem to have left them as Trials of our Industry, and Arguments of our Imperfections and as” he (significantly) added, “Occasions of our Charity and Toleration to each other, and Humility in our selves, rather than as Respositorys of Faith, and Furniture of Creeds and Articles of Belief.” Collins was arguing that he had episcopal support that the authority of the Scriptures had been misapplied and misunderstood because there was a false consensus—acknowledged by the clergy themselves (Taylor)—of their interpretation. Taylor’s point was that the difficulty of Scripture was not in the language *per se* but in the interpretative dissonance available from the myriad of vantages on it (the language)<sup>69</sup>, and that such had always been the case. This vantage appealed to Collins who

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<sup>65</sup> See Richard Bentley, *Remarks upon the late Discourse on Free Thinking* (1713), 52: “Wonderful! and so because Three or Four Divines in Your Island are too fierce in their Disputes, all We on the great Continent must abandon Religion.”

<sup>66</sup> Collins saw the impossibility of unifying clerical opinions about God and Scripture, (see *Discourse*, 47).

<sup>67</sup> From Collins references, he appears to have been using Taylor’s own published collection of his polemical works, but the pagination varies and the exact edition is not clear: *Simbolon ethiko-polemikon, or, A Collection of Polemic and Moral Discourses* (1657).

<sup>68</sup> John Spurr, “Jeremey Taylor (*bap.* 1613- *d.* 1667)”, *Oxford DNB* (I would describe a summary of *The Liberty of Prophesying* that Spurr includes as proto-Lockean).

<sup>69</sup> Taylors phrases for describing the meaning hidden within the language of Scripture precede the quoted material above: “That there are innumerable places of the Scriptures containing in them great Mysterys, but yet are so enwrap’d in a Cloud, or so darkned with Umbrages, or heighten’d with Expressions, or so cover’d

was advocating that the problems that afflicted the clergy in his own time had afflicted priests throughout time and in all societies. The final Taylor quotation (from the same source) drove home this point further:

Consulting Originals is thought a great matter in the Interpretation of Scripture. But the difficulty is in the Thing however express'd, the least in the Language. The Inspection of the Original is no more certain way of Interpretation now, than it was in the primitive Ages of the Church, when there was an infinite Variety of Translations of the Bible, and never a one like another.<sup>70</sup>

Taylor had previously pointed to the many senses and categories of interpretation that were applied in frequently overlapping ways to Scripture. This included, a particular quotation that cast a shadow on the use of reason: “Scriptures are pretended to be expounded by Analogy of Reason. But unless there were some *Intellectus Universalis* furnish'd with infallible Propositions, by referring to which, every one might argue infallibly; this Logick may deceive as well as any of the rest. For it is with Mens Reason as with Mens Tastes”.<sup>71</sup> Collins in no way saw this highlight (by himself) of the acknowledged limits (due to variety) of reason to settle disputes as detracting from the “duty” of freethinking, but rather as the precise cause of it—there was no universal measure of rationality granted mankind, and thus, in practical terms, the recorded violence necessary to secure a single opinion obviated the option of force and necessitated freedom in its more (and mere) foundational faculty of thought, which was universal among mankind.<sup>72</sup> In relation to the “...violence necessary”, in 1724 Collins stated that “Nothing has been a greater Source of Mischief among Men, than the violent Means, that have been used, and, indeed, are necessary to be used to destroy such original and fundamental Rights and Duties of Men, as to *think* and *judge* for themselves, to *profess* what they *believe* true, and to *teach* what they *believe* true to others.” And directly related to this study of the early-eighteenth century discourse on authority is Collins’s comment just previous to this, where he wrote that “If such Liberty of *professing* and

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with Allegorys and Garments of Rhetorick, so profound in the Matter, or so intricate in the Manner, in the Clothing and the Dressing; that God may seem...”

<sup>70</sup> Collins, *Discourse*, 61. The rest of the paragraph from Taylor’s *Liberty*, pages 79-80: ...; will think that we shall differ as much in our Interpretations as they did, and that the medium is as uncertain to us as it was to them; and so it is; witness the great number of late Translations, and the infinite number of Commentaries, which are too pregnant an Argument that we neither agree in the understanding of the words nor of the sense.

<sup>71</sup> Collins, *Discourse*, 60-61.

<sup>72</sup> In relation to *thought* as a foundational faculty, it could be argued that Collins anticipated the mere capacity to think (i.e., to connect individuated thoughts into knowledge) as the marker of mankind, later identified as the exact category for humanity in the term “Homo Sapiens”, which originated in 1735 with Linnaeus’s publication of *Systema Natura*. This demarcation by Collins also follows from Locke’s “person-as-consciousness”, elaborated by Dixon in his *Nice and Hot Disputes*.<sup>72</sup> for example see page 169.

*teaching* be not allow'd, *Error*, if authorized, will keep its Ground; and *Truth*, if dormant, will never be brought to Light; or, if *authorized*, will be supported on a false and absurd Foundation, and such as would equally support Error; and, if received on the Foot of *Authority*, will not be in the least meritorious to its Professors.”<sup>73</sup>

O'Higgins, it seems, too readily allows that Richard Bentley, the foremost critic of the *Discourse*, gave a full response to Collins's use of varieties of interpretation of Scripture to prove their uncertainty. Bentley demonstrated that Collins had in fact “misunderstood the purpose of textual criticism” by simply “pointing out that,” like any book, “the more variant readings one possesses, the surer and not the more precarious the text”.<sup>74</sup> Bentley's response clearly satisfied his peers. However, Collins' opposite (and more popularly understood) reading of such variety set a pattern for similar attacks on the clergy in England. This was particularly the case in the nineteenth century, as the contrast between hard and precise scientific knowledge and the comparatively soft and malleable allegorical understanding (or otherwise) sharpened. The popularity of Evidential Christianity is then, in part, one product of Collins's line of criticism that was impatient and dismissive of the nuance Bentley and others found indispensable in absorbing such a rich variety of Scriptural interpretation.

From this understanding of the uncertainty attached to Scripture via the “*Religious Prelate*” (i.e., Taylor), Collins then observed the “Diversity of Opinions of the Priests of the Church of *England*,” adding that “all pretended to be deduc'd from the Scriptures.” The first of his given “Specimen” is that of “*the Ever-blessed Trinity*”. Despite its being “[t]he most fundamental Doctrine of the whole *Christian Religion*...yet what different Notions of the *Trinity* do the Priests pretend to deduce from Scripture?” According to O'Higgins, this was “[Collins'] case at its strongest”.<sup>75</sup> And again, as Clarke's troubles later demonstrated, the critique engendered real consequences within the clerical body.

Collins found six different variants of Trinitarian exposition among the clergy, and even subvariants within those. The main variants were listed as follows, with the first (a) representing the Athanasian position, that,

...(a) The Persons of the Trinity are one God, as Peter, Paul, and Timothy are one Man.

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<sup>73</sup> Collins, *Grounds and Reasons*, x-ix.

<sup>74</sup> O'Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 86.

<sup>75</sup> O'Higgins, *Collins*, 86.

Some (b) maintain three distinct, eternal, equal Beings, whose Unity is partly numerical and partly specific.

Some (c) maintain three distinct, eternal, unequal Beings, the first whereof is alone self-existent, and the second and third subordinate. ...

Some (d) make the Persons to be eternal Modes of Subsistence, or internal Relations of the one Substance of the Deity to it self. ...

Some (e) make the Trinity to consist in a Mind that from all Eternity had Wisdom, that from all Eternity understood himself, and from all Eternity loved himself.

Lastly, Others (f) receive the words of the Athanasian Creed without any Sense or Explication at all, conceiving the Article of Faith to lie in something unintelligible.<sup>76</sup>

Collins was widening the gaps at times between not incommunicable differences, and was “not too accurate”<sup>77</sup> with his succinct declaratory of positions. That said, what was clearly within the purview of subordination (variant “c”) was Samuel Clarke, whom it appears Collins singled out in particular. Among the four clergy that Collins footnoted as supporting this strain of Trinitarian theology, only Clarke had maintained the Son’s subordination due to derivation from the Father’s (incommunicable) attribute of self-existence though it was perhaps prescient on the part of Collins to make the statement, since Clarke (under pressure) would also maintain the Son’s eternal generation without recanting the former claim (an event discussed in the next section), thereby making Collins in a sense correct in his summary that the three persons were held by Clarke to be “distinct [and] eternal” and yet ultimately “unequal Beings”. Again, Bentley’s reply to Collins on the Trinitarian disputes was simply that none of these divines had been “anathematiz’d nor censur’d” by the Church, though he included with this statement an ominous “yet”.<sup>78</sup> O’Higgins argues that while the Church of England clergy believed there to be a real standard to an accepted understanding of the Trinity, they disagreed as to the language by which to express it. However, this bypasses his own observation that certain articulations were indeed perceived as out-of-bounds (“certainly heterodox”), including that of important divines, such as Clarke, the Rector of St. James’s Piccadilly, a high-profile London church, and Edward Fowler (1632-1714), the Bishop of Gloucester.

Having demonstrated the real divisions among the clergy in understanding the doctrine of the Trinity, Collins immediately turned to their dispute about whether it was

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<sup>76</sup> Collins, *Discourse*, 62-63.

<sup>77</sup> O’Higgins, *Collins*, X.

<sup>78</sup> O’Higgins, *Collins*, 88. See Richard Bentley, *Remarks upon a late Discourse on Free Thinking* (1713), 59.

indeed a fundamental doctrine of the Christian faith. Taylor is again given the bulk of space in the demonstration of this division. Collins first pointed to two clergymen, one of whom is Robert South who stated that “A Man can no more be a Christian without the Belief of the Trinity, than he can be a Man without a rational Soul.” Then he pointed to Taylor who held that “The Example of so excellent a Man as Athanasius in his Creed, has been follow’d with too much Greediness; all the World in Factions, all damning one another, each Party damn’d by all the rest; and there is no Disagreement in Opinion, but Damnation presently to all who disagree.” Despite this observation by Taylor, Collins again highlighted the uncertain and competing categories of authority among the clergy when he quotes Taylor’s own position:

If it be consider’d how many People understand not the Athanasian Creed, how contrary to natural Reason it seems, how little the Scripture says of those Curiosities of Explication, how Tradition is not clear on Athanasius’s side for the Article it self, how Athanasius is put to it to make an Answer and Excuse for the Fathers who express’d themselves like Arians, how the Arians appeal’d to the Fathers for Trial, and the Offer was declin’d; it had not been amiss if the final Judgment had been left to Christ, who is appointed Judg of all Men, and who will judg them righteously; for he knows every Truth, the Degree of every Necessity, and all Excuses that do lessen the nature and malice of a Sin: all which Athanasius, tho a very good Man, did not know so well as to warrant such a Sentence [with the damnatory clause]. ...it is very strange to put Uncharitableness into a Creed, and make it an Article of Faith.<sup>79</sup>

According to Taylor, Reason, Scripture, and Tradition all militate against the necessity of believing the Athanasian Creed. Yet for others, the doctrine of the Trinity is essential to salvation even while its credal explication is in dispute. Collins capitalized on the crisis of authority among the clergy to settle their disagreements, or with certainty know the fundamental truths of religion, to insist upon his own solution, that was just as protestant: private judgement, or freethinking.

Elsewhere in this second section of the *Discourse* Collins pointed to Whiston, Sacheverell, and Clarke (as well as the clerical treatment of Locke) among others to demonstrate his ultimate argument: that religious authority was being fractured by the priests themselves and the solution was to cease relying on them and to think freely for oneself:

And therefore shall now conclude from those foregoing, That since the Priests, not only of different Religions and Sects, but of the same Sect, are infinitely divided in Opinion about the Nature of God, and the Authority and Meaning of Scriptures;...nor can we be easy in our own Minds, under the Prejudices and Difficultys which the

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<sup>79</sup> As quoted in Collins, *Discourse*, 64-65.

Priests put into us against these Truths, but by ceasing to rely on them, and *thinking freely* for our selves.<sup>80</sup>

Disputes over the doctrine of the Trinity among the clerical class and the, by them, acknowledged uncertainty of Scripture in both translated text and expository interpretation had formed the core of Collins argument. O'Higgins has helpfully pointed out that Bentley refused to confront Collins' primary argument of the *Discourse*, that of religious authority, and instead chose to significantly undermine the potency of Collins' work by instead only seeking to discredit his scholarship and to re-present, or at least see his argument as an advocacy of agnosticism or even atheism.<sup>81</sup> However, Collins' himself demonstrated it was much more, and in this O'Higgins underestimates the scope of Collins' thesis. For religious authority was indeed the question, but it was a question in context of the pretended continuity by many of the clergy (particularly in the later years of Queen Anne's reign) of the Church-State establishment *after* its alteration via the Glorious Revolution and subsequent Act of Toleration.

This perceived context is explicit when Collins considered the changed position of the civil magistrate, since the time of Charles II, in relation to religion. Collins quoted Samuel Parker (1640-1688) from his *A Discourse of Ecclesiastical Politie* (1670) to emphasize the extreme extent that the Erastian doctrine of passive-obedience had prevailed among clerical thinking. Collins then asserted the present situation following the Act of Toleration.

But since the Magistrate has laid aside all Claim to Dominion over Mens Minds and Consciences, by ceasing to fine and imprison Men on the score of Religion, and by granting a Toleration; they now set up the *Authority* of the *Priest* (which they call *the Church*) and make the Magistrate himself, who is by Law *the Supreme Governor in all Causes and over all Persons, as well Ecclesiastical as Civil*, the *Priests Ecclesiastical Subject* as well as the rest of the Laity.

For Collins, the Act of Toleration had settled the question of religious authority, yet he saw many of the clergy seeking to ignore the toleration and to bind the Magistrate and his subjects to a dead settlement. Collins did not blame the entire clerical class for the attempted reversal, for "[s]ome few Priests, such as Mr. Chillingworth, Dr. Tillotson, and others now living, have

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<sup>80</sup> Collins, *Discourse*, 98-99. Collins' conclusion anticipated a significant part of Immanuel Kant's argument in *What is Enlightenment?*, where he advocated against the perpetuity of "immaturity", or the simple recourse from courage and knowledge to reliance on a book to reason for you, a medical doctor to secure your health, or a pastor to act for your conscience. See also Reventlow, *The Authority of the Bible*, 358. Less precise than my own reading, Reventlow does not point to the anti-clerical connection between Collins solution and Kant's later statement, rather he briefly focuses on the overall aim of Collins conclusion as "the invitation to be wise, *sapere aude*, the motto of the Enlightenment".

<sup>81</sup> O'Higgins, *Collins*, 83 and 88.

clearly asserted the Right of all Men to judg for themselves.”<sup>82</sup> Apart from those few, however, Collins detested the rest and mocked them for their refusal to accept the Magistrate’s will in defiance of their own doctrine of passive-obedience (which Mayhew, among others, referred to as “unlimited submission”). He does so with a pointed reference to Sacheverell:

The Renowned Dr. Sacheverel says in his *Speech at his Tryal, That by abandoning Passive-Obedience, the distinguishing Badg and Glory of our Reformation, we must render ourselves the most inconsistent Church in the world.* By which words the Doctor must suppose, even before the Sentence pass’d upon him condemning the Doctrine of Passive-Obedience, that many Doctrines of the *Church* were inconsistent and contradictory to one another; otherwise one Inconsistency more would not make it *the most inconsistent Church in the world.*<sup>83</sup>

Of course, Collins himself would have been in favor of freethinking without any Magistrate’s approval, he was merely pointing out the pronounced inconsistency of the clergy.

Here, I will note O’Higgins remarks that Collins “still had links with what he considered to be the protestant idea.”<sup>84</sup> He subsequently expounds on this to state, that, “A good deal of what [Collins] wrote can be interpreted as the writing of an anti-clerical protestant, insisting on private judgement for the laity.”<sup>85</sup> Earlier than his discussion of the *Discourse* in the biography, O’Higgins spoke about the seeming “great gap between Collins and the enthusiasm of the sects” adding that, “Puritanism however contributed something to his outlook.” Within his library, he held John Goodwin’s *Hagiomastix*, which O’Higgins states “denied the right of the civil magistrate to dictate to anyone’s conscience and held that the discovery of religious truth depends upon the use of our own reason, under the influence of the revelation given us by God.” And while the puritan sense of revelation was a point of disjuncture, “their asserting the rights of the individual conscience, and, to some extent, with the opinions of such men as Goodwin on reason, he could agree.”<sup>86</sup>

Just prior to the publication of the *Discourse*, Collins saw fit to keep a promise to visit the Netherlands again. As such he was (perhaps conveniently) absent when, as mentioned previously, his work was burned by the common hangman.<sup>87</sup> His printer, John Darby (likely

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<sup>82</sup> Collins, *Discourse*, 76.

<sup>83</sup> Collins, *Discourse*, 76-77.

<sup>84</sup> O’Higgins, *Collins*, 84.

<sup>85</sup> O’Higgins, *Collins*, 89. O’Higgins continues his discussion of this through the medium of the third section of the *Discourse* and his conclusion does not significantly differ from this preliminary statement to the discussion.

<sup>86</sup> O’Higgins, *Collins*, 40.

<sup>87</sup> See O’Higgins, *Collins*, 79. Dyblikowski, “Anthony Collins,” *DNB*.

the son of his more noted father),<sup>88</sup> had been questioned and Collins' authorship was made known.<sup>89</sup> Since the *Discourse* was burned in this manner, it is of related interest to note something of it in the discourse of the period, such as this selection from a published response to Collins's subsequent *Priestcraft in Perfection* (1710) "But [if by the statement that] *there was less liberty and freedom of thinking* in that [Elizabethan] Age, fewer Books, he means that deserv'd to be burnt by the common hangman; and if all the learning of our Age be in the *Freethinker*, I cannot but imagine, that it would be much happier, both for our Church and Constitution, that ours were as ignorant and stupid as *Queen Elizabeth's*."<sup>90</sup> However, burning the book rather than the author seems to have taken on the symbolic recognition that ideas, and not their ostensibly curable carriers, were the real threat to society. Perhaps more significant to this study, is the "hidden connection" that Reventlow notes "between the Deistic approach and the legacy of Puritan hostility to ceremony" apparent in Collins' *Priestcraft in Perfection* and the "integral elements of the legacy of Humanism and Puritanism" in the *Discourse*.<sup>91</sup> Collins's work was to have a widespread readership on the continent, and in late Puritan Massachusetts, we know that a youthful Benjamin Franklin read and assimilated his arguments.<sup>92</sup>

While Collins's hopes for the *Discourse* as a scholarly and not just polemical contribution to the discourse surrounding Scriptural authority (and the attached claims of clerical authority) may have been defeated by Richard Bentley's response, the publication made at least one immediate impact due to his ultimately unanswerable critique of the clergy's variety of opinions on and articulations of the doctrine of the Trinity.<sup>93</sup> Hitherto unnoted in the scholarship, is that Samuel Clarke had published his *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* in the spring of 1712 and while there had been several responses written, no formal complaints had yet been raised by Convocation. That changed following Collins's

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<sup>88</sup> See Beth Lynch, "John Darby (d. 1704)", *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>89</sup> O'Higgins, *Collins*, 79.

<sup>90</sup> Hilckiah Bedford, *A Vindication of the Church of England from the Aspersions of a Late Libel...* (London: W.B. for R. Wilkin, 1710), 163.

<sup>91</sup> Reventlow, *Authority of the Bible*, 356-57.

<sup>92</sup> See Franklin, *Autobiography*, 53: "And being then, from reading Shaftesbury and Collins, become a real doubter in many points of our religious doctrine". Oddly enough, however, it was most likely Samuel Clarke's (or possibly Clarke's protégé Benjamin Ibbot's) Boyle Lectures that persuaded Franklin to become "a thorough Deist" in his youth (see page 65).

<sup>93</sup> O'Higgins, *Collins*, 93. See also pages 162-163: O'Higgins finds that Collins would not repeat the same mistakes of scholarship or argument that he did in the *Discourse*: "[The preface to Collins' *Grounds and Reasons*, a work written against Whiston] avoids the faults of the *Discourse of Freethinking*, its errors in scholarship and the implication that seems to underlie it, that to think freely means to be a rebel. ..."

anonymous publication in early 1713, Bentley responded within the year and the success of his *Remarks* was met with the formal gratitude of Cambridge offered on 4 January 1714, and by 2 June 1714 Clarke was asked to respond to a formal complaint, submitted by the Lower House and approved by the Upper House of the bishops.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> From Whiston we learn that he wrote to Clarke on 16 May 1712 to both thank him and complain to him about his book and aspects therein, yet having read “less than one quarter” (see *Historical Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Samuel Clarke* (1730), p. 27), and O’Higgins reports that according to Collin’s close friend Desmaizeaux that Collins left London on January 2, 1713, just prior to the publication of the *Discourse* (see p. 79). For Bentley, see Hugh de Quehen, “Richard Bentley (1662-1742)”, *Oxford DNB*.

## 2.4 – Convocation Charges: Samuel Clarke

Samuel Clarke (1675-1729) was a widely acclaimed scholar. The son of Hannah, the daughter of a merchant, and Edward Clarke, an alderman and elected member of Parliament for Norwich (not the same as Locke's friend and "voice in Parliament" from Chipley).<sup>1</sup> Clarke's father was highly regarded (as his son would be): "A Person of an Excellent Natural Capacity, and of an untainted Reputation for Probity and all Virtue."<sup>2</sup> Clarke was educated at the Free Grammar School in Norwich under the Rev. John Burton, and from there he entered Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge "at an earlier age than usual".<sup>3</sup> While at Cambridge he "laid the foundations for the encyclopaedic knowledge for which he was famed in later life"<sup>4</sup> and became "Master of the Chief parts of the *Newtonian Philosophy*".<sup>5</sup> Following Whiston, Clarke became a chaplain to the bishop of Norwich, John Moore, whose extensive library Clarke put to good use.<sup>6</sup> He was invited to deliver the Boyle lectures twice, in 1704 and 1705.<sup>7</sup> Four years later he was awarded his doctor of divinity following a celebrated performance in his defense of the propositions "No Article of the Christian Faith delivered in the Holy Scripture, is disagreeable to Right Reason" and "Without the Liberty of Humane Actions there can be no Religion".<sup>8</sup> He had become Isaac Newton's close collaborator and friend, translating his *Opticks* into Latin in 1706, and later defended him in an acclaimed correspondence with Leibniz.<sup>9</sup> Clarke, though capable, declined and was denied further ecclesial preferment following his brushes with the lower house of Convocation that sought to censure him two years after he published *The Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* (1712). In

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<sup>1</sup> See Mark Goldie, "Edward Clarke [called Edward the Grave, Standard Clarke] (1649x51-1710)," *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>2</sup> As reported by Hoadly in his Preface to Samuel Clarke, *Sermons on the Following Subjects* (London: W. Botham, for James and John Knapton, 1730), i. See also Whiston, *Historical Memoirs...Clarke*, 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ferguson, *Dr. Samuel Clarke*, 1-2. Ferguson has it that in 1690 Clarke "was admitted...as a pensioner in Gonville and Caius College," while John Gascoigne's *ODNB* entry only has that Clarke matriculated at Cambridge in 1691. Hoadly matriculated in 1692, though the extent of his and Clarke's interactions there are not well known, though Hoadly's father, Samuel, succeeded Burton in 1700 at the Norwich school. With the connections of Whiston and Clarke (and Hoadly) to Norwich, it is tempting to think of an early "Norwich set" within Newton's circle.

<sup>4</sup> John Gascoigne, "Samuel Clarke (1675-1729)," *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>5</sup> Hoadly's Preface to Clarke, *Sermons*, iii. See also Jeffrey R. Wigelsworth, "Samuel Clarke's Newtonian Soul," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 70, No. 1 (Jan., 2009), 45.

<sup>6</sup> Whiston, *Historical Memoirs...Clarke*, 6. See Peter Meadows, "John Moore (1646-1714)," *Oxford DNB*. According to Whiston, Clarke's preferments prior to his *Scripture Doctrine* were due to the influence of Bishop Moore. See also Ferguson, *Dr. Samuel Clarke*, 8-9.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas Emlyn claimed that when he read Clarke's Boyle lectures when they were first published, he was convinced that Clarke could not hold an orthodox Athanasian view of the Trinity" (see Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 119).

<sup>8</sup> See Gascoigne, "Samuel Clarke (1675-1729)," *Oxford DNB* (2004).

<sup>9</sup> Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 110. See also Gascoigne, "Samuel Clarke", 7.

this work, Clarke engaged in a painstaking process of biblical exegesis that proved, he argued, that there is a hierarchy in the Trinity: that God the Father is the Supreme God and any worship of the Son “must always be understood as redounding ultimately to the Glory of God the Father.”<sup>10</sup>

Clarke’s argument emphatically rested on the authority of the God-given endowments of both revelation and reason. Aside from nature, scripture was the sole source of God’s revelation of himself and reason the sole method and measure for understanding it. As Philip Dixon has correctly observed, “[For Clarke]...the Reformation represented a concerted attempt to recover the true meaning of the Scriptures and sought to remove the unwarranted accretions of the previous millennium; whatever Christ taught and whatever the Apostles preached, that and that alone is to be accepted as the rule of faith....One could only accept as part of the deposit of revelation what one was reasonably convinced was actually part of it.”<sup>11</sup> Hence his meticulous textual method of analysis, isolating each data point of perceived relevance and assessing its weight in the measure of the whole. Clarke explained (speaking in the third person) that

To understand rightly the Scripture-Doctrine, in a Subject of so great Difficulty [as the Trinity]; he was humbly of Opinion, that the Method most proper in it self, as well as most agreeable to the Principles of the *Reformation*, was to collect all the Texts of the New Testament relating to that Matter, which are in Number more than 900; and from those Texts ranged under proper Heads, to deduce the whole Doctrine in general Propositions, compared with the Opinions of the Antient Fathers of the Church, and of Modern Learned Divines.<sup>12</sup>

Clarke’s *Scripture-Doctrine* was a stunning demonstration of “the new science” come to theology,<sup>13</sup> and it proved both convincing and popular among those who shared Clarke’s faith in the combined authority of scripture and reason; however, as most suspected and Clarke

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<sup>10</sup> Samuel Clarke, *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: James Knapton, 1712), Table of Contents Proposition LII (52).

<sup>11</sup> Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 184.

<sup>12</sup> Samuel Clarke, *The Works of Samuel Clarke, D.D. Late Rector of St. James’s Westminster*, Volume IV (London: Paul Knapton, 1738), 552-53. Note the absence of “Scholastick Divines”.

<sup>13</sup> See Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 184-86. Dixon relates that, for Clarke: “One could only accept as part of the deposit of revelation what one was reasonably convinced was actually part of it. If once not accept that a putative article of faith was to be found in the Scriptures then one ought not to accept it.” Dixon also voices the complaint that while “The treatment of the 1,251 texts is thorough but atomistic; phrases and sentences are cited with little regard for their context. Whilst this sort of approach was characteristic of the treatment of Scripture in general, the degree of atomism is a reflection of the influence of the ‘new science’, an influence found in the philosophical thought of Hobbes and Locke.”

himself would not deny, reason held the preeminence of the two. The scripture was vitalized only in the rational understanding of it.<sup>14</sup>

Among Clarke's Fifty-five "distinct Propositions" regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, he stated the following results that he had derived from his New (but not Old) Testament searches:

The Word, *God*, in Scripture, no where signifies the Person of the *Holy Ghost*. (Proposition XXXII, referred hereafter with only the roman numerals)

The Word, *God* in Scripture, never signifies a complex Notion of *more Persons than One*; but always means *One person only*, viz. either the person of the *Father* singly, or the person of the *Son* singly. (XXXIII)

The *Son*, whatever his metaphysical Essence or Substance be, and whatever divine Greatness and Dignity is ascribed to him in Scripture; yet in This He is evidently *Subordinate* to the *Father*; that *He derives* his *Being* and Attributes from the *Father*, the *Father* Nothing from *Him*. (XXXIV)<sup>15</sup>

Besides questioning terms used to identify the Holy Ghost as divine, Clarke utilized a univocal understanding of the term *person* and subordinated the Son's "Greatness and Dignity" to the Father, thereby declaring the Persons of the Godhead to be unequal (as Collins had succinctly apprehended in his *Discourse*).

In relation to the Son's divinity, Clarke explained: "The *Reason* why the *Son* in the New Testament is sometimes stiled *God*, is not upon account of his metaphysical *Substance*, how Divine soever; but of his relative *Attributes* and Divine *Authority* (communicated to him from the *Father*) over *Us*" (XXV). In other words, the Son was God only in relation to us, and that because of the Father's communicated attributes and authority to him. However, there was one attribute that was not communicated to the Son: "Independency" of person.

To the *Son* are ascribed in Scripture [beside making and governing the World] *Other* the *Greatest Things* and the *Highest Titles*; even all *Communicable Divine Powers*: That is, All Powers which include not That *Independency* and *Supreme Authority*, by which the *God and Father of All* is distinguished to be the *God and Father of All*. (XXVII)

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<sup>14</sup> See also Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 184.

<sup>15</sup> Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), Table of Contents Propositions XXXII, XXXIII, XXXIV (32, 33, 34). It is perhaps interesting to note that the specific numeral where Clarke chose to proscribe "a complex Notion of more Persons than One" in God on the basis of scriptural authority is the compounded Thirty-three. Note also Clarke's particular "proposition" of the personal and singular aseity of the Father via his emphasis of "Being" in the final sentence. See also Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 112.

In short, the Father's self-existence was incommunicable. Clarke had already stated: "The Son is not Self-existent". This was further than Whiston had ventured, who had only asserted that the manner of the Son's derivation was wholly unique and accorded with the Nicene formula of substantive sameness, but owned "his *Generation* to be really unsearchable by *Mankind*".<sup>16</sup> Clarke attempts to affirm Whiston's point while yet extending it by the single identifiable attribute of aseity:

In *what particular metaphysical Manner* the Son derives his Being from the Father, the Scripture has no where distinctly declared; and therefore Men ought not to presume to be able to define. (XIII)

They are Both therefore worthy of Censure; both they who on the one hand presume to affirm, that the *Son* was made...*out of Nothing*; and they who, on the other hand, affirm that he is the *Self-existent Substance*. (XIV)

The Reason why the Scripture, though it stiles the *Father God*, and also stiles the *Son God*; yet at the same time always declares there is but *One God*; is because, there being in the *Monarchy* of the Universe but *One Authority*, original in the *Father*, derivative in the *Son*; therefore the *One God* (absolutely speaking) always signifies *Him* in whom the Power or Authority is *original and underived*. (XXXIX)

Clarke had elevated (within the theological discourse) the aseity of the Father to be the absolute principle of supreme power and authority. "The *Father* is the *Sole Origin* of all *Power and Authority*, and is the *Author and Principle* of whatsoever is done by the *Son* or by the *Spirit*" (VI). From Clarke's perspective, such originality identified the Father as the Supreme God: "The *Father Alone* is, absolutely speaking, the *God of the Universe*" (VIII).

This stood in stark contrast to the Athanasian Trinity, where the Father could not (nor any other person of the Godhead) be God without his absolute relative-existence to the other persons of his Being. Clarke held that "The Son derives his Being [note the single *person* to single *being* ratio]...by an Act of the *Father's incomprehensible Power and Will*" (XVII). (This capacity to "Act" and its significance for Clarke will be discussed later in relation to Locke's use of the term "intelligent Agent"). The Son's existence was not necessary for the

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<sup>16</sup> Whiston, "The Council of Nice vindicated" in *Three Essays*, 7. See the prior section on Whiston that discusses his position on the Trinity. See also Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 115. Wiles briefly notes the differences between Clarke and Whiston's Trinitarian theologies, and specifically points to Whiston's *later* assertion (to Clarke) that the Son has "lesser power, lesser knowledge [and] lesser goodness". Wiles contrasted this with Clarke's "claim that all divine powers except supremacy and independency have been transmitted to the Son". Wiles also footnotes that Emlyn made the same point as Whiston, referencing the Son's stated lack of knowledge (along with the angels) "of that hour" of his own return in Mark 13:32. As such, proposition XXVII seems to mark a definite parting of ways for Whiston and Clarke. I emphasize the word *later* to point to the fact that prior to Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine*, (as evidenced within Wiles observation) Whiston's particular "lessening" of the Son's divine attributes was not readily apparent.

Father to exist as God Supreme. However, that said, it was God’s perfect attributes *and* character (or, “Power and Will”) that generated the Son’s existence—“*With* this *First* and Supreme Cause or Father of all Things...from the Beginning” (II). So, even allowing the Son to be eternal *with* the Father, the second person was ultimately not *the* first or original, and thereby one independent person/being: “The *Father Alone* is *Self-existent, Underived, Unoriginated, Independent*. He *Alone* is of *None*, either by *Creation, Generation, Procession, or Any Other Way whatsoever*” (V). This nuanced qualification of the eternal generation—a phrase unused by Clarke in *Scripture Doctrine*—of the Son’s Being in contrast to the eternal Being of the Father that thereby hierarchized the Godhead upon the attribute of aseity would be one of, if not *the* primary issue that Clarke responded to in his “Paper” to the bishops (discussed later).<sup>17</sup>

David Nichols has written that “[w]hether Clarke can properly be called an Arian is doubtful.” For, he continued, “Newtonian Anglicans were eager to maintain the unity of the godhead” since Newton believed polytheism would render science impossible. Therefore, it was the widely held position in the Western Church that Clarke repudiated, the “notion of the Trinity as three identical units differentiated only by their relationships.” Instead, Clarke “insisted that in the dynamic relations of the persons of the Trinity the Father has a certain priority as the source of all being.”<sup>18</sup> Clarke wrote in the third edition (1711) of his 1704 Boyle lectures:

As to the *Diversity* of Persons in the ever-blessed *Trinity*: That is; whether notwithstanding the Unity of the Divine Nature, there may not coexist with the First Supreme Cause, such Excellent Emanations from it, as may themselves be really Eternal, Infinite, and Perfect, by a Complete Communication of Divine Attributes in an incomprehensible manner; always excepting Self-Origination, Self-Existence, or absolute Independency: Of this, I say; as there is nothing in bare Reason, by which it can be demonstrated that there is actually any such thing; so neither is there any Argument, by which it can be proved impossible or unreasonable to be supposed; and therefore so far as declared and made known to us by clear Revelation, it ought to be believed.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 553-57.

<sup>18</sup> Nicholls, *God and Government*, 168-69.

<sup>19</sup> Samuel Clarke, *A Discourse Concerning the Being and Attributes of God* (London: Will. Botham; for James Knapton, 1711), 51. Note the title change from the first edition’s *A Demonstration of...* But more importantly, note that there are potentially significant changes in this paragraph from the first edition: Clarke replaces “that One and the same Nature” with “the ever-blessed *Trinity*” and his closing “when declared and made known to us by clear Revelation” with “so far as declared and made known to us by clear Revelation”. See also Nicholls, *God and Government*, 168-69.

The Son and Holy Spirit “coexist with the First Supreme Cause” as “Excellent Emanations from it...really Eternal, Infinite, and Perfect, by a complete Communication of Divine Attributes in an incomprehensible manner; always excepting Self-Origination, Self-Existence, or absolute Independency”. Mere reason could neither demonstrate the Trinity nor disprove it. And insofar as Scripture revealed the Godhead’s diverse unity, “it ought to be believed.” But, if we are to understand Clarke correctly in his *Scripture Doctrine*, the Son and Spirit and all they did originated from the Father and, therefore, the Father alone was ultimately the due recipient of all praise and worship. Nicholls points out that Clarke did not include this paragraph in later editions of his *Demonstration*,<sup>20</sup> beginning with the fourth edition published in 1716. There, Clarke replaced this discussion by briefly (and only somewhat implicitly) referring his reader to his *Scripture Doctrine*, and, rather overtly, warning them against the exegesis of medieval scholasticism (i.e., Athanasianism): “That the *Unity of God, is a true and real, not figurative, Unity.*” In this edition, however, instead of announcing a frustrated “bare Reason” he pointed to the unity of God (in accord with Nicholls’ assessment of Newton’s aversion to polytheism) as the “Prime Foundation of Natural Religion,” adding, that “how the *Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity* perfectly agrees, I have elsewhere indeavoured to show particularly, in its proper place.”<sup>21</sup>

Clarke’s emphasis on aseity, or the attribute of self-existence, seems to have most readily derived from his understanding of Newton’s *Principia*. Nicholls states that Clarke’s conclusions were “apparently arrived at on the basis of Newtonian philosophy”<sup>22</sup> while Rupp declares that *Scripture Doctrine* “was not intended in any way to expound the Newtonian world view, though, more than he seemed aware, this moulded his conclusions.”<sup>23</sup> Somewhat oddly, then, Rupp goes on to explain that in his Boyle lectures—that had already been noted by Rupp for utilizing “some Newtonian animadversions on the relation of Deity to time and space”—Clarke had argued “that the unity and self-existence of God were inseparable, and he now [in *Scripture Doctrine*] concluded that it is only God the Father who is supreme over

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<sup>20</sup> See Samuel Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God* (London: Will. Botham, for James Knapton, 1716), 48. Note that in the fourth edition he reverted to the original title. The edition produced for the Cambridge Texts in the History of Philosophy series is based on the seventh and eighth editions and does not note the existence of the prior paragraph and the subsequent changes (see Samuel Clarke, *A Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God: And Other Writings*, edited by Enzo Vailati (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), xxxvii and 36).

<sup>21</sup> Clarke, *Demonstration* (1716), 48.

<sup>22</sup> Nicholls, *God and Government*, 168.

<sup>23</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 253.

all”.<sup>24</sup> Rupp fails to connect Clarke’s priority of self-existence to his discussion of time and space.<sup>25</sup> For, in discussing his proposition “VI. *The Self-Existent Being, must of necessity be Infinite and Omnipresent*” Clarke argued that “The Idea of Infinity or Immensity, as well as of Eternity,” are “closely connected with that of Self-Existence”. He explained that “To be Self-Existent...is to Exist by an Absolute Necessity in the Nature of the Thing itself...it must be *every where*, as well as *always*, unalterably the same...Whatever therefore Exists by an Absolute Necessity in its own Nature must needs be Infinite as well as Eternal.”<sup>26</sup> Newtonian frameworks and relations permeated Clarke’s apologetics and exegesis.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, in the General Scholium, appended (in 1713) to the second edition of the *Principia* a year after Clarke’s *Scripture Doctrine* was published, Newton himself (according to Snobelen) “stated forcefully...that the solar system could only have proceeded ‘from the counsel and dominion of an intelligent and powerful being’ and that the universe of stars ‘must be all subject to the dominion of One.’”<sup>28</sup> Proposition VII of the *Demonstration* was that “*The Self-Existent Being, must of necessity be but One.*” Newton is even alleged by modern scholars to have “almost certainly” published his General Scholium in such a timely manner for the purpose of “support[ing] publicly his ally Samuel Clarke”.<sup>29</sup> The foregoing suggests that well before the English edition of the *Principia* was published, Clarke had ably translated Newton into the theological discourse correctly and approvingly. And, unlike Whiston who initially published in Latin, Clarke made his version of Newtonian theology accessible to a general audience via his country’s vernacular.

Clarke’s use of the term “Intelligent Agent” also speaks to Newton’s influence, though it most likely originated with Locke. Snobelen found Newton using the term in correspondence with Richard Bentley, the first Boyle lecturer, in 1692. “Newton...told Bentley that he was ‘forced to ascribe’ the design of the solar system ‘to ye counsel & contrivance of a voluntary Agent’ and, similarly, that ‘ye motions wch ye Planets now have could not spring from any natural cause alone but were imprest by an intelligent Agent.’”<sup>30</sup> In Locke’s *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), in his chapter “Of Cause and

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<sup>24</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 252-53.

<sup>25</sup> See also Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 120-21.

<sup>26</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. II, 540.

<sup>27</sup> See Pfizenmaier, *Trinitarian Theology...Dr. Clarke*, 176.

<sup>28</sup> Stephen D. Snobelen, “‘God of Gods, and Lord of Lords’: The Theology of Isaac Newton’s General Scholium to the *Principia*,” *Osiris*, Vol. 16, *Science in Theistic Contexts: Cognitive Dimensions* (2001), 174.

<sup>29</sup> See Snobelen, “God of Gods, Lord of Lords,” 171-72.

<sup>30</sup> Snobelen, “God of Gods, Lord of Lords,” 173.

Effect”, he equated the terms “Agent, or Cause”.<sup>31</sup> Locke then flatly declared in the next chapter that “without consciousness there is no Person”, illustrating his point with the statement that “a Carcase may be a Person, as well as any sort of Substance...without consciousness.”<sup>32</sup> Locke emphasized consciousness as the principle of a *person*.

Consciousness is how a person becomes “concerned and accountable, [and] owns and imputes to it *self* past Actions”. One of his most important explications of the term *person* is when he calls it ‘the name for this *self*’ (that is, consciousness). This *self-as-consciousness* he described as “a Forensick Term appropriating Actions and their Merit; and so belongs only to intelligent Agents, capable of a Law, and Happiness and Misery.”<sup>33</sup> Locke focused on *actions* and *accountability*, and identified *consciousness* as what made the linking of these possible. He used the term “intelligent Agents” but did not emphasize it in the manner that Samuel Clarke did later.

While Locke focused on *actions* and *owning actions*, Clarke located the principle or the distinguishing core of a *person* to be in *acting*. Clarke explicated at length on this in his Boyle lectures. There, Clarke (like Locke) argued an equivalence of “Cause” and “Agent” but emphasized the necessity of “a Principle of *Acting*, or Power of *beginning* Motion”.<sup>34</sup> (Recall Clarke’s Newtonian emphasis on causal origin and self-/existence). This distinction becomes significant when we consider the problem of equating *mere* consciousness, or even action, with “person”, when pitted against materialists (such as Spinoza) who potentially held that all matter was conscious of its own action, or motion. Locke, by assuming *action*, allowed *consciousness* as the basis of a person without explicitly detailing the necessary corollary of *acting*. Clarke, on the other hand, took “intelligent agent” to consist specifically of *acting*, or, if you will, he apprehended a *person* to be a *causing-consciousness*. This capacity to *act* he often styled as “*Liberty*”.

*For Intelligence without Liberty...is really (in respect of any Power, Excellence, or Perfection,) no Intelligence at all. It is indeed a Consciousness, but it is merely a Passive One; a Consciousness, not of Acting, but purely of being Acted upon.*

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<sup>31</sup> John Locke, *An Essay on Human Understanding*, edited by Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: OU Clarendon Press, 1975), 325.

<sup>32</sup> Locke, *Essay on Human Understanding*, 344.

<sup>33</sup> Locke, *Essay on Human Understanding*, 345: *Person*, as I take it, is the name for this self. ...It is a Forensick Term appropriating Actions and their Merit; and so belongs only to intelligent Agents, capable of a Law, and Happiness and Misery. This personality extends it *self* beyond present Existence to what is past, only by consciousness; whereby it becomes concerned and accountable, owns and imputes to it self past Actions, just upon the same ground, and for the same reason, that it does the present. See Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 142.

<sup>34</sup> Clarke, *Being and Attributes*, 72. My emphasis.

Without Liberty, nothing can in any tolerable Propriety of Speech, be said to be an Agent, or Cause of any thing. For to Act necessarily, is really and properly not to Act at all, but only to be Acted upon.<sup>35</sup>

Here we see Clarke equating the word “Intelligence” with “Consciousness”, and, again, “Agent” with “Cause” (hence, my conceptual distillation: *causing-consciousness*). The principle, or core element of a *person* is this “Liberty”, this capacity “to Act” rather than “only to be Acted upon.” Clarke referred to God as the “Supreme Cause” and insisted that he is not merely an “Intelligent” (Conscious) and “Active Being” but that “he is likewise indued with Liberty and Choice, which alone is the Power of Acting.”<sup>36</sup> *Active* and *Acting* are here juxtaposed to demonstrate the more primary aspect of the latter: “Acting” is a causal state, where “active” is simply a state of motion and can be said of any number of objects, person or otherwise. Locke seems to have assumed *action* in making consciousness primary to the existence of a person; Clarke made (or at least emphasized) *acting* as primary to a person’s being. Clarke’s relation to Locke can be summed up in his succinct observation concerning the “antient *Hylozoicks*” who attributed consciousness to “*all Matter*”, such that “a Stone, when it falls, has a Sensation and Consciousness; but that That Consciousness is no Cause at all, or power, of Acting.”<sup>37</sup> Accordingly, Clarke perceived the apparent inadequacy of Locke’s emphasis within the definition of *person* and went beyond him to the more exact emphasis—and thereby different definition—of *person* as “Intelligent Agent”, or a Causing-Consciousness.<sup>38</sup>

Dixon does not effectively highlight this significant difference between Locke and Clarke, but sees that the shift from viewing a “person” as “intelligent substance” to “intelligent agent” suggests that the latter “conception was more dynamic, and may well reflect the growing importance of motion as one of the key concepts in physics.”<sup>39</sup> Dixon’s account of Clarke’s understanding of the term “person” is lessened to the extent that he fails to account for Clarke’s emphasis on causality in relation to self-existence with the derivative implications that Clarke (therein) sought to genuinely discover while maintaining an absolute

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<sup>35</sup> Clarke, *Being and Attributes*, 61.

<sup>36</sup> Clarke, *Being and Attributes*, 62.

<sup>37</sup> Clarke, *Being and Attributes*, 62.

<sup>38</sup> For a further contrast with how I have explained Clarke’s “improvement” upon Locke (in view of Dixon) by emphasizing the capacity to Act or Cause, over a mere rational capacity to reflect via Consciousness, see Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 141.

<sup>39</sup> Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 189.

integrity to revelation.<sup>40</sup> That said, a major weakness in Clarke's scriptural support was that he only accounted for New Testament passages. The Old Testament was therefore an easy redoubt for Athanasians following Clarke's seeming breach of the New Testament and Patristic eras (which were by no means abandoned to Clarke's Subordinationism). In addition to the counter-claims, Clarke and others utilizing Newtonian related readings of the New Testament were, in part, countered with *prisca theologia* readings of the Old Testament.<sup>41</sup>

Significantly, Clarke forcefully applied the term "intelligent agent" univocally, meaning that the divine Persons of the Trinity were also defined as "Intelligent Agents".<sup>42</sup> This was something that Locke refused to do in his controversy with Bishop Stillingfleet.<sup>43</sup> Clarke stated in his *Demonstration* that for the "Supreme Cause to be *properly* an Intelligent and Active Being" he must "likewise [be] indued with *Liberty* and Choice, which alone is the Power of Acting."<sup>44</sup> This univocity of the term *person* allowed Clarke to argue that, whereas the natural attributes of God were incommunicable, his moral attributes were very much so. Clarke thought that having established that "there must be in the Universe some Being, whose Existence is founded in the Necessity of its Own Nature; and which... must of Necessity have in *it self* a Principle of Acting, or Power of beginning Motion, which is the Idea of Liberty" that it would be "easie [sic] to show hereafter, that it [Liberty] is a Power cable of being communicated to Created Beings."<sup>45</sup> I have discussed Clarke's emphasis on human liberty elsewhere.<sup>46</sup> In the meantime, the milieu of Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine* and his improvements to Locke's vocabulary via Newtonian priorities helps us to understand the

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<sup>40</sup> Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 189: "It should be noted that while this study has focused on Clarke's understanding of the usage of the word 'person' in this context, many other issues are, and were, raised in response."

<sup>41</sup> Some support for this is found in Stievermann, Introduction to *Biblia Americana*, Vol. 10, 148 (draft copy): In response to "scholars and Deist critics" who asserted Christianity as among the world's religions, "Mather responded by reinterpreting the ancient notion of a *prisca theologia* in the light of all the new learning. He assumed that an edenic ur-religion, complete with a proto-trinitarian belief in a coming messiah..."

<sup>42</sup> In the second edition of *Scripture Doctrine*, published in 1719, Clarke made this even more explicit by inserting the words in brackets into one of the most significant propositions, one that separated "The Word, God, in Scripture," from "a complex Notion of *more Persons*, [or *Intelligent Agents*] than One; but always means *One Person only*, viz. either the Person of the Father singly, or the Person of the Son singly" (Samuel Clarke, *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity*, second edition (London: James Knapton, 1719), Proposition XXXIII). See also Dixon on the univocal use of person and intelligent agents by Clarke (Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 186-90).

<sup>43</sup> See Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 164: "...Locke's uncharacteristic and awkward silence."

<sup>44</sup> Clarke, *Being and Attributes*, 62.

<sup>45</sup> Clarke, *Being and Attributes*, 71-72.

<sup>46</sup> See Jonathan D. Pike, "'The Glorious Liberty of the Children of God': Moral Agency and Human Liberty in Samuel Clarke's Newtonian Theology" in *New Approaches to Religion in the Enlightenment*, edited by Brett C. McInelly and Paul E. Kerry (Lanham, MD: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 2018).

confidence with which Clarke asserted his scriptural exegesis and attendant theological views.

Clarke attempted to maintain the grounding of scriptural boundaries for his argument while at the same time asserting at once a Newtonian frame and Lockean vocabulary of exegesis:

There is *One* Supreme Cause and Original of Things; *One* simple, uncompounded, undivided, *intelligent Agent*, or *Person*; who is the Alone Author of all Being, and the Fountain of all Power. (I)

*With* this *First* and Supreme Cause or Father of all Things, there has existed from the Beginning, a Second *Divine Person*, which is his *Word* or Son. ...[and] a *Third* Divine Person, which is *the Spirit* of the Father and of the Son. (II, III)

What the proper Metaphysical *Nature*, *Essence*, or *Substance* of any of these Divine Persons is, the Scripture has no where at all declared; but describes and distinguishes them always by their *PERSONAL Characters*, *Offices*, *Power* and *Attributes*. (IV)

The *Father Alone* is *Self-existent*, *Underived*, *Unoriginated*, *Independent*. He *Alone* is of *None*, either by *Creation*, *Generation*, *Procession*, or *Any Other Way whatsoever*. (V)

Clarke thought that he had placed Christianity on a solid scriptural foundation and understanding that accorded with both Newtonian verities and Christian antiquity, both devoted reason and the Church's devotion to revelation. As such, he felt confident in observing that "They who are not careful to maintain these *personal* Characters and Distinctions [of the Godhead], but, while they are solicitous (on the one hand) to avoid the Errors of the *Arians*, affirm (in the contrary Extreme) the *Son* and *Holy Spirit* to be (*individually* with the Father) *the Self-existent Being*". By so doing, Clarke explained, "These, seeming in *Words* to magnify the *Name* of the Son and Holy Spirit, *in reality* take away their *very Existence*; and so fall unawares into *Sabellianism* (which is the same with *Socinianism*.)" To Clarke, the Athanasians fell into Sabellianism and were therefore, ultimately, no different than the Socinians, as both left indistinguishable the personal attributes of the Godhead and thereby obviated the persons of the Son and Holy Spirit and dissolved them into the single self-existent person of Father.

Clarke was careful to condemn those who express "*that there was a time when the Son was not*" and upheld that those who had "presumed to affirm" that belief had "justly been censured" (XVI).<sup>47</sup> For, "The Scripture, in declaring the *Son's Derivation* from the Father,

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<sup>47</sup> J.C.D. Clark misunderstands Clarke's "Proposition XVI". This was "the claim that Scripture proved that the Son was a being created in time" (see Clark, *Language of Liberty*, 37).

never makes mention of any Limitation of *Time*; but always supposes and affirms him to have existed with the Father *from the Beginning and before all Worlds*” (XV). Clarke’s able assertion of Newtonian and Lockean frameworks and vocabularies into the debate over the doctrine of the Trinity led to some pause as participants adjusted their footwork to this novel explication of God from and for “the new day of Locke and Newton”.<sup>48</sup> After all, Clarke had employed the same framework and vocabulary in his celebrated (and widely appreciated)<sup>49</sup> Boyle lectures against the doctrines of Spinoza and the Deists, particularly his *Demonstration of the Being and Attributes of God*.

Thomas Pfizenmaier has stated that Clarke’s inquiries into the genuineness of Athanasian orthodoxy was prompted by the rational priorities of his time and that it was his searches of the Fathers that caused his departure and challenge to the same.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, Philip Dixon sees Clarke’s utility of the Fathers to be ornamental and in no way authoritative in interpretive disputes.<sup>51</sup> Dixon asserts, that for Clarke “the Bible alone is the rule of faith for the Protestant, and there can be no appeal to tradition or authority.” For, “Obedience to an external authority alone, however prestigious, could not take the place of the probative force of reason.”<sup>52</sup> He quotes Clarke: “[it is] the Duty, and in the Power, of every particular Christian [with] Helps and assistances...to understand for himself, whatever is necessary for his own salvation.”<sup>53</sup> Prior to Dixon, Maurice Wiles stated that Clarke “allowed the Fathers a restricted role as guides to assist our understanding of Scripture, but nothing more than that”. He later continued, “In Clarke’s judgment there was no other ultimate court of appeal than our own understanding. An unprejudiced view of the human reason was the only path to determining the true sense of Scripture, and thereby the true substance of Christian faith.”<sup>54</sup>

In a manner similar to Dixon though not quite so dismissive of Clarke’s attitude toward the Church Fathers, from my own searches it seems apparent that Clarke had created a sort of hierarchy of authoritative interpretation, similar to that of his Trinity. As stated above, he did not dismiss the conciliar creeds or tradition, but judged them by revelation, and

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<sup>48</sup> This phrase comes from Rupp, *Religion in England*, 249.

<sup>49</sup> See Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 113.

<sup>50</sup> See Pfizenmaier, *Trinitarian Theology...Dr. Clarke*, 218.

<sup>51</sup> See Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 184-85.

<sup>52</sup> Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 184.

<sup>53</sup> Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 184-85.

<sup>54</sup> Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 118-19.

revelation by reason. Therefore, I take some issue with Pfizenmaier's assertion that it was "Clarke's understanding of early Church history, and his reading of the Ante-Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers in particular, [that] were the greatest cause of his departure from the 'three persons in one substance' formulation." For, Pfizenmaier continues, "[w]hereas the necessity of reasonable explanation, which was so typical of his age, compelled Clarke to examine the doctrine, it was his conclusions regarding the opinions of the Fathers which caused him to challenge it."<sup>55</sup> It appears then that, according to Pfizenmaier, Clarke both *departs from* and then *challenges* Athanasian orthodoxy based on the Fathers. On the contrary, I view this as more descriptive of Whiston. There is a good deal of verity in Wiles's summary of Daniel Waterland's perception of Clarke's argument: "As he [Waterland] saw it, the real source of Clarke's opinions was not Scripture (not even Scripture and the Fathers, but philosophy." Wiles added shortly after, that "Clarke's main claim to fame was, after all, as a metaphysical theologian."<sup>56</sup> Certainly, the Fathers (as Clarke read them) formed a bulwark of support for his endeavor, adding courage to the rational fact. But it was the rational faculty (as understood in Christian religion) that ruled Clarke, and it appears, to me at least, that he would have ultimately departed from the received understanding of Athanasian orthodoxy per his Newtonian theology without the historical supports. However, he may not have challenged it in the same way (or at all) in their absence. The Newtonian necessities of the natural order framed his theological priorities, that then proved (to him) overwhelmingly apparent in Scripture in a manner that nicely corresponded with a historicized Nicene orthodoxy, which thereby disavowed the Athanasian formulary.

From Newton, there appeared two strong currents of evidential argument against the Athanasian Trinity, one according to his historical searches, the other according to his natural philosophy. Whiston and Clarke relied on both, but each held to an emphasis of one over the other. Whiston was clearly taken by the historical argument concerning textual authenticity and Patristic era Church politics, hence his continuous rehashing of fourth and fifth century grievances. Clarke on the other hand seems to have been more interested in driving at the pure argument apparent from the priorities of his natural theology (as informed by his

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<sup>55</sup> Pfizenmaier, *Trinitarian Theology...Dr. Clarke*, 218.

<sup>56</sup> Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 118.

Newtonian inflected philosophy), that he found to be amply supported by both the Christian revelation and the record of Christian antiquity.<sup>57</sup>

Regarding Clarke's use of Scripture and the Church Fathers, a few instances will illustrate his less pronounced accord with Whiston regarding the timeline of doctrinal shifts in Christian history. Clarke stated that, "The greatest part of the Writers *before* and *at* the time of the Council of *Nice*, were (I think) really of That Opinion... which I have endeavoured to set forth in [his fifty-five] Propositions" based on Scripture. However, for those "Writers *after* that Time" (i.e. Nicaea) can be cited either way, "[f]or I do not cite places out of these Authors, so much to show what was the Opinion of the Writers themselves, as to show how naturally Truth sometimes prevails by its own native clearness and evidence, even against the strongest and most settled prejudices".<sup>58</sup> In other words, Clarke was able to use the words of supposed Athanasians (including Athanasius) against their own doctrine.

In his *Scripture Doctrine*, Clarke explained that "the Meaning of these Words, [*Three Persons and yet but One God,*] understood consistently must be; that the *Power and Divine Authority* of each of the *three Persons* in their several Operations, being distinctly acknowledged". However, he continued, "there is yet nevertheless but *One God*, or One Supreme unoriginated independent absolute Governour of all things, viz. *God the Father Almighty* governing all things *by his Son* and *by his Spirit*." To support this, Clarke cites one of Athanasius's own citations and then Athanasius's own words: "It is absolutely necessary (saith *Dionysius Romanus* cited by *Athanasius*,) that the Holy Trinity should be as it were recapitulated into One Head, and terminate in the One God of the Universe, even in Him who is Supreme over all. For," Dionysius continued, "it is the Doctrine of the vain and foolish *Marcion*, to divide the Monarchy of the Universe into Three [Supreme] Heads: Which is a wicked Notion, and not the Doctrine of the true Disciples of Christs, or of those who follow our Saviour's instructions." He then offered a series of brief quotations from Athanasius, culminating in this illustrative extract: "When all things (saith he) are done *By God, Through Christ, In the Holy Spirit*; I see the undivided Operation of the *Father*, the *Son*, and the *Holy*

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<sup>57</sup> See Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 110-11: "In the field of theology [Clarke] was far ahead of either [Newton and Whiston] in the philosophical aspects of the discipline." As such, Clarke's Boyle lectures "made Whiston acutely aware of the difference between himself and Clarke in their attitudes to philosophy, leading him to express to Clarke his doubts about the wisdom of such 'abstract and metaphysical reasonings' which he himself 'never durst meddle with'."

<sup>58</sup> Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), xviii.

*Spirit:*” Clarke continued to quote Athanasius: “Yet do I not therefore so confound together, him *by whom*, and him *through whom*, and him *in whom* All is worked; as to be forced to run the *Three Persons* into *One*. For...the *FATHER* himself, *through the Word*, and *in [or by] the Spirit*, worketh and given all things.”<sup>59</sup> It appears therefore that Clarke basically followed, in a less abrasive manner than Whiston, a similar binary of pre- and post-(late)Athanasius in the Trinitarian debates to better inculcate in his readers the primitive purity of his own argument. Unlike Whiston, Clarke was careful to consistently point out that the Athanasian Creed was not written by Athanasius but (according to Dr. Cudworth) “*a long time after by some other hand*” (discussed later in this section).<sup>60</sup>

However, regarding the authority of Scripture (particularly in contrast to creeds), Clarke was clear about its exclusive status, particularly among Protestants. He explained in his Introduction that “in the *Books of Scripture* is conveyed down to us the Sum of what our Saviour taught, and of what the Apostles preached and wrote...[and] are to Us Now not only *the Rule*, but *the Whole and the Only Rule of Truth* in matters of Religion.”<sup>61</sup> Though he is not explicit, Clarke appeared to disagree with Whiston regarding the authority of the Apostolical Constitutions, even denying the possibility of recovering such ancient texts. For, Clarke stated, “were there as good evidence, by any certain means of Tradition whatsoever, of any other things taught by Christ or his Apostles...it could not be denied but that such Tradition would be of the same Authority.... But, “he continued, “there is no such Tradition (and indeed in the nature of things there can be no such Tradition) at this distance of time”. He subsequently went further in his explication of Scripture authority, relating that “there is contained in those Writings great Variety of things, and many occasional Doctrines and decisions of controversies, which though all equally true, yet are not all equally necessary to be known and understood by all Christians of all capacities”. Therefore, “the Church from the Beginning, has out of Scripture selected those plain fundamental Doctrines” necessary to be “understood by all Christians”, such as “their Baptismal Creed” (often the Apostles’ Creed). Not that such a creed had any authority “otherwise than as it expressed the Sense of Scripture”. He asserted a contrast between matters of “Philosophy, or Art” and “Revelation and divine Testimony”. The former “improve generally from small beginnings...and arrive at

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<sup>59</sup> Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), 455-58. The use of brackets here is original to Clarke’s text.

<sup>60</sup> Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), 445.

<sup>61</sup> Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), iv-v.

Perfection by degrees”, while the latter “are on the contrary complete at first”. Accordingly, “Christian Religion, was most perfect at the Beginning”.<sup>62</sup>

Clarke best expressed the necessity of Scripture— “the Root of Unity” —as the rule of faith via his whig rendering of Christian history since that earlier period that justified and celebrated his present endeavor.

As in process of time men grew less pious, and more contentious; so in the several Churches they enlarged their Creeds, and Confessions of Faith; and grew more minute, in determining unnecessary Controversies; and made more and more things explicitly necessary to be understood; and (under pretence of explaining authoritatively,) imposed things much harder to be understood than the Scripture itself; and became more uncharitable in their Censures; and the farther they departed from the Fountain of Catholick Unity, the Apostolical Form of sound words, the more uncertain and unintelligible their Definitions grew; and good men found no where to rest the Sole of their Foot, but in having recourse to the original words of Christ himself and of the Spirit of Truth, in which the Wisdom of God had though fit to express itself.<sup>63</sup>

Similarly, Clarke lamented, that following “the days of the Apostles...needless Contentions, soon began to arise; and Faith became more intricate; and Charity diminished; and Humane Authority and Temporal Power increased...and Religion decayed continually more and more, till at last (according to the Predictions of the Apostles) it was swallowed up in the great Apostacy”. Despite the fact that the Reformation “began to recover...the Doctrine of Christ and his Apostles” as “the Only Rule of Truth”, division and contention had continued. Nevertheless, Clarke exulted that “(thanks be to God) the Root of Unity has continued amongst us; and the Scripture hath universally been declared to be the only Rule of Truth, a sufficient Guide both in Faith and Practice”. He therein concluded, “Wherefore in any Question of Controversy in a Matter of Faith, Protestants are obliged (for the deciding of it) to have recourse to no other Authority whatsoever, but to that of Scripture only.”<sup>64</sup> In the foregoing, it becomes apparent that Low and High Church factions viewed Christian history differently, with the former highlighting a narrative of Apostacy to justify reform, while the former maintained Catholic continuity and development beyond (and in spite of) Rome.

It is interesting to note here that in 1712 Clarke did not address the difficulty of Scripture as a historical group of texts, and barely that with regard to the interpolated text

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<sup>62</sup> Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), viii.

<sup>63</sup> Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), vii-viii.

<sup>64</sup> Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), viii-x. He went on to quote extensively Chillingworth on “the Religion of the Protestants”.

most openly discussed among scholars. In his treatment of 1 John 5:7, he explained that by “these Three are One” is meant “Not One and the same *Person*; but One and the same *Thing*,” that is, given the context of bearing record, “One and the same *Testimony*.” He thereafter, in a spirit of disclosure, only briefly stated that “it ought not indeed to be concealed, that This Passage, since it does not certainly appear to have been found in the Text of any Greek Manuscript, should not have too much stress laid upon it in any Controversy.”<sup>65</sup> In 1719 (the second edition), his explication regarding the Johannine Comma became much more extensive and emphatic. Clarke declared forcefully that “it has never yet been proved to be found in the *Text* of *ANY* Greek Manuscript, before the Invention of Printing; nor in the Text of Any Antient Version; nor was cited by any of the numerous Writers in the whole *Arian* Controversy”. Furthermore, “the Sense of the Apostle is very complete without it” in relation to Christ’s baptism by water, and his death and resurrection signified by his blood, and the Spirit’s grant of gifts to the Apostles. The water, blood, and Spirit, thereby, each testify “that Jesus is the Son of God.”<sup>66</sup> Clarke also added a lengthy footnote, wherein he stated plainly again that in “no *Greek* Father (in any genuine work) was it ever cited at all, either before or after the Council of Nice; though many of them quote the words immediately foregoing and following” and no Latin Father cited it before Jerome. He explained his dismissal of alleged citations by Tertullian and Cyprian (both had been used by Cotton Mather in his defense of the embattled text).<sup>67</sup> He then pointed to the fact that “in the first *English* Bibles after the Reformation” the text had been the signified as “wanting in the Original” per a different type when printed. He referred the reader to his correspondence upon the subject (since 1712), to John Mill’s Greek New Testament published in 1707 (criticized by both Daniel Whitby and Anthony Collins generally),<sup>68</sup> and “an Anonymous Book...[w]herein this whole matter is learnedly and fully discussed.”<sup>69</sup> A text not mentioned

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<sup>65</sup> Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), 238. The explanatory and bracketed Greek is here removed from Clarke’s exegesis of the word “One” for the reader’s ease.

<sup>66</sup> In his posthumous *Works*, Vol. IV (1738), Clarke’s editor (Benjamin Hoadly) was careful to include both verses 7 and 8 to demonstrate Clarke’s exegesis and maintain the historical point more clearly: “1 John v. 7, 8. For There are Three that bear Record [*in Heaven; the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these Three are One. And there are Three that bear Witness in Earth,*] the Spirit, the Water, and the Blood; and these Three agree in One.” See Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 121.

<sup>67</sup> See Mather, *Brief Treatise...Injuries unto the Saviour* (1713), 34-35: “This Text [1 Joh. V. 7.] was not inserted by the Enemies of the *Arians*; for you find it cited by *Cyprian*, in the middle of the Third Century; and by *Tertullian* who was before *Cyprian*”.

<sup>68</sup> See Stuart Handley, “John Mill (1644/5-1707),” *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>69</sup> Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1719), 205-07. See Snobelen, “Antitrinitarian Textual Criticism,” 132-33.

by Clarke is William Whiston's fourth volume of *Primitive Christianity Reviv'd* published in 1712, again, the same year as the first edition of *Scripture Doctrine*.

This is perhaps significant in that Whiston goes into greater depth in 1712 on many of the same areas that Clarke did in 1719. For example, he also noted "one inaccurate Citation in *Cyprian*" and that "a place in *Tertullian* is pretended to be a Quotation of the last Words [three in one], [but] 'tis plainly otherwise" when one "considers that he "had more occasion to quote this Text, than any other in the whole Bible, especially in his Book against *Praxeas*" and he did not. Therefore, "Tertullian's silence" instead proved to be "one of the strongest Arguments against [the *comma*] in all Antiquity." As Mather published his *Brief Treatise* in 1713, it is quite likely that he was giving some brief response to Whiston specifically, (which I discuss in the Mather section). Furthermore, where Clarke merely mentioned that "the passage out of *Cyprian* [is] only a mystical Interpretation of the 8<sup>th</sup> verse", Whiston explained that "it was a Gloss or mystical Exposition of the eighth Verse, set at first in the Margin, and afterward put into the Text." He went on to explain the African origins of the interpolation, commenting that from there it was "certainly no wonder" that "it crept into some Copies and late Versions...when it seemed to support the *Orthodox* Doctrine beyond any other Text in the whole Bible." Therein, he also believed that Erasmus had inserted it into the third edition of his Greek Testament to simply avoid being "*call'd* an Arian". In exegetical contrast to Clarke, Whiston focused on the incoherence that verse 7 brings between verse 6 and verse 8, that the text showed itself to be "wholly forreign to the Series, Scope and Coherence of John in that place". Whiston argued that the passage was "so singular and remarkable" that it is "next to impossible to suppose it so long lost to the Church, without the Observation of any; especially when it belong'd to one of the more undoubted Epistles". Whiston also refers readers John Mill's scholarship, criticizing it for not concluding against the contested passage. For Whiston, on the other hand, the text was "one of the plainest and most pernicious Corruptions that is now in the World; and built on such poor Evidence as in any other Case of meer Criticism, where *Orthodoxy* were not concern'd, would be look'd upon as perfectly inconsiderable."<sup>70</sup> Clarke and Whiston clearly had seen the same sources, and had very likely conversed on the subject in the years since both their publications. In any case, the debate over the text had clearly intensified for Clarke following his 1712 publication of *Scripture Doctrine*.

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<sup>70</sup> Whiston, *Primitive Christianity Reviv'd*, Vol. IV, 171-73.

Clarke had been warned beforehand that the political situation was inopportune for such a publication. According to Whiston's *Historical Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Samuel Clarke* (1730), "About this Time, or before the Publication...there was a Message sent him from the Lord *Godolphin*, and some others of Queen *Anne*'s late Ministers, that "The Affairs of the Publick were with Difficulty then kept in the Hands of those that were at all for Liberty;" adding "that it was therefore an unseasonable Time for the Publication of a Book that would make a great Noise and Disturbance". Whiston declared that Clarke "had no Regard" for the message, "but went on, according to the Dictates of his own Conscience, with the Publication of his Book", and praised this as marking one "of the greatest Instances of Dr. *Clarke*'s Christian Courage and Sincerity".<sup>71</sup> The purported message is noteworthy here (in this study) because, if it was indeed sent, it is a fine demonstration of the close connections between the politicians and clergy, as well as the specific situation of many latitudinarians following the already mentioned dismissal of Godolphin as the Lord High Treasurer (proto-Prime Minister) by Queen Anne in 1710, along with his allied Whig ministers, and their subsequent dependence on the keeping the "right" Tories in power during the present administration. And while Clarke's courage is commendable, he may have wondered, after a belated but serious complaint was made in 1714 by the Lower to the Upper House of Convocation, what the outcome may have been if he had waited, as Godolphin had thought prudent, "'till a fitter Opportunity should offer itself."<sup>72</sup>

The Lower House of Convocation was no stranger to controversy, even (perhaps especially) with regard to itself. Rupp reports, that in 1664 the archbishop had waived the clergy's ancient right to be taxed separately, which, in effect, made the Lower House irrelevant to the monarch; relieving them of any need to summon the lower house (pecuniary matters were simply paramount). This neglect lasted until the arrival of William III and Mary, whereupon the lower clergy's vehement opposition for either Comprehension or Toleration of dissenters caused them to be prorogued again. Their loyalty was to the House of Stuart, maintained by first Queen Mary and then Queen Anne. The dismissal of the nonjuring bishops and the appointment of firmly Latitudinarian bishops and archbishops was a clear marker for the subsequent discord between the Upper and Lower Houses. Convocation consisted of the Upper House (bishops) and the Lower House (clergy), and whereas the

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<sup>71</sup> William Whiston, *Historical Memoirs of the Life of Dr. Samuel Clarke*, Second Edition, Corrected (London: Fletcher Gyles, 1730), 25-26. Godolphin died in September 1712.

<sup>72</sup> Whiston, *Historical Memoirs of Dr. Clarke*, 25. See also Rupp, *Religion in England*, 254; and Ferguson, *Eighteenth Century Heretic*, 51.

bishops as Lords Spiritual had been a permanent feature in the House of Lords, there had been no similar evolution for the synod of the lower clergy to maintain a notable presence in either the Commons or any function of national government. In 1701, the Lower House had sought to win greater relevance by asserting their right to adjourn irrespective of the archbishop, and appointed a committee to scrutinize John Toland's heretical (from their view) *Christianity not Mysterious*.<sup>73</sup> This sort of jockeying continued throughout the decade. William Gibson has explained that "At the core of the Convocation controversy lay the high church view that the clergy was a sacramental body, with rights and privileges that should be safeguarded by Convocation."<sup>74</sup> The archbishop and Upper House, however, were not supportive of the Lower House's claims to independence, nor was the monarchy. For her part, Queen Anne "was resolved to maintain her Supremacy and the due subordination of Presbyters [lower clergy] as fundamental parts thereof",<sup>75</sup> a statement that reveals both her sympathy for the lower clergy's sought recognition as fundamental to the national governance, but ultimately her own loyalty to the present Church-State establishment.<sup>76</sup>

With the landslide election of 1710 for the Tories, the Lower House saw its opportunity to exercise the breadth of its claimed rights and privileges.<sup>77</sup> And according with their wishes, the Queen instructed Convocation to assess the state of religion and explore any necessary amendments to church law and discipline.<sup>78</sup> The prolocutor of the Lower House and speaker of the Commons began to work closely together. Their legislation reflected, in the words of Rupp, "the conception of one Christian realm, exercising moral and spiritual authority over the Church through the clergy, reinforced by the legislative sanctions of a Christian parliament."<sup>79</sup> They were concerned about the promulgation of heresy and unbelief, particularly with regard to the doctrines of the Trinity and Christ's incarnation and atonement, and authenticity of Scripture; and as such floated the proposal of "restraining the present excessive and scandalous Liberty of Printing wicked books at home or importing

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<sup>73</sup> Toland's full title: *Christianity not Mysterious: or, a Treatise Shewing, That there is nothing in the Gospel Contrary to Reason, Nor Above it: And that no Christian Doctrine can be properly call'd A Mystery* (1696).

<sup>74</sup> William Gibson, "Altitudinarian Equivocation: George Samlridge's Churchmanship," in *Religious Identities in Britain, 1660-1832* (Routledge, 2017), 44.

<sup>75</sup> As quoted in Rupp, *Religion in England*, 61.

<sup>76</sup> For the foregoing paragraph, see Rupp, *Religion in England*, 55-64.

<sup>77</sup> See Gibson, *Samuel Wesley*, 147-48, see also 146-150.

<sup>78</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 62.

<sup>79</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 63. Basically, the English High Church equivalent to Puritan Massachusetts' conception of itself. The influential 1697 *Letter to a Convocation Man* argued that "the powers of church and state 'are distinct in their end and nature, and therefore ought to be so in their exercise too.'" As quoted in Switzer, "Suppression of Convocation", 152.

them from abroad”.<sup>80</sup> Whiston’s subsequent censure by both the Lower and Upper Houses, regarding his views on the Trinity, has already been mentioned. Some of the zeal tapered off after 1711, but the 1714 case of Clarke demonstrated the more significant and ongoing dissonance between the more temperate bishops and the more zealous lower clergy, both anxious to either avoid or pursue, respectively, confrontation over doctrinal nuances.<sup>81</sup>

On 2 June 1714, the Lower House presented a complaint to “the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, and the Lords the Bishops of the Province of Canterbury” (the Upper House) concerning Clarke’s *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*, declaring it an attempt to “subvert our common Faith, to corrupt the Christian Worship, and to defeat the Church’s main End in agreeing upon her [Thirty-Nine] Articles; namely, *The avoiding of Diversity of Opinions*”. They also succinctly stated the Church of England’s understanding of the Trinity as “*Three Persons of One Substance, Power and Eternity, in the Unity of the Godhead*.” The Upper House agreed with the clergy’s “Apprehension of the Mischiefs and dangerous Consequences that may ensue” and added that “The Bishops think the Lower-House had just Reason for their Complaint” and subsequently directed them to produce an extract of the offending passages with their commentary. The Lower House was most incensed by Clarke’s insistence that “Being” and “Person” corresponded, that any other understanding was “a manifest Contradiction” and “an express Contradiction”, and, therefore, that each member of the Godhead was not “Eternal”, “uncreated”, or “Almighty”.<sup>82</sup> Furthermore—and this demonstrates the competing combinations of authority and their preferred methods of inquiry—the House concluded their complaint with

... moreover, we beg Leave to observe, that the Offence given by the Books complained of, seems to us to arise not only from such particular Parts and Passages thereof as are before-cited, but from the general Drift and Design of the Whole; the said Books, in our Opinion, tending to nothing less, than to substitute the Author’s private Conceits, and arbitrary Interpretations of Scripture, in the Room of those Catholick Doctrines, which the Church professes and maintains, as warranted both by Scripture and Antiquity.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>80</sup> See Rupp, *Religion in England*, 63. As quoted therein.

<sup>81</sup> For some further insight into the relationship between the Lower and Upper House of Convocation, see this dated but helpful article by Gerald B. Switzer, “The Suppression of Convocation in the Church of England”, *Church History*, Vol. 1., No. 3 (Sep., 1932), 150-162. The discussion on page 152 is particularly summative of the differences between the Houses.

<sup>82</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 545-46.

<sup>83</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 547.

The authoritative claims (made by the Lower House) were a combination of either Scripture and Antiquity, or of Scripture and (private) Reason. Albeit, in his *Scripture Doctrine*, it is apparent that Clarke fully fronted the latter combination, while still extensively utilizing the testimony of former. A fact he demonstrates in his formal response to the complaint and extract.

When Clarke's written response to the extract was sought, within three days he delivered a measured, but quite thorough rebuttal. As in his doctor of divinity defense, he appeared indomitable in both written and spoken debate.<sup>84</sup> Clarke correctly observed that not one of his fifty-five propositions "wherein his whole Doctrine is distinctly expressed" had been disputed as "false or erroneous." (He spoke in the third-person throughout). But rather, the Lower House had nit-picked over "his Explications of some *Metaphysical Words not found in Scripture*", noting that, of those words, even "learned Men have been of various Opinions" and defended himself on the fact that he had, throughout, "explained those Terms no otherwise than very many of the antient Fathers of the Church, and of our most eminent *English Divines*".<sup>85</sup> Clarke must have resented being judged by the Creeds coupled with the vocabularies of the "schoolmen" when he had explicitly offered Scripture as the substantive grounds for a rational discourse, lamenting that they refused to meet him on the grounds of his choosing but rather maintained their traditional defenses in debate over the meaning of unscriptural terms. However, Clarke's own seemingly casual forays onto the otherwise formidable grounds of those terms merited their response.<sup>86</sup> Even so, Clarke exhibited his already known prowess on the grounds of their choosing, demonstrating just how few among them would be able to contend with someone of his intellectual agility, breadth of learning and acute judgment.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> See Rupp, *Religion in England*, 254. For a brief assessment of Clarke in spoken debate: concerning Clarke's published "solution" regarding the Trinity: "...Dr Smalridge, tried to talk him out of it in a learned conference at Aynho in Northamptonshire, but as usual, Clarke was invincible in spoken debate."

<sup>85</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 547.

<sup>86</sup> As Dixon has commented in *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 194: "In retrospect perhaps it is not Clarke's difficulties with the Trinity that stand out, but the *ease* with which he felt he could talk about God."

<sup>87</sup> Clarke's scheme of theology would be chiefly opposed by Daniel Waterland, Master of Magdalen College (the same college that produced Sacheverell), with Dixon stating that "What is certain is that Waterland's mind was as agile and learned as Clarke's" (*Nice and Hot Disputes*, 197). Rupp lists Clarke's detractors and then added, "But it was in Daniel Waterland that Clarke met his match in learning" (*Religion in England*, 255). See Gascoigne, "Samuel Clarke," Oxford DNB. Gascoigne notes Clarke's "famed" because "encyclopaedic knowledge" and remarks that "He was noted for the range of his interests", "excelling in natural philosophy, mathematics, theology, and classical studies each. Clarke was not only "invincible in spoken debate" (Rupp, *Religion in England*, 254), but he was intimidating in any form of debate, spoken or written, as evidenced in his *Reply* but also in his later correspondence with Leibniz. Recall also that Voltaire called Clarke "a real reasoning

For instance, Clarke insisted on the definite and demonstrable meaning of terms, asserting the ambiguity of the English language and the necessity of understanding the terms in their original language *and* according to the recorded intent of their first instigators. This he did to specifically defend his equating the terms *person* and *subsistence* (i.e., *being*). Clarke explained to the bishops that the Lower House’s claim was that “Homoousios” signified “of *One Individual Substance* with the Father. Whereas”, he countered, “our Church translates it only, of *One Substance* with the Father.” He continued, “Now the *English Word One* being ambiguous; and equally capable of being understood to mean *One in Number*, or *One in Kind*; ‘tis humbly conceived the Sense of the Church should not be judged of from the *English Word*, which is *ambiguous*; but from the *original Greek Word*, which is *not ambiguous*.” He went on to discuss the “Council of Nice” who affirmed “in Their Creed...the Son to be, not...*the Substance of the Father*, but...*FROM the Substance of the Father*.” Thereby, Clarke saw that the Council “seem[ed] evidently to declare, that by the Word [Homoousios] they did not mean, of *One INDIVIDUAL Substance*, or *One Substance in NUMBER*.” He then turned to one of the Council members for support: “What they themselves professed they did mean by it, is thus recorded by Eusebius.” (The same Eusebius that Whiston, as well as Newton,<sup>88</sup> adhered to in understanding the Nicene Creed).

*Upon the Debate* (saith he [i.e., Eusebius]) *it was agreed that by the Words, “of one Substance with the Father,” should be intended to be asserted This only, that there is no Similitude between the Son of God and the Creatures made by him; but that he is in all Things likened unto his Father only, who begat him; and that he is not from any other Subsistence or Substance, but from his Father.”*<sup>89</sup>

Clarke drew upon other Councils and authors of antiquity to support his point; including Justin Martyr, who had explained (in Clarke’s words) “that the *Son* was derived from the *Father* as *one Fire* is lighted from *another*; in Opposition to those, who compared him to the *Light* or *Splendor* of the Sun, which has no distinct *Subsistence* of its own.”<sup>90</sup> He also turned to “the Writers of the Fourth and following centuries” that “constantly” and specifically avoided using terms that signified “of *One Individual Substance*, or *One Substance in Number*.” Clarke thus demonstrated that the complaint of the Lower House in fact “plainly

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machine”, and placed him among Newton, Locke, and LeClerc, as “the four finest writers and thinkers of their age” (see Voltaire, *Notes on England*, [43]). Also, David Nichols comments on the difficulty of sparring with Clarke, who he calls “always a slippery customer in debate” (see Nichols, *God and Government*, 169).

<sup>88</sup> See Pfizenmaier, *Trinitarian Theology...Dr. Clarke*, 169-72.

<sup>89</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 548.

<sup>90</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 548-49.

contradicted the Council of *Nice*, and other following Councils [such as *Chalcedon*].<sup>91</sup> Even when appealing to “Antiquity” Clarke applied the “New Science” and culled together data sets from the historical record for his defense. He did not, however, appeal to the “Scholastick Writers” of “later Ages” that held to “an *Abstract and Figurative Unity* [of God]”, which he had dismissed in the *Scripture Doctrine*, but which in his response to the charges of the Lower House he diplomatically chose to simply ignore.<sup>92</sup> He skipped to the “Modern eminent Writers” Dr. Sherlock, Bishop Bull, and Dr. Cudworth, who understood “the Antient Writers of the Church” in the same manner as he did and were of the same opinion as himself (he could claim) concerning the intended meaning of the term *homoousios*. Furthermore, the Church of England itself did not “any where affirm the Son to be of *One Individual Substance* with the Father: The Words, [*of One Substance*] in the First of the XXXIX. Articles, and where else it is used, being evidently intended as a Translation of the Word [*homoousios*]” according to its “true Signification” as just explained by Clarke.<sup>93</sup> At base, Clarke was claiming that the very term that had been adopted by the Council of Nicaea to avoid any countenance for the Arian position had instead been misconstrued to admit that of the Sabellian.<sup>94</sup> Contrary to Pfizenmaier, this makes clear that Clarke was not an advocate of the term *homoiousios* but that he was challenging the widely (and to his view mistakenly) received understanding of the term *homoousios*. Clarke was not disputing over the use of latter word but rather the evolution of its received meaning.<sup>95</sup> The question is not whether Clarke was an Arian—he was not—but whether his philosophically informed theology, backed by Newton’s rendering of natural philosophy that necessitated a single underived *person*, or *being*, was tenable to the framework of Christian salvation and its attending worship that had been systematically explicated for more than a millennium.<sup>96</sup> Put quite simply, it was not.

The relational divinity of the Athanasian Trinity necessitated three persons existing from and in absolute Eternity, take away the relation and divinity itself ceased, or was not.

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<sup>91</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 549.

<sup>92</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 178.

<sup>93</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 549.

<sup>94</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 550. In response to the complaint that claimed Clarke said the persons of the Trinity were not eternal, uncreated, and almighty, Clarke explained that these were not his assertions but that of the proper translation of the Athanasian Creed that would not “be thought to favour Sabellianism” (550).

<sup>95</sup> See Pfizenmaier, *Trinitarian Theology...Dr. Clarke*, 138-139.

<sup>96</sup> This is contrary to Wiles who saw (per Waterland) Arianism “implicit” within Clarke’s language that thereby obviates the question of historical intent and meaning attached to terms (see Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 116-17).

For the Athanasians, it was as if Clarke was saying, there was a time when *God* was not. However, that said, it is possible to read Clarke as not taking away the relations, allowing them to exist from and throughout all-eternity, but merely asserting that the acknowledged (substantive, or existential) foundation of the Triune relations—the begetter—was God supreme as his “only begotten” had seemed to witness (see John 14:28). Even so, Clarke had shifted the basis of *Eternal and Supreme Deity* from Athanasian relation back to (he would claim) the *homoousian* assertion of aseity, allowing the Son to be *from* the same substance, i.e., consisting of the same substance but not subsisting *in* the same substance. Therefore, it was the mere fact of the Father’s primary (not priority) subsistence, from which was derived the Son’s *own* (agentive and accountable) subsistence, upon which Clarke staked the marker of *supreme* deity. However, such a reading becomes problematic with Clarke’s dual use of the term *eternal*, which will be discussed (via his correspondence with Whiston) shortly. Also, it should not be neglected that such a formulation was necessitated, in part, by the Lockean univocity of *person* that both Newton and Clarke had adopted and thereby perceived the absolutely necessary existence and (therein) supreme status of the Father to the relations and works of the Triune Godhead. It may be likened to locating the primary basis of the subsisting nucleons consisting in *and* constituting the nucleus of an atom.

Pfizenmaier helpfully details that Newton (prior to Clarke) was aware of the way that the term *homoousia* had been used at the Council of Nice but then determines that Newton was therefore an advocate of the term *homoiousia* because it described the understanding corrupted by the Latin translations of the Greek term *homoousia*. He does the same with Clarke. In other words, Pfizenmaier propounds the very confusion Newton and Clarke claimed to have discovered; he does this by focusing on the understanding they advocated rather than the corruption of the term itself. Newton and Clarke both subscribed to the Council of Nicaea’s understanding of *homoousia* but not the subsequent understanding of the term. To label them as having subscribed to the term *homoiousia* against *homoousia* is to perpetuate the incoherence of both time and polemic and therefore dismiss their historical researches to restore the term *homoousia* to its corrected understanding. Pfizenmaier does note that Clarke was more comfortable with using the term than was Newton, but still, Pfizenmaier persists in labeling Clarke as one who subscribed to the *homoiousia* understanding of Nicaea.<sup>97</sup> This can be likened perhaps to Whiston’s use of the term *Arian*,

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<sup>97</sup> Pfizenmaier, *Trinitarian Theology...Dr. Clarke*, 169-174, 140.

which Pfizenmaier also arguably misapplies to Whiston when it is used in its proper sense, which Whiston himself would not allow.<sup>98</sup> But Whiston's use of the term *Arian*, like Newton's use of *homoiousia*, was based on their acceptance of the terms' polemical usage in the later fourth and fifth century debates. It appears then, that of Newton, Whiston, and Clarke, that only Clarke was able to see the necessity of restoring the proper use of the terms if there was going to be any hope (from his perspective) of resuscitating Primitive Christianity. Similar to Clarke, Hoadly bemoans such shifts in language that at first signify one thing and then gradually come to be used to signify what was never intended. As will be discussed later, Hoadly sermonized on how the *Worship of God* in antiquity was the *Worship of the Father*, but now "in many *Christian Countries*, that which still retains the Name of the *Worship of God*, is indeed the Neglect, and the Diminution of the Father; and the *Worship of other Beings* besides, and more than, the *Father*."<sup>99</sup>

The other complaints against his work by the Lower House were demonstratively argued by Clarke to be misunderstandings of either language or context, or an aversion to understandings that would cause the liturgy to be consistent in its address to God on Trinity Sunday as it was on all other Sundays.<sup>100</sup> Ultimately, he appealed to "the Principles of the *Reformation*" and the original grounds on which he had wanted to conduct any discussion about, and demonstration of, the consistency between the Articles and Liturgy of the Church of England and the Scriptures. In such an endeavor, Clarke argued, "the Divine Authority of the inspired Books required, that the Expressions *taken from Scripture* should be made the *Measure* of interpreting such as were *not taken from Scripture*; and not on the contrary."<sup>101</sup> He closed his "Reply" by submitting himself to the Lord Bishops' "Justice and Goodness; whose known Wisdom and Temper, as well as great Learning and Knowledge of Scripture and Antiquity" gave him "the justest Ground to expect" they would find "nothing to be erroneous or false, but what *really* and *plainly* is so." Clarke was, therefore, confident in not

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<sup>98</sup> See Thomas C. Pfizenmaier, "Why the Third Fell Out: Trinitarian Dissent," in *Religion, Politics, and Dissent, 1660-1832: Essays in Honor of James E. Bradley* edited by Robert D. Cornwall and William Gibson (Routledge, 2010); compare to Paul R. Gillum III, "William Whiston: No Longer an Arian," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 66, No. 4 (October 2015). Even if Whiston is not an Arian proper, Pfizenmaier is right to differentiate Whiston from Clarke where, for example, Whiston's conception of the perfections and attributes of the Son relative to the Father (i.e., they are significantly lower than) are distinct from Clarke's conception of the Son sharing every "communicable" perfection and attribute, which excludes only aseity (see Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), 441-42; see the quotations of Whiston in Pfizenmaier, *Trinitarian Theology*, 53; and Gillum, "No Longer an Arian," 767).

<sup>99</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 6-7.

<sup>100</sup> See Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 550-52.

<sup>101</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 552-53.

only “Scripture and Antiquity” (as was the Lower House), but also the “Wisdom and Temper,” the principle of Reason improved upon, within his superior judges.<sup>102</sup>

Clarke’s “Reply” was thorough, and quite enough to convince the bishops that they wanted a (by far) less spectacular ending than either Clarke or (certainly) the Lower House anticipated. Apparently, the Upper House quietly crafted a compromise statement that satisfied their (and not the Lower House’s) concerns, to which Clarke then gave his assent.<sup>103</sup> Hoadly, the editor of Clarke’s posthumous *Works*, only intimates that “(for Reasons not needful here to be mentioned)” the bishops did not send Clarke’s reply to the Lower House, but instead exhibited “a great Disposition to prevent Dissensions and Divisions” and “Dr. Clarke (it seems) was prevailed upon to lay before them the following paper.”<sup>104</sup> Therefore, within a week’s time, Clarke had inexplicably reversed course and presented (on 2 July) a much shorter “Paper” to the Bishops, wherein he appears severely chastened. He immediately began with the carefully crafted statement: “My Opinion is, That the Son of God was eternally begotten by the eternal incomprehensible *Power* and *Will* of the Father; and that the Holy Spirit was likewise eternally derived from the Father, by or through the Son, according to the eternal incomprehensible *Power* and *Will* of the Father.”<sup>105</sup> The statement uses the terms “eternally begotten” and “eternally derived” and otherwise borrows or reiterates Propositions XVII and XX. Clarke acquiesced to the use of these terms otherwise absent from his propositions, that generally use the words “derives his *Being from the Father*” (e.g., XIII and XX) for both the Son and Holy Spirit, avoiding any distinct declaration of “*what particular metaphysical Manner*” by which this is so.

Clarke proceeded with a promise to not preach on the topic, and stated that he did “not intend to write any more concerning the Doctrine of the Trinity.” He denied any misconduct

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<sup>102</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 553.

<sup>103</sup> Gascoigne, “Samuel Clarke”, *Oxford DNB*: “...Clarke agreed to a compromise form of wording about the nature of his belief in the divinity of Christ. The working, which was formulated by a number of bishops anxious to avoid division within the church, was studiously ambiguous and left the lower clergy dissatisfied...” Gascoigne is the only source I have read that makes this claim. And as the materials on which Gascoigne relied in making this claim are unspecified, I have my doubts that the bishops wrote the statement. However, it seems quite probable that some of them instigated the rapprochement with Clarke, and it is very possible that these gave suggestions and perhaps a final approval prior to his sending it officially. This seems to accord with Wiles assessment that “some of the bishops, led by Wake, were keen to avoid any direct condemnation of Clarke in person, and prevailed on him to write a conciliatory document to aid them in their purpose (*Archetypal Heresy*, 114). See also Gibson, “George Smalridge’s Churchmanship,” 49-50

<sup>104</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 553. For more on the divisions between the (Whig) Upper and (Tory) Lower Houses of Convocation and such “obstructions” by the bishops during this period, see Gibson, *Samuel Wesley*, 153-58; the cases of Whiston and Clarke are therein briefly discussed, see 154-58.

<sup>105</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 553.

in the worship services he presided over, and explained that any apparent discrepancies in relation to the treatment of the Liturgy and Athanasian Creed therein were “for brevity sake, at the Discretion of the Curate, and not by my Appointment”. He offered assurance that his private conversations did not warrant “those Reports which have been spread concerning me, with relation to this Controversy.”<sup>106</sup> And he ends with a final apology, one that must have been heartbreaking to write for a cleric who (still) held such promise: “I am sorry that what I sincerely intended for the Honour and Glory of God, and so to explain this Great Mystery, as to avoid the Heresies in both Extrems, should have given any Offence to this Synod, and particularly to my Lords the Bishops. I hope my Behaviour for the Time to come, with relation hereunto, will be such, as to prevent any future Complaints against me.”<sup>107</sup> Mere weeks before the death of Queen Anne (on 1 August 1714), and the Hanoverian succession that would favor once again the latitudinarian cause, Samuel Clarke had apparently caved to the political pressure of the Upper House.

Whiston, for one, was not impressed. He complained to Clarke that his “Paper” had “occasioned a real and sensible Grief to my self, as well as the rest of your Friends hereabouts.” He explained: “Not that we think it contains (what your Enemies would have it thought) a real *Retraction* of any thing you had before said; but because it is very like a Retraction, and yet is not such; and seems to be penn’d with a plain Intention only to ward off Persecution.” Whiston feared his otherwise brilliant and courageous friend had succumbed to the rationale that tempering his views with “modern Terms” was required “for so valuable a Thing as the *Peace of the Church*”. He therein likened Clarke’s work to that of the Reformation, reminding him that “there is a *false* Notion of Peace, which would have effectually put a Stop to the *REFORMATION*, had the Cry of it been then regarded.” The terms that alarmed Whiston were of course “eternally begotten” and “eternally derived”, and he believed Clarke had equivocated via “their ambiguous Meaning” in “the Word *Eternal*”. He lectured Clarke that, “though the Generation of the *Son* and Procession of the *Holy Ghost* may in a Sense be said to be *eternal*...what is that to the absolute Eternity of a Self-existent Being? ...In [which,] the *highest* and most proper Sense of the Words, *eternal Generation* implies a manifest Contradiction.”

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<sup>106</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 554.

<sup>107</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 554.

Whiston's thoughts grew darker. He contemplated the "natural" fallen capacity of even one such as Clarke, before returning to a frustrated humility of ultimately not knowing the point at which his own mettle might bend: "To say something that has a *double Entendre* [i.e., *eternal*] to stop the Rage of Persecution, and to please the Orthodox, how natural is it to make use of that Method? But whether that be not corrupt Nature, I am loth to say; because I know not my own Frailty, and indeed none of us know our own Strength and Courage till we come to be try'd." He continued by assuring Clarke that "tho' you seem to me to have weakned your *Scripture-Doctrine* I will suppose that you are yet That Good and Great Man I always took you to be." He asked Clarke to deliver "a *Second Paper*" that would be "more Explanatory of your Sentiments and Conduct than the first".<sup>108</sup>

Clarke answered Whiston that indeed it was not a "real *Retraction*" but was intended "only to shew, that I did not in any of my Books teach (as had by many been industriously reported) the Doctrine of *Arius*, [viz. that *the Son of God was a Creature, made out of nothing, just before the Beginning of this World;*] but that he was begotten eternally, that is, without any limitation of Time...in the incomprehensible Duration of the Father's Eternity". Clarke explained that the Son was begotten "Not by absolute *Necessity of Nature*, (which infers Self-existence and Independency,) but by the *Power* and by the *Will* of the Father: So that the *Father* alone is, and is to be Honoured as being the Supreme Original and Lord of all, Himself *without Original*." Clarke applied the same understanding to the Holy Spirit, respectively. And as regarding the word "Eternal" when it is meant to imply "unoriginated, necessary, or independent Existence", he stated plainly that he "did *then* and do *still* declare, that, in that sense, I think the Word can only be applied to the Father." Clarke referred Whiston to the portion of his *Scripture Doctrine* that addressed the Athanasian Creed, adding the quip of Archbishop Tillotson that "I wish we were well rid of it".<sup>109</sup>

Within that portion of the *Scripture Doctrine*, Clarke had pointed to that body of bishops "and other eminent Divines," commissioned in 1689 to review and correct the liturgy, wherein "nothing was more unanimously agreed upon, than that the Use of the Creed, commonly called *The Creed of St Athanasius*, should no longer be imposed."<sup>110</sup> Furthermore, Clarke quoted Athanasius as himself propounding the understanding that "there is preached

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<sup>108</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. VI, 554-55. See also Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 194; and Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 114.

<sup>109</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 555-56.

<sup>110</sup> Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), 450.

in the Church One God, even the Father of the Word.”<sup>111</sup> In contemplating the Athanasian Creed, Clarke had earlier enjoined the “Governors of the Church” to consider “retain[ing] only those more indisputable Forms and Professions of Faith, which were received unanimously in the Primitive Church, and which...confessedly contain all that is explicitly necessary, to the *Baptism, Absolution, and Salvation* of a Christian.”<sup>112</sup> This hearkened back to his first publication, *Three Practical Essays on Baptism, Confirmation, and Repentance[:] Containing Instructions to a Holy Life* (1699), which suggestion (though not explicitly aimed at an ecumenical end) may bear some comparing with Cotton Mather’s “Maxims of Piety”. Of course, in contrast, Mather retained the Athanasian Creed’s understanding of the Trinity.<sup>113</sup> Clarke, on the other hand, inversely suggested the cessation of its use, since the Athanasian Creed was not genuine, “but the Composition of an uncertain obscure Author...about the year 800” and tended to lead people into “either *Sabellianism* or *Tritheism*”. Furthermore, it provided an easy objection to unbelievers, appeared contradictory per the English language to the untrained, was too often utilized by “the Romanists” to encourage “the Belief of real Contradictions”, and offended the most pious and “learned Men”. The Creed was “That which to Some of the best and ablest men that ever lived in the Christian Church, hath appeared wholly *unjustifiable*; to very Many, *suspicious*; and to All,

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<sup>111</sup> As quoted in Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), 456; see also pages 455-58. This sort of treatment of Athanasius stands in contrast to Whiston (and Newton) who consistently asserted that Athanasius was a person of disreputable character. For example, see [William Whiston], *Athanasian Forgeries, Impositions, and Interpolations. Collected chiefly out of Mr. Whiston’s Writings* (London: J. Noon, 1736), 2-5. Clarke is mentioned within these pages as someone who relayed Newton’s judgment of Athanasius to Whiston, but the fact remains that Clarke did not challenge the character of Athanasius in his writings. See also Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 115.

<sup>112</sup> Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), 446.

<sup>113</sup> See Samuel Clarke, *Three Practical Essays On Baptism, Confirmation, Repentance. Containing Instructions for a Holy Life* (London: James Knapton, 1699); and, Cotton Mather, *Malachi* (Boston: Robert Starke, 1717). On page 8 of Mather’s *Malachi*, he declared: “If we deny the Eternal GODHEAD of our SAVIOUR, we destroy all True PIETY; The Impious Men who do this thing, are by no means to be owned as, *The People of GOD*.” Furthermore, on the same page Mather relied upon 1 Timothy 3:16, a passage Newton viewed as corrupted and Clarke saw as suspect (see Pfizenmaier, *Trinitarian Theology...Dr. Clarke*, 151). Clarke had emphasized as determinative the categories of “*Baptism, Absolution, and Salvation* of a Christian” as “explicitly necessary” for the proper profession of faith (Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), 446, and also 448), and in his *Three Practical Essays* had earlier generalized those into “the great Business of Repentance and Conversion” (see Preface). In comparison, Mather believed that “*The Terms of Communion* should run parallel with the *Terms of Salvation*” (*Three Letters from New England*, 9), and saw “a Right Introduction unto all True PIETY,” to be “coming unto your SAVIOUR, in all his Glorious Offices” (i.e., “equal with God” in Trinity) as “the First Steps of a CONVERSION unto GOD” (*Malachi*, 9). A more thorough understanding of Clarke and Mather’s respective distillations of those essentials that mark the “*Christian religion*” (Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine*, 446) is warranted, but this may suffice at present to demonstrate a similar (perhaps shared) set of priorities regarding salvation and conversion, as well as piety and a holy life, that yet came to different emphases and outcomes regarding the Athanasian Trinity. See also Jan Stievermann’s Introduction to *Biblia Americana, Vol. 10*, 111 ft.201 (draft copy).

*unnecessary*". Only performance of baptism (for an infant or adult) and rendering absolution (for the sick or penitent) were necessary in the Christian Church, which (by the way) did not contain in its "first 800 years" the Athanasian Creed—"tis evident [it] cannot be necessary Now".<sup>114</sup> Clarke explained to Whiston that he was not backtracking on his published statements calling for the omission of the Athanasian Creed, and that he had only sought to clear himself from the false charges of his official conduct, and a false report of a private conversation that "was never given the least Ground" to believe.<sup>115</sup>

Having sent this requested "Apology" to Whiston, Clarke became "apprehensive" (Hoadly's term) that aspects of it "might be liable to be misunderstood" out of context if published (as Whiston was sure to do) and, thereby, possibly be used to try and undermine his reputation of upright character and sincere integrity. He, therefore, preemptively sent on 5 July "the following *Explanations* of the aforesaid Paper" to the Lord Bishop of London, containing something of that which Whiston was concerned for him to clarify, as stated in his previous request to Clarke that he write "a *Second Paper*". Clarke carefully explained to the Bishop, of his prior opening statement, that

I did not mean thereby to *retract* any thing I had written; but to declare that the Opinion set forth at large in the Book Intitl'd *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity*, and in the *Defenses of it*; is, that *the Son was eternally begotten, by the eternal incomprehensible Power and Will &c.* Which Words, [*the eternal incomprehensible Power and Will of the Father,*] I desire may be so understood, as to signify that *God the Father alone* is, and is to be honored as being...the Original of all, himself without Original.

The all-important doctrinal point reasserted; Clarke then turned to clarifying his intention not to publish. He wanted to be understood, "in point of Conscience" as retaining the "Liberty" of making "inoffensive Corrections" to later editions of "my former Books", and that this did not preclude "*vindicating* myself from any Misrepresentations or Aspersion, which may possibly *hereafter* be cast upon me on the occasion of this Controversy". Furthermore, he only meant "to signify" in his "Paper" that he had "no *present intention* of writing any New Book", but that if he did produce new material he would "readily submit" to any "such Censure" passed upon it by the bishops.<sup>116</sup> Whiston's champion appeared to have resaddled

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<sup>114</sup> Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), 446-48.

<sup>115</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 555-56.

<sup>116</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 557.

the cause, but he did in fact publish little thereafter, at least openly, on the doctrine of the Trinity.

The Lower House was not satisfied with Clarke's "Paper" nor his "Explanation", the latter of which they viewed the same day it was delivered to the bishops, 5 July. The bishops accepted Clarke's "Declaration of his Opinion concerning the Eternity of the Son and Holy Spirit, together with an Account of his Conduct for the time past, and Intentions for the time to come" and decided "to proceed no farther" on the case. Note the capitalized "Eternity" used by the bishops; of course, they had not seen Whiston's correspondence with Clarke, where Whiston reserved the capitalized word (as Clarke seems to do as well) for the Father alone. As such, Whiston must have felt fully justified in his concerns over the bishops' interpretation of Clarke's first "Paper" as a recantation (despite his "Second Paper") that did not recognize the dual sense of the term *eternal*. It is possible as well that the bishops were happy to allow the ambiguity, but on their terms and therefore winked at the "Second Paper".<sup>117</sup> Indicating as much, the Lower House complained two days later that "the Paper...doth not contain in it any Recantation of the Heretical Assertions, and other offensive Passages...nor doth give such Satisfaction for the great Scandal occasioned by the said Books, as ought to put a stop to any further Examination and Censure thereof."<sup>118</sup> Regardless, the inquiry was entirely dropped by Convocation.<sup>119</sup>

The bishops had averted the open divisions and taking sides that surely would have followed in the midst of a formal trial of such an able and esteemed scholar and churchman as Clarke. Instead, Clarke's views were not formally anathematized, only given a warning about the use of acceptable terms and the proper use of the liturgy, and thereby, contrary to the aims of the Lower House, were able to be freely available for "further Examination". Accordingly, a war of treatises ensued with proxies taking up Clarke's defense against the able opponents who denied the surety of his textual method and logic, even as they complied

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<sup>117</sup> See also Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 114. Wiles offers no source material for his report that "in the end [Clarke] succumbed to Wake's pleas not to insist on having his gloss ["Second Paper" of 5 July] added, and the unglossed statement ["Paper" of 2 July] enabled Wake to win the bishops support and prevent Clarke's condemnation, much to the chagrin of the Lower House." This would mean that not all the bishops saw Clarke's "Second Paper", and that it was therefore only Wake who (according to Wiles) persuaded Clarke to allow the ambiguity, or permitted himself to dismiss the "Second Paper" as simply unhelpful in the situation. Further source material is needed to resolve this important question of Clarke's compliance. That said, the relative silence from Clarke in writing on the topic may indicate that he took the "Paper" without his second statement as the measure of what he had agreed to do. See also Gibson, "George Smalridge's Churchmanship" (2017).

<sup>118</sup> Clarke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 558.

<sup>119</sup> See Pfizenmaier, *Trinitarian Theology...Dr. Clarke*, 185-86.

with them as the controversy's altered rules of engagement insisted on by Clarke.<sup>120</sup> However, with Clarke basically removed,<sup>121</sup> the best spokesman for his views had been effectively neutralized. As a result, the protracted debate held a (more) narrow impact, largely confined (at least initially) to the clergy, and therefore did not invite the sort of inflamed public excitement that the Parliamentary impeachment of Sacheverell had engendered, but rather the ruminations of Anglican and Dissenting clergy alike.

Clarke's brush with Convocation was, in part, due to the recognition by the Church of England (conveniently pointed out to them by critics, principal among them Collins) of just how many opinions were at variance among the clergy regarding the Trinity. Therein, the Latitudinarian unity of the faith was asked to take account of its Catholic purity. One has to wonder what may have been the fate of Clarke and his explication of the doctrine of the Trinity if the Hanoverian succession had already taken place. Clarke never sought preferment and his name was blocked from further consideration whenever it did surface. Hoadly explained that Clarke "had Reasons within his own Breast, which hinder'd Him either from seeking after, or accepting any such Promotion. Of these He was the proper, and indeed the only Judge" but to this he tellingly added, "He was happy in that Station, in which it had pleased God to fix Him before those *Reasons* took place..."<sup>122</sup> His works, and particularly his *Scripture Doctrine*, however, continued to garner interest in the unfolding Age of Newton.

That said, Dixon points out that the lesson of Clarke's treatment was not lost on his fellow clergy: "All in all the search is not worth the candle, and subsequent lack of interest in the Trinity was to be in part dictated by the prudential desire to avoid the fate of Clarke and Whiston." He continues with the observation that, "Francis Hare, later Bishop of Chichester, gave similar advice to his young student, remarking cynically that it seemed as if 'Orthodoxy

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<sup>120</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 254-55: "...Waterland seems to have been content to conform to his opponent's [Clarke] pattern in concentration on a succession of texts, and above all on the theme of God as the Creator and Governor of the Universe." However, Rupp points out that Waterland focused the texts on the aspect of redemption rather than mere or isolated revelation, per the original emergence of the doctrine of the Trinity "against the Jewish background of a deep belief in the unity of God. It was out of the experience of redemption of the first Christians and the first Christian community that the thought of God as Trinity emerged." Rupp adds, that the doctrine "was not nearly as obscurantist as Collins asserted

<sup>121</sup> See Pfizenmaier, *Trinitarian Theology...Dr. Clarke*, 187: "...[Clarke] clarified his position in a letter to the Bishop of London dated July 5, 1714...[wherein] He also reserved the right to respond in writing to criticism of his previous work and make any necessary alterations in forthcoming editions." Clarke never, at least openly, followed through with this reserved right.

<sup>122</sup> Hoadly, Preface to Clarke's *Works*, Vol. I, xiv.

atones for all vices and heresy extinguishes all virtue.”<sup>123</sup> Clarke’s treatment by Convocation had incensed a dear friend, Benjamin Hoadly, who at one time had consorted regularly with Whiston. After his elevation to the Bishopric of Bangor, he would face the censure of the Lower House due to his advocacy for the separation of Church-State prosecution (in cases such as Clarke’s). Hoadly, Dixon reports, tellingly “wrote at least two satires attacking those who would make the formularies of the Church of England more infallible than those of the Church of Rome.”<sup>124</sup> Fully backed by the Hanoverian Succession, when facing the ire of Convocation, he refused to blink.

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<sup>123</sup> Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 196. Recall that Anthony Collins was an earlier student of Francis Hare (see “Anthony Collins” Oxford DNB).

<sup>124</sup> Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 196.

## 2.5 – Church-State “Separation”: Benjamin Hoadly

Benjamin Hoadly (1676-1761) was a descendant of notable Puritan clergy, his grandfather had returned from New England in the 1650s to settle in Scotland as the chaplain of Edinburgh Castle, while his maternal grandfather had been a member of the Westminster Assembly. His father was a notable educator that finished his career at Norwich Grammar School (but arrived a decade after Samuel Clarke’s education there). Beginning in 1682, Hoadly was educated at St. Catharine’s College, Cambridge. While there he contracted smallpox and a surgeon’s mishap left him crippled, causing him to walk with sticks in public and, later, to kneel in the pulpit when preaching for the duration of his life.<sup>1</sup> Hoadly had a powerful patron in the person of the Duchess of Marlborough, a close friend of Queen Anne. In his early career, Hoadly had published, with effect, such pamphlets as *The Reasonableness of Conformity to the Church of England* (1703), *A Persuasive to Lay-Conformity* (1704), and *A Brief Defense of Episcopal Ordination* (1707). Though Hoadly was broadly sympathetic to dissenters, the last of these denounced their continued separation from the established church as inevitably resulting in “Confusion and Disorder, Indecency in the Worship of God, Irregularity, Strife, and Emulation, Heat, and Passion, Ill-will, and Malice”. Hoadly asserted that it was “unaccountable, and inconsistent, to separate from an *imperfect* Church, in order to press a farther Reformation.” The *Brief Defense* would later prove effective in helping Samuel Johnson of Connecticut to conform to the Church of England.<sup>2</sup> However, Stephen Taylor has pointed out that while Hoadly acknowledged the imperfection of the Church and favored reform, he was a firm supporter of episcopacy. As a shadow of things to come, the marrow of his support for church government by bishops was not in Divine Right but in the certitude of its apostolic practice. As such, he did not reject the efficacy of Presbyterian ordinations that occurred in the interregnum.<sup>3</sup> Hoadly was often perceived as, and still represents for many, the consummate low-churchman. As Rupp wryly remarked, “Benjamin

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<sup>1</sup> Stephen Taylor, “Benjamin Hoadly (1676-1761)”, *Oxford DNB*; C.S. Knighton, “Samuel Hoadly (1643-1705)”, *Oxford DNB*; Ferguson, *Dr. Samuel Clarke*, 2; and Rupp, *Religion in England*, 88. The report that “Samuel Hoadly was able to attract as a pupil Samuel Clarke, the son of the Mayor of Norwich, and thus established a friendship and connection between Samuel Clarke and Benjamin Hoadly” is incorrect (see Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 44). Cambridge would seem to be the more natural meeting point of these lifelong friends, though the Hoadly’s move to Norwich very likely helped. As noted earlier, Clarke matriculated at Cambridge in 1691, while Hoadly matriculated in 1692.

<sup>2</sup> As quoted in Taylor, “Benjamin Hoadly”, *Oxford DNB*. Taylor also noted that, “Its arguments were powerful enough to be instrumental in convincing the leading New England high-churchman Samuel Johnson to abandon Congregationalism.”

<sup>3</sup> Taylor, “Benjamin Hoadly”, *Oxford DNB*.

Hoadly might have sat for the portrait of a low churchman by Henry Sacheverell.”<sup>4</sup> In this section, I explore Hoadly’s relationship to the Trinitarian debates and Anglo-American discourse on authority, particularly with regard to his sermon on *The Nature of the Kingdom, or Church, of Christ* (1717). Therein, I qualify and add to the discussion concerning Hoadly’s affinity with not only Clarke’s method but also his doctrine, with the most relevant contrasting or parallel points made by Guglielmo Sanna (who does not consider the sermon)<sup>5</sup> referenced in the footnotes for comparison. Hoadly’s channeling of Locke is reemphasized.

After the Tory triumphs in 1710, Hoadly became more outspoken in his latitudinarianism and decidedly opposed to the High Church program that would prohibit his aims of comprehension. William Gibson outlined, what could be termed, Hoadly’s reactionary evolution:

The departure of Hoadly from his previous position can only be explained in the light of the aggressive High Church Tory policy of both the Convocation, which censured Latitudinarians like Whiston and Clarke, and the Tory government of 1710-1714, which had passed the punitive Occasional Conformity and Schism Acts. Hoadly’s reaction was to recast his views of the Church and he found himself more critical of it as an institution than he had been under more moderate Whig leadership before 1710. It was a position that, together with his support for the Whigs at the election of 1710, cemented Hoadly into an ultra-Latitudinarian stance.<sup>6</sup>

With the death of Queen Anne in 1714, and the Hanoverian Prince Elector (great-great-grandson of James I through his daughter Elizabeth), George I, now on the British throne, Hoadly spoke more freely and became “identified as the standard-bearer for the Whig-Latitudinarians.”<sup>7</sup> James Force has noted that in 1715, Hoadly attended meetings of Whiston’s Society for Promoting Primitive Christianity, and that Whiston was highly disappointed when Hoadly “renounced” his suspicions over the Athanasian Trinity for the sake of episcopal preferment.<sup>8</sup> Later that year, Hoadly preached a sermon on (the ever significant) 5 November in the midst of a serious Jacobite uprising. Therein he articulated the

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<sup>4</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 88.

<sup>5</sup> See Guglielmo Sanna, “How Heterodox was Benjamin Hoadly?” in *Religious Identities in Britain, 1660-1832*, eds., William Gibson and Robert G. Ingram (Routledge, 2005), 61-79. Sanna highlights more particularly Hoadly’s *A Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord’s Supper* (1735), stating that “...the *Preservative* and the *Kingdom* form but one chapter of a larger body of work” (p. 62).

<sup>6</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 130.

<sup>7</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 130.

<sup>8</sup> Force, *Whiston: Honest Newtonian*, 19-20, 98-99, and 160n26. Taylor reports that Hoadly was consistent in ensuring the Athanasian Creed was read at the duly appointed times during the services he presided over (see Taylor, “Benjamin Hoadly,” *Oxford DNB*). William Gibson, contrary to Force, states that “Hoadly had offended Whiston by pointedly refusing to attend meetings of his eccentric Society for Promoting Primitive Christianity between 1715 and 1717.” Hoadly’s insistence on subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles is discussed later.

Whig view in support of the Protestant Succession and against the Catholic endeavors to spread discord, the latter of which too many (High Church) Protestants were contributing toward. The sermon was quickly published to wide approval. Gibson speculates that it is for perhaps this more immediate reason that Hoadly was elevated to the Bishopric of Bangor the following month.<sup>9</sup> Though the appointment importantly gave him episcopal status, according to Rupp, Bangor “was a remote and miserably paid see”.<sup>10</sup> Clearly, a low-entry for Hoadly’s episcopal career that would subsequently translate to Hereford in 1720 and, as his seniority allowed, upward to Salisbury in 1723, ending with the “reward” of Winchester in 1734.<sup>11</sup>

Hoadly quickly demonstrated an adept ability to disseminate a Low Church-Lockean theology that emphasized sincerity (conscience), scripture, and reason. Hoadly was incensed with Sacheverell’s High Church extremism, with its exclusionary vision of the national Church, and disgusted (as noted earlier) at the subsequent treatment by Convocation in 1710 of Whiston and in 1714 of Clarke, his close friend. When George Hicke’s posthumously published *The Constitution of the Catholicic Church, and the Nature and Consequence of Schism* (1716), that asserted the independence of the Church from State authority in apostolic succession,<sup>12</sup> the newly mitred Hoadly was eager to publish a rebuttal, and did so in his *Preservative against the Principles and Practices of Non-Jurors* (1716). Subsequently, on 31 March 1717 before the king he preached against the similarly problematic (to his mind) High Church claims to authority. The sermon (perhaps at the suggestion of George I) was on the text of John 18:36: “Jesus answered, My Kingdom is not of this World”, which was published at the King’s request. The publication was entitled *The Nature of the Kingdom, or Church, of Christ*. The sermon sparked what became known as the Bangorian controversy (as Hoadly was the Bishop of Bangor at the time), and led to a protracted pamphlet war concerning the authority of Church and of State, as well as of individual conscience. What has not been sufficiently detailed previously, is the context of the Trinitarian debates in relation to Hoadly’s arguments within the sermon.<sup>13</sup> In what follows, I demonstrate Hoadly’s

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<sup>9</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 130-31.

<sup>10</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 91.

<sup>11</sup> Taylor, “Benjamin Hoadly”, *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>12</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 139.

<sup>13</sup> For example, Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 124, 149-52, 181. Gibson notes Hoadly’s thanks to Clarke for “the method into which he brought this dispute” over the doctrine of the Trinity (p. 124), but in his initial analysis of the sermon neither the Trinity nor Clarke’s method are mentioned (p. 149-52). In a subsequent analysis of the controversy, he reports that John Potter, the Bishop of Oxford “told his clergy that the Nicene and Athanasian Creeds were a test against Arianism, and hinted that Hoadly was defending those who impugned the divinity of Christ” (p. 181). See also Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 122-24, 194, and 287.

assumption of Clarke's argumentative foundations in the historicity and evolution of language, as well as implicit support for Clarke's Trinitarian positions. For example, note the consistent application by Hoadly of the term *God* to the *Father* alone. Dafydd M. Daniel has written recently on Hoadly's reliance on Clarke for his assertion of individual conscience and rejection of apostolic succession, but he does not explore the specific use of arguments employed by Hoadly that followed Clarke, but rather Hoadly's capable application of Clarke's "ethical rationalist moral theology".<sup>14</sup>

At the beginning of Hoadly's sermon he discusses the evolution of language and of the meaning attached to particular words, such as *religion*. The argument sounds very much like what Clarke had argued in relation to *homoousios* (discussed previously). "The Signification of a Word, well known and understood by Those who first made use of it, is very insensibly varied, by passing thro many Mouths, and by being taken and given by Multitudes, in common Discourse; till it often comes to stand for a Complication of Notions, as distant from the original Intention of it, nay, as contradictory to it, as Darkness is to Light." He attributes this "Evil" phenomenon to "The Ignorance and Weakness of Some, and the Passions and Bad Designs of Others". Such occurrences "ought in reason be opposed" even in "only indifferent Matters...but, when it hath once invaded the most Sacred and Important Subjects, ought, in Duty, to be resisted with a more open and undisguised Zeal, as what toucheth the very Vitals of all that is good". His solution also accords with Whiston and Clarke's use of historical texts and Scripture (the New Testament in particular), and their priority of Reason: "The only Cure for this *Evil*, in Cases of so great Concern, is to have recourse to the Originals of Things: to the Law of Reason...and to the Declarations of Jesus Christ, and his immediate Followers".<sup>15</sup> The implicit support for Clarke's Trinitarian argument becomes even more apparent when Hoadly then stated:

For the Case is plainly this, that Words and Sounds have had such an Effect, (not upon the Nature of Things, which is unmoveable, but) upon the Minds of Men in thinking

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<sup>14</sup> See Dafydd Mills Daniel, "Benjamin Hoadly, Samuel Clarke, and the Ethics of the Bangorian Controversy: Church, State, and the Moral Law," *Religions*, Vol. 11, No. 11, (November 2020), 599 (article number, not page). The abstract sums up Daniel's article thus: "...this article demonstrates that Hoadly's Bangorian writings were embedded within the ethical rationalist moral theology of Isaac Newton's friend, and defender against Gottfried Leibniz, Samuel Clarke. As a follower of Clarke, Hoadly objected to the doctrine of apostolic succession, and to the existence of religious conformity laws in Church and state, because they prevented Christianity from being what he thought it ought to be: a religion of conscience." Later Daniel states that "it was Hoadly's anti-Convocation and anti-conformity law writings in defence of Clarke that formed part of the backdrop to his Bangorian writings" (p. 6 and 12 of 14).

<sup>15</sup> Benjamin Hoadly, *The Nature of the Kingdom, or Church, of Christ* (London: James Knapton and Timothy Childe, 1717), 3-4.

of them; that the very same Word remaining [such as Clarke's explication of *homoousios*], (which at first truly represented One certain Thing.) by having Multitudes of new inconsistent Ideas, in every Age, and every Year, added to it, becomes it self the greatest Hindrance to the true understanding of the Nature of the Thing first intended by it. / For Instance, *Religion*, in St. James's Days, was Virtue and Integrity, as to our selves, and Charity and Beneficence to others; before God, even the Father.<sup>16</sup>

Later, and again in accord with Clarke and Whiston's conclusions, he explicates a further instance, pointing again to "the Worship of the Father" and a complaint of how "the Notion of it [worship per se] is become quite another thing":

Thus likewise, the *Worship of God*, to be paid by Christians, was, in our *Saviour's* time, and in his own plain Words, the Worship of the Father in Spirit and Truth; and this declared to be one great End proposed in the *Christian Dispensation: The Hour cometh, and now is, when the true Worshippers shall Worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him*. John iv. 23. But the *Notion* of it is become quite another thing: and in many Christian Countries, that which still retains the Name of the *Worship of God*, is indeed the Neglect, and the Diminution of the Father; and the Worship of other Beings besides, and more than, the Father.<sup>17</sup>

Note that the term *Worship* is at first the only word under scrutiny (i.e., italicized), but by the end the word *God* (which before as here signified only "the Father") is as well. He concluded with what could be taken as a jab at both the Athanasian Creed and the Thirty-nine Articles, that "any indifferent Spectator would conclude, that neither the Consciences nor Understandings of Men, neither Spirit nor Truth, were at all concerned in the Matter; or rather, that they had been banish'd from it *by an express Command*."<sup>18</sup>

In perhaps another implicit reference to Clarke's argument when explicating the original use of the word *homoousios* and how its meaning had been changed and had thereby resulted in notional and liturgical inconsistencies, Hoadly summed up his point:

In the mean time the *Word* or *Sound*, still remains the same in Discourse. The whole Lump of indigested, and inconsistent Notions and Practices; Every thing that is solemnly said, or done, when the *Worship of God* is profess'd, is equally cover'd under that *general Name*; and, by the help of using the same *Original Word*, passeth easily for the *Thing* it self.<sup>19</sup>

*God* used to mean *the Father*. *Worship of God* used to mean *Worship of the Father* (at the *Saviour's* direction). That such was no longer the case often went unrecognized due to the

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<sup>16</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 4-5.

<sup>17</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 6-7.

<sup>18</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 7. My emphasis.

<sup>19</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 7.

continued use of the same original words even though the meaning of them had since become altered. Of course, the Athanasians would claim the same of their opponents, as Waterland had of Clarke's denial of the traditional markers for the doctrine of Arius.<sup>20</sup> He maintained the same theological stance when speaking of the phrase "the *Love of God*, and of *our Saviour*". He even intimated a varied use of the word *eternal* (as discussed previously in Clarke) when he stated "that an ordinary *Christian*, with the utmost Sincerity in his Heart, is filled with nothing but eternal Suspicions, Doubts, and Perplexities, whether he hath any thing of the true *Love of God*, or not." This use of *eternal* seems to convey (an albeit frustrated) endlessness, far removed from the necessarily *Eternal self-existence* of the Father, and, for that matter, perhaps even the *eternal generation* of the Son.<sup>21</sup> Hoadly stated that "I have mentioned these *Particulars*, not only to shew the Evil it self; and to how great a Degree the *Nature* of Things hath suffered in the Opinions of Men, by the Alteration of the Sense of the same *Words* and *Sounds*: but to give you Occasion to observe, that there can be no Cure for it, in *Christians*, but to go back to the *New Testament* it self..." It does not appear that Hoadly was speaking of Convocation when discoursing on the shifts of language in the address to God and worship of him due to "the Opinions of Men" since the time of the New Testament.<sup>22</sup>

Therefore, while the primary concern of the sermon was Church authority, the foregoing examples from hitherto unacknowledged though relevant passages from the sermon suggest or at least leave open the argument that, at this time, Hoadly's doctrinal sympathies regarding the Trinity were with Clarke.<sup>23</sup> And indicate that Hoadly perhaps most immediately perceived the crisis of the Church's authority to be in concert with increasingly prominent challenges or calls to further reform its dogma and liturgy relating to the Trinity. This argument has particular support in, first, Hoadly's equating (in the time of the New Testament) the *Worship of God* to the *Worship of the Father* only, as stated by Christ himself. And, second, his lament that "in many *Christian Countries*, that which still retains the Name of the *Worship of God*, is indeed the Neglect, and the Diminution of the Father; and the Worship of other Beings besides, and more than, the *Father*." A third particular support would include that "the Alteration of the Sense of the same *Words* and *Sounds*" was the result

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<sup>20</sup> See Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 116-17

<sup>21</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 8-9.

<sup>22</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 9.

<sup>23</sup> See Sanna, "How Heterodox was Benjamin Hoadly?" 75: While stating that "Hoadly's position was not so heterodox as it has been assumed", Sanna allows that "Hoadly may well have fallen short of the expected Trinitarian orthodoxy, he may have been a subordinationist like Clarke in some moments of his life."

of “the Opinions of Men” in the intervening centuries, of which Convocation was a condoning party but hardly the root force or impetus that Hoadly could have had in mind. Hoadly’s sermon, taken within the context of Clarke’s recently published *Scripture Doctrine*, that (especially academically) elevated the significance of the Trinitarian debates, suggests Hoadly’s endeavors were not solely concerned with Church authority in a vacuum of Church-State relations during the Hanoverian Succession, footnoted by the era’s labyrinth of ecclesiastical politics.<sup>24</sup> The sermon bore arguable marks of an informed (and not wholly neutral) cognizance of the doctrinal battles over the doctrine of the Trinity then being waged with the latest weapons of exegetical prowess.

Pfizenmaier makes an argument that “Hoadly’s subordinationism” was revealed in his earlier “satirical *Dedication to Pope Clement XI*” (1715).<sup>25</sup> I think his non-ironic statements<sup>26</sup> that I have discussed, delivered before the king and as a bishop, are therein a better context to gain a surer *suggestion* of Hoadly’s sympathies, rather than as a *proof* of a theological position he did not disclose.<sup>27</sup> As a further point of context, Clarke’s work had not been suitably answered when Hoadly delivered the sermon, and Daniel Waterland would not publish his *A Vindication of Christ’s Divinity* until 1719, and “William Law among others” found Hoadly’s belief in the Athanasian Trinity to be suspect.<sup>28</sup> Dixon’s citation of Law’s *Second Letter to the Bishop of Bangor* (1717) reveals that Law did not think to reproach Hoadly for his remarks that I have focused on but in relation to Christ’s ability to forgive sins.<sup>29</sup> It is not yet clear to me why these statements about “the Diminution of the Father” in Hoadly’s highly controversial sermon were not highlighted and exploited by his numerous opponents throughout the Bangorian controversy. It is hard to believe that anxiety for the Church’s authority would distract from the supposed purpose of that authority, so recently exercised in doctrinal prosecutions.

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<sup>24</sup> See also Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 122-25. Gibson outlines many of the doctrinal disputes Hoadly had been engaging in the years prior to his 5 November sermon in 1716, the doctrine of the Trinity is prominent among them.

<sup>25</sup> Pfizenmaier, *Trinitarian Theology...Dr. Clarke*, 51-52. For more on Hoadly’s *Dedication to Pope Clement XI*, see also Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 128-130. See Benjamin Hoadly, “The Dedication to Pope Clement XI” in *The Works of Benjamin Hoadly*, Volume I (London: W. Bowyer and J. Nichols, 1773), 534-553.

<sup>26</sup> See Sanna, “How Heterodox was Benjamin Hoadly?” 72: “...ironic statements against the pretensions of Athanasians do not prove commitment to anti-Trinitarianism.”

<sup>27</sup> See Sanna, “How Heterodox was Benjamin Hoadly?” 67: “Hoadly never entangled himself with Christological quarrels” (see also page 68).

<sup>28</sup> Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 196-97.

<sup>29</sup> To the polemical Law, it was plain that Hoadly’s opinion was that “Christ is not God” (William Law, *A Second Letter to the Bishop of Bangor*, (London: W. Innys, 1717, 67).

I will note that Hoadly seems to have been consistent with his earlier views. In 1734, he published a work that applied Clarke's exegetical methods to the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, wherein Hoadly proffered a series of prayers to be used daily or otherwise that were consistent with his statements about worshipping the Father in his *Nature of the Kingdom*. His prayers were careful to address the Father, but, again, never denigrated the Son. Of particular consistency is a portion of his suggested "A large Form of Prayer, for more particular Occasions" that runs for nearly 30 full pages. Therein, Hoadly's prayer for "the whole Christian world; all who are called by the Name of thy Son, and profess his Holy Religion" asked for the Lord's "interposition" due to "a large Scene of spiritual *Evils*". Hoadly continued his explanatory plea that accorded with the assertions of his 1717 sermon: "In many places, the *Faith*, once delivered to the Saints in Purity and Simplicity, enervated by vain and groundless Traditions; or darkened by the inventions of Men: —The Worship of Thee, O *Father*, expressly established, by thy Son *Jesus Christ*, in *Spirit and in Truth*, overclouded by numberless Superstitions; and even destroyed by Idolatry itself". He continued by asking for "an effectual stop" to the use of superstition "for base and secular ends". He prayed that the same with regard "to all Usurpation over Consciences of Men: and dissipate those clouds of Ignorance which dispose People to a base and ignominious slavery to the dictates of Men, rather than to a rational Enquiry into thy Holy Will which lies open to them." He subsequently mentioned "*Scripture* the Rule of Faith".<sup>30</sup> To Hoadly, it appears, the liberty of conscience and the cessation of superstition and improper worship—that belonged exclusively to the Father—progressed together.

As for Hoadly's insistence on subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles, Gibson relates that Hoadly refused to appoint either William Whiston or John Jackson (a friend of Clarke) "to livings in his dioceses unless [they] subscribed to the Thirty-Nine Articles to attest [their] basic doctrinal orthodoxy". However, Gibson also explains that Hoadly, who could regard the Articles as "adiaphora", preferred men of "flexible minds" with "the charity to welcome fellow Christians into the Church, [rather than those that] stand on brittle dogmas."<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, while it is certain that "Hoadly was, at least in his own mind...an orthodox

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<sup>30</sup> Benjamin Hoadly, *A Plain Account of the Nature and End of the Sacrament of the Lord's-Supper* (London: James, John, and Paul Knapton, 1734), 232-34. Contrast this brief treatment with Sanna, "How Heterodox was Benjamin Hoadly?" 76: "The *Plain Account* followed on Clarke's footsteps in that it affirmed the validity of Biblical sources exclusively, not in that it sympathized with anti-Trinitarian thought."

<sup>31</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 26, and 260-61. See also Gascoigne, "Latitudinarianism, Rational Dissent and radicalism," 226-27.

Anglican”<sup>32</sup> and never omitted the Athanasian Creed from his services, his statement to a Mr. Jones suggests that he could overlook his subscription to the Athanasian Creed as a point “not very essential to [the Christian religion]” in a way that enabled him to “still promote the Christian religion in general, though cramped in some points”.<sup>33</sup> Acknowledging this in no way impugns Hoadly’s sincerity or good conscience, but rather acknowledges his “supple intellect”, active (it appears) in “the cause of comprehension”.<sup>34</sup>

In any case, Hoadly was advancing the methodology of Clarke’s argument as it rested in *Scripture Doctrine*.<sup>35</sup> Again, Hoadly wanted to highlight not only the occurrence of this linguistic evolution, or “the Evil it self” but also that the only “Cure for it, in *Christians*,” was “to go back to the *New Testament* it self; because there alone we shall find the Original Intention of such Words; or the Nature of the Things design’d to be signified by them”. The intention and meaning there had been “fixed by our Lord, or his Apostles from him.”<sup>36</sup> It appears, then, that Hoadly, followed Clarke in his belief that following the Apostles, “in process of time men grew less pious, and more contentious; so in the several Churches they enlarged their Creeds, and Confessions of Faith; and grew more minute, in determining unnecessary Controversies”. Clarke continued by pointing to the entropic effect of impious controversy on language, “and the farther they departed from the Fountain of Catholick Unity, the Apostolical Form of sounds words, the more uncertain and unintelligible their Definitions grew”.<sup>37</sup> Only within the New Testament, Hoadly preached, could be found the markers that would “guide and guard us in our Notions of those Matters, in which we are most of all concern’d.”<sup>38</sup>

It is only after this lengthy introduction (a third of the sermon) that both borrows the frame, method, and argument of Clarke’s *Scripture Doctrine*, that Hoadly then proceeded to give his sermon on the words and meaning of the text found in “St. John, xviii. 36. Jesus answered, My Kingdom is not of this World.”<sup>39</sup> The sermon (perhaps polemically) called into question the authoritative claims to clerical and ecclesiastical “*Infallibility*” to legislate or

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<sup>32</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 67.

<sup>33</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 262.

<sup>34</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 67. See also Sanna, “How Heterodox was Benjamin Hoadly?” 73.

<sup>35</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 124.

<sup>36</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 9.

<sup>37</sup> Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), vii-viii; see also iv-v.

<sup>38</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 9-10.

<sup>39</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 3, 10.

judge “in the Affairs of Conscience and Eternal Salvation.”<sup>40</sup> Accordingly, it can be argued that Hoadly’s sermon was more concerned about correcting ecclesiastical overreach in “Matters of Conscience, or Salvation”<sup>41</sup> that saw otherwise able sons of the church persecuted via prosecutorial proceedings—most recently (and readily illustrated by) the Trinitarian debates—more than it was with the immediate political handwringing over the Church’s threatened (or threatening) role in the administration of God’s will on earth.

Hoadly continued his argument under “Two *General Heads*” that followed in a successive fashion and continued to imply a cognizance of Clarke’s claims and arguments. First, Hoadly equated the Kingdom of Christ with the Church of Christ; and second, that if such were the case, coupled with Christ’s own declaration that his “Kingdom be not of this World”, that the system of Laws given by Christ, sanctioned by their attending consequences, would manifest as much.<sup>42</sup> In discussing the first “General Head” Hoadly was keen to point out that Christ “left behind Him, no visible, humane *Authority*; no *Vicegerents*, who can be said properly to supply his Place; no *Interpreters*, upon whom his Subjects are absolutely to depend; no *Judges* over the Consciences or Religion of his People.”<sup>43</sup> If Christ had given that authority to “any Men upon Earth” then it would no longer be the Kingdom of Christ but of those men. And, again, perhaps indicative of Hoadly’s own position with regard to the Athanasian Trinity (and perhaps the grounds for accusations that he was Socinian),<sup>44</sup> Hoadly claimed that “whoever hath such an Authority of making Laws, is so far a King...is as truly a King, as *Christ himself is*” (my emphasis).<sup>45</sup>

Hoadly condemned the erection of “*Tribunals* [by those who would] exercise a *Judgement* over the Consciences of Men[,] and assume to Themselves the Determination of

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<sup>40</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 11-13. The potentially polemical use of “*Infallibility*” (often used in reference to Roman Catholicism, though the Catholic doctrine was not formalized until the nineteenth century) appears at the end of my citation, whereas on page 12 he used the perhaps more descriptive “absolute *Vicegerent Authority*”. Either way, Hoadly opposed those who “pretend...to assert the true *Interpretation* [of his Law], amidst the various and contradictory Opinions of Men about it” (page 13). See also Pelikan, *Christian Tradition: Volume 5*, 71: Pelikan quotes Gilbert Burnet’s *An Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England* (1700) to explain how “Protestant critics” misunderstood the Catholic understanding of the pope speaking “*ex cathedra*” to be what Burnet calls “an infallibility in general”. Clarke uses variations of the term *infallible* or quotations utilizing it among Bishops Taylor and Chillingworth at least six times in his *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), often in relation to authority of Christ and/or his Apostles (as delivered in Scripture) (see pages i, iv, vii, 451-52, 474).

<sup>41</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 14.

<sup>42</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 11 and 17.

<sup>43</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 11-12

<sup>44</sup> See Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 27-28.

<sup>45</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 12.

such Points, as cannot be determined, but by One who knows the Hearts”. In this, he appeared to impugn the Church of England directly, in relation to both subscription to the Thirty-Nine Articles and Convocation’s attitude toward people like Whiston and Clarke on “such Points” as the Trinity. For Hoadly “since it doth not seem fit to Christ himself to interpose so as to prevent or remedy all their mistakes and contradictions, that, if They have this power of interpreting, or adding, Laws, and judging Men, in such a sense, that *Christians* shall be indispensably and absolutely obliged to obey those *Laws*, and to submit to those *Decisions*”, then ultimately, “They are *Kings* of this *Kingdom*, and not *Christ Jesus*.” He continued:

If therefore, the *Church of Christ* be the *Kingdom of Christ*; it is essential to it, that *Christ* himself be the Sole *Law-giver*, and Sole *Judge* of his Subjects, in all points relating to the favour or displeasure of *Almighty God*; and that All His Subjects, in what Station soever they may be, are equally Subjects to Him; and that No One of them, any more than Another, hath Authority, either to make New Laws for Christ’s Subjects; or to impose a sense upon the Old Ones, which is the same thing; or to Judge, Censure, or Punish, the Servants of Another Master, in matters relating purely to Conscience, or Salvation. If any Person hath any other Notion, either thro’ a long Use of Words with Inconsistent Meanings, or thro’ a negligence of Thought; let him but ask himself, whether the *Church of Christ* be the *Kingdom of Christ*, or not: And, if it be, whether this Notion of it doth not absolutely exclude all other Legislators and Judges, in matters relating to Conscience, or the favour of God...<sup>46</sup>

In addition to the absolute equality in Christ’s Kingdom among his subjects, notice the injunction against imposing new meanings to “*Old [Laws]*,” such as was argued against the Athanasians in relation to Nicaea, but even more so against all post-Apostolic<sup>47</sup> statements of binding faith in relation to Scripture. Note also the continued harping on the inconsistencies inherent to the evolution of language.

Hoadly defined the Church (or Kingdom) of Christ without recourse to any visible ecclesial officers, but rather as “the Number of Men, whether Small or Great, whether Dispersed or united, who truly and sincerely are Subjects to Jesus Christ alone, as their Law-giver and Judge, in matters relating to the Favour of God, and their Eternal Salvation.”<sup>48</sup> If Christ, the King of the Church, does not “interpose” on the Consciences of Men, by what right would Convocation. Hoadly had taken the High Church notion of “passive obedience” to a divinely appointed monarch and turned it against them when considering *the* divine

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<sup>46</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 14.

<sup>47</sup> See Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 19.

<sup>48</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 17.

monarch of the Church. Entirely absent, however, from Hoadly's discussion is the Person of the Holy Ghost and the question of that member of the Godhead's "interposition" regarding the authority of councils. One could speculate that his response to such a question would have been a restatement of Luther's argument at Worms "that councils had often erred, [and] had often contradicted each other". This view had already been echoed in his comment about "mistakes and contradictions" of self-declared "*Vicegerents*".

Under the second "General Head" Hoadly explained that "The Sanctions of Christ's Law are Rewards and Punishments." He then quickly asked (and answered), "But of what sort? Not the Rewards of this World, not the Offices, or Glories, of this State; not the pains of Prisons, Banishments, Fines, or any lesser and more Moderate Penalties; nay, not the much lesser Negative Discouragements that belong to Humane Society." Hoadly was well aware of Thomas Emlyn's imprisonment and fine, Whiston's banishment, and the "lesser" pressures that led to the bishops prevailing upon Clarke who (in his subsequent career) still underwent "moderate Penalties" such as his passing up opportunities for preferment because he would not subscribe and/or being overlooked for elevation to a bishopric.<sup>49</sup> Later, in a similar fashion, Hoadly insisted that "the Frowns and Discouragements of this present State should [not] in any Case attend upon Conscience and Religion". For, of all the foregoing methods, "[Christ] was far from thinking that These could be the Instruments of such a Perswasion, as He thought acceptable to God." Hoadly seems to have intended the term "State" to implicitly carry the dual meaning of the "Offices, or Glories" of both this general, "present" state of mortality (contrasted with the "future State" of immortality) and those of the specific British State. He warned against "the erecting of any sort of Temporal Kingdom, under the Covert and Name of a Spiritual one."<sup>50</sup> Hoadly clearly advanced that the Apostles did not use temporal punishments (or rewards): "St. *Paul* understood this so well, that He gives an Account of His own Conduct, and that of Others in the same Station, in these words, *Knowing the terrors of the Lord, we perswade men*". He contrasted this with, "whereas, in too many Christian Countries, since his [Paul's] days, if Some, who profess to succeed *Him*, were to give an Account of their own Conduct, it must be in a quite contrary strain; *Knowing the terrors of this World, and having them in our power, We do, not perswade men, but force their outward Profession against their inward Perswasion.*"<sup>51</sup> Hoadly summarized his

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<sup>49</sup> See Gibson, *Unity and Accord*, 67.

<sup>50</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 18.

<sup>51</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 19.

Lockean position as against all “Force or Flattery, Worldly pleasure or pain”. Indeed, to act otherwise was “to act contrary to the Interest of True Religion, as it is plainly opposite to the Maxims upon which Christ founded his Kingdom.” Those maxims were founded on “*Motives* which are *not of this world*, to support a *Kingdom* which is *not of this world*.”<sup>52</sup> The “*Rewards* and *Punishments*” were “from the World to come” and ought not to be changed to this present “possession”. And furthermore, “there can be no *Reward* where there is no *Willing Choice*”.<sup>53</sup>

Hoadly offered a number of conclusions from his foregoing understanding of Christ’s Kingdom. Among them, he concluded that Christ alone was King in his Kingdom, “and that We must not Frame our Ideas from the *Kingdoms of this World*, of what ought to be, in a visible and sensible manner, in *His Kingdom*.”<sup>54</sup> However, just prior to this he indicated that Christ was not God Almighty. For some were “Substituting *Others* in his Place, as *Law-givers* and *Judges*, in the same Points, in which He must either *Alone*, or not at all, be Law-giver and Judge”. It would be hard to envision Hoadly saying that Christ’s Father in these “same Points” could “not at all, be Law-giver and Judge”.<sup>55</sup> And Hoadly, who was later to enjoy a series of preferments that would see him become Bishop of Winchester (a permanent seat in the House of Lords),<sup>56</sup> declared that Christ’s Kingdom did not share in the practices of “Common Earthly Kingdoms, [wherein] the Rewards are, Worldly Honours, Posts, Offices, Pomp, Attendance, Dominion” just as it did not share in “the Punishments [which] are Prisons, Fines, Banishments, Gallies and Racks; or something Less, of the same sort.” He continued in a sardonic manner,

If these can be the true supports of a Kingdom which is *not of this World*; then Sincerity, and Hypocrisy; Religion, and No Religion; Force, and Perswasion; A Willing Choice, and A Terrified Heart; are become the same things; Truth and Falshood stand in need of the same methods, to propagate and support them; and our Saviour...If He had but at first enlighten’d the *Power of this World*, as He did St. *Paul*; and employed the *Sword* which They bore, and the *Favours* They had in their hands, to bring *Subjects* into his *Kingdom*; this had been an Expeditious and an effectual way, according to the Conduct of some of his professed Followers, to have had a Glorious and Extensive *Kingdom*, or *Church*.

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<sup>52</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 20.

<sup>53</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 20.

<sup>54</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 25.

<sup>55</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 24.

<sup>56</sup> See Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 27.

Contrary to this Constantinian model, Hoadly asserted that Christ did not establish “Rules against the Enquiry of All His Subjects into his *Original Message* from Heaven” (such as Clarke’s *Scripture Doctrine*, or Emlyn’s *Scripture Account*, the latter is often referred to as Emlyn’s *Humble Inquiry*). And, even more so, Christ did not call “upon the *Secular Arm*, whenever the *Magistrate* should become *Christian*, to inforce his Doctrines, or to back his *Spiritual Authority*” (as Locke had pointed out in his *Letter*).<sup>57</sup>

Another conclusion seemed to implicate the Creeds, with Hoadly reminding the true subjects of Christ’s Kingdom that they need not “envy the Happiness of *Others*” who “think it a much more evident Mark of their belonging to the *Kingdom of Christ*” that they have accepted “*other* Law-givers, and Judges, in *Christ’s Religion*, besides *Jesus Christ*”. Such as these “have recourse not to *his* [Christ’s] *own* Words, but the Words of *Others* who profess to interpret them”. And to the evident fact that “that They are ready to Submit to this *Interpretation*, let it be what it will”, Hoadly seemed to specifically hone in on the Athanasians and their Creed. This he described in a manner not wholly dissimilar to Clarke’s concerns regarding its relation to the Church of England’s liturgy, and a bit more similar to Whiston’s articulations about Athanasius himself.

They have set up to Themselves the *Idol* of an unintelligible *Authority*, both in *Belief*, and *Worship*, and *Practice*; in Words, *under* Jesus Christ, but in deed and in truth *over* Him; as it removes the minds of his *Subjects* from *Himself*, to Weak, and passionate Men; and as it claims the same Rule and Power in *his Kingdom*, which He himself *alone* can have.<sup>58</sup>

This passage and others foregoing illustrate that the context of the Trinitarian debates is vital to an informed reading of Hoadly’s invective against the activities of Convocation in the first half of the decade. Some could argue that Hoadly here intended to impugn strictly the authority over men’s consciences claimed by the clergy in Convocation, but that does not accord with the context where the doctrine of the Trinity as expounded in the creeds (the Athanasian in particular) was often described as “unintelligible”. Clarke, Whiston, and Collins had all used this term in their writings on the Trinity: Clarke and Collins directly in relation to the Creeds or specifically the Athanasian Creed and Whiston to aspects of the doctrine, such as the eternal generation of the Son.<sup>59</sup> Furthermore, the “unintelligible

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<sup>57</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 21-23. See Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 23-24.

<sup>58</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 27.

<sup>59</sup> See Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), vii-viii, xxix, 289; William Whiston, “A Dissertation upon the Epistles of Ignatius” in *Primitive Christianity Reviv’d*, Vol. I (London, 1711), 15: “That Modern, Unintelligible Notion of

*Authority*” applied to the Creed as it had continued to be upheld in the Church of England’s Thirty-Nine Articles (*Belief*) and its liturgy (*Worship*), that Clarke sought to modify specifically in relation to the Athanasian Creed to thereby restore Scripture as the Church’s “Guide both in Faith and Practice” of “what is explicitly necessary” for Christian salvation (for Clarke, *Baptism* and *Absolution*).<sup>60</sup> Also, only in subscription to the anathemas in the Athanasian Creed did one assume the “same Rule and Power” that Christ alone can have, i.e. saving or damning. It appears that Convocation’s own authoritative reliance on the Creed’s “unintelligible *Authority*” within the Trinitarian debates was, in part, what led Hoadly to the secondary question of Church authority and the nature of the Church. Accordingly, the passage also demonstrates that the more politically-minded and politically-savvy Hoadly, who generally held a close theological acquaintance with men such as Clarke and Whiston, instead redirected the question from the received doctrine of the Trinity instead to the authorized instruments of the Church in its conduct relating to (that) doctrinal debate, which then inevitably led to debate over the nature of the Church of Christ.

As such, it is significant to note that Whiston’s immediate concern (and preemptory complaint) to Clarke following his “Paper”, about “a false notion of the Peace of the Church” and a putting a stop to the Reformation, are also present in Hoadly’s conclusions. “There are *Some* Professed Christians,” Hoadly bemoaned, “who contend openly for such an *Authority*, as indispensably obliges All around Them to *Unity* of Profession; that is, to Profess even what They do not, what They cannot, believe to be true.” However, those are equally wrong “who think they act a glorious part in opposing” this Inquisitorial scheme (recall the remarks to Emlyn by the chief justice)<sup>61</sup> and who yet “retain such an *Authority*” that allows people to think whatever they will and even does not require them “to profess what They do not believe” while still maintaining that such persons must “forbear the *profession* and *publication* of what They do believe” even if they “believe it of never so great Importance.” Consider in particular the case of Clarke, who was discouraged from publishing further on the Trinity.

Both these *Pretensions* [either of inquisition or forbearance] are founded upon the mistaken Notion of the Peace, as well as Authority, of the Kingdom, that is the Church, of Christ. Which of them is the most insupportable to an honest and a

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*Eternal Generation...*” (see also page 92); Whiston, “Historical Preface,” viii: and Collins, *Essay Concerning the Use of Reason* (1707), 36; Collins, *Discourse of Free-Thinking* (1713), 63.

<sup>60</sup> Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), x, 446-450. See discussion in Clarke section on the Athanasian Creed. See also Thirty-Nine Articles (1571), 15-16 (Article 25 “Of the Sacraments”).

<sup>61</sup> See Emlyn, *Narrative*, xxxiii-xxxiv, see also viii.

Christian mind, I am not able to say: because They both equally found the Authority of the Church of Christ, upon the ruins of Sincerity and Common Honesty; and mistake Stupidity and Sleep, for Peace; because They would both equally have prevented All Reformation where it hath been, and will for ever prevent it where it is not already; and, in a word because both equally devest *Jesus Christ* of his Empire in his own Kingdom; and teach them to prostitute their *Consciences* at the feet of *Others*, who have no right in such a manner to trample upon them.<sup>62</sup>

Note the interchangeable nature of Empire and Kingdom in relation to Christ's Church, which can perhaps serve to indicate the emergent Anglo-Protestant imperial telos of the eighteenth century.<sup>63</sup> The purity-unity dynamic of the Church would have been significantly decreased (if not wholly dissolved) by Hoadly in the doctrine of sincerity. For Hoadly, purity of purpose (i.e., sincerity) trumped purity of doctrine, and the resulting unity in sincerity would obviate any proliferation of perspectives.<sup>64</sup> Gibson relates that Hoadly had earlier written (in December 1714) a defense of Clarke that "expressed a desire for a Church founded entirely upon what he argued was the founding principle of Protestantism, namely that all men had a right to consult the scriptures as the rule of their own faith and practice". Furthermore, Gibson reports that contrary to his (Hoadly's) earlier positions, following Clarke's treatment by Convocation, Hoadly "controverted the views of clergy...who argued for peace and tranquility, because that might imply abandonment of the search for the truth...[and] could justify the terrors of the Inquisition."<sup>65</sup> Hoadly had certainly nurtured these thoughts further in the ensuing two years and three months before delivering his protracted sermon before the King that openly declared the magisterial Church of England to be astray from the principles of the Reformation and Christ's Rule in the Church. In the

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<sup>62</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 28-29.

<sup>63</sup> See William Gibson, "Teleologies and Religion in the Eighteenth Century," Chapter 2 in *Teleology and Modernity*, edited by William Gibson, Dan O'Brien, and Marius Turda (New York: Routledge, 2020).

<sup>64</sup> See Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 181-83. In Gibson's analysis he points out that Hoadly's doctrine of sincerity "was dramatic because it legitimised the claims of the Dissenters to equality of sincerity of faith." He goes on to juxtapose Hoadly with Locke, in a manner that demonstrates my statement in the text connected to this footnote: "While Locke believed that the Church was one of a number of voluntary societies, built on individual judgement and sincerity of faith, Hoadly's judgement was that the Church of England was a single institution that could embrace, or ought to be capable of comprehending, men and women of all shades of religious opinions." Therefore, for those who disagree with Hoadly's sermon on The Nature of the Kingdom, or Church, of Christ "was to resort to the view that Dissenters were in error because they had relied on conscience rather than the authority and teachings of a divinely inspired Church." Gibson had earlier related that Hoadly did not view conscience as infallible. Gibson explains that "By using the word and concept of sincerity in place of authority, doctrine or Church teaching, Hoadly subtly secularised faith. Sincerity in faith could be placed alongside sincerity in political beliefs, in aesthetics and in the gamut of human relations." Thus, "sincerity, properly applied, made the Church accessible to men of all religious persuasions." Gibson observes how easily Hoadly's doctrine of sincerity was dismissed and derided by his adversaries via the counter example of a recent assassination attempt on George I.

<sup>65</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 124-25.

sermon he boldly held forth that “The *Peace* of *Christ’s Kingdom* is a manly and Reasonable *Peace*; built upon Charity, and Love, and mutual forbearance, and receiving one another, as God receives us.” Whereas, in the contrary manner, “any other *Peace*; founded upon a Submission of our *Honesty*, as well as our *Understandings*; it is falsely so called.” For such “is not the *Peace* of the *Kingdom* of *Christ*; but the *Lethargy* of it: and a *Sleep unto Death*, when his *Subjects* shall throw off their relation to *Him*; fix their subjection to *Others*...and go blindfold at the Command of *Others*”.<sup>66</sup> Daniel appropriately conveys Hoadly’s vision: “Within the Church-Kingdom, peace results from the satisfaction of our tripartite duties...in which we love ourselves, others, and God. Crucially, the peace of Christ’s Kingdom is not something that remains within the Church *qua* particular ‘apostolic’ visible communion; [rather] it is a peace which infuses, and becomes the model for, society as a whole.” Such a vision could not be publicly mandated or coerced, only voluntarily come into via “a vibrant and avowedly Protestant public sphere...it is as each individual is allowed to follow their own conscientious reflection that religious and moral harmony develops between individuals as autonomous rational agents.” For Hoadly, then, Anglicanism (per Daniel) was intended to assist in the creation of “a tolerant Protestant civil religion which recognises the capacity of each individual to progress in their own sincere appreciation of universal moral and religious truth”, therein allowing “for the free ‘*profession* and *publication*’ of religious ideas.”<sup>67</sup>

In the sermon’s conclusion, Hoadly reiterates his primary points and then asks his audience whether it was more becoming a member of Christ’s Church “to seek all these particulars in those plain and short Declarations of their *King* and *Law-giver* himself: or”, he warns, “to hunt after Them thro’ the infinite contradictions, the numberless perplexities, the endless disputes, of *Weak Men*, in several Ages, till the Enquirer himself is lost in the Labyrinth, and perhaps sits down in Despair, or Infidelity.” Finally, in the presence of the Hanoverian successor, Hoadly enjoined all to not “fear Man’s judgment” but to “live and act as becomes Those who wait for the appearance of an All-knowing and Impartial Judge; even *that King*, whose *Kingdom* is not of this *World*.”<sup>68</sup>

The sermon immediately sent the partisan presses into action. The overwhelming concern was Hoadly’s overturning the basis of Church authority, there was almost no discussion questioning his Trinitarianism, and that did not engage his particular comments

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<sup>66</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 29.

<sup>67</sup> Daniel, “Benjamin Hoadly, Samuel Clarke,” 10-11.

<sup>68</sup> Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 30-31.

about “the Worship of the Father” and “the Neglect, and the Diminution of the Father; and the Worship of other Beings besides, and more than, the *Father*.”<sup>69</sup> But it was the more serious inquiry of Convocation that was important. Under the direction of Thomas Sherlock, (who would be elevated to the Bishopric of Bangor in 1728 and become Hoadly’s High Church counterpart), Convocation drew up a report that accused Hoadly’s sermon of “tending to subvert all government and discipline in the church and to reduce this kingdom to anarchy and chaos.”<sup>70</sup> Rupp correctly doubts whether Hoadly’s, to be sure, “remarkable sermon” “would have had such sensational consequences, had it not been for the resentment in the Lower House of Convocation at Hoadly’s earlier utterances, and above all for his work against Non-Jurors, which in effect condemned most of the High-Church principles.”<sup>71</sup> In the overheated aftermath and with Hoadly facing certain censure by the Lower House of Convocation, the King prorogued Convocation and continued to do so indefinitely, until it became a perfunctory function of the inherited Crown. Convocation was perceived, once again, as unnecessary to the workings of government and the aims of the monarch. Hoadly had presented the obvious (to his mind) conclusion that where Church and State were synonymous, any perceived breach of the Church would result in civil penalties *not* prescribed by scripture, and others agreed. Following the prorogation of 1717, Convocation would thereafter be “silenced” until the mid-nineteenth century.

Gibson has been keen to point out that this “silencing in 1717 was not occasioned by Hoadly or by the House of Bishops, but by the insistence of the Tory High Churchmen between 1710 and 1717 to use [Convocation] as an instrument of censorship and repression.” Additionally, he credited the long freeze on such an intemperate assembly with “saving the Church from damaging divisions and rifts that would have pitted Latitudinarians against High Churchmen.” More significantly, he offered the following, necessarily nuanced, observation:

Historians have...focused on Hoadly’s impugning of Church authority. In fact, of course, Hoadly did not question Church authority that was derived from the Bible, only those claims to authority, such as those made by Convocation, that were explicitly not scriptural. The suggestion therefore that Hoadly rejected all notion of Church authority and sought to demolish any claims to spiritual discipline is a misreading of his work.<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> See Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 152; Law, *Second Letter*, 67; credit to William Gibson for the words “overturning the basis of Church authority”. For the quotations, that appear earlier, see Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 6-7.

<sup>70</sup> As quoted in Rupp, *Religion in England*, 96.

<sup>71</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 96.

<sup>72</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 197-98.

The debate had hinged on the authority of Scripture to determine the ecclesial authority of the State established Church, the discourse had operated on the grounds of reason, and had been instigated by the claims of conscience. Whiston's censure and Clarke's arraignment were markers of Lower Convocation's power. It was, in part, Benjamin Hoadly's refusal, as the Bishop of Bangor, to be cowed in the face of his sought censure that broke the power of that assembly, though their fractiousness lived on in the high church episcopacy that resented and often successfully resisted latitudinarian aims well into the nineteenth-century. The campaign to censure Hoadly was occasioned by his limiting ecclesial authority to spiritual matters, and his assertion that any temporal authority resided with the monarch, who also held authority over the Church. Hoadly had been instrumental in breaking the power of High Church doctrines that precluded his own projected aim of greater comprehension.

As such, the Bangorian controversy "signaled loudly to Dissenters that their faith, grounded on sincerity and private judgement, was as legitimate as that of the Anglicans."<sup>73</sup> For that matter, as Gibson pointed out earlier, Hoadly would become a misapplied reference for many a Dissenter who sought the atrophy of their own church government and discipline. Rupp asserted that "It does not seem indeed that Hoadly and his friends...intended to deny visible particular Churches their government, discipline, and sacraments. What they rejected was an authoritarian and clerically dominated Church which claimed absolute obedience in matters concerned with conscience and eternal salvation." Hoadly was against "the use of force, rather than persuasion, in matters of religion."<sup>74</sup> For at the core of Hoadly's theology was the doctrine of sincerity (noted earlier), by which he (as he had politically with Locke, explained below), broadcast the religious ideas of William Chillingworth (1602-1644), whose ideal was similarly that of a comprehensive church.<sup>75</sup> Chillingworth had consistently taught that it was the "Sincerity of an honest Heart" that pleased God, that the blessings and promises afforded the faithful were contingent on whether "our Consciences can assure us, that we do obey God's Commandments in the Truth and Sincerity of our Hearts", and that

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<sup>73</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 198.

<sup>74</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 99-100.

<sup>75</sup> See Warren Chernaik, "William Chillingworth (1602-1644)," *Oxford DNB*. Additionally, less so than the shared principle of comprehension, Chillingworth was irenic where Hoadly pointed to the ironic; namely, a situation (as he saw it) of the Church of England becoming more infallible than the Church of Rome (see Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 196; and Taylor, "Benjamin Hoadly," *Oxford DNB*). Also, it appears that Whiston misdirected a reference to Richard Steele (cited without correction by James Force) that was actually from Hoadly's anonymous *Dedication to Pope Clement XI* that preceded Steele's *Account of the State of the Roman Catholic Religion*. Whiston was commending in his *Memoirs* the characterization of the Church of Rome as pretending to infallibility, while the Church of England pretended "to be *always in the right*." Compare Taylor's discussion in "Benjamin Hoadly," *Oxford DNB* with Force, *Whiston: Honest Newtonian*, 19.

salvation came “not by the Perfection, but the Sincerity of our Obedience to the new Covenant.”<sup>76</sup> Rupp has asserted that by no means was Hoadly “thinking merely of ‘sincerity’ in the abstract.” For Hoadly rejected the abuse and accusations he received that insinuated he had intended the term to be understood with an obtuse salvific meaning. By fronting the Christian context of his sermon on the Kingdom of Christ, he told them that they were wrong “in charging Me with maintaining that all heathen, Jews, Turks, Infidels, if *sincere*, were within...the rewards of sincere *Christians*...my Thoughts did not extend when I was writing that Passage in a Christian Country...as if I had thought that All equally sincere Persons should have the same Reward in Heaven.”<sup>77</sup> Hoadly apparently perceived various degrees of truth available among these varied groups, and yet an equality of sincerity. A person’s sincerity was only as efficacious as the truth (or extent thereof) that they received, and sincerity to that religion delivered by Christ and taught by his Apostles (i.e., the full truth), therefore, resulted in the highest preferment available at that day of individuated judgement.

One of the most significant impacts of the Bangorian controversy was the widespread dissemination of “Locke’s ideas into the mainstream of political debate.” Gibson tells us that “Whereas before the Bangorian controversy Locke’s ideas were rarely mentioned, and particularly so in Anglican sermons, by 1720 Benjamin Ibbot directly quoted Locke in his Hoadlyite sermon ‘The Nature and Extent of the Office of the Civil Magistrate.’”<sup>78</sup> And while one may question whether Ibbot, “Clarke’s friend and assistant,” was a decided input by which to justify the claim, the fact that Ibbot did not merely make an inference but quoted Locke “directly” is indeed telling of the advance in Locke’s reception during the period.<sup>79</sup> This was true of Dissent as well. For in 1722, the ecumenically minded Philip Doddridge who was a student of John Jennings, not only owned that Locke’s *Essay* was utilized by Jennings, but that he encouraged “the greatest freedom of inquiry” not following “the doctrines or phrases of any particular party” And in 1723, Doddridge gave a more general description of his Dissenting education again, writing that Jennings “furnishes us with all kinds of authors upon every subject, without advising us to skip over the heretical passages

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<sup>76</sup> William Chillingworth, *The Works of William Chillingworth*, 10<sup>th</sup> ed. (London: D. Midwinter, 1742), 13, 113, and 108.

<sup>77</sup> As quoted in Rupp, *Religion in England*, 98.

<sup>78</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 196-97.

<sup>79</sup> Alan Houston, “‘A Difference of Opinion is Inevitable’: Franklin, Hemphill, and Modern Toleration,” *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Vol. 49, No. 3 (Spring 2016), 336. See Leonard W. Cowie, “Benjamin Ibbot (1680-1725),” *Oxford DNB*.

for fear of infection”.<sup>80</sup> Gibson helps us draw a clear connection and insight into Hoadly’s insistence on the combined authority of scripture and reason when he observed that, “For Hoadly the individual had to reach a relationship with God based on sincerity and his reading of the Scriptures.” Which, Gibson notes, “were exactly Locke’s arguments in the *Letter on Toleration*, moreover Locke had denied the temporal claims of the ‘visible’ Church.”<sup>81</sup> Hoadly successfully asserted Locke’s conception of the relations between Church and State and Individuals, not only into a more prominent place in the public (Anglo-American) discourse, but into the considered Church-State praxis of successive Hanoverian monarchs as well.

Gibson summarizes the Bishop well when he states: “Hoadly argued that people would find that their entitlement to salvation did not rely on their ‘particular method’ of worship but upon their ‘real sincerity in the conduct of conscience.’”<sup>82</sup> And, regarding Hoadly’s more immediate context, Leon Guilhamet describes him as one who “possessed the genius to intuit and share the feelings of a large number of Englishmen who were not prepared to renounce religious liberty forever in reaction to the Puritan revolution...”<sup>83</sup> Of these, Dissenters were perhaps the keenest of the Puritan progeny to listen to and then to hold aloft, especially among themselves, Hoadly’s accessible principles of scripture and sincerity to conscience. The Trinitarian debates largely fueled by Whiston and Clarke, coupled with the Protestant rationale dismissive of ecclesial and creedal authority in Hoadly, would spark the dissolution of an already tepid unity among Dissenters, much to the dismay of New England’s Cotton Mather.

## **Conclusion (Chapter 2)**

Samuel Clarke and Benjamin Hoadly are among the most prominent Anglican divines whose writings heavily influenced the controversy and outcome at Salter’s Hall (to be discussed).

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<sup>80</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, 370-71.

<sup>81</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 196. See also William Gibson, ed., Introduction to *The Original and Institution of Civil Government, Discuss’d* (1710) by Benjamin Hoadly (AMS Press Studies in The Eighteenth Century, No. 51, 2007), more particularly pages xxvi-xxxi. See also Guglielmo Sanna, “Latitudinarian Politics and the Shadow of Locke,” *Anglican and Episcopal History*, Vol. 85, No. 2 (June 2016), 141-163. Sanna offers an alternative reading of Locke’s influence on Hoadly (p.144) and an argument that “Hoadly walked a fine path between different political traditions” (p. 163).

<sup>82</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 142.

<sup>83</sup> Leon Guilhamet, *The Sincere Ideal: Studies on Sincerity in Eighteenth-Century English Literature* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1974, 65. See also Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 142-43.

William Whiston's works concerning "Primitive Christianity" were also circulated among some Dissenters. William Gibson has demonstrated that Clarke benefited from friendships such as Bishop George Smalridge, who helped arrange his escape from the full censure of Convocation. Smalridge was a high church bishop with deep sympathies for latitudinarian theology and scholarship, such as that of Hoadly and Whiston as well as Clarke. Smalridge therefore provides us with a greater comprehension of how the very public debates about the Trinity were powerfully assisted one way or the other in more private ways. Also, the figure of Smalridge perhaps signals part of a marked growth in conciliatory rather than dogmatic responses to controversy among the bishops seeking Church-State unity while wrestling with the anxious and vexing Lower House of Convocation in the last years of Queen Anne and those at the start of the Hanoverian succession.<sup>84</sup> This chapter has followed some of the trials and controversies that drove the necessity of conciliation to the forefront of the religious establishment's aims.

Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity* was of particular attraction and importance due to its clear emphasis on the authority of scripture above creed. As Michael Watts observed, "That some Dissenters were receptive to the views of Whiston and Clarke is not difficult to understand. Though the Westminster Assembly had defined the theological beliefs of Presbyterians in Calvinist terms, in practice they had maintained with Chillingworth that the Bible and 'the Bible only, is the religion of Protestants.'" Throughout the eighteenth century, the General Baptist Assembly adhered to their resolution in 1697 "that if members debated the Trinity, they must do so 'in Scripture words and terms and in no other terms'".<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine* did draw on the secondary authority of early Church Fathers, as well as select passages from the writings of recent Anglican divines, such as Archbishop Tillotson and Bishop George Bull. All of this gave the sense of rational recovery and progressive development toward a resolution through restoration of one of the most (otherwise) divisive doctrines within Christendom. To Clarke's devotees, his pattern of scholarship was a formula for healing and this particular work an olive branch in the discord plaguing the Reformation and Christendom in the world. To Clarke's detractors, however, he

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<sup>84</sup> See Gibson, "George Smalridge's Churchmanship," (2017). In Gibson's *Unity and Accord* (pages 64-71), he describes the role of other government (Walpole and Townshend) and ecclesial leaders (Gibson) in the "return to tranquility" that did not, however, result in doctrinal compromise. Though the refusal to advance (a Christologically suspect) Thomas Rundle's preferment to the see of Gloucester in 1733 contributed to the eventual fallout between Robert Walpole and the bishop of London, Edmund Gibson. For more on the Rundle controversy, see Ingram, *Reformation Without End*, 3-6.

<sup>85</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, 373.

had introduced a dangerous definitivity to the most infinite, sublime, and truest of Christian mysteries, the Triune Deity.

Additionally, my assessment of Clarke has demonstrated that scholars have been incorrect to assume that he was not aware of and sensitive to the linguistic shifts between antiquity and his own time. For example, Rupp has commented,

It did not occur to eighteenth century divines, any more than to some modern successors, to wonder if their equipment for tackling Christological questions might be less competent than that of the Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, in respect of subtlety and flexibility of language, or that the ancient philosophy of substance, susceptible at least of rational definition, might be more satisfactory than the shifting sand of their own vocabularies about the relation between soul and body, spirit and matter.<sup>86</sup>

Instead, we have seen that Clarke utilized the historicity of language to advance his argument. Clarke's incisive theological contributions, as well as his precise methods of exegesis, in an effort to arrive at a better understanding of both the doctrine of the Trinity and relations in the Godhead, were (and have continued to be) a source of regard, denunciation, and debate.<sup>87</sup>

As will be discussed in greater detail, the immediate cause of the conference on the 19 and 24 February 1719 at Salter's Hall of Nonconformist ministers in London from the three most prominent Dissenting denominations (Presbyterian, Congregational, and Baptist) was occasioned by the request for advice by their Exeter brethren on the matter of subscription for their clergy, since a number of their clergy rejected the Athanasian Trinity.<sup>88</sup> To give a wider scope to the situation, Gordon Rupp noted that "[Archbishop] Wake could write with deep sympathy to his Swiss friends when the dissolution of orthodoxy involved a subscription controversy: [but] he had nothing to say by way of comfort or counsel to the Dissenters at Salter's Hall, *even though their crisis had been largely fueled by the writings of Anglican divines.*"<sup>89</sup> In a later reference, Rupp was more explicit: "It was upon the younger Dissenters that Clarke's words fell with power, and reinforced existing tendencies in a rationalist and Unitarian direction, and his writings must be seen among the influences leading to the Salter's Hall debate."<sup>90</sup> To be sure, the Anglican disputes fueled the moment and significance

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<sup>86</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 156-57. This is not wholly true, as will be seen in relation to Cotton Mather and his brother Samuel Mather. See also Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 184-85.

<sup>87</sup> See Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 127.

<sup>88</sup> See Watts, *Dissenters*, 374.

<sup>89</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 85. (My emphasis).

<sup>90</sup> Rupp, *Religion in England*, 256.

of Nonconformity's theological splintering, but someone like New England's Cotton Mather had been fretting over doctrinal conformity regarding the Trinity for decades prior.

## Chapter 3

### Dissent and Anglo-American Churches: Discipline and Definition

Many roads met and many were made at Salters Hall and the Hemphill Affair. William Gibson has observed that, “For Dissenters, the Bangorian controversy was the Anglican forerunner of their 1719 Salters Hall debate on Trinitarianism and local determinism...the rejection of persecution and excessive centralized religious authority.”<sup>1</sup> Much earlier, Roger Thomas wrote, that “both controversies are but parts of one and the same story; both deal with closely allied problem; and the same leading ideas are prominent in both.”<sup>2</sup> The “debate on Trinitarianism” was occasioned most forcefully by Clarke’s system of theology (and not Whiston’s), as partially evinced by the title of Joseph Hallet’s defensive tract *The Belief of the Subordination of the Son of God to His Father No Characterstick of an Arian* (1719).<sup>3</sup> Hoadly was popular among Dissenters, and in 1718, one Northern Irish Presbyterian declared that “there is a perfect Hoadly mania among our young ministers.”<sup>4</sup> This environment does not appear to have been lost on the later sentiments and selective preaching of the Ulster-Scot Presbyterian émigré to Philadelphia, the Reverend Samuel Hemphill. For, as Thomas rightly asserted, “The Salter’s Hall controversy was but one episode in a general movement of thought much wider than the confines of Dissent.” But prior to Salter’s Hall and the later Hemphill Affair, New England sought to respond to doctrinal challenges dawning from the direction of Old England and the European continent. Also, significant to the New England legacy and intertwined in its establishment is the Puritan and Parliamentary revolt and rule in England from 1641-60. However, in juxtaposing the events of the Glorious Revolution from 1688-89 and subsequent settlement of the 1690s with those of the earlier rejection of Stuart rule, one finds a greater pan-Protestantism at play in the latter that fundamentally shifted New England’s trajectory and, according to many, effectively ended the Puritan experiment. As such, the Glorious Revolution and the subsequent Act of Toleration ushered in a marked period of inclusiveness for New England as it joined the officially Protestant project of the

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<sup>1</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 170.

<sup>2</sup> Roger Thomas, “The Non-Subscription Controversy amongst Dissenters in 1719: the Salters’ Hall Debate” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (October 1953), 180.

<sup>3</sup> As already discussed, Whiston (unlike Clarke) unwisely did not proscribe the title of Arian, in part because he recognized it was a fourth century polemical term that did not actually correspond with the theology of Arius. Even so, Pfizenmaier quotes Whiston: “I have fully, in more places than one, declar’d how far I am an Arian.... I incline more to the followers of Arius himself than of Athanasius...” (see Pfizenmaier, *Trinitarian Theology of Dr. Clarke*, 186). Farrell conveys a better quote that demonstrates Whiston’s disavowal of the “Arian heresy, strictly so called” (see Farrell, *William Whiston*, 274).

<sup>4</sup> As quoted in Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 170.

British Empire and took definite steps toward tolerating the official presence of other nonconformist denominations. Cotton Mather's responses to the doctrinal and religious differences presented by the plurality of Christianities confronting New England (in part, stemming from the English Civil Wars and Commonwealth era) illustrate something of this movement.

### **3.1 – New England Church Discipline: Cotton Mather and the Saybrook Platform, Religious Society of Friends, William Whiston, and John Locke**

Across the Atlantic in New England, Cotton Mather was equally concerned about the maintenance of doctrinal purity. Cotton Mather was the grandson of prominent Old and New England divines, Richard Mather and John Cotton. His father, Increase Mather, was the foremost transatlantic Congregational minister who had returned to Massachusetts following the Stuart Restoration in 1661, and in 1662 married the daughter of (the deceased) John Cotton, Maria (whose widowed mother, Sarah, had already married his own father).<sup>5</sup> Cotton Mather not only carried the combined nomenclature of his heritage but the full intellectual complement as well. The precocious Mather entered Harvard College at the age of eleven already fluent in Latin, pursuing Greek and Hebrew grammar, and conversant in the Latin and Greek literature.<sup>6</sup> In 1685, at the age of 22 he was installed as his father's assistant in Boston's North Church and married the following year. Accordingly, when his father went to England in 1688 to negotiate a new charter for the colony, the young Mather was left in charge of one of Boston's most important congregations. As soon as news of the landing of William of Orange and the flight of James II reached New England the royal governor and members of his government and troop accompaniment were arrested. Twenty-six year old Mather, as a minister of the North Church (and with his father in England), was in the center of this transatlantic continuity of the Glorious Revolution.<sup>7</sup> Mather would remain a central figure in Massachusetts and New England for at least the duration of his life. His concern as one of the foremost ministers in the colony is reflected in relation to his support for the Saybrook Platform and his writings against both the Religious Society of Friends and William Whiston. These along with his approach to Locke are each discussed in the

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<sup>5</sup> After Richard Mather's first wife, Katharine, died, he married John Cotton's widow, Sarah.

<sup>6</sup> See Michael G. Hall, "Cotton Mather (1663-1728)", *Oxford DNB*, (3 October 2013), 1.

<sup>7</sup> Kenneth Silverman, *The Life and Times of Cotton Mather* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1984), 69-72. See also Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 178.

following section in a demonstration of the overarching concerns that at least one prominent New Englander had in relation to the doctrine of the Trinity in the early eighteenth century. Thereby offering additional insight into the Anglo-American discourse on authority in early engagement with Lockean solutions and adding a parallel view of colonial America's participation in and reactions to the Trinitarian debates taking place in England.

In his written ministry, Mather showed particular attention to the doctrine of the Trinity—and sought to establish the means of greater doctrinal discipline among the congregational churches, especially their ministers. This concern was an outgrowth of the fact that, following the Glorious Revolution and the final loss of the Massachusetts charter, “the full burden of enforcing orthodoxy fell on the churches themselves.”<sup>8</sup> Prior to this, the state had “lent its weight to synodical platforms such as those of 1649 and 1662” (the 1649 Cambridge Platform, officially, *A Platform of Church Discipline*, was first drafted in 1646 by Richard Mather with the help of John Cotton, who wrote the published preface).<sup>9</sup> However, Bremer is keen to point out that the problem of “uniformity” due to “congregational autonomy” was a criticism of the New England Way even before the charter was lost. Increase Mather (who had been an active participant in the drafting of the previous *Heads of Agreement* between Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Baptists in London, see section on Salter's Hall) and Cotton Mather sought to find institutional solutions and looked first to the formation of associations of ministers. Eventually, five associations of ministers were formed (at Cambridge, Weymouth, Salem, Sherborne, and Bristol) and a standing council composed of these clerical bodies was proposed in 1705. Such a standing council—which never formed—would have been able to provide a platform for discussing disputes, examining and recommending candidates for the ministry, overseeing the member churches, and, importantly, withdrawing fellowship from congregations that “persisted in error”. While the associations had widespread support among the ministerial class, there were significant misgivings about establishing centralized synodical government at the final expense of congregational autonomy.<sup>10</sup>

In Connecticut, however, with the same endorsement given the project by the Mathers, such synodical means were established in 1708 with their adoption of the Saybrook Platform. The platform's confession was the same as that adopted by the ministers of Boston

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<sup>8</sup> Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 216.

<sup>9</sup> See “John Cotton” and “Richard Mather”, *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>10</sup> Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 217.

in 1680, and had been agreed to now by a synod of “Elders and Messengers of the Churches in the *Colony of Connecticut in New England*, by virtue of the Appointment and Encouragement of the Honourable the General Assembly.” With the assembly’s approval of the platform, Congregationalism was the official religious establishment of Connecticut, in contrast to its de facto establishment in Massachusetts (as displayed in the Breck Affair). This allowed the General Court to officially set doctrinal limits and effect such discipline within the churches of the colony. The preface to the platform offers the modern reader a sense of the narrative motive and fundamental claims that made such an explicit establishment desirable, among them doctrinal purity.

The preface began by situating Connecticut (and New England) firmly under the English crown, with the claim that “Among the Memorable Providences relating to our English Nation in the last Century” was the settlement of “English Colonies in the American parts of the World”. The writers quickly turned, however, to begin a history of New England, and noted the “Peculiar” and “distinguishing Glory of that Tract called New England” which was not formed “for the advantage of *Trade and a Worldly Interest*; But upon the most noble Foundation, even of *Religion, and the Liberty of their Consciences*”. This noble foundation was wholly a matter of “respect unto the Ordinances of the Gospel Administered in the Purity and Power of them” while such a condition of “Happiness [was] then not to be enjoyed in their Native Soil” of England. (Note the motive of gospel purity). They then praised “the Religious Liberty of our Brethren” in the reign of William and Mary, and called for the maintenance of “the Toleration” in Queen Anne’s present rule. They reflected that if such religious liberty had been in place earlier, “our Fathers would have been far from Exchanging a most pleasant Land...for a vast howling Wilderness”.<sup>11</sup> They gloried that their Fathers had “heartily professed the only Rule of their Religion from the very first to be the Holy Scripture” though this statement was qualified with, “according whereunto, so far as they were perswaded upon diligent Inquiry, Solicitous search and faithful Prayer”. Any irony the modern reader may see with paeans to “Liberty of Conscience” in the preface to the confessional platform that became the colony’s official Congregational establishment was not wholly lost at the time, as Church of England clergy noted themselves as the dissenters

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<sup>11</sup> *A Confession of Faith Owned and Consented to by the Elders and Messengers of the Churches in the Colony of Connecticut in New-England, Assembled by Delegation at Say Brook, September 9<sup>th</sup>. 1708* (New-London: Thomas Short, Timothy Green [1710/09]), 1-2 (hereafter cited as Saybrook Platform). See also Walker, *Creeeds and Platforms*, 517.

now.<sup>12</sup> But such an apparent discrepancy illustrates well the discourse on authority at the time, where even a wide consensus on the morality of a particular principle did not translate into any equal measure of agreement on its just application, in any given location.

Scripture forms the foundational authority of the entire platform. Yet, as the platform was itself not Scripture, the synod prefatorily appealed to the traditional use and antiquity of “Confessions of Faith”—“composed and agreed upon by Oecumneical Councils”—“as the necessity of the Church for the Correcting Condemning & Suppressing of *Heresy & Error* required”. A summary of ecumenical councils, both ancient and “of latter times” from the Reformed British colonials perspective is provided; first, of course, is that “Of *Nice* against *Arrius*”.<sup>13</sup> Five “Counsels” are also offered before the preface concludes, each asserting the fundamental necessity of “Holy Scripture” or “the Word of God” in receiving, applying, and maintaining this confession of faith in their lives.<sup>14</sup> The second “counsel” bears a particular comment with regard to the discourse on authority.

II. *That You be determind by this Rule [of Holy Scripture] in the whole Religion. That your Faith be right and Divine, the Word of God must be the foundation of it, and the Authority of the Word the reason of it.* You may believe the most Important Articles of Faith, with no more than an Humane faith; And this is evermore the cause, when the Principle Faith is resolved into, is any other than the holy Scripture. For an Orthodox Christian to resolve his Faith, into Education Instruction and the perswasion of others is not an higher reason, than a *Papist, Mahometan, or Pagan* can produce for his Religion.<sup>15</sup>

While the articles of faith resolved upon in Reformed Christianity could be assented to with no more than “an Humane Faith”, such an assent would not endure. Reason based on education and instruction without “the Authority of the Word” was insufficient in combat with heresy and error that could do the same. Scripture was the foundation of not only right faith, but more fundamentally, right and “higher reason” as well. In the first chapter of the confession “Of the Holy Scriptures” (identical to that in the Savoy Declaration of 1658, in accord with the Massachusetts Synod of 1680), this point is again propounded: “Although the Light of Nature, and the Works of Creation and Providence, do so far manifest the Goodness, Wisdom and Power of God, as to leave men unexcusable; yet they are not sufficient to give that Knowledge of God and of his Will, which is necessary unto Salvation”. Hence, the

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<sup>12</sup> See Thomas J. Curry, *The First Freedoms: Church and State in America to the Passage of the First Amendment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 107.

<sup>13</sup> Saybrook Platform, 4. See also Walker, *Creeds and Platforms*, 518.

<sup>14</sup> Saybrook Platform, 6-10. See also Walker, *Creeds and Platforms*, 519-20.

<sup>15</sup> Saybrook Platform, 6. See also Walker, *Creeds and Platforms*, 519.

necessity of God's revealed will ("unto his People now ceased") as preserved in "the holy Scripture".<sup>16</sup> As Bremer summarized it, the platform was "a compromise", one that sought to maintain some Congregational aims while utilizing Presbyterian structures in the interest of doctrinal discipline, albeit one that relied on a "tax and other privileges of establishment" to keep churches in the right way. In all, however, "not only did Connecticut Puritans adopt a platform where the Mathers had failed, but in Connecticut control of the state by the godly gave some strength to the new structure." Adding that, consequently, "Connecticut would generally evolve toward a closer affinity with the Presbyterianism of the middle colonies";<sup>17</sup> though, as will be seen with the Hemphill Affair, the Presbyterianism of those colonies did not have recourse to state coercion, as Connecticut did.

After the initial efforts by Cotton Mather and others in the first decade of the eighteenth-century to establish institutional means of ensuring doctrinal conformity in Massachusetts failed, in the second decade he shifted his focus to explicitly ecumenical endeavors. Bremer noted that, "In the 1710s, Cotton Mather began to dispense with theological disputation and to work toward achieving an ecumenical pietistic consensus. Seeking a new 'Christian Union,' he saw its base as the common practice of piety." Bremer pointed out that *Bonifacius: An Essay Upon the Good* (1710) "was but one expression of his concern."<sup>18</sup> Mather's numerous publications and their context are indeed a particularly forthcoming source for understanding at least one representative "expression" of New England throughout the Trinitarian debates and how Mather (among others) sought to procure doctrinal conformity in view of the controversies that were in part catalyzed by the English Act of Toleration.

To gain a greater understanding and appreciation of Mather's writing and publishing, it is important to take a moment to briefly place them within the context of his life and location. Mather's biographer, Kenneth Silverman, has helpfully sketched this for us, noting that Mather ministered with "thoughtful devotion and exceeding care" to what was "probably the largest congregation in New England" at the Old North church, around fifteen hundred people. He spent several hours preparing each sermon he delivered (often twice a week),

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<sup>16</sup> Saybrook Platform, 11-12, 5. See also Walker, *Creeks and Platforms*, 367, 367n1. Walker missed a slight discrepancy, keeping "being now ceased" from the Savoy Declaration.

<sup>17</sup> Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 222,

<sup>18</sup> Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 217-18. For more on this and Mather's international network of likeminded Protestants, see Jan Stievermann, "A 'Syncretism of Piety': Imagining Global Protestantism in Early Eighteenth-Century Boston, Tranquebar, and Halle," in *Church History*, Vol. 89 (2020), 829-856.

careful to ensure that different groupings within his congregation were not missed. Among his congregation were not only the “prosperous and notable”, but perhaps a quarter were “maritime people”, a sixth were widows, and there were “numerous blacks” as well as “many children.” More than two-thirds were “unregenerated” and as such, “[Mather’s] ingenious aesthetic sense enjoyed the challenge of varying the presentation while repeating the substance” of “his message” intended to assist in their conversion. In part to accomplish that design, Mather published (prodigiously) his prescriptions for pursuing a life of piety and avoiding the dangers of error. Silverman specifically notes that on any given day of pastoral visits Mather would usually give away half a dozen copies and reported that Mather himself estimated that every year he dispensed with at least six hundred copies of his works. However, his various publications were (by Mather’s own endeavor) distributed throughout New England, aboard vessels for seamen to read, sent overseas and throughout the colonies. Silverman noted of this mass distribution that it very likely made Mather the “best-known man in America”. To give a better sense of Mather’s lifelong propensity for pen and paper and print, Silverman illustrated by pointing to the 388 separate titles published by Mather, with at least 90 of those works published before 1702, and from then until 1713 at least 135 more, with an average of 10 publications a year following that: “Mather not only published far more than any other New England minister; he probably published more than all the New England ministers before his time combined.” This does not include the estimated five thousand letters in a worldwide correspondence that Mather ably and astonishingly maintained from the British Isles and Continental Europe to the Caribbean and British India, of which only six hundred have been preserved and yet those still represent “the largest extant correspondence of any American Puritan”. Mather was keen to keep abreast of religious and intellectual developments, but also to prove wrong the skeptics of New England and its Way.<sup>19</sup>

Unsurprisingly, therefore, we find that Mather’s concern over the doctrine of the Trinity seems to have percolated first among his concerns over the Religious Society of Friends in New England, who had earlier been labeled with the epithet of “Quakers”.<sup>20</sup> In Book VII of his *Magnalia Christi Americana* (1702) he related much of those concerns, with regard to doctrine and to the laws and “*good Order, both Civil and Sacred*” of New

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<sup>19</sup> Silverman, *Life and Times*, 194-199.

<sup>20</sup> See H. Larry Ingle, “George Fox (1624-1691)”, *Oxford DNB* (2004).

England's colonies. The relatively brief rendering<sup>21</sup> Mather gave of the historical events (as well as commentary on subsequent developments) presents a good introduction to the discourse surrounding authority, both sovereign and primary, in New England at the beginning of the eighteenth century, and that with a firm relation to centrality of the Trinitarian dogma in helping to push the discourse into further settlements. In particular, the Friends appeared to elevate the claims of Conscience above those of both Church and State, and in response Mather sought to keep Conscience fully tethered to that “*good Order*” via the authority of Scripture, which, he argued, viewed Conscience as compromised by the Fall.

Mather explained to the reader of his *Magnalia* the history and views of “Quakers” in New England, and offered (but then tacitly rescinded) a distinction between the “old *Foxian Quakerism* which then visited *New England*” and the later “Finer sort of *New Quakers*”. Mather reported that “in the Year 1657 [Quakers did] find a way into *New-England*, where they First infested *Plymouth-Colony*, and were for a while most unhappily successful in seducing the People, not only to attend unto the *Mystical Dispensations* of the *Light within*, as having the whole of *Religion* contained therein, but also to oppose the *good Order*, both *Civil* and *Sacred*, erected in the Colony.” He went on to explain that “Those Persons in the *Massachusets-Colony*, whose Office it was to be *Watchman* of it, were much Alarumed at the Approach of so great a *Plague*, and were at some Loss how to prevent it, and avoid it.” Mather then importantly (and tellingly) allowed that, “Altho’ *Quakerism* has been by the *New-Turn*, that such ingenious Men as Mr. *Penn* have given to it, become quite a *New Thing*; yet the old *Foxian Quakerism*, which then visited *New-England*, was the grossest Collection of *Blasphemies* and *Confusions* that ever was heard of.”<sup>22</sup> However, in drawing the distinction between old and new “Quakerism”, he maintained that the basic and fundamental differences remained ultimately the same: “the *New England Quakerism*, in those Nooks of the Country where this *Choakweed of Christianity* yet remains, is, as far as I can understand, still that Old *Foxian Quakerism*, which does utterly renounce the *Letter* of every thing, that

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<sup>21</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Book VII, 21-26. The pages of the publication were formatted by the printer with tightly packed words in long and large double columns. As a separate publication the same content may have constituted a small pamphlet, of at least around 20-25 pages. See also Mather's (and other Boston ministers) 1690 pamphlet, *The Principles of the Protestant Religion Maintained...Against all the Calumnies of one George Keith, a Quaker* (hereafter cited as *Protestant Religion Maintained*).

<sup>22</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Book VII, 22. Penn had published *A Key Opening a way to every Common Understanding, How to discern the Difference betwixt the Religion professed by the People called QUAKERS, and the Perversions, Misrepresentations and Calumnies of their several Adversaries* (London: Thomas Northcott, 1693), wherein he had attempted to assuage most of the immediate concerns that many held regarding doctrine and civil government. Mather, for one, was not satisfied and was only slightly less pugnacious with “these *New Quakers*” in *Magnalia*.

the Finer sort of *New Quakers* are compelled now to own something of; nevertheless” Mather continued, “these *New Quakers* cover their Sentiments with such Fallacious and Ambiguous Expressions, that all *Fox’s* gross *Quakerism* can be at once either asserted or denied, under those *Modes of speaking*, which *Penn, Barclay, Whitehead*, and others use to serve their Finer *Hypothesis*”.<sup>23</sup> Apparently, the tranquilizing distinction for Mather that William Penn and others (“one [George] Keith particularly”),<sup>24</sup> brought to the movement hitherto characterized chiefly by George Fox merely made the adversarial relationship between the Society of Friends and the Reformed churches cordial but it did not remove any of the barriers to any nomination or claim for them to be considered as brothers in Christ.

Mather offered to his readers, with the claim to have “kept close to their own *Printed Words*” (the italicized portions quoted below), the Friend’s original offending Christology, centered as it was in Conscience.

The **Christ** then *witnessed* by the [“Foxian”] Quakers was, *A certain Heavenly Divine Body, constituted of invisible Flesh, Blood and Bones, in which Christ came from heaven; and he put that Body into the other Body of our Nature, which he took of the Virgin, and that outermost Body he left behind, when he ascended into Heaven, no Body knows where; and this heavenly and spiritual Body, (which the Quakers at length Evaporate into a meer Mystical Dispensation, and at last it is nothing but that Excusing and Condemning Principle in Man which we call, The Natural Conscience!) is the Man Christ, a measure of which is in the Quakers; upon which Accounts the Quakers made themselves to be Christs, as truly as ever was Jesus the Son of Mary. There is in every man a certain excusing and condemning Principle; which indeed is nothing but some Remainder of the Divine Image, left by the compassion of God upon the Conscience of man after his Fall; and this Principle the Quakers called, A measure of the Man Christ, the Light, the Seed, the Word.*<sup>25</sup>

This emphasis that Mather placed in delineating the Friend’s assertion of each individual’s Conscience as “a measure” of Christ indicates the continued Congregational (and Reformed churches generally) fears of antinomianism in the Church, which was coupled with fear of anarchy in the State (as will be discussed in a moment). However, alongside this hated Christology Mather listed a litany of their other doctrinal offenses, pointing next—and at

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<sup>23</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Book VII, 24.

<sup>24</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Book VII, 24: Mather was puzzled by Keith “who differed almost as much from the generality of the *New-English Quakers*, as we that *Persecuted* them; and yet he did such an *Unaccountable thing*, as to appear like a *Champion* for them, in Opposition to the Churches of *New-England*, until the Ministers of *Boston* were put upon Publishing of divers Books to maintain the Religion of our Churches against his Impetuous *Batteries*.” Indeed, by 1702, the same year Mather’s *Magnalia* was published Keith arrived in Massachusetts as an Anglican minister (see Silverman, *Life and Times*, 206). See also J.S. Chamberlain, “George Keith (1638?-1716),” *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>25</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Book VII, 22.

once—to their attitude toward Scripture and denial of the Trinity: “They Stiled those *Blind Beasts and Liars*, who should say that the Scriptures reveal God; and affirm’d it, *The greatest Error in the World, and the Ground of all Errors, to say, The Scriptures are a Rule for Christians*. They said, *That the Scripture does not tell People of a Trinity, nor Three Persons in God, but that those Three Persons are brought in by the Pope.*”<sup>26</sup> He went on to list quoted evidence of their denial of imputed righteousness, Christ’s physical second coming, ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and the exclusivity of the Sabbath Day, as well as their assertions that believers in Christ were not capable of sin, and that, in regard to prayer, all should “*learn to be Silent, until the Spirit give them Utterance.*” Despite the long list of the Friend’s “Endless to Enumerate” doctrinal offenses, it is their Christology and attitude to the Trinity and to Scripture that Mather again highlights when defending the zealous response of the “Masschuset-Colony”<sup>27</sup>: “Reader, If this also will further alleviate the Business, I must not conceal it; that it was very enraging unto the *Zeal* of those Godly Men, who then govern’d us, to hear these Wretches ordinarily saying among the people, *We deny thy Christ! We deny thy God, which thou callest Father, Son and Spirit! Thy Bible is the Word of the Devil!*”<sup>28</sup> Mather then continued by stating that these particular Friends were “yet more Provoking, Pernicious and Perilous” due to their notorious novelty, aptly encapsulated, for him, in the title of one publication, entitled: “*Against All Earthly Powers, Parliaments, Laws, Charters, Magistrates and Princes.*”<sup>29</sup> But before we address Mather’s account of their attitude toward state authority, it is important to note that much of Mather’s ire and his final defense of New England’s persecution of the Society of Friends was their alleged denial of Christ, the Trinity, and Scripture. Nor, it must be said, did Mather believe that the “Finer sort” of Friends had truly repented of this notable offense; these had rather changed the tone but not the tune itself.

Mather had already stated earlier that he was not seeking to vindicate the actions of the colonial government, rather it is clear that he was seeking to explain the provocation. As such, he fully agreed that it was true that “these Quakers did manifest an Intolerable Contempt for Authority,” adding that they “needlessly pull upon themselves a Vengeance,

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<sup>26</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Book VII, 22.

<sup>27</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Book VII, 22.

<sup>28</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Book VII, 23.

<sup>29</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Book VII, 23.

from which the *Authority* would gladly have released them, if they would have accepted of a Release”.<sup>30</sup> He later illustrated this point further:

...they do not own *any Government for God’s Ordinance*, but that of those who Witness to their *Light within*; and that they call every *other Government*, consisting of *Rulers, Judges, Justices, Lawyers and Constables*, a Tree that must be cut down, for the *Light* alone to Rule. I appeal to all the reasonable part of Mankind, whether the Infant Colonies of *New-England* had not cause to guard themselves against these *Dangerous Villains*. ...But I will inform the World of a better *Vindication* for my Country than all *this*; namely, that they did by a Solemn Act afterwards Renounce whatever *Laws* are against a Just *Liberty of Conscience*.<sup>31</sup>

The threat to God-ordained, rational order and the infant, vulnerable state of the New England colonies were Mather’s defense, and their vindication the mature legal protections provided “afterwards” as the colonies grew in confidence and learned to handle the balance of such difficult matters. An indicative example of that learned balance is the qualifying term “Just” that Mather attached to “*Liberty of Conscience*”. “*Liberty of Conscience*” had been the clarion cry of Fox’s oft imprisoned followers, and that cause and its claims had been promoted in the practical discourse of authority in the seventeenth century to a good degree because of it.<sup>32</sup> Mather had in fact stated in a perceptive comment that closely mirrors Gamaliel’s reasoning with the Pharisees in Acts, chapter 5, but perhaps also indicates the rather rapid reach of Locke’s influence, that “I am verily perswaded these miserable *Quakers* would in a little while (as we have *now* seen) have come to nothing, if the *Civil Magistrate* had not inflicted any *Civil Penalty* upon them”.<sup>33</sup> He also added, with regard to the other side of the church-state settlement in Massachusetts: “nor do I look upon *Haereticide* as an *Evangelical way*, for the extinguishing of *Heresies*”.<sup>34</sup>

Mather later related, in 1724, his own father’s “*Second Thoughts*” on “the *Civil Magistrates* using his *Power*, in *Coercive Ways*” to prevent possible corruptions of “*The Faith and Order of the Gospel*, in *Evangelical Churches*” which was, after all, the entire purpose of the colony. Despite the fact that Increase Mather “little Approved” of “the *Rash Things* done unto the *Quakers*” thereby, he believed in principle that there should be no “*Toleration for Seducers*” who brought in “*Apostasies* or *Deviations*”. Indeed, “*Toleration*

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<sup>30</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Book VII, 23.

<sup>31</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Book VII, 24.

<sup>32</sup> For examples, see Edward Burroughs, *The Case of Free Liberty of Conscience in the Exercise of Faith and Religion* (London: Thomas Simmons, 1661), as well as other of his publications; or, the already mentioned publication by William Penn, *No Cross, No Crown* (1669).

<sup>33</sup> Acts 5: 34-35, 38.

<sup>34</sup> Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, Book VII, 23.

was decried, as a *Trojan Horse* profanely and perillously brought into the City of GOD...*Antichrist coming in at the Backdoor*". However, Mather exulted in his father's (and the colony's) transformation, declaring that Increase soon enough "became fully Satisfied, in the Declared Will of our SAVIOUR, *That the Tares must have a Toleration*". This was in accord with "the Principle that generally Obtained among all Christians till the Days of *Constantine*, and was [still] Asserted by many of the Fathers after him", that is, "the Nonsense and Folly of *Converting People with Penalties*."<sup>35</sup>

Mather's description of his father's views then took a decidedly Lockean turn, as he explained that his father could see "That the Man who is a *Good Neighbour* and a *Good Subject*, has a *Right* unto his Life and the Comforts of it". It was not a man's religious opinion that would "forfeit" "this Right", but "his doing something that directly tends to the Hurt of *Humane Society*". This included blasphemy "and attempts to Poison People with *Atheism* and *Profaneness*", these "Destroy the Ligaments of *Humane Society*". A person was a civil subject before he was a Christian. Increase particularly decried the "*Unreasonable*" deprivation of "*Temporal Enjoyments*" as a punishment inflicted upon a Christian who was not "of the Uppermost Party among the Subdivisions." Conscience was key: "All *Acts of Religion* produced meerly by *External Violence*" and "not Proceeding from a *Conscience* Perswaded...are *Detestable Things*." Mather described his father's thoughts to culminate in this related point: "For a Man to *Do*, in Religion, what his *Conscience* does not Approve, is for him to *Deny the GOD that is Above*". "The *Christian Religion*...has no *Weapons* but what are purely *Spiritual*." The theocratic Kingdom of Israel and the English imperial colony New England were not the same, and the penalties and punishments of the former did "not Legitimate the like Proceedings among the Christian Gentiles". "For the *Holy Land* of Old, was by a *Deed of Gift* from the Glorious GOD" to the nation of Israel on condition of their obedience to "*Mosaic Institutions*." Furthermore, Christ himself did not direct any persecution of the Sadduces for "*Heresies*...[that] struck at the Foundations of all Religion". Mather happily reported that his father's earnest espousal of toleration was manifest in both word and deed, including his participation in ordaining a Baptist pastor in a neighboring church.<sup>36</sup> Through Increase's exemplary reversal regarding religious freedom, Cotton Mather was able to celebrate at once the pure intent of the colony's founders to preserve for their

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<sup>35</sup> Cotton Mather, *Parentator* (Boston: B. Green, 1724), 56-58.

<sup>36</sup> Mather, *Parentator*, 58-61. For more on Mather's writings relating to toleration, see Stievermann, Introduction to *Biblia Americana* Vol. 10, 131-32.

posterity “*The Faith and Order of the Gospel*” and the later repudiation of their improper interpretation of the relation between church and state in that cause.<sup>37</sup>

Four years after the publication of his *Magnalia*, in a 1706 diary entry, among other things such as reports of his endeavors to work through the English Parliament a “Design of Christianizing Negroes” and awoken in Connecticut’s General Assembly “their zeal, to Christianize their Indians” (indicating the granted reality and belief, at the time, of the link between the interests of “true religion” and the state), Mather recorded a continued displeasure with the Society of Friends and their relations with New England. On 20 September he recorded that “...the wicked Quakers having made their Addresses and Complaints and Clamours, at home in *England* against the Countrey [New England], whereof an Account was address’d unto us, by the Independent Ministers in *London*; as if we had persecuting Lawes among us”. Mather was incensed and “thought this a good Opportunity, not only to vindicate my injured Countrey, but also to discover more and more of the wicked Spirit of *Quakerism*, and to demonstrate,” he continued, “that their *Light within* is a *dark, feeble, sinful Creature*, and that to sett it up for *Christ and God*, which is done in *Quakerism*, is a very horrible idolatry.” The subsequent treatise he composed and sent to the Ministers in London was apparently never published.<sup>38</sup>

However, he continued the diary entry by stating that “About this Time” he was confronted with another alarming report, but this time concerning “The Apostasy of some few of our People to *Popery* in *Canada*”. This, Mather recorded, “awakened my Concern, to have our People better fortified, not only against the *Wiles* of *Popery*, but also against the *Snares* of all other Errors, whereby they may be endangered.” The work that he quickly composed for “all Faithful Ministers and all Godly Householders” consisted of a simplified catechism for small children (and an even simpler one “To Begin with Negro’s”),<sup>39</sup> “An Abridgement of the Assemblies Catechism”, and with these, now digested catechisms, was

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<sup>37</sup> I would like to credit Jan Stievermann for this observation, and for pointing me to “Article XIII” (p. 55-61) in Mather’s *Parentator* and some of its more salient passages and points. The summary is my own.

<sup>38</sup> Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Volume I, 1691-1708* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1957), 571-72. This zeal was reminiscent of Mather’s earlier published responses to “the Calumnies” of George Keith, who had since conformed to the Church of England, served as a missionary for the SPG in Boston where there was further heat between him and the Mathers, and returned to England permanently in 1704 where he continued to oppose the Society of Friends, dying in 1716 ([Mather], *Protestant Religion Maintained*, title; see Silverman, *Life and Times*, 208-209; and Chamberlain, “George Keith (1638?-1716),” *Oxford DNB*). For more on Keith’s earlier controversies in Pennsylvania in relation to the Friends’ Christology and use of creeds, see Andrew Murphy’s *Conscience and Community*, 166-68, 187-207.

<sup>39</sup> Cotton Mather, *Man of God Furnished* (Boston: B. Green, 1708), 32.

“accompanied” a third catechism (wholly by Mather) of “seven Essayes” aimed “Against Popery, and Quakerism, and Socinianism” as well as Pelagianism, Antinomianism, Anabaptism, and Antisabbatarianism. The first three “errors” listed “which most commonly assault the Cause of Christianity” concerned the two alarming reports, but the third he had not yet mentioned. Mather “entitled” this “Threefold Catechism” *The Man of God Furnished*, and it was published in 1708.

In this “Work, which cost me more than a little Study,” as Mather also related, he confidently fronted the authority of Scripture. For example, in the preface to Mather’s catechism, which he titled “*Supplies from the Tower of David*”, he explained, that “The Work is contrived in such a manner, that every *Answer* Ends with a SCRIPTURE, which alone would be a full and a fair *Answer* to the *Question*. The Force of an, ***It is Written***, to defeat the *Wiles* of Satan, has been admirably Exemplified, when our *Saviour* took that way to answer the *Tempter*.” Therefore, Mather thought that “if the *Younger Children*, at their first going over this ***Catechism*** should be Set only to Learn the ***Scripture***, this may be sufficient.”<sup>40</sup> My focus will be this third catechism, written by Mather to assist the previous two in the particular endeavor of avoiding error. To continue with Mather’s treatment and response to the Society of Friends, I will briefly address aspects of the second essay first as it concerns their claims to the sovereign authority of Conscience, before assessing his treatment of Roman Catholicism and of the of theological descendants of the Polish Brethren’s Racovian Catechism.

In “Essay II. The True Child of LIGHT” Mather’s first question and answer owns that there is indeed a “***Light within all men***” but that it is “miserably Wounded”, and in another answer, that it is “a CREATURE”.

The LIGHT of *Reason* and of *Conscience*, wherewith our Glorious CHRIST, the Creator of the world, has *Enlighten’d* ordinarily *Every man that comes into the World*; is a Faculty miserably *Wounded* in us by our Fall from God. And to look upon that Excusing and Condemning Principle of *Conscience*, or *the work of the Law naturally written in the Hearts of men*, as the CHRIST of God, is a very dangerous Delusion...

Our LIGHT WITHIN is a CREATURE; Yea, tis a Dark, and a feeble, and a Sinful Creature: And the Adoration of such a Creature, as if it were Christ, and God, can not but be a most Grievous Idolatry.

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<sup>40</sup> Mather, *Man of God Furnished*, 50.

He ultimately rested the argument of these refutations (as already mentioned) with authoritative passages of Scripture, these two from the Pauline epistles: “*The unbelieving, even their mind, and their **Conscience is defiled***” (Titus 1:15), and “*They Changed the Truth of God into a Lye, and worshipped & served the **Creature**, more than the Creator; who is Blessed forever. Amen*” (Romans 1:25). Between these rebuttals that fully aimed to reduce the authority of Conscience, are two questions relating to two members of the Godhead. The question and answer is intended to refute the idea of a “***Christ within***” “*All men*”, while the second queries the degree and manner of “*the **Spirit of God***” in “*All Saints*”. This second set demonstrated an important nuance in Mather’s view and use of Scripture, albeit it allowed his belief in the present allowance of gifts of the Spirit while giving prophets special authority:

*Q. All Saints have the Spirit of God: But how far are they influence by the Holy Spirit?*

*A. All the Children of God, are Led by that Holy Spirit, who by His Converting Impressions upon them, hath made them so: And He Dwells in them, to Sanctify them, and Instruct them and Comfort them, and Incline them to the Things that are Holy and Just and Good. But all Saints among us, are not influenced by the Spirit of God, in such a manner, or measure, as were the Holy Prophets whom God sent on special Messages unto His People.*

It is Written; [I Cor. 12. 29.] ***Are all Prophets? Are all workers of Miracles?***

The “special Messages” which became Scripture were authoritative in the lives of “the Children of God” because they were “unto His People” and not simply intended for personal admonishment or edification in (for Mather) following or understanding Scripture.<sup>41</sup>

Mather’s views on the authority of Scripture are clearly (and even succinctly!) laid out in his “Armour against the Wiles of Popery”, which will help us (in a later section) to understand his response to the Salter’s Hall controversy (and his critics therein) just over a decade later. Four examples in this “Essay I. The Fall of Babylon” are necessary as they concern the sufficiency of scripture, the role of tradition, the relation between the authority of scripture and the authority of the church, and the role of scripture in controversy.

To the first query, about whether “***Sacred Scripture [is] a Sufficient Rule***” for both religious practice and belief, Mather answered, that not only was “The RULE given us, by the Spirit of GOD Speaking in Scripture” sufficient to Salvation, but that “It is a vile Reproach upon those Holy Oracles to imagine otherwise.” When he then queried: “*Is there any Need of*

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<sup>41</sup> Mather, *Man of God Furnished*, 72-74.

any *Traditions*, to make up the want of any Directions for us in the Sacred Scripture?" his answer was somewhat surprising (if we include creedal statements): "The Additions of our TRADITIONS to Direct us in the Service of GOD, beyond the Directions of the *Scripture*, are Needless, Useless, and Sinful. The Faithful care of our Lord Jesus Christ over His Church, is Reproached in such *Traditions*." To this he attached Matthew 15: 9, "*In vain do they Worship me, teaching for Doctrines, the Commandments of men*." Mather, of course, was not one to deny the necessity (or authority) of creeds, they had been quoted earlier in the publication and it is certain he agreed with their treatment in the preface to the Saybrook Platform. And here he was making a specific point about worship and church polity, but not theology in general. Still, such Scripture passages were employed to fight subscription to the creeds later at Salter's Hall.

The same difficulty potentially arises again when Mather answered (almost cryptically) whether "the *Authority of the Sacred Scripture depend[s] on the Authority of the Church?*" He answered, that "The *Scriptures* receive not their FORCE from the Church, any more than a candle does receive its Light from the candlestick that holds it: But they [the *Scriptures*] are to be Received for the EVIDENT MARKS of a Divine Wisdom, and Holiness, and Faithfulness, which every Serious Mind must acknowledge in them." It can appear that Mather dodged the question, but if he was asserting authority in terms of potency, then "FORCE" is an apt synonym. Still, the reader is left without anything more than an assurance that all Scripture is Divine, but without any suggestion for their interpretation beyond themselves. This was a particularly tenuous moment for Mather in the catechism, for he appears to have felt the need to be careful so as to not obviate the Church (and his own) authority and, yet, not give the Church authority over the already stated salvifically-sufficient Scripture itself. The lack of necessity for the Church becomes even more apparent when he answers the question: "*What is to be attended as the Only Judge in Controversies of Religion?*" The answer: "The SPIRIT of God speaking in the Sacred SCRIPTURE, is to be attended as the *Only Judge* in Religious controversies; & by the *Judgment* of the *Sacred Scripture* only (not by any *Man*, or *Church* pretending to *Infallibility*) must all Doubts in Religion be determined." By this prescription, Mather rather ominously (though tacitly) left open the possibility that a church *not* "pretending to *Infallibility*" could perhaps take a more active role in religious controversy.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Mather, *Man of God Furnished*, 54-56.

In one other particularly relevant query that appeared later in the section on “Popery”, Mather asked about the power of “the Church, or Pope” in relation to the State: “The Church, has no pretence of Power, to depose any CIVIL RULERS, from their *Authority*; or Absolve Subjects from their *Allegiance*.” He continued by asserting the authority of Conscience to dictate such allegiance: “And it is the Duty of all Private Christians, and they are *bound in Conscience*, to yield Obedience unto Lawful Authority: And where they cannot with a Good Conscience, Obey the Laws of the Government where they Live, they ought patiently and peaceably to Submit unto their *Penalties*.” True to his hierarchy of post-Reformation authority, Mather supported this nexus of a Christian’s Conscience and Civil Authority with the authority of Scripture: “It is Written, (In the Epistle to the Church of Rome; Chap. 13. 1, 5.) *Let Every Soul be Subject unto the Higher powers. Ye must needs be Subject, not only for Wrath, but also for Conscience sake.*<sup>43</sup> Thus far, these answers in the third catechism relating to both “Popery” and “Quakers” demonstrated the difficulty for Reformed Christians (and Protestants generally) to define the relation between the collage of authorities presented to them; whether between the authority of Scripture and that of the Church, or between the State and the Church and the Conscience of individual persons. For example, as we have seen, at one point Conscience “is a Faculty miserably Wounded”, but at another (the above query), Conscience binds “all Private Christians...to yield Obedience unto Lawful Authority” and, yet, still, when “they cannot with a Good Conscience, Obey the Laws of the Government where they Live” to “Submit unto [the] *Penalties*”. Mather’s concern over the Religious Society of Friends combined with that of Roman Catholicism, exhibits well the perceived extremes in the post-Reformation crisis of authority that he was certain could be balanced by the authority of Scripture, that, apparently, did not need either tradition or the Church.

Interestingly, there is no mention of the Friends undermining civil government, as before in the *Magnalia*. This could also perhaps be explained by the functioning colonial government in Pennsylvania, or simply a matter of context as doctrinal concerns were the main purpose in the *Man of God Furnished*; however, that said, it did not stop him from commenting on Roman Catholic power in relation to the State. Similarly, unlike in his *Magnalia*, Mather does not here include any further condemnation or accusation that the Friends denied the Trinity. His only mention of the Trinity in these first two sections concerns avoiding “*Images in the worship of God*”.<sup>44</sup> This apparent lack of comment could

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<sup>43</sup> Mather, *Man of God Furnished*, 62-63.

<sup>44</sup> Mather, *Man of God Furnished*, 58.

be because he had subsequently been convinced that the Friends indeed espoused that doctrine, or (more likely) it could be that he knew he was going to deal with that particular “error” in the very next essay, or it was simply a matter of brevity, or some combination of the latter two. As a reminder, the purpose of this section and chapter is not yet to understand exactly how Mather understood the Trinity, but what Mather’s attitude was toward the competing categories of authority within that discourse as exhibited by the controversy over that doctrine.

In “Essay III. *Divine Revelation* Victorious over carnal *Reason*” (or, “Armour against the Wiles of Socinianism”), as stated in the title, Mather asserted (again) the primacy of Scripture over Reason, to the point that the latter is hardly mentioned in the questions and answers but the former is called on and employed throughout. That said, the way in which Scripture is used seems less authoritative and more a confirming surety. In the first question about whether “there [is] a Trinity of Eternal Persons” in the Godhead, Mather answered, that “Tho’ the Mystery of the TRINITY of Persons in the *One Eternal God*, cannot be *Comprehended* by us, yet it must be *Acknowledged*: Inasmuch as the Sacred Scriptures assure us.”<sup>45</sup> And in answer to the second question, of “*Our Lord JESUS CHRIST, is He to be adored as very GOD, by Nature **GOD**?* Our Lord JESUS CHRIST, is in the Sacred Scriptures, very often Styled, GOD...”<sup>46</sup> And within the fourth question: “*If our Blessed JESUS be a **Meer Man**, does the **Love of God**, in giving Him to be made a Sacrifice for us, appear so astonishing and incomprehensible, as His Word has represented it?”<sup>47</sup> Reason (though of course employed in the answers) was only mentioned explicitly by Mather as a category of authority when he states that “no *Natural Reason* can be given for [the Sacrifices required of old], they were no part of *Natural Religion*, but ow’d their Original to *Divine Institution*.”<sup>48</sup> In the final question, he asks whether a man may be saved “*if he Live according to the Principles of the Light of Nature?*” He clearly answered by stating that “There is no SAVING RELIGION but the CHRISTIAN RELIGION; ...And it is a profane Imagination, that men may with Safety indifferently Embrace all *Religions*.” That Mather appeared to be less confident in this section than the previous two seems to be the case, at the same time he seemed more devotional as well.<sup>49</sup> Perhaps Mather himself was dissatisfied*

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<sup>45</sup> Mather, *Man of God Furnished*, 84.

<sup>46</sup> Mather, *Man of God Furnished*, 85.

<sup>47</sup> Mather, *Man of God Furnished*, 86.

<sup>48</sup> Mather, *Man of God Furnished*, 88.

<sup>49</sup> Mather, *Man of God Furnished*, 90.

with this brief treatment and defense of the doctrine of the Trinity against the Racovian Way, for the next year he published a lengthier work at the request of some of his congregation, where he again addresses (briefly) the Socinians, who had, it appears, by that point overtaken the Quakers in his attentions to doctrinal purity.

Mather titled this work, apparently started as a collection of sermons, *The Mystery of the Trinity in the One infinite and Eternal God, Practically Improved and Applied and Plainly brought into the Life of Christianity* (1709). He fronted the passage of 1 John 5:7 (that he addressed more extensively in his *Biblia Americana*),<sup>50</sup> and organized the first few pages around that text. Subsequent to those introductory paragraphs, Mather told his reader that

There have been Endeavors of the *Socinians*, to get a *Writ of Ejectment* for this Text, and have it cast out of the Bible. Because they find some Ancient Copies without this Text; and it never occurs in the *Syriac*, and *Arabic*, and *Ethiopic* Versions; and the most Lively Assertors of the *Trinity*, among the Fathers, as is plain from *Cyril* and *Austin*, do not press this Plainest of all Text upon the Adversaries; no, not when they quote Clauses from the Context: Therefore they pretend, that it was foisted in, by some that were Enemies to the *Arians*.

To this accusation Mather returned the counter-accusation that it was those “who would have *Christ*, no other than a *Meer Man*, [that] did not blush to Adulterate the Divine Writings.” Mather claimed that “These Wretches had their Tools, to scatter their False Copies of the Scriptures, about the world.” In this counter-claim Mather relied on the reports of Antiquity. He claimed that “the Number and Value of the Copies, that have the Text, is greater than that of those that have it not; and we find it Quoted by the Primitive Writers, who flourished long before the Days of *Arius*.” He continued: “We read it Cited by *Cyprian*, about the middle of the Third Century. And *Fulgentius* commends the Citation of *Cyprian*. But before *Cyprian*, we have it in *Tertullian*. And *Jerom* reproached the Translations that omitted it.”<sup>51</sup> However, according to Mather’s searches, “they were not the Arians who first left it out.” The corrupting of texts had already started in the times of the Apostles and, as he had indicated, the crime in relation to 1 John 5:7 occurred “long before the Days of *Arius*”.

I find about the middle of the Second Century, *Dionysius* the Pastor of *Corinth*, complaining, That some *Apostles of the Devil*, Corrupted his Epistles, while he was yet Alive; but he did not wonder at it, *For*, said he, *Some have attempted to Corrupt*

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<sup>50</sup> See Cotton Mather, *Biblia Americana, Volume 10: Hebrews-Revelation*, ed. Jan Stievermann (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, forthcoming 2022).

<sup>51</sup> Cotton Mather, *A Christian Conversing with the Great Mystery of Christianity. The Mystery of the Trinity In the One Infinite and Eternal God, Practically Improved and Applied and Plainly brought into the Life of Christianity* ([Boston]: T. Green, 1709), 5-6 (hereafter cited as *Mystery of the Trinity*).

*the Sacred Scriptures themselves. Iraenius* who flourished near the End of that Century, often made this Complaint against the *Marcionites*: But, what is yet nearer to our purpose, a Nameless but Pious Writer, in *Eusebius*, relates, that *Asclepias* and other Scholars of *Theodotus Coriarius*, who would have *Christ*, no other than a *Meer Man*, did not blush to Adulterate the Divine Writings... And yet more particularly; *Socrates* [of Constantinople] affirms, That the Ancients declared that some had Corrupted, *The First Epistle of John*.<sup>52</sup>

This reliance on the Fathers and on the texts of Antiquity to set aright (in Mather's view) the disputed Johannine Comma is indicative of the almost co-equal weight that tradition held for Athanasians among the primary authorities of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason, particularly when a scripture itself was in question. It is clear from the text as well, that in this context Mather was purposefully looking to pin the crime of corrupting sacred texts on ancient "Socinians", rather than the (subsequent) Arians. Mather's ascribing a historical antecedent to Arianism, in a clandestine theological faction that amounted to Socinianism, presciently mirrored that of his own time as well.<sup>53</sup> For, as Silverman writes, "That Arianism might become genuinely troublesome began to strike Mather in 1711", when he recorded that "My learned Friend *Whiston* is likely to raise a prodigious Dust in the world, by reviving the Arian Opinions."<sup>54</sup> In 1713, Mather maintained this line of argument (perhaps in a specific response to Whiston) when he defended 1 John 5:7 by stating that, "This Text was not inserted by the Enemies of the *Arians*; for you find it cited by *Cyprian*, in the middle of the Third Century; and by *Tertullian* who was before *Cyprian*; and both of these a good while before *Arius* appeared in the World." He explained that the text was missing from the writings of some of "the most lively Assertors of the Trinity, among the *Fathers*" because their writings "were probably such as had been wronged by the [same] Scholars...[that] had adulterated the Divine Writings, out of Enmity to the Deity of our Saviour...the *First Epistle of John particularly*" as reported by the Church Fathers, Eusebius and Socrates.<sup>55</sup> Before we address Mather's response to Whiston and others in the first half of the 1710s, it is important to recognize how his previous writings against deniers of the Trinity and of the authority of Scripture had impacted Mather's outlook on doctrinal controversy and the unity of the faith.

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<sup>52</sup> Mather, *Mystery of the Trinity*, 6-7.

<sup>53</sup> See Watts, *Dissenters*, 371-72.

<sup>54</sup> Cotton Mather, *Diary of Cotton Mather, Volume II, 1709-1724* (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing, 1957), 106. Silverman, *Life and Times*, 329.

<sup>55</sup> Cotton Mather, *A Brief Treatise on the Injuries Offered unto the Glorious and Only Saviour of the World* (Boston: Thomas Fleet, 1713), 34-35 (hereafter cited as *Brief Treatise*).

In the first, Mather displayed a ready reliance on the authority of Scripture and “regenerate” reason; he remained, it would seem, unsatisfied though with the seemingly straightforward verbal or written debate of the doctrines (particularly regarding the person of Christ and of the Trinity) without regard to the “Life of Christianity.” As he had asserted in his brief preface to *The Mystery of the Trinity*, “tho’ it be one of the First Articles in our Holy Religion, yet is not enough Liv’d upon.”<sup>56</sup> This was a full recognition on the part of Mather that the right understanding of Scripture and use of Reason were totally beholden to the practice of piety. He therefore embarked on a long campaign, in and beyond the 1710s, of ecumenism through piety in order to, in part, combat the multiplying “Wiles” of doctrinal error. Where associations of ministers and the non-formation of synodical government failed in Massachusetts to make ready safeguards against such dangers, and his own publications could only respond in part to the steady growth of controversy, Mather saw the necessity to pursue doctrinal unity (and by default discipline) through a reliance on and an increase of the Spirit.

Mather himself underwent the strain of rational comprehension with regard to the Trinity and was preserved to it by the practices of piety. After noting in his diary that Whiston, who he admired and with whom he had a correspondence, “revives [the Arian Opinions] with more than ordinary Advantages”, Mather remarked that, “I am likely to have my own Mind shock’d with more than ordinary Temptations on this Occasion.” His recourse to piety rather than mere rational argument was immediate: “Wherefore, I cry most ardently unto the glorious Lord, that He would graciously enlighten me; cause me to take up right Thoughts of my dear Jesus, and of His Holy Spirit; lead me into all Truth, and keep me from Error, and show me my Duty, and never leave me to hurt any Interest of His Kingdome in the World.” In this prayer Mather *asks* for enlightenment and “right Thoughts” as grounded in a relational grace that was entirely God’s to give and Mather’s to receive if granted. It was this habituated propensity to rely on piety for the reception of true understanding “which called me more particularly into the Dust before the Lord” when he learned from Whiston himself “an Account of his Proceedings”.<sup>57</sup> This reliance on piety was rewarded for Mather when, as Silverman informs us, “the next year he began reeling from doubts about the Trinity, his mind ‘hideously assaulted and harassed’ by temptations to Arianism. By importuning God, however,” Silverman continued, “he managed to receive a ‘Sweet Satisfaction...in His Truth,

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<sup>56</sup> Mather, *Mystery of the Trinity*, preface.

<sup>57</sup> Mather, *Diary*, Vol. II, 106. The entry was recorded for the 8/9 September 1711.

concerning Three Eternal Persons in His infinite Godhead.”<sup>58</sup> Having the doctrine of the Trinity thereby confirmed to him, Mather confidently reentered the sphere of argument and published the following year *A Brief Treatise on the Injuries Offered unto the Glorious and Only Savior of the World* (1713).

Mather had conceived of preparing “a Discourse” on 4 February 1713 and it was ready for publication exactly one month later. A portion of the discourse was lifted from a sermon delivered nineteen years ago, but which now “incorporated thereinto, a couple of long Paragraphs”: the first, against the “*Jewish Infidelity*”; and “the other, a clear Elucidation of the Doctrine of the Trinity; and the Godhead and Kingdome of JESUS; and a Confutation of the *Arian Heresy*.” While each would serve “the Interests of Religion”, the “latter of them, I propose as an Antidote against the wretched Poison, wherewith Whiston is endeavouring to corrupt the Church of God” adding that it was written “particularly to defend the Students in our Colledge from the Corruption.”<sup>59</sup> Despite the notable reference in his diary to Whiston’s “wretched Poison” and endeavor to “corrupt the Church of God”, in the publication Mather was careful to focus on those who “In many instances...are seldome *Aware* of their being so *Injurious* to the Eternal Son of God”, “So they that Wrong our Saviour, often do it *Ignorantly*”.<sup>60</sup> These he likened to Saul, who was “the chief Persecutor” (perhaps a reference to Whiston), “an Enemy to our Saviour” who yet, in the end, became “so great a Believer on Him, as great an Assertor of Him, as great a Sufferer for Him, as ever was in the World!”<sup>61</sup> Again, Mather’s tone and pace was confident as he invited the reader to “go along with me” to see the conversion of Saul to Paul.<sup>62</sup> This same sureness is sensed throughout.

The “couple of long Paragraphs” are such indeed, and the publication runs to over one hundred pages. There are times when he addresses Whiston without saying so, such as when he references “you, Syr, that pay some Regard unto the Prophecies of the *Apocalypse*”.<sup>63</sup> And when he reports, with “the New Animation of the *Arianism*, which had lien Frozen to Death, for so many Ages”, that, “The most Learned and Candid Men, have censured the Assertors of

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<sup>58</sup> Silverman, *Life and Times*, 329.

<sup>59</sup> Mather, *Diary*, Vol. II, 183, 186. The editors footnote correctly states that the exact writings of Whiston to which Mather refers are unknown, but it is certainly not “impossible” to find out. On 8/9 September 1711 Mather recorded that he had been sent “an Account of his Proceedings” by Whiston himself, possibly that contained in his “Historical Preface” published that same year (see Mather, *Diary*, Vol. II, 106; and Whiston, “Historical Preface” to *Primitive Christianity Reviv’d* (1711), title page for “Volume I”).

<sup>60</sup> Mather, *Brief Treatise*, 4.

<sup>61</sup> Mather, *Brief Treatise*, 6.

<sup>62</sup> Mather, *Brief Treatise*, 8.

<sup>63</sup> Mather, *Brief Treatise*, 48.

these [Apostolical] Constitutions, as Men who have not only made a Shipwreck of Faith and a good Conscience, but also have cast all Shame away, for abetting so Evident and so Universally Condemned a Forgery.”<sup>64</sup> As he concludes, Mather returns to Saul, and seems to say to a Whiston who has been kicking “against the pricks”<sup>65</sup>: “And now, take up reasonable Resolutions. Come, *Fall down* with conquered *Saul*, and say, *Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?*” Note the call to Reason here, but then juxtapose this with the nigh revival-in-print finish that displays Mather using his own interpolations of the Messiah’s voice:

Finally. Instead of provoking the *High and Lofty One*, who sits on the *High and Holy Throne of Eternity*, to say, *I am JESUS whom thou Persecutest*; I now Propose and Advise, that by affording the Reverse of the Occasion, you may obtain from the Glorious Lord, who *knows your Works*, this great Consolation; *I am Jesus, whom thou Glorifiest; and this thy Jesus has prepared for thee, the Spiritual Blessings of the Heavenly Places, and a Glory that Fadeth not!*

For this Purpose, I will now solicit you to come into the RESOLUTIONS of a Christian offering *Services* instead of *Injuries* unto His only Saviour. Of these RESOLUTIONS, my Brethren, Be able now to say unto your Glorious JESUS; *My Heart is fixed, O God, my Heart is fixed; and in such Ways as these, by the Help of thy Grace, I will for ever offer Praises to thee!*

... My Friend, upon such *Resolutions*, what will thy Saviour from Heaven speak to thee? — *FINIS*.

It seems that Whiston is *still* “My Friend” (note the singular address), but that he *will* only be one of his “Brethren” (plural) if he accepts now this solicitation and these resolutions. However that may be, what is important to note for this study is *how* Mather asserted Scripture, as a call of the *vital* Word speaking to Whiston in his Sauline state. And what begins as “reasonable Resolutions” transforms into “*My Heart is fixed*”. But most noteworthy is the final sentence querying to the reader (Whiston) “what will thy Saviour...speak to thee”, it appears, personally. This is a far different use of Scripture than the (by comparison) relatively mechanical use of scripture in his third catechism, *Supplies from the Tower of David*, and his simply authoritative use of it in *The Mystery of the Trinity*.<sup>66</sup> Through this use of Scripture, Mather still appealed to his reader’s capacity for reason, but his faith was by now in the resolutions of the heart, answered by God himself.

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<sup>64</sup> Mather, *Brief Treatise*, 53-55.

<sup>65</sup> Acts 9:5

<sup>66</sup> Mather, *Brief Treatise*, 106-108. Of course, the example of Saul is useful in addressing Jews, as Mather does alongside the Arians in this publication, but the reference to “the Chief Persecutor” coupled with the diary entry(s) makes “My learned Friend *Whiston*” the likely target of Mather’s earnest conclusion.

Silverman relates that Mather was “thankful that Arianism had not crossed the water and contaminated New England” but, that “he looked perturbedly on its steady advance abroad”.<sup>67</sup> That advance was assisted by the controversy surrounding Samuel Clarke’s *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*, published in 1712. Clarke was only brought before Convocation in 1714 after Anthony Collins embarrassed the Church of England, in his *Discourse of Freethinking* (1713), for its allowance of such a multiplicity of views on the Trinity among its ordained clergy, Clarke’s (most recently) among at least four others. Whiston, Clarke, and Collins, all belonged to the Church of England, but it was apparent to Mather by 1717 that the younger dissenting ministers had been influenced by Whiston and Clarke’s writings.<sup>68</sup> And while the Church of England Bishops had successfully been able to circumscribe the renewed controversy by measures that obviated any certain vote in Convocation with regard to Clarke’s views, Dissent did allow for just such a vote among their London ministers at Salter’s Hall in March 1719. For many Dissenters, the question concerned “Liberty of Conscience” in relation to either a strict scripture-subscription or to the authority of creeds in matters of doctrine. In other words, the sovereign claim to Conscience and the authority of Scripture alone, against the appeal to Tradition in ecumenical councils. This question was decidedly more pressing than even the Subordinationist views of the Exeter ministers, as the vote tally showed. The narrow results that favored plain subscription to Scripture in accord with Conscience, distressed Mather exceedingly and severely diminished his ecumenical hopes that he had been endeavoring constantly to promote over the last decade.

Mather’s response, in addition to his other correspondence, is seen in his publication, *Three Letters from New-England, Relating to the Controversy of the Present Time* (1721). The first letter (dated September 1719) and the second letter (dated 1 July 1720) were written by Cotton Mather, while the third letter was written by his father Increase at the age of 83 (the same day as the second letter). In the third letter, Increase Mather wrote with an “aged and dying hand” to commend “what my two Sons have written,” both Cotton and Samuel (a London minister),<sup>69</sup> in the controversy over subscription to the doctrine of the Trinity. He

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<sup>67</sup> Silverman, *Life and Times*, 329.

<sup>68</sup> Silverman, *Life and Times*, 329.

<sup>69</sup> See Samuel Mather, *A Discourse Concerning the Necessity of Believing the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity* (London: Eman. Matthews, 1719); and, *A Discourse Concerning the Godhead of the Holy Ghost, The Third Person in the Eternal Trinity. Wherein the Sentiments of Dr. Clarke are consider’d* (London: Eman. Matthews, 1719).

briefly reflected on his role in “the *Agreement of the United Brethren*”<sup>70</sup> thirty years ago, and opined “That I now live to see (what I could then have little imagined) some of the *United Brethren* (tho, I hope, a very *few*) fallen into very grievous *Heresies*”. Furthermore, he lamented to see “a *Division* rais’d among those who remain yet sound in the Faith, about the *Methods* and *Measures* to be taken, for asserting and preserving that most Important and Illustrious Doctrine of Godliness”. One of “the more *Signal Mercies*” in his life had now met one of the “more *Signal Troubles* of a *Life drawing near to the Grave*.”<sup>71</sup> But he captured well, in view of his life’s experience, the fully felt tension between doctrinal purity and unity then at issue.

In the second letter, there are two sections (among many) that I will particularly note. In the first, Mather returns to the role and authority of Scripture, as well as his earlier condemnations of “our *Friends*, who go under the Name of *Quakers*”. These “*Friends*” held “A Notion of CHRIST, more eligible and defensible than what some *Free-Thinkers* would now thrust upon us!” (Perhaps a reference to Anthony Collins’s publications). Note the emphasis on Mather’s use of the term “*Friends*” that he takes advantage of to pursue his more ultimate point of “*Brethren*”:

Well, what *Usage* now shall we think it proper for these *Friends* to be treated with! Certainly, a very *friendly Usage*. We ought to converse with them as *Friends*, and multiply to them all the kind Offices of *Humanity*; we ought for ever to avoid, abhor, decry the *Persecution* which they have sometimes met withal; we ought never to withhold from them the Civilities of an obliging *Neighbourhood*: And yet shall we call them *our Brethren in CHRIST*, whose *Faith* is in a CHRIST, which the *Gospel* is an utter stranger to; and who ascribe the Glories of a CHRIST, to a Being that is not really to be so esteemed of! Or, shall we reckon them qualified for *Communion* with us, merely because the *Express Words of Scripture* will be subscribed by them! Indeed there is no fear of *Their* asking for it; but why should a *Socinian* be of any better Esteem than a *Quaker* with us?<sup>72</sup>

Between *Friends*, *Socinians*, and *Free-Thinkers*, this paragraph captures much of what has already been discussed in this section, and allows one to see both the consistency and development of Mather’s approach and appeals to authority in relation to doctrinal unity and purity in the face of the Trinitarian controversies that he had observed and participated in

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<sup>70</sup> The 1691 “*Heads of Agreement*”, see Walker, *Creeks and Platforms*, 455-62: and Michael G. Hall, *The Last American Puritan: The Life of Increase Mather, 1639-1723* (Middletonwn, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988), 238-39.

<sup>71</sup> Increase Mather, “To the Reverend Mr. Thomas Reynolds” in *Three Letter From New-England Relating to the Controversy of the Present Time* by Cotton and Increase Mather (London: Eman. Matthews, 1721), 28-30 (hereafter cited as *Three Letters* with the appropriate author).

<sup>72</sup> Cotton Mather, *Three Letters*, 16-17.

over more than two decades. Also, the Lockean solution, implied here is more explicitly detailed later (discussed in the second section of the letter that I will highlight). Mather was intent on discussing the phrase “the *Express Words of Scripture*” to which the Non-subscribers held. And in the conclusion of that discussion, he voiced the irony (to him) that “‘Tis a marvelous Injustice, to charge those *Protestants* with the Spirit of *Popery*, and as *Tyrantizing* over their Brethren, who (like himself) desire a further *Explanation of Sentiments*, than *the Express Words of Scripture*, from those whom they would receive as *Brethren*.” Mather explained that in accomplishing that desire, “our *Appeal* is entirely unto the SPIRIT of GOD, speaking in the *Sacred Scriptures*; and we demand nothing, but that the *Sacred Scriptures* may not be abused and eluded by the shuffling Tricks of Men”.<sup>73</sup> And yet, he continued, pleading to be understood in his cause to secure and preserve the Scriptures in the interest of true, communal brotherhood:

For Men to charge us, that we *Desert* the *Sacred Scriptures*, when all we do is to *Secure* them; to charge us, that we *Renounce* the *Sacred Scriptures*, when our main Aim is to *Preserve* them: For Men to flout at us as *Creed-Makers*, and as *Text-Makers*, because we fly to the *Sacred Scriptures*, and would be informed, whether our *Brethren* do so know THEM, as to be *made wise unto Salvation* by them: ...

Since our Grand Adversary has not been able wholly to *Bereave* us of our BIBLE, he must think on Methods to *Defeat* the Holy Intentions of it. And one of his *Methods* is, in the first place, to assist Men in *finding out many Inventions*,<sup>74</sup> to maintain a *Legion of Damnable Heresies*, under a shelter from the *Express Words of Scripture*; and then, to raise mighty *Calumnies* and *Obloquies* upon all just Endeavours of *Reasonable Men*, to sift out the *Inventions*, and fence and guard against them.<sup>75</sup>

The Protestant Bible is not to be abused by the “Tricks of Men” seeking to undermine the unity of the faith enjoined by brothers in Christ seeking salvation. Creeds and confessions (and subscription to them) are, therefore, the methods employed by “those Protestants” to guard, preserve, and secure “the Holy Intentions” of Scripture, namely, “to be *made wise unto Salvation*”. The methods (and “sentiments”) that Mather communicates here meant not only in the cause of detecting “*Damnable Heresies*” but also “the most effectual *Destruction* of *Popery* that can be imagined!” Interestingly, Mather does not appeal to Conscience and Scripture but to Reason in the service of Scripture purity.

The second section that I will highlight, concerns Mather’s relation to Locke and the jurisdiction of doctrinal discipline and the right of association. It is important to note here that

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<sup>73</sup> Cotton Mather, *Three Letters*, 21.

<sup>74</sup> Ecclesiastes 7:29.

<sup>75</sup> Cotton Mather, *Three Letters*, 21.

Mather acknowledged something of this connection to Locke when he stated at the outset of the letter, that he was sharing his “*American Sentiments*” for the loftier “Consideration among the Europeans” because he was “so happy as to have much abler Persons, and Men worthy to be *mixed with the Great Men of Europe*, concurring with me”.<sup>76</sup> Yet, as he did “expose” their views, he did not do the same for their names. This section will demonstrate that one of those persons was John Locke, a name indeed held to be among “*the Great Men of Europe*”.

Mather began this part by outlining and granting “a noble Assertion”, stating that “The Matter may yet be a little more exactly settled.” Mather asserted: “Our SAVIOUR has left us the *Laws of his Kingdom* in the *Sacred Scriptures*, and the *Rule* of what we are to *Believe* and *Practice*, in order to Salvation. He has not left an *Authority* with any Man, or Order of Men, to *Interpret* this *Rule*; and impose the Interpretation upon *other Men*. ‘Tis all granted; all allowed. Yea, ‘tis a noble Assertion; we’ll stand by it.” This was the premise of Benjamin Hoadly’s argument in the Bangorian controversy, but it was completely and precisely Locke’s construction (well summarized) in his *Letter Concerning Toleration*,<sup>77</sup> and here Mather agreed to it. Earlier, in this same letter, Mather had set out his adherence to the “Protection from the Government” that every person should enjoy in “any thing in *Religion*, whereof he is not convinced in his Conscience, that GOD requires it of him”. (Of course, “*Principles* and *Blasphemies* directly tending to the Detriment of *Human Society*” may not be protected). However, at the same time he asserted, “That there are certain *Maxims of Piety*, which all who *truly live* unto GOD are *united* in.”<sup>78</sup> It appears that Mather was almost (perhaps really) engaging in a dialogue with Locke, adding where he believed Locke lacked, i.e., “*Terms of Communion*” for “all Good Men”, rather than only civil protections for them. Of course, Locke had offered a single term, the recognition of Jesus as the Messiah.

Mather continued by then presenting Locke’s formula and applying it to the particular “present controversy” that occasioned his writing, by: (1) presenting a specifically Protestant (because denied a Roman Catholic) right of interpretation and (2) illustrating the “present controversy” through a Protestant faced with that dilemma, giving (3) a version of unity which may be agreed and which, (4) upon agreement, the particulars of such an agreed association are spelled out:

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<sup>76</sup> Cotton Mather, *Three Letters*, 8.

<sup>77</sup> Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 11-12.

<sup>78</sup> Cotton Mather, *Three Letters*, 9

- (1) Well; but still every Protestant will have the Right of Interpreting for himself. He is no Genuine *Protestant*, if he gives it up. Now, the Question with the *Protestant*, is, *Who is it, that, according to my Sense of the Sacred Scriptures, is to demand of me the Regards due to them, who duly embrace the Doctrine which is according to Godliness?* In deciding of this *Question*, he judges for none but himself.
- (2) 'Tis not long before he finds considerable Numbers of GOOD Men, who Agree in the same Judgment with him. He finds People of different Sentiments about many things in Religion, but all uniting in This;
- (3) *That a Glorious CHRIST, who is the Eternal and Almighty Son of GOD Incarnate, and Enthroned in our JESUS, is the Redeemer, who has made himself a Sacrifice for us, and on whom we are to trust for our Deliverance from all the Miseries which our Fall from GOD has brought upon us: And, That our Good-Will towards Men should be such, as to do unto them, what we would have them to do unto us.* [Mather's three "Maxims of [ecumenical] Piety"]<sup>79</sup>
- (4) All of these, be their Opinions what they will in *Lesser Matters*, are to him his Brethren in CHRIST, and he decides the Question, for an Union with them. They who agree in this *Decision* of the *Question*, do thereupon associate for an Holy Communion with one another. While they hold this Agreement, they continue in their Communion. If any of them so change their Minds, that they cannot well continue in it, they are at their *liberty* to withdraw. They who never came into the *Agreement*, have nothing *imposed* on them; they are also at their *liberty* to remain where they are, and find out whom they can *unite* withal. Thus *Liberty* lives in the Perfection of it [the *Agreement*]: *The Sons of it sing together, and shout for Joy!*<sup>80</sup>

Here, in Mather's letter, we see exactly Locke's solution as given in his *Letter Concerning Toleration*, but instead of the terms *consent* and *voluntary society* we see *agree* and *association*.<sup>81</sup>

Locke had stated that "since the joyning together of several Members in to this Church-Society...is absolutely free and spontaneous, it necessarily follows, that the right of making its Laws can belong to none but the Society itself". Locke also stated that the very existence of Dissenters from the established Church "unavoidably puts us upon a necessity of deliberating, and consequently allows a liberty of choosing that, which upon consideration, we prefer." And again, Locke formulated what Mather described, in considering the forming of an association: "I consent [after due consideration] that these men have a Ruler of their Church, established by a long Series of Succession as they judge necessary; provided I may have liberty at the same time to join my self to that Society, in which I am perswaded those things are to be found which are necessary to the Salvation of my Soul."<sup>82</sup> And to Mather's "according to my sense of the Sacred Scriptures", Locke pre-offered whether "it be not more

<sup>79</sup> See Stievermann, "Imagining Global Protestantism," 843. See previous footnote's related text.

<sup>80</sup> Cotton Mather, *Three Letters*, 22-23.

<sup>81</sup> Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 9-15.

<sup>82</sup> Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 11.

agreeable to the Church of Christ, to make the Conditions of her Communion consist in such things, and such things only, as the Holy Spirit has in the Holy Scriptures declared, in express Words, to be necessary to Salvation”.<sup>83</sup> Here, we see an important continuity yet difference from Locke to Mather.

We have already clearly seen that Mather does not agree with Locke on following only the “*express Words of Scripture*” but in a sense he advocated instead “*according to my sense of Sacred Scripture*” to replace the former phrase, the latter a better construction, adhering to the priorities of Scripture *with* Reason (indicating perhaps that Locke viewed Scripture *and* Reason as equal authorities while Mather subordinated the latter within the effects of the former). Mather did not agree on other things as well. For example, while Locke thought that the regulation would be founded in “Charity” and “that Faith which works, not by Force, but by Love”, Mather (despite his third maxim) continually claimed that Charity was being abused, referring to “a promiscuous Application of a blind *Charity*, (alas! not *Catholic*, but *Spurious Charity!*)”.<sup>84</sup> However, it is the overall framework of Locke that Mather had adopted and applied, importantly with his own priorities and sense of Scripture, to the controversy surrounding subscription to creeds and confessions in relation to the doctrine of the Trinity. A doctrine that was, in his view, an essential article of the Christian faith and religion. In which case, Mather accepted that voluntary separation was in due order if this (to him) fundamental difference remained. And, it is interesting that where Mather took the vantage of the dissenting person having a “*liberty to withdraw*”, Locke framed the same scenario from the vantage of the religious society: “no Church is bound by the Duty of Toleration to retain any such Person in her Bosom, as, after Admonition, continued obstinately to offend against the Laws of the Society.” Locke continued, “For these being the condition of Communion, and the Bond of the Society, if the Breach of them were permitted without any animadversion, the Society would immediately be thereby dissolved.”<sup>85</sup> Mather could only wonder why the separation was not mutual.

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<sup>83</sup> Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 12.

<sup>84</sup> Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 2; Cotton Mather, *Three Letters*, 24 (see also page 25). On page 6, Mather, with particular reference to Latitudinarians, stated: “They can’t see, that it is any other than *spurious Charity*, and the noble Principle of *Catholick Charity* miserably misapplied and prostituted unto evil Purposes, when it extends unto such a Latitude, that we must admit all sorts of *Hereticks*, and even *Mahometans* themselves, to our *Communion*; and compels us to *communicate* with all those whom it would be an unjust thing to *persecute*.”

<sup>85</sup> Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 13-14.

It is also interesting to note that Mather held forth a change of “Mind” rather than any variability of Conscience as the premise for any dissolution of an agreed association, or “Holy Communion”. And further to the point of Mather’s acquaintance with this process, one need look no further than to the fact that his own congregation had experienced two separations from their specific agreed association, and though the impetus for the separations were not fundamental articles of doctrinal faith, still the pattern of association and dissolution was familiar to Mather.

Mather, building on Locke, perhaps best-stated the purpose (for him) of such an agreed association premised on the Protestant “Right of Interpret[ion]” when he said “surely the Cause of *Liberty* may be so regulated, that the Cause of PIETY shall not be damnified: and *Liberty* will not of necessity involve us into a *Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness*.”<sup>86</sup> Locke had stated regulation was necessary.<sup>87</sup> Mather wanted to assert that regulation in the doctrine of the Trinity was exactly that. He developed this concern even further, however, when he accused his adversaries in the controversy of a plot to undermine the practice of Christian communion and life:

Truly, some of us in *America* are so dull, that we cannot (*or are very loth to!*) see into the Plot of those Gentlemen, who, when they have nobly defended the Cause of *Christian Liberty*, carry the Terms thereof so far; that the *Express Words of Scripture* being subscribed unto, Christians must have no *Liberty* left them to discriminate between the *Righteous* and the *Wicked*, the *Clean* and the *Unclean*, him that *sacrificeth* and him that *sacrificeth* not...

To this he darkly added, that there was “upon the Minds of many Good Men...an Apprehension, that there is a strong and a deep *Conspiracy* in our very sinful Nation, to dethrone the Eternal Son of God”.<sup>88</sup> Locke had denied this sort of conclusion when he mocked the idea that “an Agreement in matters of Religion, were in effect a Conspiracy against the Commonwealth”.<sup>89</sup> And, perhaps more precisely related, Locke argued that “True Religion” consisted in “the regulating of Mens Lives according to the Rules of Vertue and Piety...It is vain for any Man to usurp the Name of Christian, without Holiness of Life, Purity of Manners, and Benignity and Meekness of Spirit”.<sup>90</sup> Locke’s method of discrimination

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<sup>86</sup> Cotton Mather, *Three Letters*, 23.

<sup>87</sup> See Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 10: “...No Church or Company, I say, can in the least subsist and hold together, but will presently dissolve and break to pieces, unless it be regulated by some Laws, and the Members all consent to observe some Order.”

<sup>88</sup> Cotton Mather, *Three Letters*, 23-24.

<sup>89</sup> Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 50.

<sup>90</sup> Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 1-2.

focused on behavior rather than belief. In contrast, Mather saw belief as the living root of behavior.

In the first letter, written the previous year, Mather had also asserted the Lockean solution, though with less effort at application. Here, he used the language of rights with regard to civil government:

‘Tis true, they [Nonsubscribers] are utterly against the *Persecution* of any Men, for their holding of such dangerous and pernicious Errors. They think that all *Good Subjects* and *Good Neighbours*, have a Right unto the Protection of the Civil Government. But they admire at the Rhetorical Flourishes of those Men, who call it a *Persecution*, for Christians to withdraw their *Communion* from such as hold the grievous *Heresies*, which render it impossible for them to carry on their Prayers together.<sup>91</sup>

This division of church and state in matters of doctrinal discipline and communal purity had been present within Mather’s other publications as well, most recently in his *Brief Treatise*, but also percolating in his writings on the New England treatment of the Society of Friends (as already discussed). Benjamin Hoadly had argued this construction in the Bangorian controversy, and it had been discussed at Salter’s Hall, while it was fully displayed in America with the Hemphill Affair in Philadelphia. For Mather, the division of related but separate jurisdictions for the civil magistrate and the churches had not really been a matter of contention. But rather, for him, it was *within* the authority of Scripture that the division over methods and measures ultimately ran its course. Scripture was *the* primary authority, but “the *Express Words of Scripture*” were an insufficient safeguard.<sup>92</sup> For Mather, Scripture was an authority that could only be accessed through true piety, “a true *Living to God*”.<sup>93</sup> Hence the crisis of Scripture authority in the Trinitarian controversy. As Mather wrote in the first letter, upon the news of the controversy surrounding the Trinity: “the most grievous Tidings that ever passed over the *Atlantick* to us...the Tidings of *Schism* arisen among our *United Brethren*, upon the Opinions which disturb, and even destroy the Faith, in which all the Saints for many Ages have still found the *Life of their Hand*, in living unto God”.<sup>94</sup> Yet, the solution

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<sup>91</sup> Cotton Mather, *Three Letters*, 5. See Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 15.

<sup>92</sup> See Cotton Mather, *Three Letters*, 17: Both Socinians and “*Romish Idolaters*, will not they subscribe to the *Express Words of Scripture!*”

<sup>93</sup> Cotton Mather, *Three Letters*, 5.

<sup>94</sup> Cotton Mather, *Three Letters*, 3. See also page 12: “Whereas the *Arian* and the *Gentilist*, obtruding upon us *Another CHRIST*, than He who is *our Life*; this *kills* our *PIETY* at once.”

was found in strengthening precisely what was threatened. Ultimately, it was true piety that Mather maintained would unite and purify “the children of God”:

[Non-subscribers, with Subscribers] mightily approve and pursue the Design of making the *Terms of Communion* to be no other than the *Terms of Salvation*; and of all good Men coming professedly and explicitly to unite on the Basis of that PIETY, on which all the children of God are indeed for ever united. But yet...[Non-subscribers] are at a loss how they shall suppose the *Terms of Salvation* complied withal [without the Trinity]...or how shall they suppose, that Men come up to that PIETY, which will oblige us to acknowledge them as our Brethren in CHRIST.<sup>95</sup>

According to Mather, the "*Terms of Salvation*" that the Non-subscribers would like to unite on were impossible given their lack of the (Athanasian) Trinity—the very terms of salvation. Without the Trinity, "that PIETY", whereby "Brethren in CHRIST" recognize one another, is impossible to "come up to". It is upon the "Basis of that PIETY"—true piety (i.e., practiced in and through God in Trinity)—that "the children of God are indeed for ever united."

Finally, New England Congregationalism, with its perceived weakness of "congregational autonomy,"<sup>96</sup> had schooled Mather well for dealing with such a doctrinal fissure and splintering among the religious associations of yet ecumenically minded English Dissenters, but the separations were keenly felt and lamented. Also, in a very real sense, Congregationalists had been practicing a form of the “Lockean solution” long (and well) before Locke. Indeed, the New England Way had (unintentionally) proven the pattern for (associational) living in increasingly pluralistic societies.<sup>97</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Cotton Mather, *Three Letters*, 4.

<sup>96</sup> Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 216.

<sup>97</sup> See John Coffey, “Puritanism and Liberty Revisited: The Case for Toleration in the English Revolution”, *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 4 (Dec., 1998) 961-982; and, Manfred Svensson, “John Owen and John Locke: confessionalism, doctrinal minimalism, and toleration”, *History of European Ideas*, Vol. 43, Issue 4 (2017), 302-316. See also Watts, *Dissenters*, 260-61.

### 3.2 – The Splintering of Dissent: Salter’s Hall and James Peirce

Following the legislative failure of comprehension and the passage of toleration, wherein Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Baptists found themselves permanently on the outside of the established Church of England (despite comprehension efforts up to the mid-eighteenth century), they soon sought ways to band together. Most readily, this was accomplished in 1691 under the *Heads of Agreement Assented to by the United Ministers In and About London: Formerly called Presbyterian and Congregational*. Increase Mather had played an active, even essential role in this ecumenical endeavor. And while the agreement in London “utterly failed”<sup>1</sup> relatively soon thereafter, the original served as a model for other nonconformists elsewhere, including in Exeter and New England. In 1699, a new Congregational church in Boston controversially established itself in the spirit of this “intersectarian harmony” with a minister (Benjamin Colman) ordained by the London Presbytery while yet a member of the Mather’s North Church. The controversy was eventually resolved with the congregation declaring its adherence to the *Heads of Agreement* despite an earlier and bolder *Manifesto* that announced a program following “the UNITED BRETHREN in *London*, and throughout all *England*” that was in fact more fully intended to redirect parts of their worship away from that regularly practiced by “the Churches of CHRIST here in *New-England*.” The new harmony played out in further ways in Connecticut, as we have seen with the Saybrook Platform, and will see subsequently with the Breck and Hemphill Affairs that concerned the Hampshire Association of ministers and the Philadelphia Synod, respectively. In 1702, the London Dissenters formed a more enduring Committee of the Three Denominations<sup>2</sup> to which the Exeter Assembly appealed for advice when a number of their ministers were found to hold Subordinationist views of the Trinity.<sup>3</sup>

For approximately two decades prior to the vote taken at Salters’ Hall that decided those advice, a significant latitude was present in the education of Nonconformists within many of their academies.<sup>4</sup> In 1696, Isaac Watts reported that his tutor had ranged from “the

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<sup>1</sup> Walker, *Creeds and Platforms*, 452.

<sup>2</sup> See N.C. Hunt, *Two Early Political Associations: The Quakers and the Dissenting Deputies in the Age of Sir Robert Walpole* (Oxford: Oxford University Clarendon Press, 1961), 115.

<sup>3</sup> Silverman, *Life and Times*, 140-42; 147-49 (as quoted therein). See Sealey, “Church Authority,” 24-26, 38; and Watts, *Dissenters*, 372-76; Walker, *Creeds and Platforms*, 443-52; Stevens, *Protestant Pluralism*, 20. See also Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 215-17.

<sup>4</sup> For more on Dissenting Academies and the “considerable variation from academy to academy,” see Mark Burden, “Academical Learning in the Dissenters’ Private Academies, 1660-1720,” PhD Thesis (Queen Mary, University of London, 2012), 252-55 and 202-05; see also chapters 3 and 4. Burden argues that while there was a wide array of sources discussed, the intent (tied to funding) was to generate ministers acceptable to

camp of Socinius...almost to the tents of John Calvin". Thomas Secker, who was later to conform to the established church and become archbishop of Canterbury, wrote in 1711 that his tutor sought for his pupils "all imaginable liberty of making objections against his opinion, and prosecuting them as far as we can".<sup>5</sup> And Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* was no stranger to the students of these academies.<sup>6</sup> That said, Gibson relates that Locke's influence in the first two decades of the eighteenth century is less clear. Accordingly, Gibson believes that (in the words of F.R. Ward) "to [Bishop Hoadly] belongs the credit (or blame) for the introduction and transmission of Lockean liberalism to the eighteenth century and beyond."<sup>7</sup> Starting in about 1690, the Presbyterian minister Joseph Hallet (1656-1722) operated a dissenting academy in Exeter that became noteworthy for its role in instigating a controversy over subscription, specifically to creedal Trinitarianism. This occurred first in Exeter, in the southwest of England that held a higher population of Presbyterians,<sup>8</sup> and then at a special conference of London's Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Baptist ministers at Salter's Hall.<sup>9</sup> And while the historical and theological scholarship of Whiston and Clarke provided much of the nuance of the doctrinal debate amongst Dissent that led to the subscription controversy, Gibson claims that "the principal inspiration and encouragement of Dissenters and others to claim their ecclesiastical and civil liberties" was the Anglican Bishop Benjamin Hoadly.<sup>10</sup>

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congregations; therefore, the academies "only indirectly" drove theological change as it was "impossible to persuade all students to agree with accepted positions", that, "[n]evertheless" did diversify in the end (253-54).

<sup>5</sup> As quoted in Watts, *Dissenters*, 370. John Fox recorded in his *Memoirs*, that before conforming Secker had become devoted to Clarke's "scheme about the Trinity" and was exceedingly pleased with "what Mr. Peirce does at Exeter" (as quoted in Burden, "Academical Learning" (2012), 248. Secker also studied Whiston's *Primitive Christianity Revived* (1711), was influenced by Thomas Rundle before his entering Oxford in 1721, and "introduced to London Society by Samuel Clarke...and George Berkeley," even receiving ordination by the bishop of Durham in St. James's Piccadilly (where he would later become rector in 1733), see Jeremy Gregory, "Thomas Secker (1693-1768)," *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>6</sup> See Watts, *Dissenters*, 370. See also Sealey, "Church Authority," 27, 31-33; and Burden, "Academical Learning," 179, 185. For more on Locke's "influence", see Alan P.F. Sell, *John Locke and Eighteenth-Century Divines* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), 4-7.

<sup>7</sup> As quoted in Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 101-02. See also Bradley, "The Religious Origins of Radical Politics," 195-96. Bradley writes that Hoadly "adopted" and "popularized" the view of Edmund Calamy Jr. (as delivered in Calamy's *Defense of Moderate Non-Conformity* (1703-05)) in the Bangorian controversy and that this therefore "bequeath[ed] to Hoadly as much respect among Nonconformists as they later accorded John Locke." Gibson also notes Calamy's observation of the consistency between his views and Hoadly's sermon (see Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 165).

<sup>8</sup> See Watts, *Dissenters*, 272. See William Gibson, *Religion and the Enlightenment, 1600-1800: Conflict and the Rise of Civic Humanism in Taunton* (Peter Lang, 2007), 246-53.

<sup>9</sup> See Gibson, *Religion and the Enlightenment*, 246-49.

<sup>10</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 40, see also page 165-71. Gibson's statement is in relation to the whole of the century, but still applies to this seminal moment for Dissent toward the beginning of the century where

Preaching in Exeter at the time of the controversy was James Peirce. Peirce had, following his grammar school education, from 1689 to 1692 studied at Utrecht, and then at Leiden until he returned to England in 1695. Before his ministerial duties began, he had studied privately in the Bodleian Library, Oxford. He had a knack for avoiding denominational squabbles and was admired by his fellow Presbyterian ministers. In 1702 he became the minister of a joint Presbyterian-Congregationalist meeting in Cambridge.<sup>11</sup> And it was there, David Wykes informs us, that Peirce “formed a close friendship with William Whiston, who thought Peirce ‘the most learned of all the dissenting teachers that I have known’.”<sup>12</sup> Just before a move to Exeter in 1713 at the earnest invitation of a congregation there, he confronted the perplexities of the Trinity that Whiston had urged him to investigate. Wykes states that Peirce “came to realize that the theology in which he had been bred was really Sabellian. Nevertheless, he became convinced that error on this question was not fundamental, and that ‘the safest way’ was to keep closely to scripture.” As such, he maintained with Clarke the subordination of the Son, but denied that he held Arian beliefs. The difficulties of Exeter arose, however, in 1716 when the Clarkean views of a group of young ministers (connected with Hallet’s academy) had been discovered via the lax conversation of one of their number, a recent graduate, Hubert Stogdon.<sup>13</sup> (Gibson refers to this occurrence as the “Stogdon affair”).<sup>14</sup> Such nomenclature corresponds nicely with the Hemphill and Breck Affairs (discussed later) that involved other young ministers). And while Peirce was away in London one Sunday, the visiting minister took the opportunity and berated some of his congregation for maintaining “damnable heresies.” Peirce complained of the treatment but to no avail, and he subsequently complied with a request to preach on the atonement of Christ, and the controversy was seemingly dropped.<sup>15</sup>

However, when it became known in 1718 that Peirce had subsequently signed Stogdon’s recommendation for ordination, along with Hallet and John Withers, the other

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Hoadly’s figure loomed large in the related controversies of the day. See also Thomas, “Non-Subscription Amongst Dissenters,” 169n1, n3, 180-86. See also Sealey, “Church Authority,” 39. For more on the influence of Clarke and Whiston before after Salters’ Hall among (particularly young) Dissenting ministers, see Burden, “Academical Learning” (2012), 244, 246-49, 253.

<sup>11</sup> See David L. Wykes, “James Peirce (1674-1726)”, *Oxford DNB*. (page 1 of 7)

<sup>12</sup> Wykes, “James Peirce”, *Oxford DNB*. (page 1 of 7)

<sup>13</sup> Wykes, “James Peirce”, *Oxford DNB*. See also Patrick Woodland, “Hubert Stogdon (1692-1728)”, *Oxford DNB*. See also Mark Burden, “Academical Learning in the Dissenters’ Private Academies, 1660-1720,” PhD thesis (Queen Mary, University of London, 2012), 247.

<sup>14</sup> Gibson, *Religion and the Enlightenment*, 247.

<sup>15</sup> Wykes, “James Peirce”, *Oxford DNB*.

senior minister in Exeter and their fellow ministers in the Exeter assembly were outraged.<sup>16</sup> In September, when each member of the assembly was asked their position on the Trinity, Pierce stated that he believed “the Son and Holy Ghost to be divine persons, but subordinate to the Father”. Subsequently, in November, the three ministers were asked to submit a statement of their orthodoxy to the Committee of Thirteen laymen (that handled the Presbyterian finances and buildings in Exeter), but the committee members received “no satisfaction”. Unsure of how to proceed, the committee sent a request for advice to London and received back that they should ask for neighboring ministers to make a judgement. Seven ministers were invited to make a judgement and, following a meeting with the three in question, these determined the situation was such “That there are some errors in doctrine which are sufficient ground” for congregations to “withdraw from their ministers holding such errors”.<sup>17</sup> Sealy notes that here, in the first mention of “removal from office” in the controversy, that “[t]he influence of Locke’s contractual understanding of the Church is seen here among even the orthodox party who saw the dispute as the ministers relinquishing their obligations.” However, before acting on their resolution, the seven ministers also desired their decision to be ratified by the London ministers. Meanwhile, at about the same time, Peirce contacted those ministers in London he knew or had reason to believe would sympathize with his view of the situation. As a result, the Committee of the Three Denominations in London determined that the best way to proceed was to call a meeting of all London’s Nonconforming ministers to deliberate and decide on the most appropriate “articles of advice” that they should send in reply to the Exeter assembly.<sup>18</sup>

For many of the London ministers present for the debate, held on 19 and 24 February 1719, it was not a question of orthodoxy or heresy but of church discipline and liberty of conscience, and since the method of pursuing church discipline via subscription was available, the matter boiled down to whether one supported or opposed that method as a Christian form of discipline. Many of the participating ministers claimed then (and scholars do still) that while the question of subscription concerned the doctrine of the Trinity, in this case, it may have ostensibly concerned any other doctrine or practice. I disagree due to the fact that up until the vote at Salter’s Hall the Athanasian doctrine had been consistently upheld as *the* deciding marker of Anglo-Protestant Christianity, and therefore the primary

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<sup>16</sup> See Woodland, “Hubert Stogdon”, *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>17</sup> As quoted in Sealy, “Church Authority” (2010), 48.

<sup>18</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, 374; and Sealey, “Church Authority” (2010), 48 (quote), 44-49.

doctrine available to so irreparably divide on amongst so many and already ecumenically minded ministers. And yet, for ministers who sought to shift attention away from questions surrounding *the* doctrine, even if a particular and fundamental understanding of the Trinity was at stake, on what authority could a person's reasonable, sincere, and conscientious beliefs about the meaning of scripture be bound? What was the authority of conciliar creeds and confessions? Hoadly was mentioned in the course of the debate.<sup>19</sup> Hoadly had seemingly upheld the right of "visible Churches" to discipline and govern their sacraments, but had rejected the overbearing clerical claims to authority in relation to either conscience or salvation.<sup>20</sup> At what point did ministerial fellowship and lay membership rely on shared belief in the meaning of often difficult passages? For many of these Dissenting ministers, the question of discipline and belief was then fundamentally tied into the corollary of the relation between belief in the creedal Trinity and Christianity, the very boundaries of salvation.

Practically, the body of ministers assembled at Salter's Hall were, in a real sense, faced with the same situation that had been presented to the Upper House of Convocation upon the complaint of the Lower in relation to Samuel Clarke five years previous (especially since in the Exeter assembly it was Clarke's ideas that had been condemned).<sup>21</sup> How would English Dissent comparatively respond? Unlike the bishops who obviated the trial and subsequent vote that at the time they were certain would have promulgated further acrimony and division in the Church of England, the ministers decided to offer a clear vote in the course of their deliberations. The Anglican bishops likely saw their caution vindicated in the resulting divisiveness among Dissent's ministers following the vote at Salter's Hall. On the most pivotal point discussed by the ministers (as they sought to determine what advice to send to Exeter): "that no human compositions, or interpretations of the doctrine of the Trinity, should be made a part of those articles of advice", the vote tally was fifty-seven to fifty-three.<sup>22</sup> When informed of the ministers' vote at Salter's Hall, Hoadly reportedly declared it "the first convocation or assembly of divines, since the time of the apostles, that had carried a

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<sup>19</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 102. For further information on this citation of Hoadly, see John Towill Rutt, ed. *An Historical Account of My Own Life...By Edmund Calamy, D.D.*, Volume II, second edition (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1830), 408n: "...the majority...pretended to cite Dr. Hoadley, Bishop of Bangor, as favouring this opinion" that "it is not necessary to profess their belief of the Trinity in any other words than are found in the New Testament, and that the framing and imposing of creeds was mere popery."

<sup>20</sup> See Rupp, *Religion in England*, 99-100.

<sup>21</sup> This is also supported by Isaac Watts letter to Cotton Mather (discussed later): "...several Ministers in the West-country have departed from the common faith of the Trinity & entred into Dr. Clarks scheme or approached neer it".

<sup>22</sup> See Watts, *Dissenters*, 375.

question of liberty.”<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately for the accused ministers in Exeter, the local Presbyterian meeting houses (likely aware of the vote) decided not to wait for the official advices and to exclude them from their services and fellowship. In 1720, Peirce and Hallet set up a new meeting and ministered to a healthy congregation of three-hundred.<sup>24</sup>

In the aftermath, Isaac Watts wrote candidly to a concerned fellow Congregationalist, New England’s Cotton Mather, a descriptive assessment of the fallout and “unhappy Divisions amongst the Ministers of London,” with a knowledge of the proceedings that bears some attention.<sup>25</sup> Watts stated that ill- health had prevented his participation in the debate and controversy, but that as “by all the Pamphlets I have read & Conversations with the chief of both partys I think I should have been engaged on neither side if I had been in the midst of them.” To which, he added that “Matters have been cary’d in my opinion to extremes on both sides, & I have labour’d what I could towards a reconciliation.” And stated later that “some of my Brethren who write in this Controversy have too much Anger mingled with their [gall].” As far as his own views were concerned, he wrote that “the Athanasian Scheme in general to be the best I have yet seen & the nearest to Scripture,” however, he crucially added, “yet I cannot think it necessary to Salvation”. To this he reasoned: “for great & good Men are certain gone to Heaven that have differ’d from it” and then added (with a few telling terms and phrases) his boundaries of Christian belief, that

where a man Sincerely acknowledges the omnipotence & omniscience of Christ, the proper Sacrifice, Satisfaction & Atonement of his Death, & his alsufficiency of Mediation, Intercession, Vital Influence & Government, and believe him to be of a nature so far superior to all Creatures as to answer these purposes, & yet not equall with God the Father, I cannot think this Man shall be excluded from Heaven; however his notions may happen to be inconsistent with each other.

Watts’s seeming deference to the “Athanasian Scheme”, followed by his allowance of the phrases, “superior to all Creatures”, and “not equall with God the Father”, would have been immediately uncomfortable to his New England counterpart. And his use of “Sincerity” in calculations of salvation discloses just how ubiquitous that doctrine had become amongst dissenters. Furthermore, Watts was treating the received doctrine of the Trinity as *adiaphora*, something the Subscribers simply could not fathom.

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<sup>23</sup> As quoted in Thomas, “Non-Subscription Amongst Dissenters,” 181. See also Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 170-71.

<sup>24</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, 375.

<sup>25</sup> Isaac Watts [to Cotton Mather], 11 February 1720, Mass. Hist. Soc., MS N-1013, *Benjamin Colman Papers*. See also Stievermann, Introduction to *Biblia Americana*, Vol. 10, 120 (draft copy).

Watts had previously given the outline of the events and motives as they led to and transpired at Salter's Hall, noting Clarke's role in Exeter,<sup>26</sup> he then attempted to comfort Mather that the issue was not the doctrine but the matter of subscription. For while "there may be three or four" ministers in London that would not agree to, what he had referred to as, "the common faith of the Trinity", "there were above Eighty that refused to subscribe".<sup>27</sup> And those latter were clearly not opposed to the doctrine but rather disapproved of the "disorder" and "anger on both sides", to which Watts added, their more palpable "fear also lest these words should be made a Test to exclude all persons from the Communion or from the Ministry that would not comply with them." Watts concluded his description by delineating the camps into a pair of competing jealousies: "one part was jealous for the common explication of the Trinity" while the other was just "as jealous for Christian Liberty & Charity."

Watts then turned to the differences of opinion on whether the "Athanasian Scheme [is] necessary to Salvation" and disclosed his opinion to Mather that they are wrong who hold that the "meer words of Scripture are sufficient" and who yet denied that this would preclude Socinians, as well as "all other Heretics" from Communion. He ended by offering his own solution that allowed a freedom of expression coupled with satisfying the gatekeepers to Communion and the Ministry (a perhaps truly Congregational suggestion):

The method therefore that I have often & publickly proposed to preserve truth & peace together is this that in cases of admission to Communion, to the Ministry &c. The person proposing should give such a sense of Scripture, & express the Christian faith in his own words in such a manner as may satisfie the persons concerned to admit him, that he holds the Doctrines in their esteem sufficient for Salvation.

This, Watts said, would secure not only the "Truth...as far as Christ has given us power to do here upon Earth" but "the just Liberty of Christians, Ministers & Churches".<sup>28</sup> This explication that Watts provided to Mather, of the stakes and boundaries of the debate, demonstrates the consensus of concepts but not conceptions that had advanced in the course of the trials of both Anglican and Dissent. Furthermore, Watts's account does not ultimately

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<sup>26</sup> See footnote 21.

<sup>27</sup> See Sealy, "Church Authority," 36-65.

<sup>28</sup> Isaac Watts [to Cotton Mather], 11 February 1720. See also Stievermann, Introduction to *Biblia Americana*, Vol. 10, 120 (draft copy).

support Sealy's (and David Steer's) approach that renders the doctrinal debate over the Trinity as not core to the subscription controversy at Exeter and Salter's Hall.<sup>29</sup>

Michael Watts identified from the narrow margin of those votes that Presbyterians (more likely) and General Baptists (almost wholly) sided with Non-Subscription and Congregationalists and Particular Baptists (nearly all of each) sided with Subscription. Whether to subscribe or not subscribe concerned whether one preferred allowing "human compositions and interpretations" (creeds and confessions) beyond *sola scriptura* when defining the Christian/Protestant faith. In large part, it was a crucial question about the authority of the Bible, and the extent to which that authority could be inerrantly understood. Watts then informs us that the fears of Subscribers (that Non-Subscription would lead to a departure from the belief in the Trinity) were, in fact, well founded. In England, nearly all Presbyterian and General Baptist churches went through a process of "slow evolution" rather than outright revolution. Watts states that "within a century most Presbyterian meetings and many of the General Baptist churches connected with the General Assembly had become Unitarian, while the Congregational and Particular Baptist churches not only remained Trinitarian, but continued to honour the theology of John Calvin."<sup>30</sup>

Peirce's defense of his views, and the controversy in general, have not been assessed in prior scholarship in relation to recourse to the discursive categories of Scripture, the Church Fathers, and Reason. Of course, Scripture was raised as the standard for Christian liberty, but Peirce's use of Scripture in the argument has not been detailed. I will offer a representative treatment with regard to all three of these categories in the doctrinal debate. To begin, Peirce was particularly taken with Samuel Clarke's method in *Scripture Doctrine*, and thereby came to see that "I must part with some beloved opinions, or else quit my notion of the authority of the holy scripture."<sup>31</sup> Peirce was not particular in his use of the Old Testament, quoting from Isaiah 4:6 in a sermon on Christ.<sup>32</sup> Much more so, the Johannine Comma proved prominent in the debate. Peirce related in his account how a sermon on the "disputed text" by one of the ministers caused an uproar, and other ministers had also disowned it. His own published view was that well before the controversies at Exeter, he had come to believe "this text was not sufficient to prove three persons were one in essence, as it

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<sup>29</sup> See Sealy, "Church Authority," 11-12.

<sup>30</sup> Watts, *Dissenters*, 375-76.

<sup>31</sup> Peirce, *Western Inquisition*, 8. See also Sealey, "Church Authority," 40.

<sup>32</sup> Peirce, *Western Inquisition*, 24.

seemed plainly to speak only of their being one in testimony; but yet I was very unwilling to part with what had so long pass'd among protestants for scripture". It was Clarke that "wrested it" from him to the conviction "that the text was not genuine." More significant, however, is Peirce's cognizance of the implications that such a conviction held, perhaps especially for a minister: "I had a dread of the consequences of peoples knowing how the scriptures had been abused by this interpolation, lest they should abate their respect to them in general."<sup>33</sup> Peirce claimed that his statement to the Exeter Assembly did not contain any lengthy quotation of Scripture because then, as was the case with one other minister, he would only have recourse to the authority of St. Paul, "whose words any Arian or Socinian, or other heretic would make use of and assent to". Instead, Peirce explained that his chosen expression in that circumstance was such that had "not only been born with, but applauded as orthodox, in the writings of the ancient fathers, and modern divines."<sup>34</sup> In this he was heavily indebted to both Daniel Whitby and "the very learned Dr. Clarke", for the extensive quotations of the "ancient fathers, and modern divines" in their works.<sup>35</sup>

Peirce was particular to quote Whitby on not only the *antenicene* Fathers but on the "learned doctors of the Roman church" and their acknowledgement that "many of the christian writers, who lived before the council of Nice, spake unadvisedly of the mystery of the Trinity." For example, Whitby had referenced "the learned Petavius" as relating, "That many of the ancients, before the council of *Nice*, held there were more principles of things than one, and that they differ'd in *nature, substance, and dignity*, so that one was greater than the other; and that long before *Apollinaris*, they held the *Son* was *greater* than the *Spirit*, and the *Father* than the *Son*." Peirce explained the significance of such Catholic writers: "since the papists are the most zealous asserters of the common doctrine, and ambitious above all men to prove, that the ancient fathers held the same doctrine with themselves; we need not doubt that the *antenicene* fathers were not favourable to it, since the most learned men of the *Roman* communion are forced to acknowledge as much." He continued, "I would not have any one suppose, that I approve of all the expressions which are here charged upon the ancients: 'tis enough for me, that it appears they must have look'd upon the *Father* as *supreme*, and the *Son*, and *Spirit* as *subordinate*."<sup>36</sup> Clearly, the well documented use, even if

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<sup>33</sup> Peirce, *Western Inquisition*, 35-36. 1 John 5:7 was discussed at other points by Peirce on pages 147 and 158, the latter in some fashion reflecting its capacity to signal to others where one stood in the debate.

<sup>34</sup> Peirce, *Western Inquisition*, 113.

<sup>35</sup> Peirce, *Western Inquisition*, 113. See also page 119 for his acknowledgement of Clarke.

<sup>36</sup> Peirce, *Western Inquisition*, 113-115.

not the priority, of the Church Fathers within the Church of England was significantly problematized by the Trinitarian debates.<sup>37</sup>

Peirce was not especially assertive of Reason, at least not any more so than his opponents. He did highlight Stogdon's exultation: "I glory and rejoice in [my Subordinationist views], and bless God that I can read my Bible with more rational satisfaction and understanding than I could before".<sup>38</sup> For Peirce's part, he could only relate that after reading Clarke, he "was soon convinc'd the common opinion could not reasonably be esteem'd a fundamental article of the christian faith".<sup>39</sup> He did follow Clarke (and Locke) in equating person and being.<sup>40</sup> And therein, it is not insignificant to note, that while Dissenting Subordinationists often drew upon Locke's philosophy to equate person and being, Dissenting Athanasians exercised Locke's theories of toleration as they applied to membership in voluntary societies. Sealy points out that, "While Locke was discussing the authority of the state, Non-subscribers applied this principle to the power of the Church in their arguments against demanding belief in doctrines beyond Fundamental Articles."<sup>41</sup> However, as will be seen in the Hemphill Affair, this claim was successfully rejected by those supporting subscription and what Peirce called "the more common doctrine of the Trinity" (i.e., Athanasianism).<sup>42</sup>

Peirce did not accept the ascription of Arian, nor did others. In his account of the controversy, Peirce included a conversation between the young Hubert Stogdon and another minister who directly asked Stogdon if he was an Arian. Similar to Whiston, Stogdon replied "carelessly and inaccurately enough, yes, 'twas so." For "I knew I was what they would call an Arian, but I knew I was not of Arius's opinion in several points, for which he was condemn'd, and in doubt about others." At the moment when Stogdon was asked this question, he was "then in suspence, whether the Nicene council was not in the right, in asserting the Son to be consubstantial with the Father". Instead, Stogdon subsequently offered: "I believe the Father to be the only true God, and Jesus Christ (whether consubstantial or not, eternal or not, points I had not yet determin'd) to be his Son."<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See Quantin, *Church of England and Christian Antiquity*, 396-411.

<sup>38</sup> Peirce, *Western Inquisition*, 42.

<sup>39</sup> Peirce, *Western Inquisition*, 9.

<sup>40</sup> For example, see Pierce, *Western Inquisition*, 33.

<sup>41</sup> Sealy, "Church Authority," 33.

<sup>42</sup> Peirce, *Western Inquisition*, 190.

<sup>43</sup> Pierce, *Western Inquisition*, 42. See also Sealey, "Church Authority," 40.

Stogdon was correct to believe the minister would think his beliefs were Arian and he was only able to secure a pulpit, with the help of Peirce and Hallet, outside the jurisdiction of the Exeter Assembly. I will note here that the controversy over Stogdon's ordination and securing a pulpit proved a portent in the transatlantic world of Dissent, as young ministers struggled to either merge or uphold their education within the ministerial requirements of their profession. As will be discussed later, with regard to Samuel Hemphill, Robert Breck, and Jonathan Mayhew, ordinations and pulpit settlements proved to be a significant source for showcasing doctrinal controversy. That now said, Hallet clearly asserted the "Doctrine of Subordination" to be "in the TRINITY" in his pamphlet *The Belief of Subordination of the Son of GOD to his FATHER No Characteristick of an Arian* (1719).<sup>44</sup> The traditional nomenclature was indeed in dispute.<sup>45</sup>

The aged Hallet's intent was to offer a modest demonstration that subordinationism was "no novel doctrine" for Anglican, Dissent, and Reformed divines. He quoted four bishops of the established church, including Archbishop Wake, and ten more of their clergy, including Daniel Whitby. He then quoted ten dissenting ministers, before quoting six "Foreign Refom'd Divines" including Calvin.<sup>46</sup> Each of these basically argued for the relative subordination of the Son and Spirit, but tended to uphold their co-essential equality. That said, there was a clear priority of the Father as "the Fountain of the Deity". An example or two will suffice to give some representation of Hallet's recourse to (ostensibly) supporting sources for the doctrine of subordination within the Trinity.

Hallet quoted a book written in 1703 by Joseph Boyse (1660-1728), Thomas Emlyn's one-time ministerial colleague in Dublin (and of use to Franklin in the Hemphill Affair).<sup>47</sup> The book, *A Vindication of the True Deity of our Blessed Saviour*, had been composed in answer to Emlyn's *Scripture Account* in the heat of that hardly forgotten controversy among Presbyterians, in fact, Boyse published a third edition in 1719. Boyse had asserted, in writing against Emlyn, that "The Father may be said to be above the Lord Jesus Christ, (1.) with Respect to his Humane Nature, (2) with Respect to the Eternal *Generation* of his Divine

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<sup>44</sup> Hallet, *Belief of the Subordination*, 4.

<sup>45</sup> See Sealey, "Church Authority," 39: "Their 'Arianism' was not a continuation of fourth century teaching of Arius...rather the term in the eighteenth century referred to any anti-Trinitarian teaching." Sealey misses that the definition of "Trinitarian" was also not ceded by men like Clarke (referred to in his prior sentence). See also Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 142.

<sup>46</sup> Hallet, *Belief in the Subordination*, 15, 17.

<sup>47</sup> A.W. Godfrey Brown, "Joseph Boyse (1660-1728)," *Oxford DNB*. See Kevin Slack, "Benjamin Franklin and the Reasonableness of Christianity," in *Church History*, Vol. 90, Iss. 1 (March 2021), 74-75.

Person”.<sup>48</sup> Boyse went on to state that, “We acknowledge a *Priority* in the Order of Subsisting to be *peculiar to the Father*, who is therefore call’d the *Fountain of the Deity*.” Boyse explained the relationship between the Father and the Son by way of analogy with any Father and Son: “A Son is equal to his Father in Respect of the Human Nature he derives from him, but inferior in that relative Capacity of a Son. And on this Account,” he continued, “the Father is sometimes in Scripture call’d GOD by Way of *Eminency*, and propos’d as the *ultimate* Object of [Religious] Worship.”<sup>49</sup> Equal in nature, but, as Boyse continued in the published passage, “the divine Nature as primarily subsisting in the *Person of the Father*.”<sup>50</sup> Per Boyse, then, aseity is not ascribed to the Son nor inherent in the Person of the Son as it is “in the Person of the Father”.

For another example, Hallet approvingly quoted the Church of England clergyman and devotional writer, John Scott (1639-1695).<sup>51</sup> Scott upheld equality for the Father, Son, and Spirit “as to their Godhead” and “yet, in Order of Nature, and in Respect of their Personal Properties, the Third is *inferior*, the Second *Superiour*, and the First *Supreme*...being unequal in those Personal Properties, by which they stand related to each other”. Scott saw “as very reasonable, that according to these their Personal *Inequalities* they should be *Subordinate* to one another, and consequently, that the Father, who is the *Fountain of Divinity*, should be Supreme in the Divine Monarchy”.<sup>52</sup> This was, in fact, similar to at least part of Cotton Mather’s understanding of the Trinity, but while he would have subordinated the second and third persons of the Trinity, he would not divide their divinity, or their subsisting in the *same* nature.

In both of these examples, this emphasis on the Father as “the Fountain of the Deity” correspond to aspects of Cotton Mather’s *Brief Treatise* (1713), written in part (it appears) to Whiston after Clarke’s *Scripture Doctrine* was published but before the charges of the Lower House of Convocation had been leveled against it. Mather strongly asserted “That in the Infinite and Eternal *Godhead*, there are *Three Subsistences*, who have instructed us to call them, The *FATHER*, and the *SON*, and the *HOLY-SPIRIT* which *Three*...notwithstanding

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<sup>48</sup> Hallet, *Belief in the Subordination*, 11.

<sup>49</sup> Hallet, *Belief in the Subordination*, 11-12. Hallet left out the term “Religious” that was original to Boyse’s quote, and mistakenly added a comma after “ultimate”, which I accordingly leave out.

<sup>50</sup> Boyse, *A Vindication...* (1703), 36. In Hallet’s publication the quote is mistakenly referenced to be on page 26. For the third edition of *A Vindication...* (1719) the quote is on page 25.

<sup>51</sup> See Richard J. Ginn, “John Scott (1638/9-1695),” *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>52</sup> Hallet, *Belief in the Subordination*, 8.

some *Distinguishing Characters* that belong to each of them, yet are as *mutually Conscious* to each other, as One Person can be to himself; so that they are in truth, *Essentially* and *Numerically* the *One True God*.” Yet, dissimilar to Scott, Mather held that there was “One, Pure, uncompounded Nature of God” that “may be communicated unto *Three* Eternal Persons”.<sup>53</sup> However, this unity of three persons in the Divine Nature does experience subordination. “Tho’ the *Father* be the Fountain of the Deity, and the *Son* Begotten of the Father, be in this Regard Subordinate unto the Father, and the *Holy-Spirit* proceeding from the Father and the Son be therein Subordinate unto the Father and the Son, yet they are all *Equal*, in Power, in Knowledge, in Goodness, and in Glory.”<sup>54</sup> This subordination perhaps becomes more difficult to square with their unity in the Divine Nature that Mather first declared when he subsequently explains what happens to the Son when “The *Kingdom*...managed by the *Son of God* in our JESUS, will cease, when the Illustrious Ends of it are all accomplished.” Mather states that “Then, the *Son of God* no longer having such a *Distinct Kingdom* of His own, shall return to His Natural Subordination to the Father, and Reign with the *Father* and the *Holy-Spirit*, One God, Blessed for ever.”<sup>55</sup> Such language makes it difficult to distinguish always the Subordinationist view and the Athanasian view of the Trinity, but for Mather it is clear that he ascribed full divinity to consist in the relational Being of the Three Persons subsisting in one eternal substance, and that the term “Natural Subordination” should refer to the natural relation of Father and Son, and not to the consubstantial “Nature of God”. The concern that Athanasian ministers had regarding Subordinationism was not about the relational subordination between the Father and Son, but whether the Father’s “distinguishing characteristic” of aseity became a distinguishing mark of the divine nature itself. And in turn, for the Subordinationist ministers, whether Athanasianism had separated the eternal, originating source for the divine nature from the person of the Father.

As was observed with regard to Clarke, the distinction between Subordinationism and either Athanasianism or Arianism proper lay primarily with the co-eternality of the Father, Son, and Spirit and/or the definition(s) of eternity. Where Subordinationists followed the univocal use of the term *person*, there was an equivocal use of the term *eternal*. The aseity ascribed to the Father rendered the co-self-existence of two (let alone three) self-originating

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<sup>53</sup> Mather, *Brief Treatise*, 28-29.

<sup>54</sup> Mather, *Brief Treatise*, 30.

<sup>55</sup> Mather, *Brief Treatise*, 40-41.

persons problematic to the eighteenth-century mind increasingly conditioned to seek for the principal or originating source *in* all things. This conditioning of course had bearing on historical arguments in relation to both the historicity of Scripture and ecclesiastical and doctrinal tradition, but it also pressed upon the theological endeavor to know God. To this overall point, Peirce related that when he had been requested to “*assert the eternity of the Son of God*” he “had complied”. But that, despite this, “a friend, who was very warm in this matter, told me, I had said nothing to the point in asserting [the Son’s] eternity, but that I should have said he was *self-existent*, and *self-originated*. Upon which I ask’d him, if he would have me say likewise that he was *unbegotten*?” This same man had attempted to reason with Peirce “*several times...but could never have the least satisfaction*”. Peirce explained that “this was one of the times of his reasoning with me” and asked his readers whether he could be faulted “that I could not give him satisfaction.”<sup>56</sup>

In conclusion, it appears that the doctrine of the Trinity was significant, perhaps even seminal to the subscription controversies at Exeter and Salter’s Hall. Roger Thomas has already introduced us to this division (discussed previously) of what subscription was ultimately about, especially among the interlocutors themselves. Whether doctrine was fundamental to the controversy over subscription constituted one of the fundamental divides during the controversies themselves. Thomas’ quotations aptly demonstrate the widespread Anglophone participation in the controversies by English, Scottish, Irish, and American ministers, with some dismissing that the doctrine of the Trinity was “the point in question at Salters’ Hall” and another (Isaac Watts writing to Cotton Mather) believing it was about how “to secure liberty and the gospel together”. While others, such as Robert Wadrow (writing to William Livingstone) instead perceived that doctrine (particularly regarding the Trinity) was the issue: “I may be mistaken, but could never yet comprehend any plausible reason for non-subscribing, but some real dislike at the doctrine declared in the confession or articles to be subscribed”.<sup>57</sup> Furthermore, the Scots-Irish and the English had different national histories in relation to subscription, and, with regard to Dissent, that was primarily in relation to the Westminster Confession. Those histories would be on display across the Atlantic in the demographically pluralized city of Philadelphia within the Quaker colony of Pennsylvania. Furthermore, not only Clarke’s theology and preaching would play a role in the controversies there among the Presbyterians, but also those of a dear friend of the young Stogdon, James

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<sup>56</sup> Perice, *Western Inquisition*, 50-51.

<sup>57</sup> Thomas, “Non-Subscription Amongst Dissenters”, 182.

Foster, a fellow minister who had been born and raised in Exeter and educated in Hallet's academy.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> See Leslie Stephen, revised by Jim Benedict, "James Foster (1697-1753)," *Oxford DNB*.

### 3.3 – The Lockean Triumph: Benjamin Franklin and the Hemphill Affair

The subscription controversy among the Anglicans over the Thirty-Nine Articles (catalyzed anew by the trinitarian debate) that had ejected William Whiston from Cambridge University in 1710, and had halted the progress of Samuel Clarke’s ecclesiastical career in 1714, continued to smolder until its final flare in the 1772 Feathers Tavern petition.<sup>1</sup> Among English Dissent, subscription to the Westminster Confession (in whole or in part) had first fractured ministerial relations among nonconformity in Exeter, and subsequently London, in 1719. In what remained of the twilight of Puritan New England, the Congregationalist Cotton Mather was alarmed at the outcome of Salters Hall, already the Saybrook Platform in Connecticut (supported by Mather) had been the means of advancing synodal government in response to the need for greater congregational and ministerial oversight in the first decades following Toleration, and ministerial associations had been strengthened in Massachusetts where the Breck Affair became a deciding moment for that endeavor. Similarly, it was in the more regulated Presbyterian synod of the middle colonies that the now advanced controversy over church discipline by means of subscription would begin to take more immediate effect. Moreover, the controversy is relevant to the Trinitarian debates in that the sermons that sparked what became known as the Hemphill Affair were recognized foremost for their “Arian” authors, and that the minister who delivered them had been “represented by several Ministers to be... a *Deist*, one who preach’d nothing but *Morality*”.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, the controversy offers a unique look into one of America’s foremost “Christian Deists”,<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Franklin, who at this time sought (and failed) to reform his native Presbyterianism to better accord with his own religious prescriptions. That Franklin failed in this endeavor (and subsequently started attending Anglican services), and that the synod succeeded in expelling one of its ministers, demonstrates within the discourse on authority the strength of Lockean pluralism based upon voluntary principles for religious societies and individuals alike.

Also, this chapter tends to support the view that Franklin can be labeled a Christian Deist, but it is not dogmatic on the point as it simply serves (on this matter) to point out a

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<sup>1</sup> Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 132.

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *Some Observations upon the Proceedings Against The Rev. Mr. Hemphill; with a Vindication of his Sermons*, Second Edition (Philadelphia: B. Franklin, 1735), 5. See also Joseph Waligore, “The Christian Deist Writings of Benjamin Franklin,” in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, Vol. 140, No. 1 (January 2016), 14.

<sup>3</sup> Waligore, “Christian Deist Writings of Benjamin Franklin,” 7-29.

nuance about Franklin's "Articles of Belief" hitherto unexplored. In his otherwise very valuable contribution to understanding Franklin's place in the transatlantic "religious enlightenment", Slack's brief statement that this term "Christian Deist" is "problematic" because Christ is not mentioned in Franklin's "Articles of Belief" and "deist creeds" does not seem to be supported by his own assessment of Franklin's writings at the time that combined significant elements of both Deism and Christianity, and that ultimately "affirmed Jesus's system of morality."<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, Christ may be implied in Franklin's "Articles" wherein he stated "that Man is not the most perfect Being but One" (discussed later). In addition to his Slack's own scholarship, as well as that of Waligore, Holifield's assessment of Franklin (and Jefferson's) "moderate" Deism that presented "a purified Christian theology" seems to lend itself better to labeling such men as "Christian Deists".<sup>5</sup> I will also note here, that the bulk of this section of my study was written and its main arguments established prior to Slack's published 2021 article. Accordingly, any similarities that are not specifically referenced are incidental to scholarship (for example, his comments on Locke and on Franklin's attempt to reform Presbyterianism from within).<sup>6</sup>

In 1721, the Philadelphia synod began to consider "Matters of our Government and Discipline" at the suggestion of the Scottish born George Gillespie.<sup>7</sup> In 1722, Jonathan Dickinson from New England strongly advocated for nonsubscription akin to English Dissenters at Salters Hall. His position was summarily described by Bryan F. LeBeau as one that maintained "individual conscience as opposed to the imposition of human creeds and dogmas; [and] the primacy of Scripture in relation to unscriptural doctrines, especially of an exclusionary nature".<sup>8</sup> This back and forth between Gillespie and Dickinson marked the beginning boundaries of the dispute that went on until 1727 when "the Irish-born minister John Thompson moved that the entire American church subscribe to the Westminster Confession, who declared: "We are surrounded" by "pernicious and dangerous Corruptions in Doctrine"—"*Arminianism Socinianism, Deism, Free-thinking, &c.*" At the time, the English

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<sup>4</sup> Kevin Slack, "Benjamin Franklin and the Reasonableness of Christianity," *Church History*, Vol. 90 (2021), 69-70, 97, see page 77 for a ready example of Slack's assessment.

<sup>5</sup> Holifield, *Theology in America*, 162, see also pages 164-68.

<sup>6</sup> See Slack, "Franklin and Reasonableness of Christianity," 85-86.

<sup>7</sup> Alan Houston, "'A Difference of Opinion is Inevitable': Franklin, Hemphill, and Modern Toleration", *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, Volume 49, Number 3, (Spring 2016), 335.

<sup>8</sup> Bryan F. Le Beau, *Jonathan Dickinson and the Formative Years of American Presbyterianism* (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1997), 31. In an anticipation of the further splintering that was to come, Dickinson also advocated for "evangelism in the midst of the growing tide of formalism." See also, H. Shelton Smith, et al., "Should Presbyterians Subscribe a Creed?" in *American Christianity: An Historical Interpretation with Representative Documents, Volume 1, 1607-1820* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1960), 262-263.

and Welsh “all” opposed the proposal “to a man” and the Scotch and Irish were “all” in favor, but eventually they agreed the 1729 Adopting Act, which required ministerial subscription to the “Essential and Necessary Articles” of the Westminster Confession.<sup>9</sup>

According to Alan Houston, “[t]he Hemphill controversy was not simply about the content of faith. It was also a struggle over church discipline and religious liberty.”<sup>10</sup> And, later, Houston similarly asserts that the “affair was not just a contest over beliefs and practices; it was also a bitter struggle for spiritual and intellectual authority.”<sup>11</sup> Such a set of frameworks can assist us to see Salter’s Hall as not only a seminal moment of marked clarity during the “splintering” of English dissent along theological rather than ecclesiological lines, but, more so, as the next phase of ecclesial dispute occasioned by differences of theological opinion and belief: a shift from then settled and/or accommodated forms of church government to the methods and means of church discipline, albeit for the chief purpose of maintaining orthodoxy. By a slight majority, English dissent was now in favor of scriptural, rather than creedal, orthodoxy; and that majority, only symbolically enumerated at Salters Hall, would continue to grow throughout the eighteenth century. In direct contrast, the Reformed (and established) Scottish Kirk determined to maintain the opposite position, that creedal confessions and required subscriptions were better protections for maintaining the orthodox faith than was this claimed “Christian Liberty” grounded in the plasticity of scriptural terms and translations, and moral living, all measured according to the variable views of a few neighboring ministers that monitored one another.<sup>12</sup> Both these dichotomous positions, labeled by Houston as either “test oath” (Scottish) or “peer review” (English), proved influential in “the first heresy trial in American Presbyterian history” that took place in 1735 Philadelphia.<sup>13</sup>

Alan Houston has helpfully painted a picture of the context a visitor or resident of the city of Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania colony around 1735 would have experienced. At the time of the trial, Philadelphia had a population of 8,400 and Pennsylvania a population over 60,000, of which 2,000 were slaves.<sup>14</sup> Houston went on to provide additional detail to

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<sup>9</sup> See Houston, “Franklin, Hemphill, and Modern Toleration”, 335. The quoted phrases concerning the initial state of the debate’s factions are from Jedediah Andrews.

<sup>10</sup> See Houston, “Franklin, Hemphill, and Modern Toleration”, 337.

<sup>11</sup> Houston, “Franklin, Hemphill, and Modern Toleration”, 341.

<sup>12</sup> See Houston, “Franklin, Hemphill, and Modern Toleration”, 334-35.

<sup>13</sup> Houston, “Franklin, Hemphill, and Modern Toleration”, 330.

<sup>14</sup> Houston, “Franklin, Hemphill, and Modern Toleration”, 332. Philadelphia was a long way from its vaunted status following the American Revolution, described by one historian, as “the center of American abolitionism

the common observation that, “From the beginning Pennsylvania was ethnically diverse,” sharing that, “The two largest migrant flows were from Germany and Ireland; substantial numbers came from Scotland, Switzerland, the Netherlands, France, and Sweden.” Houston went on to explain that, “Ethnic diversity and religious toleration brought heterodoxy.” Houston commented on Voltaire’s observation that despite “the great variety of sects...all nationalities are friendly and serviceable to one another,” by countering that Voltaire’s assessment was perhaps a fair comparison to Europe, but that “it ignores the tensions that swirled around—and were often caused by—religious diversity.”<sup>15</sup>

Concerning the Presbyterians, Houston informs us that they had only formed their first synod in 1716 and that there was “a shortage of qualified clergy.” This made the ministry dependent on their co-religionists across the Atlantic, with a plurality coming from Ireland (Ulster-Scots) and Scotland, while about a quarter came from New England and a little less than half of that from England or Wales. Most were, therefore, trained in Scotland, but their Presbyterian experience would have varied widely: as the established national church in Scotland, tolerated nonconformists in England and Wales, and “a wide range of restrictions” in Ireland. As previously discussed, these national differences were part of the division over the use of subscription in church discipline, eventually resolved in 1729.<sup>16</sup>

In November 1734 the aging minister for Philadelphia’s Presbyterian church, sixty-one-year-old Jedediah Andrews, who had asked for an assistant several months earlier, invited a newly arrived Scots-Irish minister to share his pulpit, the young Reverend Samuel Hemphill. Hemphill had been educated at Glasgow and, prior to coming to Pennsylvania, had caused some controversy for his preaching in Northern Ireland, near Londonderry. News of the earlier controversy followed him when an Irish Presbyterian minister who had concluded of Hemphill that “no christian Minister should allow him to preach in his Pulpit” wrote to his brother in Pennsylvania (per Franklin’s account), “that there is a Preacher, *Hemphill*...who is a vile Heretick, a Preacher of Morality”. By this means it was spread that Hemphill was “a *New-Light Man*, a *Deist*...a Missionary sent from Ireland to corrupt the Faith once delivered

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and a city where a vibrant free black community was taking form.” Though, in 1731, the Friend Benjamin Lay had “arrived in Philadelphia like a living stick of dynamite,” decrying the sin of slavery and of slave societies and economies throughout the Atlantic. Franklin possibly owned one slave at this time: “As early as 1735...Franklin possessed a ‘Negro Boy,’ evidently named Joseph.” See Gary B. Nash, “Franklin and Slavery,” *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, Vol. 150, No. 4 (Dec., 2006), 626, 634, and 619.

<sup>15</sup> Houston, “Franklin, Hemphill, and Modern Toleration”, 332-34.

<sup>16</sup> Houston, “Franklin, Hemphill, and Modern Toleration”, 333-34.

to the Saints”. This caused further controversy, though Hemphill was acquitted by the local presbytery before his coming to Philadelphia.<sup>17</sup> Upon his arrival in Philadelphia in September 1734 and attendance at the Presbyterian Synod, he assented to the “essential and necessary articles” of the Westminster Confession, according to the Adopting Act of 1729, and was accepted as a ministerial fellow.<sup>18</sup> In November, he began preaching from Andrews’ pulpit. It was not long before Andrews was dissatisfied and by April he had brought eight formal charges against Hemphill for heresy, he would be convicted of six.<sup>19</sup> The charges are summarized by Lemay:

First, Hemphill taught that Christianity is ‘an Illustration and Improvement of the Law of Nature, with the Addition of some few positive Things, such as the two Sacraments, and our going to God and making our approaches to him in the Name and Mediation of his Son Jesus Christ.

Second, Hemphill denied ‘the necessity of Conversion to those that are born in the Church, and are not degenerated into vitious Practice.

Third, ...Hemphill railed ‘against the Doctrine of Christ’s Merits and Satisfactions, as a Doctrine that represented God as stern and inexorable, and fit only for Tyrants to impose and Slaves to obey.

Fourth, that saving faith was ‘a firm Perswasion of Mind of the Truths of the Gospel upon good and rational Grounds.

Fifth, Hemphill asserted ‘the sufficiency of the Light of Nature to bring us to Salvation. Andrew’s version was that Hemphill opened “the Door of the Church wide enough to admit all honest Heathens.

Sixth, ...Hemphill perverted ‘the Doctrine of Justification by Faith.<sup>20</sup>

Andrews’ formal charges that did not result in conviction were Hemphill’s apparent non-mention of original sin when giving an account “of how our Souls came to be distempered”, and his praying for “only Mankind in general” rather than “any Church either Catholick or particular, or any Ministers of it”.<sup>21</sup> Lemay pointed out that “many liberal Anglicans advocated the positions Hemphill preached” but “the Presbyterian commission believed Hemphill violated the local presbytery’s essential doctrines of election and rebirth.”<sup>22</sup> At the end of his discussion of the Hemphill affair (in relation to Franklin’s life), Lemay reminded

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<sup>17</sup> Franklin, *Some Observations*, 3-5.

<sup>18</sup> J.A. Leo Lemay, *The Life of Benjamin Franklin, Volume 2: Printer and Publisher, 1730-1747* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006), 233-34.

<sup>19</sup> Lemay, *Life of Franklin*, Vol. 2, 235.

<sup>20</sup> Lemay, *Life of Franklin*, Vol. 2, 235-36.

<sup>21</sup> Lemay, *Life of Franklin*, Vol. 2, 236.

<sup>22</sup> Lemay, *Life of Franklin*, Vol. 2, 236.

later observers that, “The Philadelphia Synod’s subscription to the Westminster Confession was, of course, the basic reason for Hemphill’s heresy trial.”<sup>23</sup> This role of creeds and confessions in the Christian religion was of particular interest to Hemphill’s anonymous spokesman and ardent defender, Benjamin Franklin.

Franklin was adamant in his effort to pressure the Commission into a more capacious profession of Christianity, declaring that “every one is accountable for his Belief to Christ alone.”<sup>24</sup> Lemay has succinctly summarized Franklin’s objections to the Commission’s reliance on the Westminster Confession, “[He] objected to making it an article of necessary faith, as well as to the particular doctrine of original sin and the belief that faith was more important than good works.”<sup>25</sup> Prior to stating this, Lemay writes an extended assessment of Franklin’s rejection of creeds and confessions. Franklin, he says, argued that “Creed-Imposers” (Franklin’s phrase) “had no authority to set up any religious tests other than a belief in the Scriptures.” The anonymous Franklin had written: “Why should I pretend to impose my Sense of the Scriptures, or of any part of them, upon you, any more than you yours upon me? and since a Pretence to Infallibility is absurd, these Interpretations may be wrong, and when this is the Case (as it is much to be fear’d, it but too often happens) Error and Falshood is impos’d instead of Truth.” Franklin later continued, “...the only Way to convince a Man of his Errors, is to address his Understanding. One solid Argument will do more than all the human Creeds and Confessions in the Universe”. Franklin also asserted a Hoadlian emphasis that “Sincerity is the Touchstone. ‘Tis that will decide our future Condition.”<sup>26</sup> However, the affinity for sincerity may have been simply more local. William Gibson has pointed out that Hoadly was identified by at least one Dissenter as a person who “had much in common with Quakers...not least his doctrine of sincerity and his view of Holy Orders.”<sup>27</sup> This same Dissenter also queried Hoadly, because of his bishopric, “art thou not therein an usurper also with them of the power and authority of the only lord and King?”<sup>28</sup> Yet, herein also, Franklin seemed to follow the Bishop of Bangor’s argument. Franklin stated

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<sup>23</sup> Lemay, *Life of Franklin*, Vol. 2, 264. For a more extended history and discussion of the Westminster Confession in relation to the Hemphill affair, see Le Beau, *Jonathan Dickinson*, 27-44.

<sup>24</sup> As quoted in Lemay, *Life of Franklin*, Vol. 2, 249.

<sup>25</sup> Lemay, *Life of Franklin*, Vol. 2, 264.

<sup>26</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *A Letter to a Friend in the Country* (Philadelphia: B. Franklin, 1755), 14. Also, a note on the authorship of this publication: While the editors of *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin* “cautiously attributed the preface to Franklin, saying it was ‘probably’ his, ‘though it is by no means certain that he wrote the body of the pamphlet. He may, however, have revised it.’” Subsequently both Lemay and Melvin Buxbaum have ascribed the entire tract to Franklin. See Lemay, *Life of Franklin*, Vol. 2, 247.

<sup>27</sup> Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 168.

<sup>28</sup> As quoted in Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 168.

that a “civil Society” had “no other Master...besides the Consent of the Plurality” or its duly appointed representatives. However, “a christian Society has no manner of Right to make any Laws that may any how infringe upon the Laws already made by our common King *Jesus*; or that may...encroach upon the Rights and Privileges of his Subjects.” Franklin even asserted that a Church could not control the belief but only the actions of its members.

Our King is absent, he has left us a System of Laws which is on all Hands own'd to be perfect and complete (and for that Reason, no Occasion for new Laws) and they acknowledge him for their King and Head, and believe that System to contain his Will in full, and seem resolv'd to act accordingly, are upon that very Account to be admitted Members of the Christian Society or Church. For this our spiritual King has not deputed any one to be here on Earth his Vicegerent, or to interpret that Will as he pleases, and impose that Interpretation on any. Every Subject is equal to any other Subject; their Concerns have nothing to do with this World; everyone is accountable for his belief to Christ alone.<sup>29</sup>

The claim that an earthly representative of Christ was not to be found was in particular accord with the language of Hoadly in his sermon on *The Nature of the Kingdom, or Church, of Christ* that began the Bangorian controversy.<sup>30</sup> The right of private judgement seemed to reach a climax in Franklin as well: “One Man’s Salvation does not interfere with the Salvation of another Man, and therefore every Man is to be left at Liberty to work it out by what Method he thinks best.”<sup>31</sup>

A further instance of Franklin echoing Hoadly in a similar manner was in Franklin’s subsequent declaration that a “Society’s pronouncing and imposing the Belief” on “a speculative Point”, not delivered as such by Jesus Christ as “necessary to salvation”, but rather by their own interpretation it became “a Term of Christian or Ministerial Communion,” this was “an unjustifiable assuming of a Power that belongs to Christ alone”.<sup>32</sup> This serves to bolster Bradley’s argument that regardless of a person’s Trinitarianism, the bedrock principle of private judgement was “based directly upon Christ’s authority, and the two were inseparably connected.” Indeed, in words closely similar to those of Franklin just related,

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<sup>29</sup> Franklin, *Letter to a Friend*, 13-14.

<sup>30</sup> See Hoadly, *Nature of the Kingdom*, 11-12.

<sup>31</sup> Franklin, *Letter to a Friend*, 14. See also Merton A. Christensen, “Franklin on the Hemphill Trial: Deism Versus Presbyterian Orthodoxy,” *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (July 1953), 439.

<sup>32</sup> Franklin, *Letter to a Friend*, 15. On page 14 Franklin explained that “Speculative Points are not indifferent, but then their Necessity or Importance varies...according to the various Circumstances and Capacities of” persons.

Bradley argues: “If a creed or a doctrinal formula was required as a test of communion, then the nonsubscribers viewed it as inevitably usurping the place that belonged to Christ alone.”<sup>33</sup>

Hoadly and Franklin have rarely been placed together for study, though the foregoing passages among others would suggest Franklin may have followed (and been influenced by) Hoadly and/or the Bangorian controversy more closely than scholars have realized. Gibson has noted that Franklin had been given a set of Hoadly’s works later in life (for a parochial library).<sup>34</sup> Lemay does not mention Hoadly in his volumes on Franklin.<sup>35</sup> Charles Scott Sealy notes often the “awareness” of Hoadly in the transatlantic Presbyterian controversies over subscription, but does not do so in relation to Franklin and the Hemphill Affair.<sup>36</sup> Alan Houston only notes that Benjamin Ibbot (discussed below) defended Hoadly who “notoriously denied Biblical justification for any church government of any sort.”<sup>37</sup> Based on the brief assessment I have offered here, a further and more thorough accounting of Hoadly’s influence on Franklin, or at least of Franklin’s relation to Rational Dissent and Anglican Latitudinarianism, perhaps in the vein of John Gascoigne’s scholarship that highlights Hoadly’s influence, appears to be warranted.<sup>38</sup>

Franklin explained in his *Letter* the soteriology of sincerity with the rationale of an exhortation: “...never do any Thing that may hinder the Discovery of any useful and important Truth. You say, you may be led into Error, but if you be sincerely persuaded an erroneous Opinion is a true one, do you imagine our good and just God will punish you for it? No, surely; or else what would become of all Mankind.” Furthermore, Franklin asserted the historical argument: “In the two or three first Centuries of Christianity, those acquainted with the History of those Times, tell us, they can find no Signs, no Footsteps of such Confessions of Faith, or Tests of Orthodoxy” before the “Beginning of the Third Century” adding that “this is the utmost Antiquity that the Learn’d will allow.” In this he turned his discussion to “The Creed commonly called the Apostle’s Creed”. Franklin argued that “it is very observable, that [that Creed] is couch’d in so loose a Manner, with respect to the Points

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<sup>33</sup> Bradley, “Religious Origins,” 225.

<sup>34</sup> See Gibson, *Enlightenment Prelate*, 22.

<sup>35</sup> See Lemay, *Life of Franklin*, Vols. 1, 2, and 3.

<sup>36</sup> Sealy, “Church Authority,” 192, 219, 229.

<sup>37</sup> Houston, “Franklin, Hemphill, and Modern Toleration,” 336.

<sup>38</sup> See Gascoigne, “Latitudinarianism, Rational Dissent and radicalism,” 219-40. That Gascoigne counters or at least qualifies Bradley’s thesis on ecclesiology should not distract from the connections he has drawn between the two groups and their underlying theology (in part, at least, more in accord with Bradley) that emphasized “obedience to God, rather than to man” (as quoted by Gascoigne on page 236). See also Bradley, “Religious Origins of Radical Politics,” 225.

chiefly controverted among Christians, that it is highly probable it was fram'd on purpose with that remarkable Latitude, in order to let into the Church all such as in general sincerely believe the Holy Scriptures". He concluded this point by stating (his view of) the relation between the Early Church, the Reformation, and the present trial: "What has been done since those primitive Times, may be looked upon as a general Corruption, and the Authority of the Church in this Case is of no greater Force, than it was in respect to the many Abuses which our Reformers have successfully oppos'd". He continued, "Nor indeed can our happy Reformation from Popery and religious Slavery be defended upon any other Principle than what are here asserted." Like the English Presbyterians at Salter's Hall, Franklin was an advocate of "The Practice of the Apostles, and of the purest Ages of Christianity, with respect to the Matter in Debate...to be on the side of Liberty",<sup>39</sup> which advocacy he called in the Preface to the pamphlet, "a good cause, *The glorious Cause of Christian Liberty*."<sup>40</sup>

Hemphill's sermons preached in Philadelphia were not "his own". In fact, Hemphill later acknowledged to Franklin, "that none of those he preach'd were his own". He explained, "that his memory was such as enabled him to retain and repeat any sermon after one reading only." Franklin viewed the detection of Hemphill's performed plagiarism "an unlucky occurrence" that "hurt his [Hemphill's] cause exceedingly." And while many "abandoned his cause," Franklin "stuck by him" since "I rather approv'd his giving us good sermons compos'd by others, than bad ones of his own manufacture"; Franklin had to acknowledge the truth, however, and added "tho' the latter was the practice of our common teachers."<sup>41</sup> Responding to Franklin's anonymous *Defense* of Hemphill's "borrowed" sermons, another pseudonymous author, "Obadiah Jenkins," that scholars agree was either Jonathan Dickinson, Ebenezer Pemberton, or both, wrote more forthrightly than Franklin, that, "...instead of imitating the *Bee*, in collecting Honey from every Flower, he has but acted the *Drone*, in stealing other Men's Labours."<sup>42</sup> The news of the "borrowed" sermons must have been of considerable disappointment for the advocates of "good works" Christianity like Franklin, who likely justified his continued support for Hemphill's cause upon the grounds that the

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<sup>39</sup> Franklin, *Letter to a Friend*, 11-12.

<sup>40</sup> Franklin, *Letter to a Friend*, iv.

<sup>41</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin & Selections from His Other Writings* (New York: The Modern Library, Random House, 1950), 111.

<sup>42</sup> William S. Barker, "The Hemphill Case: Benjamin Franklin and Subscription to the Westminster Confession," *American Presbyterians*, Vol. 69, No. 4 (Winter 1991), 249.

luckless minister was not facing church discipline on account of his unacknowledged sources, but on the substance of the arguments therein.

Had the sources of Hemphill's sermons been known from the beginning the retribution from the ranks of the Presbyterian orthodox would have likely only been swifter. Lemay relates that "'Hemphill's sources, [Ebenezer] Pemberton suggested, were even more objectionable than his plagiarism.'"<sup>43</sup> Hemphill's popular sermons were in fact the work of Samuel Clarke, Benjamin Ibbot, and James Foster—as one later Presbyterian scholar put it, "British preachers known for their Arian views,"<sup>44</sup> though this was particularly noted of Clarke by the Commission at the time, before their spokesmen rejected them all with, "how ingenious soever these Authors may be, they are the most noted Underminers of those Doctrines which have ever been esteemed the peculiar Glory of the Protestant Churches".<sup>45</sup> Clarke we have already discussed. Ibbot was the Cambridge chaplain to Archbishop Tenison and assistant to Clarke, and (like Clarke) a Boyle lecturer against Deism. Ibbot had also defended Benjamin Hoadly during the Bangorian controversy, by holding up the example of Gallio, a Roman proconsul (see Acts 18: 14-15), who refused to become involved in the Jews' accusations against Paul on the principle that crime and immorality were matters for the empire, but not "a question of words and names, and of your law", declaring that he would be "no judge of such matters."<sup>46</sup> Foster was a celebrated preacher among both dissent and their latitudinarian friends, and one of the ministers ejected from his pulpit following Salter's Hall. Hemphill's chosen three demonstrate the web of connections and close, compounding supports available to the education of aspiring young clergymen. The three also allow, in some ways, a thorough catalogue of the English controversies of the 1710s to be represented in this Philadelphia epilogue.

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<sup>43</sup> See also Lemay, *Life of Franklin*, Vol. 2, 260-261. Lemay later adds, "But Franklin's *Defense* would have buried him more effectually than any number of plagiarisms from liberal theologians" (p. 261).

<sup>44</sup> Barker, "The Hemphill Case," 248: "Sometime during the summer it had become clear that Hemphill not only advocated a deistic theology, but he had plagiarized his sermons from Samuel Clarke, Benjamin Ibbot, and James Foster, British preachers known for their Arian views" and, it should be noted—their opposition to deism. Barker is perhaps here reflecting the general polemical view of the period, wherein Deism, Arianism, and Socinianism occupy principally the same category and are therefore interchangeable terms, despite the inconsistencies. See also, Christensen, "Franklin on the Hemphill Trial," 433. Lemay, *Life of Franklin*, Vol. 2, 260; and Alan Houston, "Franklin, Hemphill, and Modern Toleration", 336.

<sup>45</sup> As quoted in Lemay, *Life of Franklin*, Vol. 2, 260.

<sup>46</sup> Benjamin Ibbot, "The Nature and Extent of the Office of the Civil Magistrate" (1720) in *The Pillars of Priestcraft and Orthodoxy Shaken*, second edition, edited by Richard Baron (London: Mr. Cadell, 1768), 207. See Leonard W. Cowie, "Benjamin Ibbot (1680-1725)", *Oxford DNB* (2008). Acts 18: 14-15.

These sermons also potentially give much greater insight into the tenor of Franklin's theological and ecclesial outlook than has previously been explored. Most scholars simply list the sermons (if that) and Franklin's explanation in the *Autobiography*, offering little commentary on Franklin's attraction to them. For example, Lemay, who gives one of the more extended treatments of the episode, stated that, "A second reason Franklin defended Hemphill is equally obvious—he thought Hemphill's sermons were good, and he enjoyed them. He believed Hemphill was right in preaching morality and works rather than faith and right in praying for all humankind rather than for just Presbyterians."<sup>47</sup> The plagiarized sermons were helpfully identified by the Commission's *Remarks* in response to Franklin's *Defense*: "[Hemphill's] Sermon on *Mark* xvi. 16. was borrowed (or rather stolen) from Dr. Clarke, an open *Arian*. His Sermons on *Gal.* vi. 15. on *Rom.* viii. 18. and on *Psal.* xli. 4. from Clarke's assistant Dr. *Ibbots*. And his Sermon on *Acts* xxiv. 25. From Mr. *Foster*."<sup>48</sup> For Franklin (and others), these sermons (as he reminisced in his *Autobiography*), "inculcated strongly the practice of virtue, or what in the religious stile are called good works."<sup>49</sup> However, the details of the sermons give further insight on the optimistic rationality, plain biblical exegesis, and non-creedal Christianity to which the young 29-year-old Franklin was exposed.

A sampling of Clarke's sermon indicates that listeners were invited (twice), in contrast to the Pharisees, to "examine and consider the Reasonableness of the uncorrupted Doctrine of the Gospel, as delivered by Christ and his Apostles, separate from the uncertain Doctrines and Comments of Men". Or, similarly, to consider "the Doctrine of Christ being extremely reasonable in itself, (the Doctrine of Christ, I say, as delivered in Scripture in its original Simplicity, and separate from the uncertain additional Doctrines and Comments of Men". And, finally, "exhort[ed] those who call themselves *Deists*, or Followers of *natural* Religion only, without regard to the Gospel, to consider seriously what it is they reject; and when they have separated the undisputed *Doctrines of Christ*<sup>50</sup> from the uncertain *Opinions of contentious Men*, Then to judge".<sup>51</sup> There is a clear rationality to the logic and delivery of

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<sup>47</sup> Lemay, *Life of Franklin*, Vol. 2, 261.

<sup>48</sup> "Obadiah Jenkins", *Remarks upon the Defense of the Reverend Mr. Hemphill's Observations* (Philadelphia: Andrew Bradford, 1735), 18, as quoted in Lemay, *Life of Franklin*, Vol. 2, 260. See also Alan Houston, "Franklin, Hemphill, and Modern Toleration," 336.

<sup>49</sup> Franklin, *Autobiography*, 111.

<sup>50</sup> This phrase "the undisputed Doctrines of Christ" can be compared to Cotton Mather's "Maxims of Piety".

<sup>51</sup> Samuel Clarke, "Of that Belief which is necessary to Baptism" on St Mark XVI. 16., in *The Works of Samuel Clarke*, Vol. 1, (1738), 329-331.

the sermon, along with seemingly unqualified appeals for listeners to use their reason. There is an unmitigated identification between Faith and Works, and a precise undermining of creeds and confessions—“the uncertain Opinions of contentious Men”.

One lengthy but particularly representative selection, heavily reliant on Scripture, conveys in more detail the appeal that Clarke’s sermon (delivered by Hemphill) must have held for the “do good” Franklin. Clarke explained that baptism “signif[ied] a man’s entring into a solemn Obligation to obey the Gospel, and his verifying That Obligation by a suitable Practice.” After quoting a lengthy list of New Testament verses in support of his explication, concluding with Titus 3:8, Clarke maintained that “numberless other” passages of sacred text demonstrate that “sufficient Care is taken to satisfy all reasonable Persons, that *Belief* is in the Gospel always valued, not by its *Denomination*, but by its *Effects*.”<sup>52</sup> Clarke spoke of this point as “a matter of...extreme importance” such that St. James wrote with absolute clarity in his epistle that “*Faith without Works* can no more save a man, than good Words without Deeds can feed the Hungry, or cloath the Naked” (James 2:14-15). For, “even the *Devils* themselves *believe*, and tremble” (James 2:19). Clarke continued to harp on James’ explication of the salvific unity of faith and works by the example of Abraham in James 2:21-26. “...*Abraham our Father was justified by Works*, or (which is the same thing) was *therefore justified by Faith*, because *by Works was his Faith made perfect*”. For, as James subsequently related, “*as the Body without the Spirit is dead, so Faith without Works is dead also*”. However, Clarke also included the words of “our Saviour himself” as recorded in Matthew 7:21 that “*he that Doth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven*”—in contrast to those that simply correctly identify, or believe, that Jesus is Lord— “*shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven*”. And then in verse 26 of the same chapter, Jesus warns that those who *hear* but then *do not* “*these sayings of mine... shall be likened unto a foolish man that built his House upon the Sand*.”<sup>53</sup>

Upon this foundation of sacred texts, and by judging Scripture by Scripture, Clarke was then able to explain St. Paul’s understanding of Faith consistent with both the teachings of Christ and the epistolary New Testament he had cited. “From which clear and decisive Expressions it appears most evidently, that when St Paul says *we are justified by Faith without Deeds of the Law*, he must be understood to mean by Faith, not a *bare speculative*

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<sup>52</sup> Clarke, “Of that Belief which is necessary to Baptism” Mark. XVI. 16, 326-27. Emphasis original.

<sup>53</sup> Clarke, “Of that Belief which is necessary to Baptism” Mark. XVI. 16, 327. Emphasis original.

*Belief*, but such *Belief and Moral Obedience* to the Commands of the *Gospel*, as are opposed to *the ceremonial Works of the Mosaic Law*". Acts 13:39 "must be understood" therefore, as "All who *so* believe, as to *repent* and *forsake* those Sins, *from* [or, upon] which they hope to be justified *by* that Faith."<sup>54</sup> Christ had fulfilled the particular ceremonial works required by Mosaic Law, but had not obviated "the Commands of the Gospel" to forsake sin by faith unto repentance.

Again, this selection of Clarke's New Testament exegesis is a mere representative text from the sermon that Hemphill is known to have preached from. What is striking is the litany of scriptural texts that Franklin would have been delighted to hear in a plain, straightforward exegetical support for "doing good" but also their salvific capacity to inculcate faith. A clear rejection of Calvinism's understanding of Paul may not have slipped his notice either.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the practical gospel injunctions to "feed the hungry" and "cloath the naked" in contrast to "bare speculative Belief"; "Effects" rather than "Denomination" determine the nature of "Belief" or "Unbelief"; the "ceremonial Works of Mosaic Law" differentiated from the "Moral Obedience" required by the "Commands of the Gospel" to "maintain good Works". Franklin must have been ecstatic to hear rational capacities called forth, scripture readings and exegesis that emphasized "doing" *as* "believing" with clear reminders that scripture itself had become corrupted at parts, and that creeds and confessions were merely the "uncertain additional Doctrines and Comments of *Men*" (note the emphasis). What a disappointment the heresy trial must have been to him.

Franklin's attachment to the 1734/35 sermons and championing the Hemphill defense becomes more grounded when placed alongside further consideration of his biography. In his *Autobiography*, Franklin stated matter of factly that he was "religiously educated as a Presbyterian", which was simply the Nonconformist equivalent in Philadelphia and the middle colonies to the general "orthodoxy" of Boston and New England.<sup>56</sup> He maintained this association with Nonconformity until 1735, despite youthful years as a "thorough Deist". However, since he returned from London in September 1726 (age 20), Franklin had become the manager of the *Pennsylvania Gazette*'s print shop in March 1727, left it and co-founded a rival print shop in 1728 that then bought out the newspaper in October 1729. Within a year,

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<sup>54</sup> Clarke, "Of that Belief which is necessary to Baptism" Mark. XVI. 16, 327. Emphasis original.

<sup>55</sup> Some will recognize in this an early recognition of what is called by theologians the "New Perspective on Paul."

<sup>56</sup> See Franklin, *Autobiography*, 91. See Leonard W. Labaree, "Franklin and the Presbyterians," *Journal of the Presbyterian Historical Society*, Vol. 35, No. 4 (December, 1957), 218-19.

Franklin had established a family. By the time of the Hemphill Affair his household would have consisted of Deborah, his common-law wife since September 1730, his acknowledged son William (born February 22, 1730) and another son, Francis (born October 20, 1732). He had organized the Library Company of Philadelphia in July 1731. And in 1732 he had launched what would become his most successful annual publication, known as *Poor Richard's Almanck*. This traveled and enterprising young father in his mid-twenties with two young sons had been admitted a freemason in January 1731 (age 25) and elected grand master in June 1734 at the age of 28. The year previous (J.A. Leo Lemay informs us “by 1 July 1733”), Franklin “had devised a scheme of thirteen useful virtues” for self-improvement. And “[b]y 1732 Franklin had taught himself to read and write German and he subsequently studied French, Spanish, Italian, and Latin, attaining a reading knowledge of them all.”<sup>57</sup> Franklin was a sermon in virtue at this point in his life, having taken full responsibility for his family relations, and in full pursuit of personal and community improvement. It is interesting to consider that had Franklin died in 1736 (at the age of 30), it is not unlikely that he would have been remembered as a youthful and precocious deviant who eventually cleaned up his life, got his priorities straight, and became a respectable and civically minded tradesman/printer, noted for his role as a Presbyterian controversialist who became disaffected from the sect on the eve of his death. Additionally, in terms of his theology, by 1732 he had advocated to the Junto a Clarkeian understanding (albeit, by default) of the “Providence of God in the Government of the World” where morality and virtue hinged on human capacities of choice. The sermons that Hemphill preached must have carried the sound of symphonic fulfillment and satisfaction to a Franklin who had known the excesses of vice and disbelief, and was now the parent-practitioner of virtue and advocate of useful moral clarity.

Regarding the doctrine of the Trinity, Franklin did not publicly have much to say in relation to the Hemphill Affair. In accordance with his role as Hemphill’s apologist, he explained that a paragraph spoken by Hemphill in a sermon was wrongly used to accuse him of denying “the Doctrine of Christ’s Satisfaction”. Instead, Franklin explained, the paragraph was meant to preach “against the Antinomians, who hold, that Christ’s Merits and Satisfaction will save us, without our performing Good Works”. In discoursing further on the paragraph and its meaning, Franklin wanted “the Reader” to see that “We are not to preach

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<sup>57</sup> J.A. Leo Lemay, “Franklin, Benjamin (1706-1790)”, *Oxford DNB* (2015).

up Christ so as to dishonour the Father, nor are we to make such undue Reliances upon his Merits, as to neglect Good Works; but we are to look upon him in both Characters of Saviour and Lawgiver; that if we expect he has attoned for our Sins, we must sincerely endeavour to obey his Laws.”<sup>58</sup>

Privately, Franklin had composed in 1728 his *Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion*, where the first two of the “First Principles” are relevant to the question of the God and then of Christ. First: “I believe there is one Supreme most perfect Being, Author and Father of the Gods themselves.” And second: “For I believe that Man is not the most perfect Being but One, rather that as there are many Degrees of Beings his Inferiors, so there are many Degrees of Beings superior to him.”<sup>59</sup> A possible reading of these statements would appear to present Franklin as allowing a Christology that maintained that “One” “Man” is “the most perfect Being” (Jesus)<sup>60</sup> who yet has many “Beings superior to him”, and that there is ultimately a supremacy among perfect Beings. This has been referred to as polytheism, but that would ignore the fact that, again, for Franklin “there is one Supreme most perfect Being, Author and Father of the Gods themselves” that could accord with Paul’s epistle that “there be gods many, and lords many”.<sup>61</sup> That said, Franklin does not direct his devotions to this supreme Being, but rather to “that particular wise and good God, who is the Author and Owner of our System”. The next passage in Paul’s epistle, therefore, may or may not illustrate how someone like Franklin could have viewed the situation “of our System” where “to *us* there is but one God”, i.e., “the Author and Owner of *our* System” (my emphasis) “and one Lord Jesus Christ”, who was a man and “the [One] perfect Being” among mankind, and where “all things” was interpreted in a localized (system) rather than a universalized (Supreme) sense. Also, the use of “but one” in Paul and “but One” in Franklin, may indicate other or further approaches to reading this verse in relation to Franklin’s theology, such as Servetus. For example, Maurice Wiles writes that Servetus believed that “The Word can be properly spoken of as a ‘person’. But a ‘person’ is not a being.... The person only becomes a being at the incarnation.” Therefore, for Servetus, “the Word that has become flesh was none other than God himself speaking. But in making that acknowledgement it is vital to be clear that it

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<sup>58</sup> As quoted in Slack, “Franklin and Reasonableness of Christianity,” 78.

<sup>59</sup> Benjamin Franklin, “Articles of Belief and Acts of Religion, November 20, 1728,” in *The Papers of Benjamin Franklin*, vol. 1, *January 6, 1706 through December 31, 1734*, ed. Leonard W. Labaree (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959), 102.

<sup>60</sup> Franklin had enjoined upon himself to “Imitate Jesus and Socrates” (see *Autobiography*, 95), but based on at least his writings in the Hemphill controversy it is very unlikely he had the latter in mind on this point.

<sup>61</sup> 1 Corinthians 8:5.

is ‘this man’, that is ‘Christ’s flesh’, that is of one substance with the Father.”<sup>62</sup> Again, Franklin had written that “Man is not the most perfect Being but One”. Perhaps this exclusivity was meant to reflect that the “Being” he intended was “this man” who “with the Father”, or “one Supreme”, was “most perfect Being”, or “of one substance with [*the Infinite Father*].”<sup>63</sup> In any case, “the Author and Owner of our System” is a “created God” who “has in himself some of those Passions he has planted in us, and that since he has given us Reason whereby we are capable of observing his Wisdom in Creation, he is not above caring for us, being pleas’d with our Praise, and offended when we slight Him, or neglect his Glory.”<sup>64</sup>

Franklin’s “Articles of Belief” posited not so much a divine monarchy but a cosmic empire ruled and administered by divine or perfect beings ultimately from *their* Supreme Being. The young Franklin seems to have imagined a sort of perfection (or divinity) that originates from a single Being to then exist in many subsequently “created Gods” who were yet “most perfect Being” withal. These ruled a panoply of systems or kingdoms in their perfection or divinity. I mention this privately held theology here in this study because it adds some theological texture to Holifield’s succinct description of Franklin’s beliefs that followed his assessment that “Though all deists rejected Christian Trinitarian theology, they agreed upon no single conception of God.”<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, placed within greater context and alongside other theological endeavors of its time, Franklin appears more sincere, unspurious, more theologically aware, and less skeptical, particularly with regard to his chosen role within the Hemphill Affair.<sup>66</sup>

The Hemphill affair is significant for several reasons, though it does not feature prominently (or at all) in histories of toleration.<sup>67</sup> In its own time, and most importantly, it underlined the right of religious societies to decide the qualifying measures and merits of their members and ministers to continue in that society. The affair also exposed the willingness of disaffected members to rejoin or reconsider communities of faith when

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<sup>62</sup> Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 56. 1 Corinthians 8:6.

<sup>63</sup> The italicized phrase is Franklin’s from “Articles of Belief,” 102.

<sup>64</sup> Franklin, “Articles of Belief,” 103.

<sup>65</sup> Holifield, *Theology in America*, 168.

<sup>66</sup> See Slack, “Franklin and Reasonableness of Christianity,” 69-70; and Christensen, “Franklin on the Hemphill Trial,” 440. See also Lemay, *Life of Franklin*, Vol. 1, 361-65 (360-71). See, for further analysis of Franklin’s religion, particularly at this time in his life, Waligore, “Christian Deist Writings of Benjamin Franklin,” 16-27; and Kerry Walters, “Franklin and the question of religion,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Benjamin Franklin*, edited by Carla Mumford (Cambridge University Press, 2008), 91-103.

<sup>67</sup> See Alan Houston, “Franklin, Hemphill, and Modern Toleration”, 330: “Oddly...the conflict over Hemphill’s ministry has played no role in histories of religious toleration.”

particular dogmas were deemphasized. More narrowly, the affair provoked the most sustained theological reasoning and dialogue extant to be carried on by Benjamin Franklin, a difficult figure to pin any label on. Without the Hemphill affair, we would know less about the extent of Franklin's moderate Deism, his willingness to participate within existing religious structures, and his frustration at his inability to shape or alter religious institutions as he did civic institutions. Franklin may have been thinking of his involvement in the Hemphill affair when he wrote almost fifty years later on acquiring the habit of appearing humble: "When another asserted something that I thought an error, I deny'd myself the Pleasure of contradicting him abruptly, and of showing immediately some Absurdity in his Proposition...And this Mode, which I at first put on, with some violence to natural Inclination, became at length so easy and so habitual to me, that perhaps for these Fifty Years past no one has ever heard a dogmatical Expression escape me." He then continued, "And to this Habit (after my Character of Integrity) I think it principally owing, that I had early so much Weight with my Fellow Citizens, when I proposed new Institutions, or Alterations in the old; and so much Influence in public Councils when I became a Member."<sup>68</sup> This selection of the *Autobiography* was written in 1784, fifty years after Hemphill first preached in Philadelphia. Lemay observed that Franklin wrote in a letter against "satirizing religion" in 1757, that "'He that spits against the Wind, spits in his own Face.' He may well have had in mind his writings defending Hemphill."<sup>69</sup>

This lesson, the difficulty of making "Alterations in the old" institutions inhabited by religion, that Franklin learned, points to one of the impacts that the events at Exeter, Salter's Hall and the Hemphill affair had—they demonstrated Locke's principle of voluntary societies and their government. This stood in contrast to the Church of England, that operated with a shared divine mantle and mandate with the coercive (temporal) power of the monarch. The principally Presbyterian controversies had been stateless affairs, handled and implemented by voluntary membership without recourse to any punishment beyond membership and ministerial assignment—the "necessary" link between Church and State for order in society was demonstrably unnecessary. Franklin had overstated the facts of the case's consequence when he accused the Commission of exercising a "right" akin to the Spanish Inquisition "to expel you [out of] our civil and ecclesiastical Society, destroy your Reputation, deprive you

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<sup>68</sup> Franklin, *Autobiography*, 103-04.

<sup>69</sup> Lemay, *Life of Franklin: Vol. 2*, 233.

of your Estate, nay your Life, or in other Words do you all the Mischief we please”<sup>70</sup>—it is likely that no one in Philadelphia would have believed Hemphill’s civil liberties were at stake. Of course, Hemphill’s ministerial office and livelihood therein, and perhaps his church membership, were on the line, but certainly not his life or his ability to act in civil society, or to even attend another denomination (as Franklin himself would shortly do). But the quite unique divorce in Philadelphia between clergy and “the civil Sword” should not be dismissed as forgotten among those thousands of religious refugees who had sought its harbor.<sup>71</sup> Franklin had written, “I am not much surpriz’d at the Conduct of a certain Set of Clergy, especially since Calumny & Reproach, where they could not command the civil Sword, were (for want of Argument) always the Weapon with which they fought, whenever their exorbitant Claims to Power & Authority were oppos’d.” This was reminiscent of Locke’s *Letter Concerning Toleration* wherein the “Power of the Sword” is constantly relegated to the Civil Magistrate and away from any “Church or Religion”.<sup>72</sup> So, perhaps the significance of Hemphill affair was (and still is) its continued status as a non-event in the history of toleration. Perhaps the Hemphill affair, rather than be cast as the first Presbyterian trial for heresy in America, could instead be labeled the first modern heresy trial that had been conducted on a thoroughly Lockean basis. A voluntary religious society (the Presbyterian Synod) in a pluralized civil society (Philadelphia) governed itself and removed fellowship from a minister and member that did not support the society’s self-understanding, irrespective of civil authority.<sup>73</sup> In the trial and surrounding controversy, Hemphill had been dismissed, Franklin thwarted, and Locke vindicated.

### **Conclusion (Chapter 3)**

In the aftermath of the 1689 Act of Toleration, and in no small part due to the Anglican trials and controversies over church authority in doctrine and discipline, a slow but significant separation between civil and ecclesial authority and power took place. Scripture was the primary mediator, though it was the medium between different emphases of either tradition or reason. Individual conscience was a key claim in the arsenal of those who favored scripture and reason in opposition to those who asserted scripture and tradition. Although the latter

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<sup>70</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *A Defence Of the Rev. Mr. Hemphill’s Observations* (B.Franklin: Philadelphia, 1735), 7.

<sup>71</sup> Franklin, *Letter to a Friend*, 7.

<sup>72</sup> Locke, *Letter Concerning Toleration*, 14-15.

<sup>73</sup> See Houston, “Franklin, Hemphill, and Modern Toleration”, 330-31; and 346.

camp asserted the claim as well, it was the proximity of reason and conscience that made it an easy pocket for the former. For the Church-State institutional establishment, any perceived infraction against either entity resulted in penalties from each. The separation of this tightly united co-institutional identity was in part caused by, the doctrinal disputes and disquietude surrounding the trials and publications of Emlyn, Whiston, Collins, and, in particular, Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine of the Trinity*. This last heralded the overreach of the High Church-Tory alliance, and the practical application of Locke's ideas via Hoadly, that concerned the nature of church authority and its relation to the capacity for state coercion, entered not only the mainstream of Whig political theory but also of Latitudinarian and Dissenting religious discourse. In particular, some dissenters applied this same argument, for the separation of church authority from the civil state, to their own church governments to argue that the church could not coerce the individual conscience or beliefs of a member. Cotton Mather's concern over the maintenance of the doctrine of the Trinity helps to demonstrate how each side of the doctrinal debate favored aspects of Locke's solution, with Dissenting Athanasians largely in favor of a society's right to define the terms of membership. At Salter's Hall, a slight majority of London's dissenting ministers sought to define such membership in accordance with "Liberty of Conscience" and Scripture terms. That endeavor continued to play out across the Atlantic and over the next decade, with a final resolution by the Philadelphia synod to uphold the practice of subscription to "essential and fundamental articles" demonstrating the conservative capacity within the basic premise of the Lockean assurance that voluntary societies could regulate their membership but only via disassociation, and no civil penalties were even considered. The Hemphill Affair ran parallel to the Breck Affair in Springfield, Massachusetts (that itself coincided with the Northampton revival of 1735) and was a portent of even more open doctrinal controversy to come.

## Chapter 4

### Anglo-American Discourse and Discord: Authority and Structure

The episodes in this chapter demonstrate the manner in which the Trinitarian debates impacted the discourse on authority in, first, the Breck Affair, a parallel controversy to the Hemphill Affair, and then the continuity of concerns in the ordination of Jonathan Mayhew and his subsequent open disavowal of the Athanasian Trinity. In a telling development in the discourse on authority in America, Mayhew's publications were answered not with an ecclesiastical council or a civil court (as was the preaching of Hemphill and Breck), but with a counter-publication by Aaron Burr, Sr. The conversion of Samuel Johnson of Connecticut to the Church of England and his attempts to provide strong assertions of his learning while remaining a faithful Anglican provide a sort of episcopal epilogue to the Trinitarian debates and their relation to the discourse on authority. This latter period of the debates harbored an open discord regarding the doctrine of the Trinity and pointed to the structural shifts that favored the further separation of Church and State in pursuit of Church purity, State unity, and individual accountability to one's Conscience.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4.1 – “[T]his old Controversy, in this new World”: The Breck Affair, Jonathan Mayhew, (Jonathan Edwards), and Aaron Burr, Sr.

This section attempts to delineate particular episodes emanating from English Nonconformity in New England from around 1730 to 1757 with regard to the Trinitarian debates. These episodes add insight to the period's discourse on authority. The first episode concerns the Breck Affair of 1734-35 that stands in comparison to the Hemphill Affair, which also reveals a less than amicable event that happened amidst the awakenings.<sup>2</sup> The initial account of the Breck Affair was written by Samuel Hopkins of Springfield, published jointly with a

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<sup>1</sup> See Ellis, *New England Mind*, 263-265.

<sup>2</sup> William S. Barker has briefly noted both the parallel controversies of Hemphill and Breck and the inability of the Congregational ministers Hampshire Association, in contrast to the Presbyterian ministers Philadelphia Synod, to effect doctrinal discipline (see William S. Barker, “The Heresy Trial of Samuel Hemphill” in *Colonial Presbyterianism: Old Faith in a New Land* edited by S. Donald Fortson III, (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2007), 110). George Marsden has noted the conjoined nature of the wider doctrinal controversy surrounding the Breck Affair with the Northampton awakening, but to my knowledge no one has specifically placed all three together in a relational analysis of doctrinal controversy and church discipline. The awakenings of 1734-35 are not the focus here, but are acknowledged as they were at the time in relation to the Breck Affair (see George M. Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 175-82).

“Defence” by Jonathan Edwards of Northampton, but it is Edwards and William Cooper of Boston that are the main interlocutors otherwise in the competing narratives of the events and outcomes of the controversy, particularly in its concern for the ecclesial and civil interests of the Congregational establishment.<sup>3</sup> That said, within Hopkins account the principal reports of Thomas Clap’s discussions with Breck in Connecticut were of particular import for establishing the doctrinal terms of the controversy. Significantly, Clap elucidates for us the concerns over Scripture and the doctrine of the Trinity in relation to Christ’s salvific role, he also reported the acknowledged transatlantic sources of Breck’s problematic conversations on these topics, primarily in the Church of England layman-writer, Thomas Chubb, a friend of William Whiston and a follower of Samuel Clarke. In particular contrast to the Hemphill trial, civil authorities were appealed to (on both sides), and, further, unlike Samuel Hemphill, Robert Breck largely conformed to the doctrinal requirements of his fellow ministers, whether they acknowledged it or not.<sup>4</sup>

Secondly, and ironically, the failures (or successes) of the Breck Affair in the west correspond well with Jonathan Mayhew’s ordination roughly a dozen years later (1747) in the east, wherein neighboring ministers were again passed over in the ordination of a doctrinally suspect candidate. Mayhew’s subsequent public aspersions of the Athanasian Trinity and role within a republication of Thomas Emlyn’s *Scripture Account* are detailed in an effort to identify his place among the various theological factions. At the same time, his statements demonstrate his firm and consistent belief in the guides of Scripture and applied reason. And thirdly, Jonathan Edwards’s concern over Mayhew’s explicitly non-Athanasian soteriology and Aaron Burr’s scholarly yet affective response to Mayhew gives further context to and understanding of the developments within the eighteenth century’s discourse on authority.

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<sup>3</sup> Hopkins, Edwards, and Cooper all published anonymously: [Samuel Hopkins and Jonathan Edwards], *A Narrative and Defence Of the Proceedings of those Ministers of Hampshire, &c Who disapproved of Mr. Breck’s Settlement at Springfield* (Boston, 1736); [William Cooper], *An Examination of and some Answer to A Pamphlet, intituled, A Narrative and Defence..., With A Vindication of those Ministers and Churches, that approv’d of, and acted in the Settlement of said Mr. Breck* (Boston: J. Draper, 1736); [Jonathan Edwards], *A Letter to the Author of the Pamphlet Called An Answer to the Hampshire Narrative* (Boston: 1737). In October 1735 (when the Breck Affair came to a head in Springfield) Jonathan Edwards was away visiting New York and New Jersey, yet in 1736 Edwards drafted the “Defence” attached to the “Narrative” by Samuel Hopkins (his brother-in-law). Hereafter, I reference Hopkin’s “Narrative” and Edward’s “Defence” in the footnotes accordingly. In 1737, Edwards drafted the “longer polemic” *A Letter* (Marsden, *Edwards: A Life*, 178 and 180 n23). See also David D. Hall, ed., “Editors Introduction” to *Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 12: Ecclesiastical Writings* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994), 5n2.

<sup>4</sup> For a general summary and analysis of the Breck Affair, see Hall, “Editor’s Introduction” to *WJE, Volume 12*, 4-17. Hall does not connect the overall event with either the Hemphill Affair or Mayhew’s later controversial ordination, though he does say it is an “echo” of the wider controversy related to Salter’s Hall (p. 14-15).

That discourse in New England with regard to the doctrine of the Trinity had adapted fairly well to its adjudication via a primarily theological discourse—without recourse to (severe) civil disabilities, let alone the executioner—but only within the (increasingly contested) boundaries of revelation and according to the shifting Enlightenment categories of exegesis. I discuss the Breck Affair in Part 1 and the debate with relation to Mayhew and his interlocutor(s) in Part 2.

### **Part 1: The Breck Affair**

As stated, parallel to and contrasting with the Hemphill Affair taking place in Philadelphia runs the case of Robert Breck in New England, and more particularly Massachusetts, where the Breck case in Springfield also coincided with Jonathan Edwards's neighboring Northampton revival of 1734-35. In fact, according to Marsden, Edwards saw the wider doctrinal controversy as part of the tinderbox that sparked the Northampton awakening, while he yet acknowledged "that the Arminian controversy, which reached an unedifying peak in fall 1735 [i.e., the Breck Affair], 'doubtless above all things that have happened, has tended to put a stop to the glorious work here, and to prejudice this country against it, and hinder the propagation of it.'"<sup>5</sup> Marsden here identifies the larger questions of Arminian and Calvinist divides within the competing understandings of the doctrines of Christianity, however, I will highlight aspects of the Trinitarian debate that very often foregrounded those questions, as was clearly demonstrated in the Breck Affair, though underexplored (or largely overlooked) in the secondary scholarship. For example, Marsden relates that, "The real issue was, as a number of witnesses testified, that Breck had taught that it was ridiculous to say God would damn the heathen who had never heard of Christ."<sup>6</sup> Michael Sweeny, summarily conveys "the conclusions of Reverend Thomas Clap of Windham, Connecticut who believed that Breck held heterodox opinions on matters relating to salvation."<sup>7</sup> David Hall succinctly writes that "[Breck] spoke admiringly of the English Arian Thomas Chubb" and admitted he was not entirely sure on matters regarding salvation. According to Hall, "[Breck] was moving toward a more rational theology that his contemporaries usually termed Arminianism."<sup>8</sup> My

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<sup>5</sup> As cited in Marsden, *Edwards: A Life*, 175 and 177.

<sup>6</sup> Marsden, *Edwards: A Life*, 177:

<sup>7</sup> Kevin Michael Sweeny, "River Gods and Related Minor Deities: The Williams Family and the Connecticut River Valley, 1637-1790, Volume I" (PhD diss., Yale University, 1986), 240.

<sup>8</sup> David Hall, "Editor's Introduction" to *WJE Vol. 12*, 6-7.

reading of the sources will highlight aspects of the Breck Affair regarding the concern for traditional Trinitarianism and the discourse on authority caused, in part, by them.

Still, as with Cotton Mather, the Protestant concerns of purity and unity were perpetuated in the Breck Affair. Similar to Hemphill, concern among ministers over the doctrinal beliefs of a young preacher seeking a pulpit and ordination was at the center of the controversy. The Hampshire Association began requiring subscription to the Westminster Confession in October of 1732, or candidates for the ministry were to “show an orthodox one of their own.”<sup>9</sup> And, as already discussed with regard to the Hemphill Affair, as well as Salter’s Hall, Marsden notes that subscription was “controversial” and “hotly contested among Middle Colonies Presbyterians, and in Scotland, Ireland, and England.”<sup>10</sup> In the Breck Affair, the personal and institutional strains to assure doctrinal conformity in the pulpit revealed cracks in Congregational polity, resulting in a failure to form a united ecclesial front in a shared pursuit for purity.<sup>11</sup> That Congregational failure, is a particular contrast to the Presbyterian’s trial of Samuel Hemphill. The Hampshire Association of ministers, which sought to block Breck’s acceptance of the call from Springfield’s First Church congregation, was itself the product of the Mathers’ and their allies earlier ecclesial/structural emphases within Congregationalism to guard against doctrinal heresy and provide appropriate counsel on practical concerns in the 1690s and early 1700s.<sup>12</sup> Robert J. Wilson, reflecting on the change in the respected status of the New England clergy among their congregations and the rise of more contractual clergy-community relations, notes that in response and “following the lead of Cotton Mather” the ministers “abetted their growing estrangement by reinvigorating clerical associations”. To which, Wilson adds the observation that such associations “promote[d] the professional interests of ministers, often at the expense of local interests.”<sup>13</sup>

The son of a minister located in Marlborough (just under thirty miles from Boston), Robert Breck (1713-1784) graduated from Harvard with distinction and noted promise in

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<sup>9</sup> Charles Edwin Jones, “The Impolitic Mr. Edwards: The Personal Dimension of the Robert Breck Affair,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Mar., 1978), 67n11. See also Marsden, *Edwards: A Life*, 177 and 177n13.

<sup>10</sup> Marsden, *Edwards: A Life*, 177. See also Hall, “Editor’s Introduction” to *WJE*, Vol. 12, 14-15.

<sup>11</sup> See Sweeny, “River Gods”, 238-251.

<sup>12</sup> See James W. Schmotter, “The Irony of Clerical Professionalism: New England’s Congregational Ministers and the Great Awakening,” *American Quarterly*, Vol. 31, No. 2 (Summer 1979), 151. See also Barker, “The Heresy Trial of Samuel Hemphill,” 110. See also, Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards: A Life*, 176-82: and Hall, “Editor’s Introduction” to *WJE*, Vol. 12, 12-13.

<sup>13</sup> Wilson, *Benevolent Deity*, 154.

1730 (the same year his father died).<sup>14</sup> However, when the first church of Springfield called Breck to preach with the intent to effect a settlement with them in late 1734, he was deemed unsuitable “to be employ’d in the Ministry” by many of the Hampshire Association (county) ministers due to a number of “erroneous” beliefs that he reportedly maintained.<sup>15</sup> Some in the Association were satisfied by subsequent explanations made by Breck at their meeting on 8 April 1735, and though the Association as a whole did not advise his immediate settlement before a full examination of the allegations with all persons involved present, the Springfield congregation called him on 24 April to be their minister anyway. This set up a western Massachusetts confrontation between the Association of ministers and the independent-minded majority of a congregation, and, as such, eastern Massachusetts ministers were appealed to by Breck and his supporters to ascertain his fitness to be ordained. The Association and a minority of the congregation harbored severe doubts about not only his doctrinal acceptability, but also with regard to his moral character.<sup>16</sup> My focus will remain on the endeavor to ensure doctrinal purity, which was the initial and foremost priority.

The first issue identified in a published defense of these ministers’ objection was that “[Breck] denied those Texts, 1 *John* 5:7. And the whole Paragraph concerning the Woman that was taken in Adultery (*John* 8.) to be of Divine Inspiration”.<sup>17</sup> This was reported from a letter written to the ministers on 20 September 1734 by Thomas Clap, a minister to one of the two parishes at Windham in Connecticut (and a future president of Yale)<sup>18</sup> who had queried Breck when he had previously applied to be the minister of an adjacent congregation. Breck had reportedly told Clap, “That God hath in his Providence, given the World sufficient Light

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<sup>14</sup> Ezra Hoyt Byington, *The Puritan in England and New England* (Boston: Robert Bros., 1896), 342.

<sup>15</sup> See Hopkins, “Narrative,” 2 and 3.

<sup>16</sup> Sweeny has noted that “Faced with this challenge from eastern Massachusetts, the Hampshire ministers looked south to Connecticut for moral, intellectual, and financial support” (“River Gods,” 243). Sweeny also saw “The secret involvement of Yale’s rector, which grew as the dispute continued, made clear the intercollegiate and sectional rivalries that attached themselves to the impending confrontation with the Boston ministers and the young graduate of Harvard” (“River Gods,” 244).

<sup>17</sup> Hopkins, “Narrative,” 4. This accorded with the work of Newton and his disciples that had concerned New England’s Cotton Mather a generation earlier (see Stievermann, Introduction to *Biblia Americana*, Vol. 10, 79).

<sup>18</sup> For more on the controversies that Clap later engaged while rector of Yale, alongside the civil and ecclesiastical fallout from the subsequent 1740s awakenings, see Chapter 3 “Legalism and Orthodoxy: Thomas Clap and the Transformation of Legal Culture” in Christopher Grasso’s, *A Speaking Aristocracy: Transforming Public Discourse in Eighteenth-Century Connecticut* (Chapel Hill, NC: North Carolina University Press, 1999). The Breck Affair is the first of many controversies in which Clap participated, his concern for “orthodoxy” was consistent throughout.

and Evidence to believe, that those Places are Interpolations and not of Divine Inspiration”, and he cited Jeremiah Jones (1693/4-1724) as his authority.<sup>19</sup>

Jones, had been a young Independent minister in England’s Gloucestershire, but died early in his promising career, evidenced by the posthumously published *A New and Full Method of Settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament* (1726/27). He had previously published a welcome (for many) refutation of William Whiston’s assertions regarding “dislocations” within the Gospel of Matthew. Jones was not considered unorthodox. Jan Stievermann has pointed out how Cotton Mather cited Jones several times, even though he chose to ignore Jones’s conclusions regarding the Syriac Version of the New Testament and (relatedly) the Johannine comma.<sup>20</sup> Robert E. Brown has noted that Jonathan Edwards’s relied extensively (“essentially an excerpt”) on Jones in Misc. No. 1060, “Concerning the CANON of the NEW TESTAMENT”, which was “[p]erhaps the longest entry of the “Miscellanies” save one, and “[b]y far the most thorough and studied treatment among all the entries in his manuscripts”.<sup>21</sup> Brown tells us that Edwards included Jones among the “orthodox critics”.<sup>22</sup> Likewise, Clap also “did not think that that Author [Jones] proved [the passages] were not of divine Inspiration; or that was his intent to do it.”<sup>23</sup>

To Breck’s point, however, Jones had concluded in his *Canonical Authority of the New Testament* that, “The Syriac Translation is of the greatest Antiquity, because there is a most remarkable Agreement between it and our most antient Greek Manuscripts of the New Testament.” To demonstrate this, he noted “the omission of some things” from those texts that did not align with “our printed copies”, the first two were “*the history of the adulterous woman*, John viii” and “*the famous controverted Text*, 1 John v. 7.”<sup>24</sup> Breck (or Clap)

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<sup>19</sup> Hopkins, “Narrative,” 4-6. Again, Marsden does not mention this dispute over the Johannine Comma and the integrity of Scripture, but instead states that “The Real issue was, as a number of witnesses testified, that Breck had taught that it was ridiculous to say God would damn the heathen who had never heard of Christ. God, Breck had allegedly said, would hold people responsible only for that which was in their power to do” (*Edwards: A Life*, 177).

<sup>20</sup> Stievermann, Introduction to *Biblia Americana*, Vol. 10, 94.

<sup>21</sup> Robert E. Brown, *Jonathan Edwards and the Bible* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002), 108-09. Contrary to Jones, who saw the absence of the four epistles and the book of Revelation as most likely “Because they were not written, when this Version [the Syriac] was made”, Edwards saw the discrepancy “as an indication that it [the Syriac Version] preceded the final canonical collection, stark testimony to the divergent influence that critical historical study could have in colonial religious thought” (p. 109).

<sup>22</sup> Brown, *Edwards and the Bible*, 109.

<sup>23</sup> Hopkins, “Narrative,” 57.

<sup>24</sup> Jeremiah Jones, *A New and Full Method of Settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament*, Vol.1 (1726), (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1798), 110-11. The other omissions were not intratextual but were whole books, “*the four Catholick Epistles*, (viz. the second of Peter, the second and third of John, and the Epistle of Jude) [and] *the Revelation*.”

reversed the order of Jones's report, perhaps to highlight the perceivably more significant commentary on the Johannine Comma. Breck and Clap then discussed "the ancient Copies" (likely the Syriac translation and the oldest Greek manuscripts where the relevant passages were absent).<sup>25</sup> Clap insisted that regardless of one's skill with regard to ancient texts "all might rely" upon the argument "That as GOD had a gracious Intention and Design in revealing the Scriptures at first, so we might depend upon it, that in pursuance to that good Intention, his Providence would be engaged to preserve the Scripture Pure and Uncorrupted." Breck countered by cornering Clap with a query about whether God would prevent "any Man...from making any mistake" as they undertook "to write, or print, a Copy of the Bible". Clap allowed that "such mistakes had happened, but when they did, GOD in his Providence gives the World sufficient Light and Evidence, that they are mistakes, from the multitude of true and ancient Copies extant in the World." Clap had just underscored Breck's reliance on Jones' scholarship in claiming that there could be mistakes, though Clap was asserting that the preponderance of (subsequent) ancient copies did not corroborate the claim. Ignoring the insistence on the necessity of further and fuller views of comparative scholarship, Breck replied, apparently satisfied that Jones' work was the sum of that scholarship: "GOD hath in his Providence, given the World sufficient Light and Evidence, to believe that those Places are Interpolations, and not of divine Inspiration".<sup>26</sup> However, Breck's Harvard education seems to have held a prominent role in developing his views on the historicity of scripture, as well as the doctrine of the Trinity.

A year later, Clap elaborated further on his discussions with Breck concerning the significance of the Johannine Comma, intimating that Breck had assured him "that Dr. *Wigglesworth* [Hollis Professor of Divinity at Harvard] had given up that Text, 1 *John* 5. 7. and laid no weight upon it at all". (Wigglesworth, who Marsden describes as "an orthodox Calvinist", would later decline the request of Jonathan Edwards that he answer Mayhew's overt attacks on the Athanasian Trinity).<sup>27</sup> Clap continued, "Our Discourse upon that Head lead [sic] us to discourse upon the Doctrine of the Trinity, and I said I tho't that it was a very important and fundamental Point: For if Christ was not God, he could not be able to make Satisfaction to divine Justice for Sin". Clap recalled that Breck's reply was "That there was no need of any Satisfaction to divine Justice for Sin; and that GOD might consistent with his

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<sup>25</sup> I would like to credit Jan Stievermann for the parenthetical observation. See Stievermann, Introduction to *Biblia Americana*, Vol. 10, 94.

<sup>26</sup> Hopkins, "Narrative," 57-58.

<sup>27</sup> See Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 435.

Justice forgive Sin without any Satisfaction at all". Not only did Breck believe "the common People held queer Notions about the Death of Christ" but he told Clap that "he was going to *Colchester* to preach upon that Subject."<sup>28</sup>

Setting aside Breck's endeavors to correct (as he saw it) the popular perceptions of Christ's satisfaction, the seamless transition in Clap's account from discoursing on the doctrine of the Trinity to a discussion on Christ's "Satisfaction to divine Justice for Sin" is significant as a demonstration of the ready connection in the discourse between soteriological conceptions and the various views of the Godhead. Two decades later, Edwards would identify the same issue in the "Justification by Faith" that Mayhew preached.<sup>29</sup>

Tellingly, Clap reported that Breck relied on Thomas Chubb "for his Voucher" in denying "*the Necessity of Christ's Satisfaction to Divine Justice for Sin*" and for his preaching "*That the Heathen that liv'd up to the Light of Nature should be Saved, & Christ should be immediately Revealed to them or they should be Saved some other way.*"<sup>30</sup> Chubb was a skilled worker who in 1711 read and was doctrinally convinced by William Whiston's "Historical Preface" in his *Primitive Christianity Revived*, published the previous year. Thus inspired, Chubb penned *The Supremacy of the Father Asserted*, which Whiston read and corrected before arranging its publication in 1715. Through Whig and Low Church allied benefactors Chubb was able to leave off most of the business of his skilled work and devote most of his time to writing.<sup>31</sup> Chubb continued to impress his more learned contemporaries with a large number of tracts during the 1720s and early 1730s, which prominently included *The Previous Question; with Regard to Religion* (1725) and *A Discourse Concerning Reason* (1731). At that point, Chubb was not yet the Christian deist that he was to become, but, according to Clive Probyn, he was "a disciple of Samuel Clarke". Chubb's early works concerned not only the supremacy of the Father but also the sufficiency of Reason as a "*Guide in Matters of Religion*". From Clap's report, it is apparent that Breck most likely owned a copy of Chubb's *A Collection of Tracts* (1730), a large volume of 35 treatises

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<sup>28</sup> Hopkins, "Narrative," 55. This was from a second letter by Clap to inquirers of the Hampshire Association included in Hopkins account; this letter was written in Springfield and dated 6 October 1735, just before the business of the ordination council commenced (see "Narrative", 61). See also, Christopher Goodson, "Edward Wigglesworth (1693-1765)", *ANB*.

<sup>29</sup> See discussion in relation to footnote 69 in the next section on Mayhew and Burr.

<sup>30</sup> Hopkins, "Narrative," 5.

<sup>31</sup> See Clive Probyn, "Thomas Chubb (1679-1747)", *Oxford DNB*.

published by him over the previous fifteen years, beginning with his *The Supremacy of the Father Asserted*.

Clap described in detail Breck's use of and reliance on Chubb. While discussing the salvific necessity of faith in Christ, Breck argued that "all that was necessary in order to [Salvation], was, that Men should forsake Sin and lead moral Lives". He added that this could be accomplished "meerly out of Love to Virtue it self; and if Men did but attain the End, it was no matter what motive they acted upon" (i.e., whether out of love for God and neighbor, or to virtue). "My Master *Chubb*" Breck reportedly said to Clap, "brings a very ingenious Comparison to illustrate [the point]; and he took down the Book, and turned the Place to me, and I read the Comparison". Clap gave an account of what he read, about men being warned to leave a house that was about to fall, with some leaving and some staying for various reasons regardless of their belief in the warning message or its messenger. When the house accordingly falls, it is not mere belief that has saved any but their actually leaving the house, as some undoubtedly left for reasons other than believing the messenger and some who believed the messenger stayed for other reasons besides. Thus, according to Clap's account of Chubb's point, "It was not Men's believing any thing that Christ or his or his Apostles said, that would save them; but their living moral Lives". Furthermore, if they did live moral lives "the whole End and Design of Christ's coming into the World, would be answered upon them; and so they should be saved, whether they ever heard or believed any thing about Christ or not." Clap told Breck that "this was a vile Comparison...the Design of it was to overturn the whole Christian Religion." Breck disagreed. In a conclusive manner, Clap said to Breck that "his Principles very well hung together; for if there was no need of Christ's Satisfaction...there was no need of Faith in him". Crucially, Clap claimed that Breck then said "he did not believe that there was any need of Christ's Satisfaction to be made for Sin; and we had a considerable Discourse upon it." When Breck disbelieved Clap "was in earnest" on the point Clap assured him that he was, and that he "thought I talked as all our Divines did."<sup>32</sup> This final observation clearly divided Breck from what Clap thought was worthy of the New England ministry.

A comparison of Clap's recollection with the corresponding passage from Chubb's tracts confirms Clap's understanding of Chubb's point. Chubb claimed that "the tenour of the *New Testament*" agreed with him that a person's "*continuance in their sins...is the ground*

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<sup>32</sup> Hopkins, "Narrative," 58-59.

and cause of their *damnation*.” Chubb’s main point was the reformation of morals *through* the messenger of God, Christ. “So in like manner, man, by his sin and wickedness, has exposed himself to God’s displeasure, and Christ is sent to apprise him of his danger, and to shew him the only and the certain way of escaping from it, *viz.* by repentance, and reformation of his evil ways.” Chubb continued, “now if [man] so far hearkens to this message as to repent and amend, he will be saved, whether he is satisfied of the *divinity* of this message, or not; but, if he goes on in his wickedness, he will be damned, tho he believes its divinity ever so strongly.” Christ’s divine message saves, whether hearkened to out of its correct capacity to amend and reform or a strong belief in its divine principle, but in the end it is the doing that matters.

Chubb does not state whether there are other ways besides Christ that one can be apprized of “this message”, but Breck seems to have inferred the corollary that the virtuous (and not only the obedient believing Christian) are saved.<sup>33</sup> This he may have done via Chubb’s earlier exposition on “propositions, whose evidence arises from the *nature of things*, cannot strictly and properly be call’d christian, tho owned by christians, and tho contained in the christian revelation...that is to say...the *Bible*”. This he argued “because their *truth* and *certainty*, and the *evidence* by which they are proved to be so, are the same, whether christianity and the christian revelation have any being, or not.” Chubb argued that if “we have the use and exercise of our *understandings*, by which we discern and judge, whether the proposition laid down be true, or not; then I say, that in every such instance it is not the *Bible*, but the *evidence* arising from the *nature of things*, which is the rule of truth to us.”<sup>34</sup> In basic point, Breck’s “Voucher” espoused a historical Christianity that recognized truth antecedent to its revelation, truth available “from the *nature of things*” was the bedrock of “our *understandings*”—not Christ. Per Chubb, the Bible was not infallible beyond intra-Christian claims and was ultimately ancillary to reason. Breck’s reading had indeed strayed from New England orthodoxy.

When Breck subsequently tried to persuade Clap that he had merely been asserting questions about the “divine Inspiration” of those passages of Scripture (per Jones) “for Argument sake”, the Windham minister “could not easily admit such a Plea”. This, he said, because Breck had seemed to be “in real earnest” and had “persisted to deny” the divine

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<sup>33</sup> Thomas Chubb, “A Discourse Concerning Persecution” in *A Collection of Tracts* (London: T. Cox, 1730), 290.

<sup>34</sup> Chubb, “Concerning Persecution,” 286.

inspiration of those passages even when Clap had assured him that he would advise against his settlement in a neighboring pulpit.<sup>35</sup> Breck left Connecticut shortly after his discussion with Clap, but upon subsequent inquiry the narrative of this conversation followed him to Springfield, where the Hampshire Association saw itself as the duly responsible institution with the rightful authority for protecting purity (both in doctrine and character) in the pulpit. Breck, recognizing that he lacked the necessary support among the neighboring clergy of the county, made appeals to clergy within or near to Boston who were more forgiving of his youthful digressions. The majority of his congregation gave Breck the latitude to choose the clergy that he wanted to participate in the ordination council. The Hampshire ministers not only saw this as a breach of Congregational practice (the appeal to non-neighboring congregations) but were convinced that allowing a candidate for a pastorate the opportunity to select their own judges would undermine the assurance of Westminster orthodoxy among the clergy. Therefore, when the ordaining council convened in Springfield, most of the western clergy were less than cooperative with their eastern counterparts. Anticipating the contentious atmosphere surrounding Breck and the ordaining council, William Cooper (of Boston) wrote to William Williams (the senior minister in the Hampshire Association) before arriving to assure him that he had no “undue Byass towards” ensuring Breck’s ordination. Cooper also shared, with an eye toward the local revivals, his sincere hope that the “happy harmony...among the Ministers and Churches in your County” that had proved so serviceable to religion would continue, “especially at a Time wherein such a remarkable Work of God is carrying on among you”. Cooper wanted nothing to “interrupt or blemish” the progress that the awakenings had spurred for “the Interests of Religion”.

William Williams, however, was not satisfied by Cooper’s show of respect and wrote to Benjamin Colman that he felt it a hard thing that “upon Mr. *Breck*’s bare word” the Hampshire ministers had prejudged him. And, that the Boston Churches would “think so meanly of us, as to count it necessary to send their Ministers and delegates to interpose in that Affair”.<sup>36</sup> This laid bare the issue of who, or (less personally) which ecclesial structure held the authority to ensure doctrinal purity in the ministry: the ministerial associations (i.e. neighboring churches) or the ordaining council (per the instructed invitation of the congregation). The prime difficulty was that, to a good degree, the answer rested primarily with the congregation of Springfield’s First Church, the majority of whom favored Breck’s

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<sup>35</sup> Hopkins, “A Narrative,” 7.

<sup>36</sup> Cooper, *An Examination* (1736), 53-4.

call to be their minister and disliked the seemingly heavy-handed Association. Cooper insisted that “we acknowledge our very Being as a Council, and consequently the Validity of all our Proceedings, depends upon the Call of the first Church in Springfield.” And, he added, neither Associations nor Councils should “take Matters into their Hands before they are put there” by the Churches.<sup>37</sup> Even so, the Association pointed to the Congregational practice of favoring neighboring churches, who had a more immediate relation to the consequences of any proximate Church’s decision.

Both sides appealed to the Cambridge Platform as their guide and support in the case. The Hampshire Association ministers claimed that “by congregational Principles all they did [i.e., the ordaining council] was null, and THERE WAS NOT ONE SOUL OF THAT COUNCIL HAD AN[Y] BUSINESS THERE according to the Platform, but their being there was in Opposition to it.” To this charge the Association’s ministers were answered by Cooper that “they have no thorough Acquaintance with those Principles they pretend to judge upon.” He then quoted the platform and the subsequent direction from the Synod of 1662, and could not see why the minister might not (with permission from his Church) invite particular ministers to participate.<sup>38</sup>

Fundamentally related to the question of proper Congregational polity, Cooper went further to ensure that recognition of the issue of ensuring doctrinal purity (the true heart of the matter) among the clergy was significant for both sides. He quoted the Hampshire Association’s core concern, one that seemed “to run thro’ their whole Performance and interwoven with almost every single Argument”: the growth of New England heterodoxy via ministerial installments. The Association claimed that “*the Method taken by the Springfield Church, and their Council, makes void all Endeavours any Ministers can use to hinder the settling of heterodox Ministers, and to prevent the Growth of Error in the Country.*” The Association’s ministers feared that the ordaining ministers “*have opened a Door for the letting in of Error...and this at a Time when...the State of the Land requires that the Care that is taken in such Cases be not slighty, but thorough and effectual.*” Cooper concurred with them (“we are as apprehensive as they are”) in their concern, but he could not see their deduction that Ordination Councils were insufficient to preserve the “Purity of Doctrine” or that Associations were in any way more equipped to effect a greater care in the matter:

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<sup>37</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 40.

<sup>38</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 44-5.

“...from the Knowledge that we have of the State of the Land, we are fully perswaded the Care of Councils respecting this Matter, is likely to be as thorough and effectual as that of Associations.” Cooper therefore defended the capacity of ordination councils comprised of trusted fellow ministers. “In this Way Purity of Doctrine has been preserv’d in these Churches, for more than a hundred Years: And”, Cooper maintained, “if future Councils will take as much Care in this Respect, as the *Springfield* Council has done, we hope there will yet be Truth in our Day...”<sup>39</sup> In the end, the shared aim of doctrinal purity, to be achieved through “congregational Principles”, was a matter of trust. Cooper and other Boston Ministers who joined the ordination council—significantly including Samuel Mather—wrote to the offended William Williams with their own counter-appeal to not “think so meanly of us”. They hoped they could be trusted to not be “Tools to carry on an irregular and unworthy Action.”

Cooper continued, however, by bringing into this discourse of trust, the Church members as well. “However inferior we may be to our Brethren with you, in other Respects, we hope we are equal with them in a concern for the Purity, Peace and Order of the Churches.” He intimated to Williams (per his own communicated sentiments) that “We are sensible, Sir, as you are, that our Churches are already too deep in Contentions; and therefore desire there mayn’t a new one arise, about the Rights of Associations, and the Liberty of particular Churches in calling and ordaining their Pastors.” In fact, “the Rights of congregational Churches” were themselves seen in (Lockean) terms relating to “the common Rights of Societies”: Cooper stated that “it is agreeable[sic] to the common Rights of Mankind as united in Societies, that the Majority should rule.” Regarding the “dissatisfied Brethren” of the congregation, Cooper reminded all that they “had an equal Vote with every other Member of the Society, both in the Choice of a Minister, and in the Choice of the Ordination Council” and, therefore, “there is no Foundation for the Complaint of their being denied the common Rights of Mankind.” Cooper further reminded his readers that “these dissatisfied Brethren” did have a right to be heard by the Council called by the Church and that such an offer had been made to and rejected by them, unless a new Council was called and the already chosen ministers entirely removed from consideration. Cooper therefore countered: “if this be the

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<sup>39</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 45-6. For the original passages quoted, see Edwards “Defence” in *A Narrative and Defence*, 85 and 70.

Right of one or two dissenting Brethren in a Church, we think it is built on the ruins of the common Rights of Societies.”<sup>40</sup>

Edwards in his “Defence” had asserted that it was wrong for the Springfield congregation to effectively silence the minority who disapproved of Breck by holding forth “the Judgement of Judges that were all chosen by him and his Party”.<sup>41</sup> He asked: “And can it rationally be thought that such a method of pack’d Councils. will ever issue in any thing else but Confusion?”<sup>42</sup> Edwards declared that “If that be a right of a congregational Church, in such a Case to chuse all the Judges, then the Rights of congregational Churches are built on the Ruins of the common Rights of mankind; and if so they stand upon but a poor Foundation.”<sup>43</sup>

The question was therefore placed as between the common Rights of mankind (Edwards) or the common Rights of Societies, i.e., those of a Church (Cooper). However, the ministerial associations were a type of society as well. Cooper countered that the Boston ministers did not blame the Hampshire ministers for acting according to their judgement, but that they were “blameworthy” in that they sought to elevate the rights of their association above that of a Church “in their free electing and ordaining power”. Acting according to their “Judgments” (note the plural) did not “invad[e] the Rights of any Congregational Church” and that if any opposed them in so acting, in fact “invades their Right, not as members or Ministers of either Congregational or Presbyterian Churches, but as Partakers with the rest of their Species of the Nature of rational Creatures.” In other words, their Association had no right, but they as concerned individuals did. However, Cooper then chided that the ministers “should be willing to allow others, who are as rational and free Creatures as themselves, a Right to act according to their Judgments.”<sup>44</sup> Within the rights of societies exists the equal rights of mankind per their rational judgment, and therefore one society could not claim a privilege over another except in jurisdiction. As such, the individual judgements of Church

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<sup>40</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 38. On page 71, Cooper included an advertisement that appeared in the Boston Gazette that was meant to mock but (for our purposes) actually identifies many of the categories that were in play during the Breck Affair: “the Subject of private Judgement, the Liberties of Particular Churches, and the ancient Rights of an Association”. This reference to “the ancient Rights of Association” points to a further data point in a wider conversation concerning an earlier observation made in the Cotton Mather section regarding Congregational polity and Locke’s system of associations in pluralistic societies.

<sup>41</sup> Edwards, “Defence,” 84.

<sup>42</sup> Edwards, “Defence,” 85.

<sup>43</sup> Edwards, “Defence,” 84.

<sup>44</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 74.

members aggregated by vote held precedence in the Congregational way in any affair that chiefly concerned themselves.

Edwards summarized his Boston opponents' position to be that "every particular Church" had full authority originating from itself and that "other Churches" had no role outside of an explicit call by that congregation to assist them as "a Sister Church".<sup>45</sup> Cooper basically agreed with this characterization: "...especially do we think them Blameworthy in that they have as an *Association*, or as *County Ministers*, set up a *Jurisdiction* over the first Church in *Springfield*, and claim'd for themselves the *sole Cognizance* of the Affairs of that Church, and endeavour'd to *limit, control, and over-rule* them, in their free electing and ordaining Power." By such endeavors, Cooper stated it "plainly, we think they have *invaded the Rights of a Congregational Church*, and are chargeable with no small Degree of *Injuriousness, Usurpation, and Tyranny*."<sup>46</sup> Edwards had in fact complained of that the "free electing" had never taken place, that, at best, the series of votes that led to the formation of an Ordaining Council were irregular if they had been officially taken at all. Edwards and his fellow ministers complained that "There were indeed Blanks given to be filled up [in the formation of the Ordaining Council]; but they were not Blanks given by the Church to be filled up by the Committee, but by the Committee, who had no Power of Choice, to be filled up by Mr. Breck". Furthermore, "the Church did not only not give this Committee Power to chuse Churches to assist, but they never so much as appointed them to send for those that Mr. Breck should chuse; but made Mr. Breck their Committee, though not yet a Member of the Church..."<sup>47</sup> An Ordaining Council consisted of those representatives chosen by the Churches applied to (as a whole), but in Breck's case the majority of the congregation allowed Breck to choose the specific persons he wanted to be sent as messengers from other churches to be on the council.

Accordingly, Edwards succinctly summed up the minority's and the Association's protest on this point: "the power that *Springfield* Church voted [ostensibly] to Mr. *Breck* was not their own power, but the power of other Churches." If "congregational principles" (rather than presbyterian)<sup>48</sup> were indeed sacred, here they had been trammled, and that according to

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<sup>45</sup> Edwards, "Defence", 87.

<sup>46</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 77. Recall that Furedi summarizes Locke's definition of tyranny as the exercise of power without authority, or "characterised" by (in Locke's own words) "the exercise of power beyond Right" (*Authority*, 216).

<sup>47</sup> Edwards, "Defence", 87.

<sup>48</sup> Edwards, "Defence", 74.

the 1662 Cambridge Platform – the “messengers” from the other churches “were not chosen agreeably to the Platform” – Edwards claimed. Edwards flatly denied the claim by others accusing the Hampshire Association of being “prejudiced against [Breck] because he was a congregational Man, and we Presbyterians” and the same with regard to the “Springfield Church, because they were a congregational Church, and that we were endeavouring to reduce them and bring them under our Power”. And though Edwards can be trusted concerning his argument and statement that “nor has any respect to Congregationalism, or Presbyterianism, had the least Concern in the Affair”, the case is nonetheless that the concerns were present and it therefore appears that Congregationalism was a cognizant motivating factor for his opponents.<sup>49</sup>

The insistence on the category of “Rights” in this dissenting discourse, let alone “the common Rights of Mankind” or the corporate “Rights of Societies”, can perhaps be ascribed to the increasingly established place of Locke’s philosophy within the New England college curriculums. The corresponding discourse in Philadelphia at the same time would suggest that Lockean categories (terms) had become commonplace in Dissent’s societies, both civil and religious. On the other hand, the relative distrust and jurisdictional confusion among the Congregational clergy in Massachusetts during the Breck case stands in stark contrast to the Hemphill Affair managed by the Philadelphia Synod. As a further and quite notable difference, the civil authority (notably absent in the Hemphill Affair) was called upon to effectively ascertain Breck’s theological understanding.

While acknowledging (without confirming) Edwards’s focus on seeming irregularities within the first Church of Springfield, Cooper spoke of the Hampshire Association as “playing the bishop in their Diocess”. Fitting to their newfound role, the ministers “then [got] some civil authority to interpose as they did, to stop the Proceedings of the Church, and the Council they [i.e., the Church] had call’d”. Cooper related, that in the midst of the Ordination Council’s assessment of Breck’s (New England) orthodoxy, “there came an Officer with a Warrant from three Northampton Justices who were fetch’d down to Springfield a Day or two before”.<sup>50</sup> Apparently the Officer was originally meant to have arrested the Boston clergymen for acting outside their jurisdiction, but one of the Justices (correctly) decided that would be very unwise and had Breck arrested instead.<sup>51</sup> Breck was then publicly tried in the “Town-

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<sup>49</sup> Edwards, “Defence”, 88. See also Hall, “Editor’s Introduction” to *WJE*, Vol. 12, 14 (11-14).

<sup>50</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 61.

<sup>51</sup> Marsden, *Edwards: A Life*, 179.

House” and the witnesses that could testify of breaches in Breck’s character or (more so) his non-adherence to the doctrine of the Westminster Confession were heard.<sup>52</sup> Breck was then taken to Connecticut to answer charges made against him there. The charges were dropped and Breck returned within a few days and the “Ecclesiastical Council” was able to continue its work of determining Breck’s worthiness for ordination.<sup>53</sup> Michael Sweeny has observed that all this civil action did was to delay the ordination council’s business and “make a martyr of Breck in the eyes of the Springfield congregation who became even more attached to him.”<sup>54</sup> However, more than that, the action underscored the gospel truth that those who “take the sword shall perish with the sword,”<sup>55</sup> for the next month the majority in the Springfield congregation appealed to the Massachusetts General Court and were confirmed that their church held the right to ordain Breck, with the House of Representatives concurring that the county magistrates held no authority to have intervened. This confirmation of the separation of Church and State jurisdictions at the local level was ironically validated by the colony’s civil authorities stipulating the proper interpretation of the Cambridge Platform for the continuance of the Congregational way.<sup>56</sup> At the very start of *An Examination*, Cooper alleged that the “*extraordinary Noise*” complained of by the opposing ministers “had been occasioned by the *extraordinary Methods* taken to hinder” Breck’s settlement “in direct Opposition to those Liberties of the Churches, which are confirm’d to them by Law”. He opined that had “the Reverend Gentlemen in the County of *Hampshire*” simply sent a formal protest “without employing the secular Arm upon the Occasion, much of the Noise had, to be sure, been prevented.”<sup>57</sup>

And, in yet a further though less dramatic contrast to the Hemphill Affair, Breck decided to conform to the doctrine of the Westminster Confession as understood by his fellow ministers, leaving off any earlier notions he had entertained that had so alarmed the Hampshire County ministers. Judging that a simple affirmation of the Westminster Confession would not satisfy Breck’s detractors, the ordination council asked that he produce a “*Confession of his Faith*”. The statement composed was deemed “an orthodox Confession

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<sup>52</sup> The Westminster Confession of Faith (1647) rather than the Savoy Declaration (1658) was what Hampshire Association ministers, beginning in 1732, were requested to subscribe (see Marsden, *Jonathan Edwards*, 177).

<sup>53</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 61-63 (and 20). Jones, “Impolitic Mr. Edwards,” 73.

<sup>54</sup> Sweeny, “River Gods,” 246.

<sup>55</sup> Matthew 26:52

<sup>56</sup> See Jones, “Impolitic Mr. Edwards,” 73-4; Sweeny, “River Gods,” 247; Marsden, *Edwards: A Life*, 179-180. See also Cooper, *An Examination*, 19-20.

<sup>57</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 1-2.

of Faith” by the Council and was publicly read by Breck prior to the event of his ordination on 26 January 1736. Breck’s first statements affirmed both the uncorrupted Old and New Testaments, the necessity of revelation and—specifically therefrom—an Athanasian understanding of the Godhead.

I Believe that *there is a God*, whose eternal Power and Godhead are to be clearly seen from the Things which he has made: But I believe the Light of Nature is no ways sufficient to lead us into the true Knowledge of what God is, and what he requires of us, in order to our Glorifying him here, and coming to the Enjoyment of him hereafter.

I therefore acknowledge *the Necessity of divine Revelation*, and believe this is to be found in the Books of the Old and New Testament, and in no other: These I most heartily receive as of divine Original and Authority, and believe that God has to this Day, in his Providence, kept them pure and uncorrupt.

According to these I believe that there is *but One God*, who is over all, blessed forever; yet, that in the Unity of the Godhead there are three Persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, who are the same in Substance, and equal in Power and Glory: And as this is a Doctrine of pure Revelation, so I look upon it to be of the highest Importance in Religion, and that on which the greatest Truths of the Gospel do depend.

Breck made certain to insist that the “this one God” (all three Persons) had acted “from all Eternity...in the Council of his own Will”. He then delineated his beliefs in redemption through Christ, justification through the imputed righteousness of Christ, man’s inability to “turn himself to God” without the “work of the Spirit of God”, enabled sanctification through perseverance, and (finally) his belief in the resurrection, judgement, and everlasting rewards. He stated that this was the “Sum of that Christian Doctrine, which I have learned from the Holy Scriptures” and prayed that he might “be enabled always to keep the Mystery of Faith in a pure Conscience.” Cooper acknowledged that “the principal Errors Mr. Breck was charg’d with are renounc’d, and the opposite Truths own’d and acknowledg’d”.<sup>58</sup>

In order to satisfy the Hampshire Association and any remaining doubters, Cooper allowed that “They may call the Confession of Faith a *Recantation* if they please; for it clearly contains a Renunciation of those Errors he had been charged with”.<sup>59</sup> Cooper asked what other method of satisfaction could have been employed in Breck’s case, “a young Student, (just bolted out of College, at a little more than 20 Years of Age,)” under the necessity to demonstrate that more than a year and a half after he had expressed doubts he had since “duly inform’d his Understanding, and settled his Principles”. Even if one made

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<sup>58</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 88-90.

<sup>59</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 91.

“the worst of him” “he was not worse than a Heretic” who, by the Pauline rule of Titus 3:10, should be twice admonished before rejected. A rejection of Breck from the ministry, after he had “long since removed” any doubts, submitted himself to an examination, and openly declared “the contrary Truths”, would itself have been a transgression.<sup>60</sup>

Cooper asked all (as the Hampshire ministers had) to “make Use of their reason” and thereby decide who had caused “the vast Confusion” in Breck’s ordination.<sup>61</sup> He challenged the Hampshire ministers to prove that “the Cause of Truth and not their own apprehended Association Rights” were truly what they had “at Heart (as they pretend)”. They could prove this by admitting Breck, since he had been accounted orthodox according to their own “professed Principles”, into their endeavors to “promot[e] the common Interests of Christ’s Kingdom”, rather than to continue doubting his sincerity.<sup>62</sup> By comparison, he vindicated the actions of the ordaining council by stating this rationale: “that we have not espous’d the Cause of Liberty, or that of a particular Person or Society, to the Damage of the Cause of *Truth*, which should be most dear to us, we think appears from the Care we took to have the great Doctrines of the Gospel both secur’d & honour’d”.<sup>63</sup> He warned the Hampshire ministers, with the words of Christ rebuking his followers who wished “to destroy men’s lives” from Luke 9:54-56: “if they countenance Measures that are now taking, to get the Parish presented to the civil Court, for not being supplied with an orthodox Minister as the Law requires, we fear those who have been ready to think there was nothing but the Wisdom and Meekness of *Moses* in them, will be ready to say, *Ye know not what Manner of Spirits ye are of:*” He added that even if the ministers “may call it *Conscience*, others will be apt to put another Name upon it.”<sup>64</sup> He concluded “this Vindication” with “a humble Prayer” that implored “That the God of Love, would unite his Ministers and Churches, in Love to Christ and one another”.<sup>65</sup> Cooper was claiming the irenic role to be with those who respected the rights of a congregational Church above that of either an outside ecclesiastical council or a ministerial association. The problem, however, was that a breach of trust between these ministerial structures had occurred as each sought to ensure doctrinal purity and practice. The

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<sup>60</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 92-3.

<sup>61</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 95.

<sup>62</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 97.

<sup>63</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 96.

<sup>64</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 97.

<sup>65</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 98.

Hampshire ministers responded a year later to Cooper's claims and narrative, in another published composition by Jonathan Edwards.

Edwards's response was at times petty and at times helpful in its explanations, but often he was unconvincing in many of his arguments, save at least one. A helpful explanation for understanding the jurisdictional concerns was emphatically given by Edwards regarding the "peculiar Obligations" of ministers as "Officer's in Christ's visible Kingdom". These obligations, he asserted, were maintained irrespective of "any proper Authority out of the Limits of our own Congregations". Ministers had a solemn duty "to seek the Advancement of his [Christ's] Honour and Glory, and to prevent whatever tends to overthrow it every where, as we have Opportunity in those Ways that imply no Exercise of Authority." This was particularly true with regard to "christian Neighbours" so as "to prevent their undoing, and to prevent the bringing in such an Infection into the Neighbourhood".<sup>66</sup> That Breck's ordination was "irregular & absurd", he insisted, was "not only what common Sense knows" but was upheld "by the known Principles, both of Congregationalists and Presbyterians". He appealed directly to both the Cambridge Platform, or "Constitution", and the more recent "Heads of Agreement assented to by the united Ministers, formerly called Presbyterian and Congregational" (in which Increase Mather had played a primary role while in London).<sup>67</sup>

Edwards asserted that Cooper had assumed that the objection made by the Hampshire ministers concerned "which was most likely to take thorough Care, Councils or Associations" but this claim he quickly set aside with the comment that "we don't so much as mention it".<sup>68</sup> The real concern was not the Hampshire Association as an institution of neighboring ministers, but the exclusion of those who "above all others [were] nearly concern'd to have an orthodox Minister settled" in Springfield.<sup>69</sup> Edwards claimed that the institutional dispute was in essence a red herring, and had "the least Relation" to their actual objection.<sup>70</sup> Even so, he defended ministerial associations (in Lockean terms), when he assumptively reacted to a comment made by Cooper about the "frequent mention in their *Narrative*, of their Association, its Meetings, breaking up, Committee, Votes, and Doings." Edwards retorted with the fact that the Boston ministers had a functioning association as well, and incredulously took Cooper's implied meaning to be "As if any voluntary Society may not

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<sup>66</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 27-8. Underline mine.

<sup>67</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 29.

<sup>68</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 42.

<sup>69</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 30.

<sup>70</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 42.

chuse a Committee to serve the rest and act for their Benefit!”<sup>71</sup> Cooper was in fact implying that the Hampshire ministers held a particular regard for their Association in a manner not shared by the other Associations, but was not criticizing its shared methods with the others. Edwards reported that one of William Williams concerns in relation to the letter from the council written to him, was that “you do...so groundlessly suggest, that what we in this Affair were contending for, was the *Rights of Associations* in Opposition to the *Liberty* of particular Churches, in calling and ordaining their pastors.”<sup>72</sup> To the contrary, Edwards wanted to be clear: “the Objection we make, which is exceedingly fully and plainly declared to be this, *that the giving a Man this Liberty of going where he will for his Judges, opens a Door for the letting in of Error*”. The foregoing, however, elides the point that an association of the neighboring ministers, who claimed priority in confirming the decisions of neighboring Churches, was indeed the practical issue. Putting that misunderstanding aside, Edwards was willing to let his opponents believe that Breck was “indeed innocent” but asked them to consider whether the method of examination would be adequate in *all* cases when a minister could select their own judges, as perhaps a thief might.<sup>73</sup> Cooper had, in fact, already addressed this point, asserting that the unity of the Churches required a belief that each ordained minister and delegate was indeed trustworthy of their charge to perpetuate doctrinal purity.<sup>74</sup>

Edwards also appealed to Cotton Mather’s decade old *Ratio Disciplinae* (1726) to contend that the ordaining council had not conducted a public hearing according to congregational principles.<sup>75</sup> However, Edwards was quoting Mather from his chapter, or “Article” entitled, “Councils upon Emergencies,” which is conducted different from an ordaining council as explained in “Article II”. Wherein, section 7 stipulated that the ordaining council does not meet publicly until they have determined whether there are any objections to the ordination: “The *Council* then (if they have no *Objection* to make against the Intentions of the Day,) appoint one of their Number to give *the Fellowship of the Churches*, in their Name,

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<sup>71</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 71.

<sup>72</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 48.

<sup>73</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 42.

<sup>74</sup> See prior discussion related to footnote 38: Cooper, *An Examination*, 45-6.

<sup>75</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 54. See Cotton Mather, *Ratio Disciplinae Fratrum Nov-Anglorum. A Faithful Account of the Discipline professed and preached; in the Churches of New-England* (Boston: S. Gerrish, 1726), 160. Edwards noted on page 71 of his response that Mather was cited by both as an authority on church discipline and congregational practice. Note also that Mather included (following the subtitle) on the title page an appeal to “the Primitive Churches” (plural): “With Interspersed and Instructive Reflections on the Discipline of the Primitive Churches.”

unto the Person that shall be ordained... The *Council* then walk in order, with the Person to be ordained, unto the *Publick Assembly*".<sup>76</sup> It is clear that Edwards and the Hampshire ministers viewed Breck as "an offending pastor" undergoing a "Tryal"<sup>77</sup> whereas the ministers in the ordaining council saw the matter as just that, an ordaining council unless formally objected to—which, it never was. This was because the minority in the congregation and the Association did not want to have a trial under the auspices of the ordaining council (whom they distrusted), so none were willing to formally submit themselves as witnesses in the proceedings of the council's business.

With regard to the arrest of Breck by the civil authorities, Edwards ultimately denied that the ministers had ever "put any such Thing into their Heads".<sup>78</sup> But entertaining the possibility that they had "called in the Help of the justices and got 'em to interpose" or may have even wanted to have them arrest the Boston ministers, Edwards gave a few pointed remarks that help to illustrate how close the connection was between the magistrate and minister in establishment Massachusetts. Addressing the ordaining council, Edwards argued that, "by congregational Principles, you had no Business there; for if so, their restraining you was not in Opposition to congregational Principles, but in Defence of them, and also in Defence of the publick Peace, that (it will inevitably follow) you were the Disturbers of..." Edwards dismissed the charge that, simply because the ministers talked with and "knew of the Design of the Justices" and had "manifested an Approbation of it", that, therefore, they had positively caused or had been behind "getting some in civil Authority to interpose".<sup>79</sup> Even so, Edwards was intimating that there may be just grounds, such as defense of "congregational Principles", to have the civil authority "interpose". He also claimed that it was possible one could even agree with an action by the civil authority and not hinder it, and that such would not amount to a "positive" interposition. However, in the end Edwards insisted that the actions of the Northampton Justices (all members of his congregation) "was no Proposal, or Invention, or Thought of ours, nor of any one of us, nor was any Thing acted by them as being moved or put forward by any of us" adding that "Yea several of us disliked it"—which, in the same moment, meant that at least a few other ministers approved.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> Mather, *Ratio Disciplinae*, 24. Note also that Mather was strongly in favor of the ministerial associations and emphasized the "neighboring churches" often.

<sup>77</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 54.

<sup>78</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 70.

<sup>79</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 68-69.

<sup>80</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 70.

More effectively, Edwards explained that the Hampshire ministers disapproved of the ordaining council's decision to accept "merely a Confession of Faith" from Breck to clear his case. The ministers saw the "Block" to Breck's "Improvement in the Ministry" not to be his inability as "a Teacher of Truth by Reason of his not receiving the Truth but" rather, his "maintaining Error", such as salvation without knowing Christ. (Edwards seemed to avoid an explicit mention of Breck's denial of scripture inerrancy with regard to 1 John 5:7 and Matthew 8, though such (especially the Johannine Comma) were just as significant to (and part of) the complaints against him made by Clap in particular). In other words, Breck was a heretic in relation the Westminster Confession and the charges against Breck, a "publick and open Dishonour to Christ and his holy Doctrines," were "a great Wound given to Religion" that needed "to be healed."<sup>81</sup> Even if Breck had not initially recognized the "open Contempt" he had manifest "on the Holy Doctrines of Christ" it would be proper that he "be ready to show his Abhorrence of himself for it to all the World" and "greatly to reflect on [himself] for so doing".<sup>82</sup> Despite "many gentle Means and Endeavors to reclaim him or perswade him to desist," Breck had, Edwards claimed, as "a Communicant and a Preacher of the Gospel...very frequently and openly treat[ed] some of the most fundamental Doctrines of Christianity with great Contempt, in a haughty and proud Manner, asserting the contrary Errors, Preaching them from Time to Time, and in various Pulpits". Because of this, Breck had "greatly stumbled many People". Edwards therefore asked: "Is not here a Wound to Religion, that does properly call for some open self Reflections, in order to its being healed?"<sup>83</sup> At bottom, Breck had never *publicly* owned "that he had ever violated" the "holy Doctrines of Christ".<sup>84</sup>

Cooper's allowance to view Breck's Confession of Faith as a "recantation" was rejected by Edwards and his ministerial colleagues. Instead, Edwards detailed what precisely constituted "A Recantation of Errors" as he supposed "all the World" understood it: an open "Acknowledgement" of the errors "*formerly held*" and a declaration of the individual's "Alteration" from those errors along with a renunciation of them. Edwards quipped that no doubt "the Rev. Mr. Cooper, would think himself greatly injured" if his own Confession of Faith when ordained was construed as a recantation.<sup>85</sup> To perhaps demonstrate the

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<sup>81</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 74.

<sup>82</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 75.

<sup>83</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 74-75.

<sup>84</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 75.

<sup>85</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 74.

significance of the matter by way of contrast, Edwards imparted, “If a Man only treat his Neighbour with publick and open Reviling and Contempt,” a much lesser infraction of Christian living, “he is guilty of that, which the gospel Rules debars him from Communion in Christian Ordinances”. The implied purpose here was (plausibly) both for Breck to apprehend the absolute severity of “cast[ing] open Contempt on the Holy Doctrines of Christ” and for those in favor of Breck’s ordination council that (therein) held the neighboring churches in contempt, even reviling them in print.<sup>86</sup>

In any case, Edwards accused the ordaining council to have not applied the New Testament practice of a reflective-recantation, that was “not only highly agreeable to Reason, but we think” he added, “agreeable to the Practice of all orthodox Churches” and therefore was “agreeable to the Practice of the Church of England itself, before it was over run with *Arminianism*”. Edwards clearly saw himself as defending the Churches in New England against such a fate as that of the Church of England.<sup>87</sup> For the Boston ministers who participated in the ordaining council, such an insistence on a *de facto* ritualized recantation seemed against the greater duty of Christian charity, particularly given the circumstance of Breck’s relative youth, as well as his willingness to conform to the council and continue to meet with any who doubted his sincerity “by Conference or any other Way”.<sup>88</sup>

Edwards ended by questioning whether Cooper’s prayer for unity was “acceptable to GOD” when he had filled his vindication with “such Scoffs and Taunts” toward his “Brethren in the Ministry”.<sup>89</sup> The Hampshire ministers would not back down from their opposition to Breck’s ordination, nor the manner of his ordination: “And let who will *be surprised* at it we confidently do it still [oppose it]: We pray GOD to judge between us and you.”<sup>90</sup> He then accused through rhetorical query the ministers of the ordaining council with unraveling the unity and rendering incapable their fellow ministers’ efforts to preserve doctrinal purity:

...yet will it always be a Comfort to you, to think that you have obtained the Victory and got your Will in this Case, and have been the Instrument of rendering the religious State of this Country, that before always flourished in an undisturbed and happy Union, our religious Affairs being, with Peace and Love, & general Consent, managed within ourselves? Will you always be glad that you have broke up that Order that has

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<sup>86</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 75. Edwards cited 1 Corinthians 5:11 and 6:10.

<sup>87</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 75-76.

<sup>88</sup> Cooper, *An Examination*, 96 and 93. On page 96, Cooper enjoins that his “Brethren of *Hampshire*, would, at this Time, put on a little more of that *Charity, which rejoices in the Truth*, and in Persons being bro’t to own and acknowledge it.”

<sup>89</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 81-2

<sup>90</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 82.

hitherto been maintain'd amongst the Ministers of the Country, for the Preservation of the Purity of Doctrine among us, and have laid us under an Incapacity for defending ourselves any more from incroaching Error, by opening a Door that Candidates for the Ministry amongst us may go where they will for their Judges & Approvers?

Note here the proto-/Lockean manner of congregational unity through “general Consent, managed within ourselves”. He continued with reference to the local awakening that had “lately” plateaued, but which was still largely a source of joy and comfort. “Our only Hope is that God himself, who has lately so wonderfully poured out his Spirit, and wrought in this Country, will again appear for the upholding his own Interest among us”. Edwards could only wonder though whether God “has suffered our Hands to be thus weakened, to prepare the Way for the greater Glory to his Power, by carrying on his Work in our Weakness, by his own immediate Hand.”<sup>91</sup>

Edwards frequently makes mention of “Reason and sound Argument” and asked that both sides abate from “Scoff and Jeer, but let our Arguments fight it out”, adding, “not that we glory in the Strength of our Reason, but we glory in the Goodness of our Cause”. He left it with his opponent “Rev. Sir, to judge whether these Requests are reasonable or not; and are will to leave the whole Affair to your own Conscience, if you will let it speak its own Words”.<sup>92</sup> Edwards’s reply to Cooper demonstrated not only the dissonance between the ministers’ perception of the issue, but the prevalence of the categories within the discourse on authority to abide in reason and conscience, coupled with the disciplinary protections afforded by institutions stemming (ostensibly) from primitive Christian tradition. The reply also illustrated the ease with which ministers felt they had concurring support from an interested civil authority, even in an event that solely concerned doctrinal purity, albeit (as is most often the case with such controversies) in the ecclesial office of a minister. Finally, the controversy showed the lack of trust between individuals and their institutional structures, which absence, in the end, diminished the authority of all involved.

By 1740, the resentments had not been resolved. When Breck was requested to assist in an ordination council, Jonathan Edwards along with other ministers allied with William Williams withdrew their participation. This left only Breck and two other ministers to effect the ordination.<sup>93</sup> However, in 1741, Breck was finally admitted to the Hampshire Association

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<sup>91</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 82-3

<sup>92</sup> Edwards, *A Letter*, 83-4.

<sup>93</sup> See Charles Edwin Jones, “The Impolitic Mr. Edwards: The Personal Dimension of the Robert Breck Affair,” *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Mar., 1978), 76.

of Ministers, but (tellingly) only six weeks following the death of the senior Williams.<sup>94</sup> And by 1747 we find that Edwards had conceded Breck's ministerial fellowship, as evidenced in a letter asking Breck to assist in a disciplinary council that would include at least himself and one other minister that had withdrawn from the earlier 1740 ordination council. "I desire you would come without fail, and be here before noon", signed "your Brother and servant. Jonathan Edwards."<sup>95</sup> Yet, in 1750, in an ironic turn, Breck would be the senior minister that sided with the 10-9 majority to dismiss Edwards from his Northampton pastorate.<sup>96</sup> Edwards's congregation perhaps knew it could rely on the depth of older disparities between ministers.

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<sup>94</sup> Jones, "Impolitic Mr. Edwards", 78. For more on the relevance of ministerial associations and the crisis engendered or catalyzed by the awakenings, see Schmotter, "The Irony of Clerical Professionalism 148-168. Schmotter concludes that, "For 40 years Congregational ministers had clung to the self-identify that Cotton Mather and other early eighteenth-century pastors had defined and described. In the end, the very tenacity of their dedication to this ideal helped most to destroy it" (p. 168).

<sup>95</sup> Jonathan Edwards, *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 16: Letters and Personal Writings*, ed. George S. Claghorn (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 222. The letter is dated 7 April 1747.

<sup>96</sup> Jones, "Impolitic Mr. Edwards," 78-9. See also Wright, *Beginnings of Unitarianism*, 25.

## Part 2: Jonathan Mayhew, (Jonathan Edwards), and Aaron Burr, Sr.

The year before Edwards' dismissal, a twenty-seven-year old pastor, Lemuel Briant, preached a sermon on 18 June 1749 to the West Church congregation of Boston, whose own youthful pastor, Jonathan Mayhew, had been controversially installed (akin to Breck) two years previous on 17 June 1747. Briant published the (anniversary) sermon with the title, *The Absurdity and Blasphemy of Depreciating Moral Virtue*. He charged that many ministers asserted and emphasized the doctrine of grace in such a manner that for many people it effectively "destroy[ed] moral Agency...[causing them to think] that nothing on their Part is necessary to Salvation, but if they are designed for it, they shall *irresistibly* be driven into Heaven, whether they will or not."<sup>1</sup> Briant had preached the sermon on other pulpit exchanges and some congregations were having a difficult time seeing the differences between Briant and their own ministers' doctrines.

Briant was countered in print and by members of his own congregation, but a majority of the Braintree First Church sided with their pastor and though a committee was formed, the doctrinal differences complained of could not be found distinct enough so as to justify a schism, especially (it was noted) among charitable Christians. Marsden notes that "Edwards' friend Thomas Foxcroft described Briant's views as not strictly Arminian but more 'Socinian'."<sup>2</sup> Perhaps Foxcroft was polemically pointing in part to Briant's parenthetical statement in his printed sermon that referred to "that final Happiness which is in the Hands and at the Disposal of Jesus Christ, who according to the good Pleasure of the supreme Father of all is constituted the only Mediator between GOD and Man".<sup>3</sup> Even so, his congregation affirmed Briant's right to private judgement that he had been so keen to inculcate in them: "we cannot but commend our Pastor for the pains he takes to promote a free and impartial examination into all articles of our holy religion, so that all may judge, even of themselves, what is right." Briant was unable to continue his crusade due to ill-health, resigning his pastorate in October 1753, dying the next year.<sup>4</sup>

Then, in 1755, Jonathan Mayhew, published a series of characteristically forthright sermons. "They appear in the open day-light, with all the naked boldness of truth and

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<sup>1</sup> Lemuel Briant, *The Absurdity and Blasphemy of Depreciating Moral Virtue* (Boston: J. Green, 1749), 7. See also Wright, *Beginnings of Unitarianism*, 68. See page 67-68 and 67 n17.

<sup>2</sup> Marsden, *A Life*, 434. See also Wright, *Beginning of Unitarianism*, 69-70.

<sup>3</sup> Briant, *Absurdity and Blasphemy*, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Wright, *Beginnings of Unitarianism*, 71-2.

innocence,” he exclaimed in the prefatory Dedication to his own congregation. “For I have conceived,” he continued, “That the end of speaking, especially of preaching, was to express, not to disguise a man’s real sentiments: Tho’ I know that I, herein, differ from many of my own Order!” Anticipating the “charge of *heresy* against” him stemming from the content of the published sermons, he declared “once for all, That I will not be, even *religiously* scolded, nor pitied, nor wept and lamented, out of any principles which I believe upon the authority of Scripture, in the exercise of that small share of reason which God has given me: Nor will I postpone this authority, to that of all the good *Fathers* of the Church,” then quipping, “even with that of the good *Mothers* added to it!” He asked his readers that they would consider “these discourses...with an open, unprejudiced mind; and then either reject, or believe and practice, according to the light and conviction of your own consciences.”<sup>5</sup>

Mayhew’s appeals to Scripture, Reason, and Conscience above the authority of the Church Fathers was a direct challenge to the institutional constraints indelibly tied to theological tradition that he had himself rejected (thereby leaving only the institutional constraints of congregational polity). He first determined upon this course as a student at Harvard following an initial but subsequently cooled enthusiasm for the awakenings (note the impervious attitude he took toward the emotions of revivals, i.e., “wept and lamented”, as against his own Scriptural and rational principles), which, ultimately, took the form of non-Calvinist theology and found him excluded from regular ministerial association. Mayhew’s sensitivity to the prolonged professional ostracism he experienced in Boston can be seen throughout the Dedication, and indeed, there were anathemas that he invited from the long-dominant Athanasian party that was then being challenged in New England (and in England).<sup>6</sup>

Mayhew was born and educated on the island of Martha’s Vineyard, just south of Cape Cod. His mother, Remember (née Bourne), died less than two years later in childbirth. His father, Experience Mayhew, was a successful third-generation missionary to the Pawkunnawkutt federation, an Algonquin-speaking branch of the native Wamponoags.<sup>7</sup> J.

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<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, *Sermons Upon the following Subjects* (Boston: Richard Draper, 1755), ii-iii.

<sup>6</sup> See Mayhew, *Sermons*, i-iv.

<sup>7</sup> Allen C. Guelzo, “Experience Mayhew (27 January 1673-29 November 1758),” *Oxford DNB*. See Charles W. Akers, *Called unto Liberty: A Life of Jonathan Mayhew, 1720-1766* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1964), 6-10, 14. Akers says fourth generation, despite his own description of Thomas Mayhew’s unconcern for such matters on page 7. Remember Bourne also came from a missionary family, to the native tribe at Mashpee on Cape Cod (page 14).

Patrick Mullins highlights that in the effort to make Protestant Christianity more palatable to the native population, Experience “drifted unawares” into the rationalist Christianity of Arminianism.<sup>8</sup> And Allen C. Guelzo notes that (in a published response to Jonathan Dickinson) in 1744, Experience “admitted that he differed ‘from most that are in the Calvinian scheme’” which he wanted to moderate “so that ‘such as are disposed to *Arminianism* among us, would be more inclined to receive our doctrine.’”<sup>9</sup> Unlike his “poorly educated” father (who was awarded an MA from Harvard later in life),<sup>10</sup> Jonathan Mayhew entered Harvard in 1740 at the age of 19. Despite his being older than most entering students and without any apparent formal training, Mayhew not only passed the entrance exams that focused on Greek and Latin, but secured a scholarship as well. He graduated with honors in 1744, and, continuing his education with grants from the Saltonstall Foundation, he received an MA in 1747.<sup>11</sup> That same year he accepted the call to the pulpit of the wealthy West Church congregation, which had recently been vacated by William Hooper, who had left it in order to fill the episcopal vacancy at Trinity Church in Boston,<sup>12</sup> caused by the death of Timothy Cutler, the foremost “Yale apostate”. Mayhew would defend New England’s religious polity and advance his father’s theological sentiments amidst the widening cracks within the Congregational capital.

Mullins highlights the impact of Isaac Watts *Logick* and *The Improvement of the Mind*, as well as Richard Steel’s *Ladies Library* and Archbishop Tillotson’s *Works* on Mayhew the undergraduate. These were among the “Enlightenment writers...[that] fueled Mayhew’s confidence in his own mind and in human reason in general.” Mullins asserts that it was Harvard, “[t]hrough its emphasis on logic, self-improvement, and natural religion” that “inadvertently trained Mayhew and others of his generation...to assert their epistemological independence against standing authority, inherited tradition, and arbitrary dogma of all kinds.” And he subsequently observes, that during Mayhew’s final years there “as a divinity student, [he] greedily devoured the theological tracts of the Episcopal theologians Samuel Clarke and Joseph Butler, philosopher John Locke’s collected works, Bishop Benjamin Hoadly’s tracts, and the recent sermons of George Benson, Nathaniel Lardner, James Foster,

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<sup>8</sup> J. Patrick Mullins, *Father of Liberty: Jonathan Mayhew and the Principles of the American Revolution* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 2017), 21.

<sup>9</sup> Guelzo, “Experience Mayhew,” *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>10</sup> Mullins, *Father of Liberty*, 21. See Guelzo, “Experience Mayhew,” *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>11</sup> See Mullins, *Father of Liberty*, 23. John B. Frantz, “Jonathan Mayhew (1720-1766),” *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>12</sup> See Mullins, *Father of Liberty*, 30-31. Wilson, *Benevolent Deity*, 138-39.

and other English” non-Athanasian Presbyterians.<sup>13</sup> The last three named, as Dissenting ministers, would become welcome friends and correspondents to the otherwise intellectually isolated Mayhew, throwing their weight into securing for him a doctorate in divinity from the University of Aberdeen for his *Seven Sermons* (1749).

As previously mentioned, when Mayhew accepted the pulpit at West Church, the congregation continued into a habit of controversial ordinations for its pastors. Going further than Breck’s congregation a dozen years earlier, the West Church (almost) wholly ignored the neighboring Boston clergy and invited fifteen country parishes, of which eleven accepted and approved of “the Soundness of *Mr. Mayhew’s Principles*,” which is not surprising when it is seen that the Arminian and more liberal-minded (“catholick”) clergy from the surrounding country turned out in lock-step formation.<sup>14</sup> At least one note of comparison between the Breck ordination and this of Mayhew, was that Benjamin Colman, who had supported Breck’s examination and ordination by clergy from far away Boston, thought it improper to send delegates when the same deference was not forthcoming toward his own locale. Colman’s protests paralleled those of the Hampshire Association (and follow from Cambridge Platform) regarding “our own Neighborhood”.<sup>15</sup> Jonathan Mayhew listened along with his father as his more recently acquired mentor, the pastor of Hingham, Ebenezer Gay, preached the ordination sermon, entitled *The Alienation of Affections from Ministers consider’d, and improv’d* (1747), wherein he expounded on the relation between a pastor and his congregation. Robert J. Wilson describes the sermon as “a declaration of theological liberation; a ringing call to arms for the Arminian movement.” Wilson, recognizing that Gay’s main thrust was his assertion that “It is the great and indispensable Duty of Ministers, to tell People the *Truth*” regardless of the threat of losing the affections of their flock, notes that Gay subsequently described this truth (anticipating Mayhew) “as ‘pure, unadulterated Scripture-Truths;...Not precarious Opinions, dark and intricate Schemes, abstract metaphysical Notions.’”<sup>16</sup> In concluding his sermon, however, Gay aptly pleaded from that particular pulpit in Boston (with references to 3 John and Ephesians 4), “That Ministers may *receive one another, as Fellow-Helpers to the Truth*” and for the people to receive their pastors, “*for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body of CHRIST: ‘Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the Knowledge of the Son of*

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<sup>13</sup> Mullins, *Father of Liberty*, 26-29 (quoted material on 28-29).

<sup>14</sup> Mullins, *Father of Liberty*, 31. See Wilson, *Benevolent Deity*, 139-40.

<sup>15</sup> As quoted in Wilson, *Benevolent Deity*, 139.

<sup>16</sup> As quoted in (and from) Wilson, *Benevolent Deity*, 140.

GOD...” in order to attain the ends that Paul taught in his letter to the Ephesians, that included doctrinal safety and surety.<sup>17</sup>

Despite Gay’s plea, there was no balm in Boston for his even more outspoken protégé. The next year Mayhew preached a series of sermons, published in 1749, that were the result of a separate (and rival) Thursday lecture series he had established, having been excluded from the regular lectures. As mentioned, these (*Seven Sermons*) won the grateful attention and applause of notable Dissenting ministers and at least one Anglican Bishop, Benjamin Hoadly. However, it was his subsequent *Sermons upon the Following Subjects* (1755) that bear the greater relevance for this study.

In the 1755 *Sermons*, there are multiple instances of Mayhew’s specifically anti-Athanasian theology.<sup>18</sup> Of each instance, I will highlight aspects of the particular challenge that Mayhew asserted and its place within the discourse on authority. More particularly, this includes his Sermon IX “On the Nature and Principle of Evangelical Obedience” and a revealing footnote (only partially accounted for by Oakes’ assessment) within Sermon XII “On the Shortness and Vanity of human Life.” The first instance was in Sermon VIII “Of mistakes concerning Justification by Faith”, where, while asserting that “We cannot be justified only by believing”, he dismissed the contrary counter-points with the aside that, “So that what these men take for an important *theological distinction*, turns out (like some of St. Athanasius’s) to be no better than a palpable *contradiction*.” This brief backhand to (what only could be assumed was) the Athanasian understanding of the Trinity was followed with explicit reference to the authoritative grounds that Mayhew consistently claimed: Reason and Scripture. He stated his astonishment “that such an irrational, unscriptural doctrine [i.e., Justification by Faith]...should be *insisted* upon with peculiar *warmth* and *zeal*, as a most important and fundamental article of the Christian Faith!” And with relevance to his rejection of mere theological tradition, he also ridiculed Luther’s “pretended ‘*Article of standing, or a falling Church*’?” (the principle article being “Justification by Faith”).<sup>19</sup> However, as will be shown in the discussion on Mayhew’s sermon “On the Nature and Principle of Evangelical

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<sup>17</sup> Ebenezer Gay, *The Alienation of Affections from Ministers consider’d and improv’d* (Boston, N.E.: Rogers and Fowle, 1747), 27-28. See also Wilson, *Benevolent Deity*, 140, and 3 John 1:8 and Ephesians 4:12-16.

<sup>18</sup> Their locations throughout are each helpfully identified by Mullins and Oakes in their footnotes: Mullins, *Father of Liberty*, 191 (n44); Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 84-87.

<sup>19</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, “Of Justification by Faith” in his *Sermons Upon the following Subjects* (Boston: Richard Draper, 1755), 254-55. In the table of contents, the two-part sermon is entitled “Of mistakes concerning Justification by Faith”.

Obedience,” Mayhew asserted a different understanding of the same principle.<sup>20</sup> Such an example demonstrates that while Mayhew upheld the principles of the Reformation regarding scripture, private judgement, and conscience, he was ready to dismiss many of its founding theological doctrines, or at least as they had been traditionally understood.

As a brief but related aside, with regard to what constituted a “fundamental article” of Christianity, Mayhew (years later) responded to a written attack on his orthodoxy in relation to “our good fathers” religion and their “opinions, at least concerning the divinity of the Son of God”. He openly declared that “I have never been backward to own, that my religious sentiments are, in some respects, different from those of the generality of our forefathers. Much less,” he added, “did I ever *swear* to, *subscribe*, or *profess* to believe all their opinions; so that, in this respect at least, the episcopalian clergy [who were required to subscribe] cannot justly accuse me of *hypocrisy*.” Furthermore, he “never imagined” he needed the cover of their merits as he had “those of my *Redeemer*.” He then pointedly queried: “Does this man, or do many others well consider what they say, when they so freely charge others with denying the *essential* doctrines of the gospel? Who told them that the doctrines which they often speak thus of, even supposing them true, are *essential*?” Who had the authority to pronounce who was and who was not essentially Christian? Similar to Locke, Mayhew offered that those that “profess a sincere regard to Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world, and to the holy scriptures as a revelation from God” were indeed Christian.

In relation to subscription, Mayhew added a footnote that commended the “first *church covenant* used in the Massachusetts Bay colony; *viz.* at Salem, before the year 1630”. He declared that if he “were a friend to subscriptions” he could with “both heart and hand, subscribe this covenant; and even go farther towards what is usually called *orthodoxy* among us.” And, judged by this covenant, those who believed him “*sincere* in this protestation (as those who know me best, will) judge whether I am justly accused of departing from the *most essential* doctrines of the gospel, which our said fathers held”. Mayhew wistfully mused that “Happy had it probably been for New-England, if no narrower, or more divisive church covenants had ever been seen among us”. The church covenant Mayhew “could” subscribe to was “preserved in Dr. *Mather*’s History of New-England” where Mather explained it was

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<sup>20</sup> See Wright, *Beginnings of Unitarianism*, 120.

“applied unto the *evangelical* designs of a *church State*.”<sup>21</sup> Mayhew therefore maintained the authoritative dynamic of the previous century, but within the purview of congregational principles and private judgement.

In “Sermon XI,” Mayhew’s concerns were less about the rhetoric of doctrinal orthodoxies and more about “the Deceitfulness of the Heart” manifest in “hot religious zealots”: “the great sticklers for what they call orthodoxy, whether justly, or unjustly, it now matters not”. For him it was “that which cometh out of the mouth”—not doctrinally, but practically speaking—that settled questions of who was (and who was not) a follower of Christ: “You will sometimes see men wrangling in such an unchristian manner, about the form of godliness, as to make it but too evident that they deny the power thereof.” He continued, “You will find some who pride themselves in being of what they call the true church, showing by their whole conversation, that they are the *Synagogue of Satan*.” Mayhew applied this principle to the whole range of disputed doctrines in their understanding, beginning with the Trinity:

Some contend, and foam, and curse their brethren, for the sake of the Athanasian Trinity, ‘till ‘tis evident they do not love and fear the ONE living and true God as they ought to do. Others you will see raging about their peculiar notions of original sin, so as to prove themselves guilty of actual transgression: About election, ‘till they prove themselves reprobates: About particular redemption, ‘till they shew that they themselves are not redeemed from a *vain conversation*. You will hear others quarrelling about imputed righteousness, with such fury and bitterness, as to show that they are destitute of personal: About special grace, so as to show that they have not even common: About faith, while they make shipwreck of a good conscience: And about the final perseverance of the saints, ‘till they prove themselves to be no saints; and that if they had ever any goodness or grace, they are now fallen from it...<sup>22</sup>

The lack of love for their God, manifest in cursing their brethren, the rage, fury, bitterness, and vain conversation were the barriers to a person’s proper worship, personal righteousness, good conscience, and growth in grace. Worth noting is Mayhew’s later defense of his preaching on many of these doctrines as well as the nature of his support for them. He took issue with a written attack on him that used mere marginal references to pages in his published sermons rather than quoting from them directly: “...whoever will be at the pains to turn to these passages, will find the whole amount of them to be this – that I explode certain

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<sup>21</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, *A Defence Of the Observations on the Charter and Conduct of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts* (Boston: R. and S. Draper, 1763), 107-10. See also Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana*, 19.

<sup>22</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, “Sermon XI. Upon the Deceitfulness of the Heart; GOD’s Searching it, and the End thereof” in his *Sermons Upon the following Subjects* (Boston: Richard Draper, 1755), 403.

wrong and unscriptural explanations of those doctrines; some of them tending to licentiousness; while I not only allow, but assert and prove the doctrines, in a sober, scriptural sense.” Mayhew claimed there was a “distinction betwixt the doctrines of scripture in general, and unscriptural refinements upon them” that he rejected.<sup>23</sup>

In Sermon IX “Of the Nature and Principle of Evangelical Obedience,” he discoursed on the exalted authority of the Son. Wherein “our obedience is more *immediately* due to the *Son*, than to the Father; it being more *immediately* by *His* authority that the various duties of the gospel are enjoined upon us”. However, he reminded his reader of the supremacy of the Father. “Christians do not (at least they ought not to) set aside the supreme authority and dominion of God, the FATHER Almighty: or, by attempting to divide, really destroy, the *Monarchy* of the universe; which is still in HIM alone; the mediatorial authority of Christ, being derived from HIM, and subordinate to HIS.” Christian obedience “is due more *immediately* to our Lord Jesus Christ” and yet this “is *ultimately* referred to *His Father, and our Father, to His God and our God*; who ‘is greater than ALL;’ and who has conferred this dignity and authority on the Son.” Mayhew insisted “that all the homage and obedience which we pay to the Son, should thus be referred to, and terminate in, the *Father*”. Drawing on St. Paul, Mayhew drove home his point, that “of this important truth, the apostle admonishes us, when he tells us, that God *highly exalted* his Son, that every tongue might confess him to be the Lord, ‘to the glory of God, the FATHER.’”<sup>24</sup>

Notice that Mayhew quoted both the Nicene Creed (note his emphasis of the Father in the phrase “God, the FATHER Almighty”) as well as Scripture to support his point. Such statements clearly place Mayhew among the adherents to Samuel Clarke’s subordinationism (where all glory “redounds” to the Father). But whether Mayhew went farther into a patently Arian understanding (“there was a time when the Son was not”) depends on the weight one gives to his footnote in Sermon XII, to be discussed later. The printed margin here is peppered with the scriptural references to both John’s Gospel and Paul’s letter to the Philippians.<sup>25</sup> Such scriptural passages for Mayhew undermined the Athanasian creed’s claims to authority, demonstrating that it was ultimately and simply unscriptural. Just prior to his reminder of the Father’s supreme status, Mayhew owned that “one essential difference

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<sup>23</sup> Mayhew, *Defence of the Observations*, 113.

<sup>24</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, “Sermon IX. Upon the Nature and Principle of Evangelical Obedience” in his *Sermons Upon the following Subjects* (Boston: Richard Draper, 1755), 266-67. See Philippians 2:5-11.

<sup>25</sup> John 20:17, John 10:29, John 14:28, and Philippians 2:11.

betwixt christian obedience, and any other” (drawing a distinction between “mere *Theists*” and Christians) was in the fact that any view that held “that the laws of christianity are, in all respects the same with the laws and religion of nature, and only a republication of it” lost the reality of Christ’s status and role in the universe as discovered in “written *revelation*”. “[Y]et, surely,” he insisted, “we could not be said to pay a proper obedience to [the laws and religion of nature], without considering them as being the laws of Christ, our Redeemer and Sovereign.”<sup>26</sup> The Son’s authority was real and it was personal, but he and it were ordained by the Father and therefore subordinate to him. Most often, Mayhew’s conception of the Godhead expressed in his published sermons was thoroughly (and narrowly) political in its categories of analysis and apprehension. He expressly refused to “meddle” with “the metaphysical abstract nature, or essence of the Deity”, barely acknowledging the medieval and patristic traditions.<sup>27</sup> He seems to match Philip Dixon’s observation that the eighteenth-century’s “God was a sober ‘Governor’...rather than an untamable ‘Lover’.”<sup>28</sup> In this sense, Mayhew was ultimately practical (and potently so) with regard to his theology.

Mayhew continued for another paragraph to discourse on the importance of the Father’s absolute dominion. In the interest of a further demonstration and insight into Mayhew’s subordinationism I will detail particular aspects. The “obedience or homage to the Son” by Christians should not be such “as has a tendency to eclipse the glory of God the Father, who is without Rival or Competitor.” For Mayhew, “[t]he Dominion and Sovereignty of the universe is necessarily *one*, and in ONE;—the *only* living and true GOD, who delegates such measure of power and authority to other Beings, as seemeth good in his sight; but ‘will not give his [peculiar] glory to another.’”<sup>29</sup> That delegated condition extended to “[o]ur blessed Saviour” who exercises “the rights and prerogatives of *his own crown*; but never usurped those of His *Father*’s”. In fact, just the opposite: Christ “constantly and uniformly tells us, that his authority was *given* to him of the Father; and is exercised in subordination to His will; not independently of it. He claims no authority, besides what he claims by virtue of the *Father*’s grant, and the commission which he received from *Him*.”<sup>30</sup>

Mayhew explained, in relation to the sermon’s text, that “WHAT is said above, seemed needful to prevent mis-construction; to suggest the true ground of that obedience which we

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<sup>26</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience”, 266-267, 269.

<sup>27</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience”, 269n.

<sup>28</sup> Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 215.

<sup>29</sup> Mayhew noted in the margin the reference to Isaiah 42:8.

<sup>30</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience”, 268.

owe to our blessed Lord; and to show the perfect consistency of paying it, with the *Unity*, and the *supreme* glory and dominion of God, the FATHER”. And he concluded with his own scolding (common to non-Athanasians) of many professors of Christianity: “The not sufficiently preserving of which *Unity* and *Supremacy* amongst Christians [of the Father], has long been just matter of reproach to them; and a great stumbling-block both to *Jews* and *Mahometans*.”<sup>31</sup> The closest that Mayhew came to making a philosophical claim in the foregoing was when he insisted on “necessarily *one*, and in ONE”, quickly reverting then to categories of political relation. As such, it is important to note that Mayhew (almost) never discusses the aseity of God either. Such an absence is highlighted in a lengthy footnote that seems to be meant in relation to his entire insertion concerning the supremacy of the Father in the sermon, one that bears due attention.

In the footnote, Mayhew stressed the “most obvious sense” of Paul’s words and emphasized the “Saviour’s prayer” in demonstration of what rationally accountable discourse looked like to him. Plain, non-philosophical language and straightforward sentences were to be held in contrast to the “unaccountable Temerity of the *Athanasians*” that disquieted the Christian verities of Scripture with anathemas upon those unready to believe beyond their understanding: “With the metaphysical abstract nature, or essence of the Deity, I am not bold enough to meddle.” For Mayhew, “Disquisitions of this kind, and denunciations of God’s vengeance against those who do not affect to be *wise*, or are not willing to believe, *above what is written*, are left to the unaccountable Temerity of the *Athanasians*.” Instead, Mayhew claimed that he could “freely acquiesce in St. *Paul*’s doctrine, in the most obvious sense of his words” he offered in 1 Corinthians 8:4 and 1 Timothy 2:5. Accordingly, he consistently referred to Christ as “Lord” and not “God”, a term he reserved for the Father, even ““tho there be [(such as Christ)] that are *called* God’s... (as there be gods *many*, and lords *many*)” but the “ONLY TRUE GOD” was the Father, as stated in the Son’s own prayer to him in John 17.<sup>32</sup> Within this footnote, Mayhew delivered a series of solid scriptural punches that left a silence of years from the shocked New England clergy for a published response. But before that response is accounted, a wider scope of Mayhew’s theology is relevant to understanding the potency of the challenge he posed to Calvinist clergy.

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<sup>31</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience”, 268-69.

<sup>32</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience”, 269.

Continuing his sermon, Mayhew drew up the differences between a Theist and a Christian, teaching the insufficiency of mere reason and/or virtue without the faith that tends to make a person “truly pious and virtuous”. With regard to reason, Mayhew taught that, “However right and reasonable men’s actions are, considered in themselves; however corresponding to the *law of liberty*; yet there is not, in strict propriety, any thing of christian obedience therein, any farther than they are done with reference to the gospel of Christ [or, *law of liberty*].”<sup>33</sup> A few paragraphs earlier, Mayhew had given three “sufficient” examples of this difference between the reason, virtue, and obedience of a Theist in contrast to that of a Christian. Given the general sense that Mayhew simply collapsed the categories of religion, reason, and nature, the passage is quoted at length to support John S. Oakes’s observation (following that of Jedidiah Morse in the early nineteenth century) that Mayhew consistently upheld the atonement of Jesus Christ.<sup>34</sup>

[1] The *Theist* may be sober and temperate because this is reasonable, and conducive to health. But the Christian moreover, considers himself as “the habitation of God thro’ the spirit;” and will not *defile the temple of God*, lest God should *destroy* him.

[2] The *Theist*’s virtue and obedience may be excited by some general confused notions of a future state of retribution. But a Christian lives under the habitual expectation of a resurrection, and a future judgment; when all they that are in their graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and come forth, *they that have done good, to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation*.

[3] The *Theist* may obey, because he imagines his virtue (notwithstanding all it’s defects) so valuable in itself, that it will fully and sufficiently recommend him to the approbation of his Creator. But the Christian obeys, because this will be acceptable to God thro’ his Redeemer, and be rewarded for his sake [i.e., Christ’s].

Mayhew summarized his overall point here by stating that even if a Theist was to “live up to” the principles of a Christian there was still “in all its parts and branches” a lack of “a peculiar tincture and complexion from [a Christian’s] profession” that “is animated by faith of the Son of God, who has redeemed us by his blood; *and*”, quoting 1 Peter 2:5, “*made us kings and priests unto God, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to Him by Jesus Christ.*”<sup>35</sup> Absent from Mayhew’s explication is any further understanding of the Holy Spirit, though he references Ephesians 2:22. Note also that for Mayhew this difference did not mean that a Christian was not reasonable or virtuous, but that the tenor of their practice changed because

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<sup>33</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience,” 274-75.

<sup>34</sup> Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 90.

<sup>35</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience,” 270-71.

of the clarity of purpose, expectation, and certain acceptance by God through obedience to Christ.

Obedience to Christ seems (for Mayhew) to be the principle of unity with Christ, and, therefore, reason and virtue are only fully salvific when in obedience to Christ. Mayhew subsequently explained that the principle of obedience is faith, and for a Christian, “faith in Christ, and in God thro’ him”, which faith “has a very natural and apparent *tendency* to make the subjects of it truly pious and virtuous; and to yield that obedience to the gospel, which is required of them.”<sup>36</sup> However, for Mayhew this faith in Christ can only *tend* to piety and virtue, since it is “manifest both from scripture, and daily observation, that people may be the subjects of faith, while they live in disobedience to Christ’s commandments”. He explained: “They may have faith, without having their tempers and manners conformed to the dictates of it: Their lives and practice may be contrary to what they profess to believe; yea, to what they actually do believe.”<sup>37</sup>

Thus, he asserted, “tho’ faith is the true principle of obedience, in all those who obey; yet it is not, in fact and event, a principle of obedience in all that believe; for there are vicious believers; as well as vicious infidels.” He referred to the Pauline epistles of 1 Timothy 1:19 and Titus 1:15-16, when drawing on the support of “the new-testament” to illustrate how “others, who did not make *shipwreck concerning faith*, but continued to hold it; yet held it in unrighteousness; making *shipwreck of a good conscience*”. He made his point further by appealing to the evidence the congregation had observed in their own lives, particularly in reference to the teaching of “our Saviour” from the parable of the sower (Mathew 13: 20-21). Mayhew stated in summary: “It is very evident then, that faith is not really a practical principle in the hearts of all *believers*: Some of them are very little, if any thing, the better for their faith”.<sup>38</sup> However, faith in Christ was the principle or foundation of evangelical obedience, of true piety and virtue.

Mayhew had observed this earlier, after quoting from Hebrews 11, that “faith [was] the great operative principle in good men, even before the coming of Christ: It was the same principle in general, which wrought in the apostles and primitive christians: And it is this principle that operates in good men, in all succeeding [sic] ages.” Faith was in fact “the

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<sup>36</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience,” 278.

<sup>37</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience,” 281.

<sup>38</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience,” 281-82.

heavenly seed, which taking root in the heart, springs up, and ripens into good fruit: This is the source and fountain from whence obedience flows: And without such a principle of faith, there can...be no obedience properly *evangelical*.” This priority of discovering the “practical principle” of Christianity (i.e., faith in Christ), which he also styles “the great operative principle in good men,” was inseparable with Mayhew’s soteriological theology of subordination.<sup>39</sup>

For, as noted earlier, Mayhew asserted that “The great principle of christian obedience is christian faith; faith in Christ, and in God thro’ him.” He explained this phrasing at length (with additional insight to the way subordinationism permeated his soteriology): “I add—in God thro’ him; because the faith of Christians does not terminate in Christ as the ultimate, (tho’ he is the immediate) object of it: but it is extended, thro’ him, to the one God and Father of all.” Here he focused on Christ’s mediatory role, doing all he did in ultimate reference to the Father: “...to beget in men that belief and trust in God, which is here intended, was one grand design of the mediatorial undertaking. Christ came into the world in his Father’s name, as sent and commissioned by Him, to declare and reveal Him. And in His name he spake to the world concerning God, and His kingdom.” Mayhew forcefully declared that “All [Christ] taught, did and suffered, refered ultimately to the Father; the end thereof being to *bring us to God*.”<sup>40</sup> Mayhew sought to “both illustrate and confirm” this fundamental point via a “passage in the apostle Peter” (1 Peter 1:20-21) but assured his listeners that “many other passages of scripture” evidenced “that christian faith is not merely a belief in Christ, or relying upon him for salvation; but rather a belief and hope in *God thro’ him*; A belief that *He* [God] is what Christ has declared him to be; that *He* is that righteous, that good and gracious Being, which the gospel represents him to be; that He is *reconciling the world to himself*, by such means, and upon such terms, as are therein mentioned”. With a marginal reference to Acts 4:12 and by quoting John 14:6, Mayhew stated that those means and terms were grounded in “[a] belief, that Christ is ‘the way, the truth and the life; that no man can come unto the Father, but by him;’ or that sinners can obtain eternal life in that method, and that alone, which he has opened and revealed.” That Christ alone “opened and revealed” the way to the Father was “the proper notion of christian faith”. In fact, to “suppose that faith terminates in Christ, as the ultimate object of it, is inconsistent with his being a Mediator at

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<sup>39</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience,” 280-81. The next sentence equated obedience with piety and virtue: “But Notwithstanding the visible tendency of faith, to produce obedience; to make men truly pious and virtuous...”

<sup>40</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience,” 275-76.

all. We lose the very idea of a Mediator upon this supposition. If Christ is really ‘the Mediator betwixt God and Man:’ he is to be believed on as such; and our faith must terminate...in *that God*, betwixt Whom and us, he *mediates*.”

Mayhew was emphatic that “the nature of christian faith in general” (upon this subordinationist scheme) was “much mistaken by many” and that thereby “the great *principle* [i.e., faith in Christ] of christian obedience [i.e., piety and virtue]”, was left undiscovered and unattained.<sup>41</sup> If the faith required to believe in the gospel message of Christ and in redemption through Christ, and to believe in God through him, does not also effectually “disengage men from their evil courses, and induce them to love and serve God” then nothing would. This turning “men from sin to righteousness”, effecting “a good influence upon men’s hearts and manners”, “induc[ing] them to obey his commandments” was the “obvious tendency” of faith in Christ. The following quote demonstrates Mayhew’s firm belief in Christ as redeemer of mankind, a redemption that does not allow men to continue in their sins.

What can be supposed sufficient and effectual to this good end, if a belief of such truths as are revealed in the gospel; if believing Christ to be really that divine messenger which he is said to be; if believing, that he came into the world to redeem us, according to the evangelical account of this matter; if believing in God, thro’ him, believing in his righteousness and holiness; his goodness and mercy; his promises and threatenings; what, I say, can be supposed sufficient and effectual to turn men from sin to righteousness, if such a faith as this, has not that influence and efficacy? if it leaves the subjects of it, as it found them, *dead in trespasses and sins*?<sup>42</sup>

To the contrary, Mayhew insisted that “[i]t is manifest thro’out the new-testament, that the apostles of our Lord, and other holy men, lived under the influence of such faith. This was the spring, and source, and animating principle of their obedience.” For Mayhew, faith and obedience were one. Furthermore, Mayhew wholly owns that while some may have been “incautious or extravagant” in “their representations of our corruption; our inability to do good; and, of the manner of God’s operation upon the hearts of men; yet”, he continued, “it is the undeniable doctrine of the gospel, that vicious men cannot attain to true evangelical holiness, merely by their own strength, or exclusively of the divine assistance.” However, Mayhew placed together a person’s inability at any given time to conform “internal purity” with “external obedience” (i.e., the ability to be pious and virtuous) with the “perverseness of men’s will”, rather than their “impotence”.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience,” 276-77.

<sup>42</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience,” 278-79.

<sup>43</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience,” 302-3.

Mayhew concluded the sermon by enjoining his congregation and the reader to improve their faith “into such a practical principle of holiness and obedience in your hearts” as he had explained. He equated “faith, in this sense” with “a pious trust and confidence in God, thro’ Christ” (maintaining subordinationism).<sup>44</sup> By this “faith, which [some] call a principle of obedience, [they] seem evidently to intend believing, together with that repentance”, which combined believing and repentance Mayhew defined as “that humble and pious temper of the soul, which is the fruit of God’s spirit, cooperating with our sincere desires to obey and serve him: *i.e* they mean internal goodness and holiness, as well as faith.” This more capacious faith was what Mayhew takes to be what the scriptures mean “when we are said to be justified thereby.”

And if we understand it thus, faith is indeed always, and in all who have it, actually a principle of obedience; I mean, of external obedience; for this faith is itself obedience, considered as a practical principle in the heart: and therefore it cannot, with any propriety, be opposed to or contradistinguished from, internal piety and goodness; or that divine nature, of which we are made partakers by the great and precious promises of the gospel, accompanied with the divine blessing.<sup>45</sup>

Mayhew was very concerned about piety amidst the rise of rational religion. Previously, in his *Seven Sermons* (1749), he had written: “we ought not to be so fond of a *rational religion*, as to suppose that it consists wholly in cold dry speculation, without having any concern for the *affections*. Real piety necessarily supposes that the heart is touched, affected, warmed, inflamed; and not merely that we have right speculative notions concerning God.” Bare obedience in our “external conduct” to God’s laws and a knowledge of his attributes would not recommend a person to a God “who requires us to *give him our heart*.”<sup>46</sup> Alan Heimert, however, argues that this concern for piety and (more so) the affections was not in concert with that of Jonathan Edwards, that apparently sought to transcend the rational, for which Mayhew’s construction of piety did not allow.<sup>47</sup> Still, it appears that Mayhew has been labeled a rationalist (according to its “cold dry speculation”) when in fact it was his particular passion to forthrightly and consistently insist on the sanity of Christianity *and* its affections, which never traversed beyond divine coherence already communicated to humans via Scripture.

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<sup>44</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience,” 306.

<sup>45</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience,” 304.

<sup>46</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, *Seven Sermons* (Boston, N.E.: Rogers and Fowle, 1749), 95-96. See also Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*, 210.

<sup>47</sup> See Heimert, *Religion and the American Mind*, 210-11.

Mayhew consistently argued from within the sphere of Scripture according to reason and experience, with the latter two standing as either an illustration or confirmation of the former, and vice versa, though the weight of any discrepancy did not favor Revelation. In an incredibly lengthy footnote (running the better portion of thirteen pages), Mayhew defended “the doctrine of human liberty” (in his sermon on “Evangelical Obedience”). Therein, he displayed the hierarchy of authority at the nexus of Scripture and human reason, with the significance of history, faith, experience, and the senses thrown into the equation of Christian verity. Mayhew stated that “we are more certain of this fact, that we are free, from daily experience; than we can be of the truth of Christianity, in the way of inference, deduction, or reasoning: Which reasoning all manifestly depends on the truth of some historical facts, of which we must, in the nature of the thing, be less certain than we are of the other.” He then homed in on his point:

No revelation, therefore, can possibly overthrow the doctrine of human liberty.... We could not rationally have been believers in Christ, without being first believers in our own senses, had we been spectators of his miracles; or, even the subjects of them, feeling in our bodies, that we were healed by him: (Mark 5. 29.) Nor can any man set Christianity at variance with the experience and feeling, with the *common sense* and *reason* of mankind; or exalt *faith* to triumph in their ruins; without being first more truly an Enemy to them, than he is a Friend to religion afterwards.<sup>48</sup>

Sense preceded Scripture. True Christianity would never abandon experience, feeling, common sense, or reason for a mystery of faith or historical uncertainty when it was a clear case of false necessity. Somewhat contrary to the common appellation of Christian rationalists,<sup>49</sup> Mayhew and others like him may be termed Christian rational-scripturalists who believed that scripture conformed to reason, but that *human* reason was not sufficient to comprehend all inquiries that arose in this life. Simply put, Mayhew refused to go where Scripture did not *plainly* lead, or “above what is written”.

Mayhew continually reiterated sufficient truths to live by while acknowledging and even warning against straining one’s intellect beyond what was readily apparent from Scripture. A good example of this was when Mayhew addressed “the perplexing question concerning *human liberty*” in this same sermon on evangelical obedience. Seeking to reconcile human liberty and God’s foreknowledge, he settled on the practical principle that

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<sup>48</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience,” 300n. For another example, see “Evangelical Obedience,” 276-77: Mayhew relied on “many other passages of scripture” and on following page he refers to “fact and experience”.

<sup>49</sup> See Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 4n6. There is also, of course, “Rational Dissent”, see Mullins, *Father of Liberty*, 13.

“if we are really free creatures” then “Some men *will* and *chuse* to conform their tempers and practice to their faith; and do so, by the concurring influences of God’s Spirit” while “Others *will* and *chuse*” otherwise. He then warned “Higher than this, I think, we cannot go, without losing ourselves. We must either take up with this simple, *scriptural* account of the matter; or else bewilder ourselves with that, both needless, and fruitless inquiry” adding later, “Since the scriptures are true, these doctrines must both be truth”. He had stated earlier with regard to human freedom, that it was “even at first view, above humanity—somewhat, to which we cannot attain—somewhat, which is evidently too high for creatures of such limited faculties; and probably for all CREATURES.” And he (again) issued a warning, that “if we exercise ourselves in these things, I know of no valuable end it can answer—except that of convincing us of our ignorance”. Once an individual was convinced of this, they could “at last...sit down contented and resigned, where the holy apostle did, saying with him—“*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! \*Rom. 11.33*”. He therefore concluded: “God’s counsel and providence govern the world; but yet men are free!”<sup>50</sup>

He spoke of this perplexity as “one of the greatest speculative difficulties that occurs, upon the subject of religion” adding that “And it is one...perhaps beyond the sphere of human understanding to give a clear and full solution” for he had found no one yet that could “fully clear up all the difficulties attending the doctrine of human freedom, as opposed to necessity”.<sup>51</sup> And later, in a paragraph that concerned “that revelation, with which God has favoured us [i.e. Scripture],” as it regards “a self-determining power”, he added a footnote that accordingly showed the relation between scripture, reason, and experience: “There are many things attended with insuperable difficulties in speculation; things, of which no clear account, or *Rationale* can be given; yea, which seem to run us into some absurdity, if supposed true: Which things are, nevertheless, certain, indubitable facts; such as cannot be denied, without denying our own daily experience.”<sup>52</sup> Scripture revealed the parameters of reason and the categories by which to apprehend experience, but human reason was still the vehicle of “that revelation”.

Finally, in Sermon XII “On the Shortness and Vanity of human Life,” Mayhew took a moment to discourse on certain exegetical deductions from the War in Heaven and Fall of

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<sup>50</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience,” 291-92.

<sup>51</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience,” 284.

<sup>52</sup> Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience,” 293-94.

Man that related to the phrase “ALL the SONS of God” (in Job 38:7). His footnote contained a reading (contra Oakes) that can only be described as Arianism proper: there was a time when the Son was not. The footnote also adds strong support to Maurice Wiles’ observation that Arianism rose and fell with the “intelligible and acceptable notion” of a pre-existence of “lesser spiritual beings” or, for that matter (and more fundamentally), “the reality of a realm of spiritual beings”.<sup>53</sup> In the text of the sermon, Mayhew had just related (in connection to the sermon’s title) how “the duration of this our mortal life is as nothing, even with relation to some finite Beings”, by which he meant, “those which were present, and ministring spirits to God, when the foundations of the earth were laid; and when it was said, “Let US make man.” The *Angels*, those “Morning Stars, then sang together, and ALL the SONS of God shouted for joy.” How long they had existed, we cannot tell: But they will survive ‘till the human race is extinct.” In the footnote Mayhew explained the scripture passage in Job 38 (just quoted) with that of Isaiah 4.12: “How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, *Son of the morning!*” Mayhew identified from the text that the verse was “more immediately” speaking about the King of Babylon, but stated that “there is a plain allusion to the *Prince of the Devils*, once a *Son of the morning*, a *morning Star*, and one of the *Sons of God*, who are sometimes called *Elohim*.”<sup>54</sup> Then Mayhew (the 1750 author of the *A Discourse concerning Unlimited Submission and Non-Resistance to the Higher Powers*), in the fashion of a true supporter of the Glorious Revolution, speculated that “*Lucifer*, the first PRETENDER, seems then to have fallen when he tempted man to rebel; setting himself up as the Prince and God of this world; and telling our first Parents that they should *not die*, but be as the *Elohim*.” He partly explained his use of the term *Elohim* to describe these *Sons of God* through the Latin and Hebrew text of Exodus 22:20, where he translated the word “*Diis*” (in English “gods” and in the King James translation “*any God*”) to be in Hebrew “*Elohim*”, relating that “[a]fter the fall, we know there were many *Elohim* both good and bad”. These were in contrast with “only *One* JEHOVAH, who was to be worshipped by sacrifice.” He confirmed this reading

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<sup>53</sup> Wiles, *Archetypal Heresy*, 161-162, 163.

<sup>54</sup> The inspiration for Mayhew’s exegesis concerning the term “*Elohim*” is difficult to ascertain. However, it is possible that Mayhew was influenced by the “revived” Trinitarian controversy surrounding Robert Clayton’s *Essay on Spirit* (1751) responded to by William Jones of Nayland (among others). See Derya Gurses, “The Hutchinsonian defence of an Old testament Trinitarian Christianity: the controversy over *Elahim*, 1735–1773,” *History of European Ideas*, Vol. 29:4 (2003), 393-409; and/or Derya Gurses Tarbuck, “The Controversy over *Elahim*: 1735-1773” (Chapter 4) in *Enlightenment Reformation: Hutchinsonianism and religion in eighteenth-century Britain* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2017), 68-84. Clayton published a sequel the next year and therein quoted “*Rabbi Ama*” describing the term “*Elohim*, i.e. *Gods*; ...*Bne Elohim*, i.e., the *Sons of Gods*; ...” (Robert Clayton, *The Genuine Sequel to the Essay on Spirit* (London: R. Baldwin, 1752), 39).

from the Old Testament with the New Testament passage “There be gods many, and lords many, but to us there is but One GOD, the FATHER” (1 Cor. 8:5-6).

From this, Mayhew then sought “[t]he contrast to *Lucifer*” who was “to bruise his head, after a long contest” and finds “the *Logos*”. Significant for Mayhew was the passage of Hebrews 1:9, whereby he intimated that the *Logos*, because he “loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore GOD, even Thy GOD, hath anointed thee...above thy FELLOWS”—presumably the *Elohim*. As such, Mayhew seemed to have crossed into Arianism proper, except he deflected (or softened) the certainty by then posing a (rhetorically confirming) question: “Was it not the *Logos*? — He who is, by way of eminence, styled, The *only* begotten of the FATHER, the *First-Born* of every creature?” Mayhew named the titles by which the *Logos* was known “[imperfectly]” in the Old Testament: “*The Angel of the Lord’s presence; The Angel of the covenant; The Messenger of the covenant...and whom David in spirit called his Lord, tho’ he was to be his Son according to the flesh*”. After relating the final outcome of the “war in heaven” with the devil’s defeat, Mayhew continued to discourse on the *Logos*.

The scripture informs us that the *Logos* had a *body* prepared for him, and that he partook of *flesh* and *blood*, that he might “thro’ death destroy him that had the power of death, that is the *devil*.” But that he took into *personal union* with himself, an human *soul*, my Bible saith not; nor that there is any other true God, besides “his Father and our Father, his God and our God.”

His now strident exegesis then turned to mocking “some who call themselves Christians” for exalting the Virgin Mary to the point that he would not be surprised if a Roman Catholic Council “declared [her] to be the *fourth*, or rather the *first Person*, in the *Godhead*, under the title of *God*, or *Goddess* THE MOTHER”. Accordingly, he supplied new creedal statements in the style of the Athasian that incorporated the “not four Eternals, but one Eternal” with the necessary anathema. He equated this to speaking (“to babble”) “without ideas”. He closed the already pointed footnote with a pugilistic warning that “neither *Papists* nor *Protestants* should imagine that they will be understood by *others*, if they do not understand *themselves*”, saving a derisive upcut for a last knockout attempt, “Nor should they think that nonsense and contradictions can ever be too *sacred* to be *ridiculous*.”<sup>55</sup> Mayhew apparently maintained a real concern for easing conversion to Christianity by Jews and Muslims, but at the expense

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<sup>55</sup> Jonathan Mayhew, Sermon XII “On the Shortness and Vanity of human Life” in his *Sermons Upon the following Subjects* (Boston: Richard Draper, 1755), 416-17 and 417-18n.

of shaving off the mysterious encrustations that made the missionary appeal difficult for no perceivable (to him) reason.

In light of this footnote in Sermon XII, Oakes' argument becomes more difficult to maintain. He argues that, "...[Mayhew's] refusal to specify his understandings of the Christ's personhood or of the relationship between him and 'God the Father' with clarity leaves insufficient evidence to label his Christology decisively 'Arian.' Unlike Samuel Clarke," Oakes continued, "whose teachings he otherwise mirrored quite closely, Mayhew nowhere explicitly affirmed that Christ was co-eternal with God, but there is no proof that he regarded the second person of the Trinity as a created being who was less than eternal."<sup>56</sup> Oakes emphasizes Mayhew's later statements in 1763 admitting that he had expressed "disbelief and even contempt of certain metaphysical and scholastic, unscriptural and ridiculous [or, irrational] definitions or explications of the *trinity*, which some men have given" but refused to allow that he "ever denied, or treated in a bold or ludicrous manner, the divinity of the Son of God, as revealed in scripture."<sup>57</sup> Accordingly, Oakes determines that while the "doctrinal departures from orthodoxy are unmistakable, Mayhew's theology of the godhead thus remains somewhat unclear." He therefore asserts that labeling Mayhew "subordinationist" does the most "to capture his understanding of Christ's role". At the same time the label "does not stipulate how Mayhew defined the nature of his personhood, which he ultimately refused to clarify."<sup>58</sup>

Mullins's review of Oakes' book acknowledges that he can "overreach" at times, but concludes that *Conservative Revolutionaries* "now serves as the benchmark for scholarship on the theology of both Chauncy and Mayhew."<sup>59</sup> Specific to the question of Mayhew's Christology, Mullins allows without comment that "Challenging the assertions of Bernard Bailyn, Jonathan Clark, and other historians, Oakes concludes that Mayhew's theology of Christ was 'subordinationist' but not decisively Arian". Preceding this Mullins reported that (according to Oakes) "Mayhew upheld the unity of God's nature and Christ's subordination to God the Father. On the other hand," he continued, "[Mayhew] did affirm 'the divinity of the Son of God' and never explicitly denied (as Arians do) that the Son is co-eternal with the

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<sup>56</sup> Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 87.

<sup>57</sup> Mayhew, *Defence of the Observations*, 111. See Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 87.

<sup>58</sup> Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 87.

<sup>59</sup> J. Patrick Mullins, review of *Conservative Revolutionaries*, by John S. Oakes, *The New England Quarterly*, 92, No. 4 (2019), 664.

Father.”<sup>60</sup> However, Oakes’s analysis of this footnote focuses on the “direct parody of some of the phraseology of the Athanasian Creed, [and] Mayhew’s anti-Catholicism”.<sup>61</sup> He wholly ignores the first half of the footnote that begins on the previous page, where Mayhew asks in rhetorical confirmation “Was it not the *Logos*? — He who is, by way of eminence, styled, The *only* begotten of the FATHER, the *First-Born* of every creature?” And just previous to this, Mayhew had (it appears) placed the Logos as originally among the *Elohim*, or “Morning Stars” who, from the text of the sermon’s paragraph directly tied to the footnote, are identified as “finite Beings”. Such textual statements from Mayhew appear (at the least) to decisively counter Oakes’s claim that “there is no proof that [Mayhew] regarded the second person of the Trinity as a created being who was less than eternal.”<sup>62</sup> They certainly do raise the question of whether “Mayhew’s theology of the godhead thus remains somewhat unclear” at least in 1755. As this is the only instance of which I am aware that Mayhew seems to deny, in an explicit manner, the eternal nature of the Son, a repeated instance—of which I am not aware—would better confirm any firm amendment to Oakes’s “benchmark” scholarship, which aligns Mayhew with Clarkean subordinationism. That said, it is just as likely that Clarke was misunderstood by the later Unitarians as it is that Mayhew was made his disciple rather than (more likely) Thomas Emlyn’s.

On 11 February 1757, Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758) wrote from his frontier ministry among the Housatonic Indians at Stockbridge, Massachusetts to the cosmopolitan clergy in Boston, pleading for a ministerial response to Mayhew’s 1755 *Sermons* and an anonymous 1756 Boston reprint of Emlyn’s *Humble Inquiry* (aka, *Scripture Account*). Edwards was the son and grandson of ministers. Born in Windsor, Connecticut to Timothy Edwards and his wife Esther, the daughter of the dominant Solomon Stoddard of Northampton, Massachusetts, Edwards began his studies at the colony’s collegiate school (subsequently Yale College) in 1716 graduating in 1720 with his BA and his MA in 1723. Between his degrees he accepted the ministry to a Presbyterian congregation in the city of New York. He spoke at both his commencements, at the first he gave the valedictory oration and at the second he delivered his thesis. His instruction at Yale had largely come from Timothy Cutler, Daniel Browne, and the prior tutor Samuel Johnson, all of whom had converted to the episcopalian faith of the established Church of England at the commencement of 1722. Edwards himself was elected a

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<sup>60</sup> Mullins, review of *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 662.

<sup>61</sup> Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 86.

<sup>62</sup> Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 87.

tutor for the college from 1724 to 1726, when he became the assistant to his 83-year-old grandfather in Northampton. Where he remained until 1750 (as previously discussed), ministering at the edge of Massachusetts until he accepted the presidency of the College of New Jersey, just months prior to his early death in March 1758.<sup>63</sup>

So, it was just over a year before then, that Edwards wrote to the Harvard Professor of Divinity, Edward Wigglesworth (1693-1765) and the pastor of the First Church in Boston, Thomas Foxcroft (1697-1769), warning them that “if no one should now appear to attempt a full vindication of the Doctrine of Christ’s Divinity” then the “Guilt of the Land...will be greatly increased by the Neglect”. He queried while writing to them, “how small a Matter” as infant baptism (“in comparison”) could be attended to with so much concern when there were, with reference to Christ’s Divinity, “Errors now brooked, and so boldly maintained, with an open Challenge to the Ministers of the [New England] to maintain the contrary doctrine if they can?” And reflecting on the fractures among ministers as a result of the awakenings of the previous century he asked, “And what a mighty ado was made all over the Country, in publishing Testimonies from the Press against Mr. Whitefield’s itinerant Preaching? & will all be silent now, as tho’ the most open Denial of the Divinity of our Saviour, and Endeavouring to root out the Doctrine out of the Countrey, were a light matter in comparison of the other?” Edwards lamented the lack of a ready response among the clergy to such challenges: “I wish that at this Day, when every evangelical Doctrine is run down, and such bold attempts are made to drive all out of doors, the Press mayn’t labour only with Performances that are leveled against Christ, and the religion he taught.”<sup>64</sup>

The reason that Edwards did not himself enter the debate in print was (at least in part) shown within his letter that identified the other doctrinal fronts on which he was already busily employed. “I have lately been writing a defense of the Doctrine of original Sin; wherein I have...particularly considered every thing, of any Consequence, in Dr. Taylor’s Book against that Doctrine; a Book that has done more to root out the Gospel, in all this western Part of N. England, than any other Book: I have almost prepared this for the Press.” To put this endeavor in context, he had also related that his “Discourse on Original Sin, will

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<sup>63</sup> See Avihu Zakai, “Jonathan Edwards (1703-1758),” *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>64</sup> Jonathan Edwards to Thomas Foxcroft, 11 February 1757, ALS 1757 Feb, box 22, folder 1304, Jonathan Edwards Collection, General Collection, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University, New Haven, CT. [https://archives.yale.edu/repositories/11/archival\\_objects/205622](https://archives.yale.edu/repositories/11/archival_objects/205622). See also Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 87-8; and Marsden, *A Life*, 434-35. Mullins only mentions that Edwards was “horrified” by the 1755 *Sermons* (see *Father of Liberty*, 41).

be almost as large as my Book on Free-Will”, he wrote, “and the other two Discourses will make another Volume something less.” Those two other discourses were “God’s End in Creating the World; the other concerning the Nature of true Virtue.”<sup>65</sup> One can envision Edwards exhaustively atop the battlements of New-England orthodoxy calling to those within for reinforcements in the effort to reaffirm the doctrines that defined the Christian faith that brought their forefathers across the Atlantic, but according to the categories of the New Learning. Edwards was a staunch supporter of the doctrine of the Athanasian Trinity, but he did not publicly engage in the back-and-forth of the debate in his lifetime. However, unlike many of those that did prominently engage in the debate, Edwards’s private advances of a consistent theology that upheld and firmed the fundamental status of the co-equal, co-eternal and co-essential Trinity proved enduring once they became more available. His theology has captured the interest of generations of scholars as well as practicing Christians and continues to be the substance of discourse concerning the doctrine and its place within Christian discipleship.<sup>66</sup> In his own time, however, Edwards was not especially known for his engaged theological defenses of the doctrine of the Trinity in the midst of the Trinitarian debates.

His most extensive manuscript writing on the subject, published long after his death, was his “Discourse on the Trinity”.<sup>67</sup> The “Discourse” and the rational arguments employed by Edwards in defense of the Trinity generally have displayed for scholars Edwards’s commitment to the Reformed tradition (that adhered to Athanasian Trinitarianism) as it was inflected by Enlightenment categories of discourse.<sup>68</sup> For example, Studebaker and Caldwell explain that in contrast to Samuel Clarke, Edwards “envisioned the deity as necessarily subsisting in the threefold relation of Father, Son, and Spirit.

God, as a divine mind, cannot *be* without the necessary and eternal reflexive act of self reflection, which engenders the perfect ‘substantial’ image of God the Son. Subsequently, Father and Son, mind and image, cannot *be* without the eternal and necessary ‘breathing forth’ of the entire deity in another subsistence after the manner of the divine love, resulting in the eternal procession of the Spirit as the love of the Father and the Son. The Son and the Spirit, though ontologically derivative, possess

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<sup>65</sup> Edwards to Foxcroft, 11 February 1757. Underlining original.

<sup>66</sup> For a recent example, and an introduction to the present state of the scholarship, see Kyle C. Strobel, “The Nature of God and the Trinity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Jonathan Edwards*, eds. Douglas A. Sweeney and Jan Stievermann (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 118-134.

<sup>67</sup> See Sang Hyun Lee, preface to “Discourse on the Trinity” in *The Works of Jonathan Edwards, Volume 21: Writings on the Trinity, Grace, and Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 111. The “Discourse” was published first in 1903, while another and much shorter manuscript writing “On the Equality of the Persons of the Trinity” was published in 2003 (see “Editor’s Introduction” to *WJE Vol. 21*, 18).

<sup>68</sup> See Stephen M. Studebaker and Robert W. Caldwell III, *The Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards: Text, Context, and Application* (Ashgate, 2012), 137-40.

the deity in all its fullness and thus equally share in divinity and all the divine perfections, including aseity.<sup>69</sup>

Edwards “sought to wed the biblical portrait of the Trinity with a rationality that could discern the outlines of God’s triunity” despite the limited capability of the latter.<sup>70</sup> In his publications, specifically with regard to his exegesis, Edwards consistently interpreted Old and New Testament passages to reflect the Godhead’s triune nature,<sup>71</sup> particularly in relation to salvation. For example, in his published sermon on “The Excellency of Christ” (published in 1738, delivered earlier, perhaps in view of the Breck Affair) he focused on the “diverse excellencies of Jesus Christ” intimated in the Lion and Lamb likening of Christ in Revelation 5:5-6. Edwards taught: “Christ has brought it to pass, that those that the Father had given him, should be brought into the household of God; that he, and his Father, and his people should be as it were one society, one family; that the church should be...admitted into the society of the blessed Trinity.” Such a society was only possible through “Christ who is a divine person, by taking on him our nature”. This allowed for “an immensely more exalted kind of union with God, and enjoyment of him, both the Father and the Son”.<sup>72</sup> *God* (proper) was not exclusive to the Father. Other scholars have argued (or countered), that like his contemporary (and former tutor) Samuel Johnson, Edwards owed much to the idealism of George Berkeley.<sup>73</sup> Throughout this study, I have sought to assess the discourse and have allowed private thoughts in their relation to the resulting public discourse, which for instance was the case with Franklin. Edwards’s privately recorded thoughts do not seem to have influenced the discourse at the time. Nonetheless, in this dispute with Mayhew, Edwards played a pivotal role in seeking an appropriate response.

As was already discussed in detail, Mayhew had multiple times asserted a firmly subordinate status—appearing to assert even a non-eternal status—of the Son in relation to the Father, who was God supreme. In light of this, it is significant that Edwards’ immediate

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<sup>69</sup> Studebaker and Caldwell, *Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 142.

<sup>70</sup> Studebaker and Caldwell, *Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 137.

<sup>71</sup> I would like to credit Jan Stievermann for this comment.

<sup>72</sup> As quoted in Douglas A. Sweeney, *Edwards the Exegete: Biblical Interpretation and Anglo-Protestant Culture on the Edge of the Enlightenment* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 96-97; see Wilson H. Kimnach, Kenneth P. Minkema, and Douglas A. Sweeney, eds., “Editors’ Introduction” in *The Sermons of Jonathan Edwards: A Reader* by Jonathan Edwards (Yale University Press, 1999), xv. The sermon was originally published in Edwards’s *Discourses on Various Important Subjects, Nearly Concerning the Great Affair of the Soul’s Eternal Salvation* (1738).

<sup>73</sup> See Scott Fenema, “George Berkeley and Jonathan Edwards on idealism: considering an old question in light of new evidence,” in *Intellectual History Review*, 29:2, (2017), 265-290; and Studebaker and Caldwell, *Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 195-96.

recommendation was to reprint in Boston “Mr. Bellamy’s late sermon, which I think, is well done to defend the great Doctrine of Justification by Christ’s Righteousness (which has been especially impugned by Dr. Mayhew)”, the only specific reference to Mayhew’s *Sermons* in the letter to Foxcroft.<sup>74</sup> This seems to demonstrate Edwards’ keen awareness of the connection between the theology of the Godhead and salvation that Mayhew was inextricably delineating contra Calvinism.

The “open Challenge”, that Edwards mentioned in his letter to Foxcroft, came directly from the dedication “to the Reverend Ministers of all Denominations in *New-England*” in the 1756 reprint (by “A Layman”) of Thomas Emlyn’s *Humble Inquiry into the Scripture-Account of Jesus Christ* (1702), whereby the Trinitarian debates of the early to mid-eighteenth century came full circle.<sup>75</sup> Conrad Wright relates that Mayhew was reported (much later) to have been the “principal means” of the reprint, helped by his parishioners and friends.<sup>76</sup> Besides the supporting context of his 1755 *Sermons*, much of the style and language is certainly Mayhew’s, such as highlighting the phrase “law of kindness” from Proverbs 31:26 (as he often did with “law of liberty” from James 1:25) or the insistence on the categories of reason and scripture while (again) anticipating the charge of heresy. As such, Mayhew seems to have had at the very least a substantial hand in the project. Furthermore, and significantly, it was Emlyn’s work on the *Scripture-Account of Jesus Christ* and not Clarke’s on the *Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity* that was reprinted in Boston. Oakes has asserted that beyond Breck’s reference to instruction by Edward Wigglesworth and the publication of Jeremiah Jones, “[c]lear indications of the origins of such ministers’ understanding of the Trinity otherwise remain as elusive as their exact nature in the immediate sources.” That said, Oakes allows that both Clarke and Emlyn “have been widely recognized for their significant influence on more rationalist eighteenth-century New England clergy”.<sup>77</sup> Oakes insists (per his source, Jedediah Morse) that Mayhew belonged to “the school of Clarke” by “admit[ing], not only the pre-existence, but the atonement of Christ.”<sup>78</sup> However, Oakes fails to show how Emlyn (apparently overlooked by Morse) did not satisfy the same criteria in an assessment of Mayhew’s published views.<sup>79</sup> In many ways, the

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<sup>74</sup> Edwards to Foxcroft, 11 February 1757.

<sup>75</sup> G.S. [“A Layman”], *An Humble Inquiry into the Scripture-Account of Jesus Christ* (1702), by Thomas Emlyn, the Fifth Edition (Boston: Edes & Gill, 1756).

<sup>76</sup> Wright, *Beginnings of Unitarianism*, 207; Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 90.

<sup>77</sup> Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 79.

<sup>78</sup> Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 90.

<sup>79</sup> See Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 81.

practicality and strictly non-metaphysical *Sermons* bear a greater kinship with Emlyn than they do with Clarke, who was acclaimed for his metaphysics. Also, the proximity of the reprint ought to bear greater weight in the determination of influence than Oakes allows. Certainly, Mayhew may have changed his views as he matured further (to be discussed later), but certainly in the mid-1750s it appears that Mayhew was in Emlyn's orbit more than he was within Clarke's.

In concert with the categories of the discourse on authority, the dedicator of the reprint praised "the plain, scriptural manner of his treating this sublime subject; a manner so well accommodated to the capacities of Christians in general" and prized it above "any other Treatise I have met with upon the same point, 'tho [those were] written with a far greater show of metaphysical learning, labour'd criticism, and quotations from fathers and councils." The author notes how "rationally, scripturally and candidly it is written" and takes Emlyn's conclusions as "the true, plain, unadulterated doctrine of the gospel".<sup>80</sup> Of course, should the publication, according to the New England ministers' "superior wisdom and penetration, be accounted heresy" the ministers would "at least have a fair opportunity publickly to refute it" to which he added "*Errare possum; haereticus esse nolo*".<sup>81</sup> Recalling the trials of Emlyn, the dedicator offered his sincere prayer (and an additional challenge) that the ministers "may never be called in providence to give the same melancholy, but convincing proof of your own integrity, that the worthy author gave of his, by patiently suffering a long and grievous persecution, rather than forego the testimony of a good conscience."<sup>82</sup> The Dedication ended with a reminder that if an answer "really deserving regard, but yet unsatisfactory to me in point of argument" was produced, then the dedicator would "take the liberty which, 'tis owned, belongs to every protestant-layman, publickly to propose my difficulties and objections".<sup>83</sup> The long shadow of the Reformation challenge to authority was a central feature throughout the eighteenth century's Trinitarian debates. Given that, according to Breck's conversation with Clap more than twenty years prior, relating that "Wigglesworth had given up that Text [1 John 5:7]...and laid no weight upon it at all", Harvard's Hollis Professor of Divinity would have been less than eager to enter into print with his own views,

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<sup>80</sup> G.S., "Dedication" in *An Humble Inquiry into the Scripture-Account of Jesus Christ* (1702), by Thomas Emlyn, the Fifth Edition (Boston: Edes & Gill, 1756), vi-vii, viii.

<sup>81</sup> G.S., "Dedication" in *Scripture Account* (1756), viii.

<sup>82</sup> G.S., "Dedication" in *Scripture Account* (1756), x.

<sup>83</sup> G.S., "Dedication" in *Scripture Account* (1756), xi.

nor stir up those of others.<sup>84</sup> Accordingly, the requested answer came the following year from Jonathan Edwards' son-in-law, the president of the College of New Jersey, Aaron Burr, Sr.

Burr's grandfather was part of the 1630 pilgrimage to Massachusetts with John Winthrop, and assisted in the founding of Springfield, but subsequently decided to settle in Connecticut. Burr was born near Fairfield, Connecticut in 1716 to Elizabeth and Daniel Burr, a respectable farmer and landowner. Excelling in languages and the sciences, Burr graduated from Yale in 1735, but was able to continue his studies for another year as a Berkeley Scholar (established just two years prior through the benefaction of George Berkeley).<sup>85</sup> The year proved seminal in his life as the Northampton revival extended to New Haven. As a result of his religious experiences, Burr decided to go into the ministry and he became the pastor for the Presbyterians in Newark, New Jersey in 1737. While he disagreed with the elements of enthusiasm that seemed to be sanctioned by some leading ministers in the later revivals, he nonetheless favored the New Side Presbyterians. In the subsequent effort to establish a college for like-minded candidates for the ministry, Burr assisted with what ultimately was chartered as the College of New Jersey (later Princeton University) in 1746. He assumed the college presidency in 1748 and remained president until his early death on 24 September 1757, six-months prior to the death of his better known successor, Jonathan Edwards. He married Jonathan and Sarah Edwards' daughter, Esther, in June 1752. The success of his ministry and later tenure as college president mark Burr as not only a devoted but also a gifted pastor, educator, scholar, and administrator.<sup>86</sup>

Burr's reply took the form of "A Letter" addressed "to *The Dedicator of Mr. Emlyn's Inquiry, &c.*" The letter was entitled *The Supreme Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, maintained* (1757).<sup>87</sup> Burr briefly prefaced his response by sharing that he would not detain the reader with claims that he "undertook it with great Reluctance; and therefore, that all the Faults and Imperfections must be imputed to those who urg'd me, rather than to my self" (though such may indeed have been the case). Burr wanted "to be thoroughly understood" and, therefore, did not want to offend his reader's (the dedicator's) "own Genius, Penetration or Learning" as he avoided language that lacked instructive capacity for most people. The comparison between Burr's brief preface in *Supreme Deity* and the short Dedication in Mayhew's 1755

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<sup>84</sup> As quoted in Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 77; see also, 88. See also Wilson, *Benevolent Deity*, 64-65.

<sup>85</sup> See John B. Frantz, "Aaron Burr (1716-1757)," *Oxford DNB*. See also Henry M. Fuller, "Bishop Berkeley as a Benefactor of Yale," in *The Yale University Library Gazette*, Vol. 28, No. 1 (July 1953), 15-16.

<sup>86</sup> See Frantz, "Aaron Burr," *DNB*.

<sup>87</sup> Aaron Burr, *The Supreme Deity of our Lord Jesus Christ, maintained* (Boston, New-England: J. Draper, 1757).

*Sermons* is striking in the parallel appeals and claims, as each defines the “end of speaking” and decries the use of “the mask of studied, equivocal, and ambiguous phrases” (per Mayhew) and “those labour’d Distinctions, Criticism, and Niceties” for the sake of “the greater Part of Mankind; who are Strangers to scholastic Niceties, and the various Methods and Arts of Sophistry; and are often easily puzzled and imposed upon by the mere Charm of Words, which either have no Meaning at all, or the true Sense of which they never come at” (per Burr). Similar to Mayhew’s wish that each in his congregation would “know the truth as it is in Jesus”, Burr explained that his purpose had been “to discover Truth; and express it in a Manner plain and intelligible, even to the lowest and most vulgar Capacity; the Subject being such as equally concerns the High and Low, the Wise and Simple, the Learned and Illiterate, to understand”. Burr’s preface was an attempt to counter the common claim made by the non-Athanasians that the Athanasian God was not only irrational but that no one, High or (especially) Low could begin to make any sense of it. And as such, the non-Athanasians asserted, certainly no one was required for their salvation to believe (let alone passively affirm) what they could not understand. This nascent democratic sensibility demonstrated by Burr marked an acceptance of a new front by the Athanasians (long labored for by their opponents) in the discourse on authority in relation to the Trinitarian debates—an explicit appeal to popular understanding (or, common sense) by way of argument and not simply scripture and creed, coupled with reason. The Congregational and Presbyterian ministers and churches, formed one and another of the most egalitarian clerical structures and certainly the ones that had to respond most readily to “the people”. It is perhaps unsurprising then that one of the first ministers to make such an appeal on the side of the Athanasian Trinity came from among their ranks. As a further indication that Burr believed and saw himself as in direct conversation with Mayhew (or at least a member of his congregation), he stated that he was writing “to one who with an honest Heart seeks to know the Truth as it is in Jesus”.<sup>88</sup>

Burr acknowledged the sincerity of the Dedicator of Emlyn’s reprint and assured him “That I have with the utmost Application, Seriousness and Candor I am capable of, read and considered, the Rev. Mr. *Emlyn’s Inquiry*”. And rather than speculate on “the grand Motive which induc’d you to procure a New Impression of this Inquiry in *New-England*”, he wanted

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<sup>88</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 1-2; Mayhew, *Sermons* (1755), ii-iv. Perhaps of interest are these parallel statements: Mayhew stated that “the end of speaking, especially of preaching, was to express, not to disguise, a man’s real sentiments” (p. iii) whereas Burr stated “The main End of Speaking and Writing (especially when any Thing of a religious Nature and Importance is the Subject) should be, to be thoroughly understood” (p. 1).

to wait until “such Remarks will appear more just and reasonable than they might do here.”<sup>89</sup> Burr’s responses to Emlyn form perhaps one of the most unique exchanges within the Trinitarian debates, as they inherently span nearly the whole time period covered in this study. But as the present focus is to assess the exchange between Burr and “*the Dedicator*”, I will only take into account two particularly insightful arguments Burr made in response to Emlyn (or his posthumous editors) before assessing his later observations and remarks to the dedicator. The first concerns his response to Emlyn’s initial exegesis of subordination, a response that juxtaposes competing appeals to Newton’s authority, and the second regards Burr’s use of the Church Fathers and antiquity.

In relation to the scriptural basis for subordination, Burr immediately addressed Emlyn’s first two arguments that “maintain[ed] the Subordination of Jesus Christ, or his Inequality to God the Father.” The points were identified as, “I. That the Term God is used in Scripture in different Sense, *supreme and subordinate*.” And “II. That our Lord Jesus speaks of *another* as God, *distinct from himself*, and owns this God to be *above or over him*.” Burr understood the intention of the first point to be “that Jesus Christ may be called a God in Scripture, and yet not be the supreme God”. He owned this as “A Point never yet denied by any who have read the Scriptures.” However, he countered that the question should be “whether *Jesus Christ* is not stiled *God* in such a Manner, and under such Circumstances, as plainly denote him to be *God Supreme*?” Burr listed several scriptures where Christ is stiled God “under such Circumstances”. Burr then drew attention to the fact that Emlyn (like Mayhew in his *Sermons*) “allows [Christ] to be *Lord of Lords* (indefinitely) but imagines, *that* notes an inferior Character, compar’d with that of *God of Gods*—and refers us to 1 Cor. 8.5. for a Proof of it.”<sup>90</sup> Burr could not see the distinction between Lord and God that Emlyn did, and demonstrated such by offering a counter reading of Emlyn’s own citation of Sir Isaac Newton as an authority.<sup>91</sup>

That great Man defines *God* from his Dominion; and observes, that consider’d as the Object of our Worship, he is Lord in the most eminent Sense; and therefore should

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<sup>89</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 2-3.

<sup>90</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 3.

<sup>91</sup> Emlyn’s citation of Newton (though more likely the editors of his posthumously published *Works*) is a footnote on page 15 of the 1756 Boston reprint of the fifth edition: “To this purpose are the words of that eminent philosopher Sir *Isaac Newton* in his *Optics*, p. 314, 315. *Lat. Edit.* The word *Deity* imports exercise of *dominion* over subordinate beings, and tho’ the word *God* most frequently signifies *Lord*, yet every *Lord is not a God*. The exercise of dominion in a *spiritual being* constitutes a *God*; if that dominion be *real*, the being is a *real God*; if it be *fictious*, a *false God*; if it be *supreme*, the *supreme God*; he might have added, if *subordinate*, a *subordinate God*.”

rather be defined from his Dominion than from his Perfections.—Whenever then we speak of God we consider him as Lord also.—Lord of Lords indefinitely must therefore imply God.-----Though every Lord is not God, yet the Lord of Lords is God; *this* implies the most extensive Dominion; and if, according to Sir *Isaac*, we are to define God from his Dominion, what more concise and proper Definition can be given of Him than that of Lord of Lords?

These competing appeals to Newton (who ironically, for Burr, was against Athanasianism but did not publish his views) perhaps demonstrated the place a natural philosopher (the budding man of science) could achieve in a discourse that sought to be apprehensible to the “High and Low”—the relevant discourse of any number of authoritative figures was more readily accessible by interlocutors. Importantly, the footnote that Burr engaged did not appear until the fourth edition, which was that of his posthumously published *Works* in 1746. This can perhaps demonstrate something of the rise of Newton as an authority, as he does not appear in the 1702, 1719, or 1731 editions.<sup>92</sup> That Burr was utilizing Newton per Emlyn’s arguments may have seemed anachronistic if Newtonian science and theology had not by then become so popular, as well as established. Even after addressing Emlyn’s use of Newton, Burr continued with further insights from Newton: “Sir *Isaac* was of Opinion, that from true Dominion, it follows that God is living, intelligent and powerful; and therefore as the Apostle attributes the most extensive Dominion to Jesus Christ, so we may thence infer that he is living, intelligent and powerful in the most eminent Sense, *i.e.* that he is God of Gods, or God supreme”. Burr then offered a particular observation that seemed to indicate the growing cognizance among interlocutors (in a theological controversy, and otherwise) of the competing authorities of the academic philosopher and the religious divine in the (now mature) Age of Newton.

But perhaps some Men will rather chuse to consider Sir *Isaac*, when he talks at this rate, as a Philosopher than a Divine; for were this allowed it would be of itself a compleat Answer to your Author as he finally states the Question, “Has Jesus Christ any God over him, who has greater Authority and greater Ability than himself or not?” certainly *not*; for the Apostle evidently attributes the most extensive Authority or Dominion to him; he stiles him the *only Potentate*—the *Lord of Lords*; and Power or Ability (according to Sir *Isaac*) follow from true Dominion: None therefore has greater Ability than *he, who* has the greatest and most extensive Dominion.

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<sup>92</sup> For the first appearance of the footnote citing Newton, see Thomas Emlyn, *Works*, Vol. 1, Fourth Edition (London: John Noon, 1746), 85.

Here we see Burr making certain that it was known to his readers that Newton was not greater than either the Apostle or (it would follow) Scripture. But yet, even after making this point clear, Burr still gave Newton the last (albeit parenthetical) word on the matter.<sup>93</sup>

Within his response to Emlyn, Burr consistently sought to uphold the dual nature distinction within Christ as God and Man, against Emlyn's rejection of it as an exegetical cop-out. Accordingly, when Burr discusses the New Testament passage of Mark 13:32 (that Emlyn had discoursed on at length), Burr offered a number of arguments that weaken Emlyn's contextual reading in favor of a reading that started with other, more Athanasian assumptions of Christ's dual nature. Where Emlyn saw the context of the phrase "the Son" as indicating "the Son in the most *Eminent* Sense" Burr immediately asserted instead, "*the Son*, i.e. the *Son of Man*, or the *human Nature*". This led Burr to claim that Christ "did not then know [the Day of Judgement], considered as the Prophet and Teacher of Mankind: It was what he could not then reveal in his Character; it being kept as an inviolable Secret from all created Beings;" adding that the answer no doubt contained "what no ways concerned them to know; yea, the Knowledge of which would be dangerous and hurtful...For this being kept such a Secret is, that *All might Watch*: A Duty that would in a great Measure be superseded by a Revelation of that Day and Hour". Burr therefore believed the true meaning of Christ's statement to be, with a slight alteration of the sacred passage to read more plainly in this vein, as "*of that Day and Hour must no Man know; no, not the Angels;—nor the Son*, considered as Man; or the Prophet and Teacher of Mankind".<sup>94</sup> He later continued, "So that the Question is plainly this, *viz.* Whether our Lord Jesus, if the divine and human Natures were united in his Person, could not affirm, that he did not know *that* as *Man*, or considered as our Teacher, *which* he did know, as God, consistent with Truth...?" He concluded that if the Disciples understood Christ to be speaking as such, knowing the distinction, then "He did not deceive them; but what he said in the Sense he intended it, and in the Sense they understood it, might be strictly true, tho' the Son in *another Nature*, or Character, did *actually know*, what is here said he did *not know*." More tellingly, Burr assumed the role of a defense lawyer when he subsequently, in reference to Christ speaking and being understood "as *Man*" and "*not Personally*" would be "inconsistent with Truth and Sincerity...that we have no sufficient Reason to suppose this, your Author has not yet proved".<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 4-5.

<sup>94</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 22. My underline.

<sup>95</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 23-24.

Burr's primary aim was not to refute beyond doubt the claims made in the reprint of Emlyn's *Scripture Account*, but rather to demonstrate clear scriptural credence for the Athanasian Trinity. To do so in this case he had to reject exegetical inference "from the Speech or Sentence itself, singly considered" since a statement's consistency "with Truth and Sincerity depends upon the Circumstances of the Time at which it was delivered; upon our Saviour's whole Discourse with his Disciples; and upon their knowledge or Notion of what he said". As for our own (modern) understanding, "it depends upon the whole Record God hath given of his Son." Burr again argued that Emlyn "has not shewn, that this [i.e. dual Nature exegesis] is not revealed to us by the same Scriptures that tell us, *The Son knows not the Day, &c.*"<sup>96</sup>

In this same section of his response, Burr consistently relied, at the very least rhetorically, on the authoritative category of Reason. He made frequent references to it, such as "We have as little Reason to complain and object..." and "Would it not be a very unreasonable Criticism..." and "would it not be barbarous and unreasonable..."<sup>97</sup> In a later section, as he replied to Emlyn's critiques of the Athanasian Trinity with regard to Christ's mediatory role, he stated that he wants to know whether his response "be not every way agreeable to Scripture as well as Reason". He then asserted first among a number of Scripture passages 1 John 5:7, in defense of the unscriptural expressions "*THREE Persons in the Godhead, or ONE divine Essence*", insisting that instead what is clear from scripture is "that the Godhead, or Divine Nature, is spoken of under the Notion of *three real Differences, or Distinctions*". "St. John tells us, 1 Epist. 5.7: *There are three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost*".<sup>98</sup>

Unlike Emlyn (and Locke), he does not equate the terms Being and Person, nor is he even particular to maintain the term Person if we can "convey our Ideas of these Distinctions better". In fact, to Burr, "Words are arbitrary, and often change and lose their Use and Meaning". Therefore, "Men may...call *these* Distinctions by what Names they please;—but the Nature and Truth of Things is not so variable". He does equate the terms "*one* divine Nature or Deity" and "*one* Deity or divine Nature" with "*one* Godhead". And relevant to

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<sup>96</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 24-25.

<sup>97</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 23-26.

<sup>98</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 68-69. A further significant instance of Burr's priority of 1 John 5:7 is on page 79: "...[Trinitarians] firmly believe with St. John, That *these* THREE are ONE...And tho' this should be stiled, *Babbling without Ideas*; saying what we do not understand, or affirming Nonsense and Contradictions; yet the Faith of a wise Man will stand unshaken, while it has so rational and solid a *Basis* as that of GOD'S WORD."

Locke (and Collins), Burr does not scruple over but embraces that in relation to “these [Distinctions], we indeed talk without Ideas so far as the Subject is above our Comprehension; i.e. We have no just Ideas of the *Nature* and *Manner* of these Distinctions or Differences subsisting in the God-head;” adding, “but we have very clear and distinct Ideas of their *Truth* and *Reality*, which the Scripture plainly asserts”.<sup>99</sup> The passage demonstrates Burr’s able response to both Emlyn and Collins’s respective critiques of the Athanasian Trinity and the joint priority he placed on Scripture and Reason in the debate. Burr acknowledged that “When we speak of the GREAT GOD, we talk without any adequate Ideas of His Nature and Perfections, or *Manner* of Existence; the Subject is vastly above the Reach and Comprehension of our Reason”. On the other hand, Burr claimed that “we may have very clear and distinct Ideas, and a rational firm Belief of his Being, Power, Wisdom, &c, and with the utmost Propriety discourse of them.” Therefore, the fact of the former inability does not dismiss the latter clarity, nor prohibit the resulting belief in the Athanasian Trinity “upon the Principles of the strictest Reason.” In fact, “no reasonable Prejudice” could be utilized against believing in “the *Truth* and *Reality*” of the existence of something like the Triune God, even if *how* it exists is “*above* our Reason”. He concluded the point by showing the respective roles and relation between Scripture and Reason in the provenance of such a belief as the Athanasian Trinity. For, the very rationale of its existence extended from “*sufficient Evidence* to ground our Faith upon, such as the WORD of GOD is generally allowed to be, by professing Christians.—And if this be allowed, as I think it must be, then it can be no unreasonable Thing for us to believe what is commonly called, *The Doctrine of the TRINITY in Unity*”.<sup>100</sup> Scripture was the evidential basis and, therefore, the rational source for the Athanasian understanding of the Christian God.

Before continuing to highlight Burr’s use of New Testament Scripture, I want to note that Burr utilized the Old Testament about as much as Emlyn. He most heavily relied on the Old Testament to demonstrate, in the lengthy section on Christ’s omniscience, “That Jesus Christ actually in the *strongest Terms*, and *most explicit Manner*, declares himself to be HE *which searcheth the Reins and the Hearts*.” He relied heavily on the phrase “*I am He*”, used by Christ in Revelations 2:23 (and elsewhere throughout the New Testament), to argue that it is “peculiarly appropriated to the *supreme* GOD in Scripture” and thereby signifies Christ’s supreme divinity. Accordingly, such use of the phrase within the writings of Isaiah are

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<sup>99</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 70-71.

<sup>100</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 71-72.

highlighted, such as Isaiah 41:4, or Isaiah 46:4, which in turn point to Isaiah 44:6, “Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and his redeemer the Lord of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.”<sup>101</sup> This was similar to his other use of Old Testament texts.<sup>102</sup> In keeping with his focus on the Supreme Deity of Jesus Christ, Burr was more concerned to find Christ’s supremacy in the Old Testament than he was to find particular references to the full Trinity.

Another instance of his use and priority of 1 John 5:7 was among a litany of proof texts (known to Emlyn and explained by him) that demonstrated to Burr the supreme Godhead of Father, Son, and Spirit. Burr utilized these passages, with the Johannine Comma first, to counter Emlyn’s criticism of the exegesis of Mark 13:32 that accepted that the term *Father* “comprehends” all three members of the Godhead. Burr’s use of scripture passages displays the frustrations attending the Trinitarian debates, as verse upon verse was reiterated to one’s own purposes only to fail to persuade others from their alternative readings, despite the rational weight they seemed to carry at interpretive crossroads. Burr unloaded: “What Proof or Ground is there to suppose that by the Term *Father*, we are to understand *three distinct Persons* here; and that the *Son of Man* stands opposed to all these included under the Term or Appellation of *Father*? Answ. Because the holy Scriptures tell us, *There are Three that bear Record in Heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost, and these Three are One.* [1 John 5:7]” He then proffered quotations (or paraphrases) of John 17:22, John 14:9, John 5:23, 1 John 5:20 and Jeremiah 10:10, 1 John 3:20, Revelation 2:23 and Jeremiah 20:12 to bring home his point, not even referencing them because they would be familiar to all his readers. For Burr, the passages all demonstrated that “in short, The God-head, or Deity, is plainly represented as subsisting in *three distinct Persons*, who equally partake of the divine Essence, and of all natural and moral Perfections; and consequently of *Knowledge*.” Burr could therefore conclude with an scripturally informed and rational confidence, “That as all but the Father are excepted from the Knowledge of *that Day*; so by the *Father*, is intended the *Deity*, or *God-head*, or all the three Persons in which it subsists”. He maintained that “this Reason remains good, till it be shewn, that no such Things as the above-mentioned are contained in the holy Scriptures...For certainly the most substantial Reason, the greatest Degree of Evidence and Probability, ought to be followed.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 50-51.

<sup>102</sup> For examples, see Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 43-44, 47.

<sup>103</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 30-31. [Bracketed scripture passages not original to the text].

In other words, since “the holy Scriptures” on the whole indicate the Triune God, then any place where it could be inferred otherwise must be read in a way that does not detract from that understanding. (The precise opposite view from Mayhew, who held that Scripture should conform to reason and experience, not the other way round).<sup>104</sup> Therefore, where there is an apparent distinction between the Father and the Son, a combination of dual-nature Christology and of  $a = b = c$  (*Father equals Deity equals Godhead*) exegetical approaches can reconcile any such discrepancy. Of course, Burr saw it as a case where, if one “impartially consider[ed], the whole Scriptures, they evidently direct us to this Interpretation”. It was not, therefore, “a good or sufficient Reason to reject an Interpretation grounded upon a Variety of plain Scriptures, merely because the Text it self...if considered *singly* by it self, is hard to understand, according to this Interpretation”.<sup>105</sup> Emlyn had also clearly “grounded” his argument on a variety of Scriptures. Later, Burr asked his Reader: “In what Words could [Christ] or his Apostles have affirmed him to be truly God, more plain and full than they have done in a Variety of Instances...?” Adding quickly, that in posing what was a counter question he “would not be thought...to [thereby] put the two Interpretation upon a level in point of Reason and Scripture-Evidence”.<sup>106</sup> Though he hoped for more, the best Burr could ostensibly achieve was a favorable draw in this method of argument.

However, Burr employed a further method, where the Bible proves difficult (at least for an Athanasian reading), Burr applied to the historicity of the text (often used to obviate or dismiss traditional readings) to demonstrate why traditional readings ought to be maintained. But before doing so, Burr explained the incommensurate role of reason and of linguistic challenges to assessing Scripture. The reason that the Scriptures are “so difficult to understand...in many Parts...[is] because they treat of the most sublime Truths;—Truths above the Comprehension of our Reason; and deal much in Parables, Metaphors and Figures of Speech: Besides the Stile and Manner of Expression in those Idioms or Languages in which they were originally delivered is very different from ours at present”. To these difficulties inherent to the sacred text is added that of historical antiquity, the fact that we are “very much unacquainted with the Scituation, Manners, Customs, Habits, &c, of the

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<sup>104</sup> See Mayhew, “Evangelical Obedience,” 300 (discussed earlier).

<sup>105</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 32. Burr’s response on page 76 to Emlyn’s use of 1 Timothy 2:5 is similar: “This [verse] seems to make our Mediator a mere Man:—But how unreasonable is it, to take *single* Texts and Scraps of Scripture, and draw Conclusions from them repugnant to the general Tenor of Scripture, the Current of the Discourse, from which they are taken, and the true Design of the Texts themselves!”

<sup>106</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 34.

Countries and Nations of which they treat”.<sup>107</sup> For Burr, a non-Trinitarian theology must answer the layers of historical encrustation before proving their pet extracts from the extant cannon. The historicity of texts, therefore, was a shield as well as a sword in the Trinitarian debates.

In a rare reference to the Church Fathers (due to Emlyn’s claims), Burr vouched for them but did not reference any particular Father when he rejected Emlyn’s claim equating Transubstantiation with Christ’s co-equality with the Father. He states that “the Fathers did not look upon the Elements to be *changed* into the real Substance of CHRIST’S Body and Blood, in the Sense which *Papists* hold, because they oft call them the *Images* thereof.” For where “[t]he *second* Distinction or Difference in the DEITY is the *express Image* of the *first*. On the other Hand, The *Papists* suppose the Elements to be transubstantiated or changed into the *real* Substance of CHRIST’S Body and Blood; but had the *Fathers* thought so, they could with no Propriety have called them *the Images* thereof.” Because “CHRIST is called the *Image* of GOD in opposition to GOD the *Father*; but the *Papists* leave nothing to oppose the *Image* [i.e., Bread and Wine] to.”<sup>108</sup> In other words, the Father is not the Son, whereas the Bread and Wine (via transubstantiation) are Christ’s Body and Blood. Similarly, in response to Emlyn’s claim “to *primitive Antiquity*,” Burr at first summarily dismisses the significance of “those Fathers who seem to have favour’d [Emlyn’s] principles:—This can be no ways material; since” Burr maintained, “our Faith is not, and ought not, to be built upon the *Opinion of the Fathers*, or, *Tradition of the Elders*; but, upon that surer *Word of Prophecy*, and *Inspiration*, the HOLY SCRIPTURES:—Upon the *Foundation of the Prophets and Apostles*, JESUS CHRIST *Himself being the Chief Corner-Stone*.” That now stated, Burr related a “general View” per Ephraim Chambers’ *Cyclopaedia* (1741) of the history of non-Athanasian Christianity to his reader.<sup>109</sup> Beginning with “Arius a Presbyter” around AD 320, whose followers “divided into several Parties” after the double condemnations of Alexander and the “General-Council of *Nice*”. Some thought the Son to be unlike his Father, others that he “was *like* the Father, and begot of his Substance; tho’ not *Co-eternal* with Him” (hence the significance of Clarke’s statement to the Bishops that the Son was “eternally begotten”). After a brief reign over much

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<sup>107</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 31.

<sup>108</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 83.

<sup>109</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 84-85. The 1741 edition of Chambers’ *Cyclopaedia* appears to be the most likely source of Burr’s summary when compared with the 1728 edition that lacks some of the detail and narrative under the entries for Arianism and Socinianism related by Burr. The 1751 edition is also a possibility, simply a later edition that presumably would have had less time to cross the Atlantic. Notably, in all editions, Erasmus is mentioned by Chambers, but he is not included in Burr’s summary, which instead skips to Servetus.

of Christendom in the sixth century, Arianism then “made no great Noise in the World, till Anno 1531, Servetus, a Spaniard, wrote a small Treatise against the *Mystery of the Trinity*” which in turn led “to the forming a new System of *Arianism in Geneva*” which “degenerated into *Socinians*”.<sup>110</sup>

Ultimately, Burr likened the Church Fathers to the clergy of his own day. “That it was much with the Fathers, as with their Sons of the present *Day*; they generally professed to build their Faith or religious Principles upon divine Revelation; in order to which, some wisely examin’d the *whole Current and Tenor* or Scripture, before they drew up an absolute determinate Conclusion;” while “others, of a more sudden Resolution and hasty Genius, considered only *particular Texts and Phrases*; such perhaps as favoured some *darling* Prepossession, and formed their Opinion with less Thought and Deliberation.” He continued, that “though the *former* were by much the fairest Candidates for Truth, and to be depended upon with the most Safety; yet they were *all fallible*; their Writings are not the *Standard of Truth*, nor the *Rule and Measure* of our Faith,” which the Scriptures provide. And as for the Scriptures, “we are, or ought to be, as capable of examining and understanding as our *Fathers* have been; and have as good a Right to judge and determine for *ourselves*, as *they* had.”<sup>111</sup>

Having finished his “Observations”, Burr turned his attention back to the intent of the dedicator of the reprint. Burr intimated that he had met reasoning with reasoning and “humbly imagine[d]” that his answers carried enough “*Truth*” to confound Emlyn’s work to the satisfaction of “every honest, considerate, unprejudiced Person”. Addressing the dedicator, he shared how he couldn’t help but hope that, despite any imperfections, “these Hints...contain proper Grounds of Conviction; and that having these laid before you, agreeable to your Promise in the *Dedication*, you will readily alter your Opinion”. If such an alteration was indeed the outcome, “I am far from desiring a publick Confession, or Declaration of Gratitude” as the mere “thought of having been the Means of turning one from the Error of his Way” was “sufficient Reward”. However, if a response to his observations was justified, Burr promised “to read and consider it” and to “yield the Point with Joy and Gratitude, whenever I see an over-balance of *fair Reasoning*, against my present Opinion.”<sup>112</sup> Hoping that this was the end of the public dispute, he asked what benefit was gained “to the Cause of Christianity” or to any Person in their duties to King, usefulness to Society, and

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<sup>110</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 85.

<sup>111</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 86-87.

<sup>112</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 87-8.

piety toward God? He believed that truth was the proper aim and it should be known, but, in reference to the reprint of Emlyn's *Inquiry*, he warned that "we should be well assured that we have Truth on our Side, before we attempt to bring about such Revolutions and Changes in Religion, as this Tract must make, if universally embraced in *New-England*."<sup>113</sup> The particular truth of Christ's divinity was one that to a greater or lesser extent affected all the "Essentials of Religion" and therefore "the eternal Salvation of Mankind". Burr then utilized the assumed convictions of the Dedicator to point out that "true *Unitarian* Charity" would not allow that it was "absolutely necessary to eternal Life, that Men believe with your Author". As such, Unitarians were upon their own principles acting dangerously in any attempt they made to revive "this *old Controversy*, in this *new World*". He subsequently was forced to suspect that either "you are not well acquainted with the Principles you espouse; or that some other Motive, than a true Love to the Cause of Christianity, and a sincere Desire to promote it, induced you to such an Attempt [i.e., the reprint]", adding that Charity obliged him to hope it was the former.<sup>114</sup>

Burr wrote, nearing his conclusion, that "it is my sincere Desire, that this Controversy may stop here; as it's of such a Nature as to admit of no determinate Decision, beyond all Possibility of Contradiction on *either* Side". The reasons that he had made a reply were that he did not want "many of the unlearned and unstable Multitude" to think there was no answer to Emlyn. Furthermore, and more practically, there was no prior tract (made in answer) that was common or available for "immediate Service to this Part of the World." And finally, while an "absolute Demonstration" was beyond (human) capacity "a rational Vindication" of the doctrine concerned was warranted. "In short," he summarized, "I humbly imagine that, in Consideration of the Manner and Circumstances of the *Dedication* and *Tract* itself, should it pass un-noticed in this public Manner, the vulgar Opinion will be, that it's *unanswerable*, at least as to our *Teachers* and spiritual *Guides*."<sup>115</sup> Burr and those other "Officer's in Christ's visible Kingdom"<sup>116</sup> who entreated him to write, with Edwards almost certainly foremost among them, wanted to be certain to "give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason

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<sup>113</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 88-9. This may be of some parallel interest regarding what John Adams observed to Hezekiah Niles in February 1818: "But what do We mean by the American Revolution? Do We mean the American War? The Revolution was effected before the War commenced. The Revolution was in the Minds and Hearts of the People. A Change in their Religious Sentiments of their Duties and Obligations."

<sup>114</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 89-90.

<sup>115</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 90-1

<sup>116</sup> Edwards, *A Letter* (1737), 27-8 (as discussed previously in the Breck Affair section).

of the hope that is in you” but Burr wanted it done as Peter had directed, “with meekness and fear”.<sup>117</sup>

“This was not wrote for *Dispute* sake”, he therefore concluded, “And should the Dispute be prolonged; I heartily join with your Author [Emlyn], in wishing, That it may be carried on with *Moderation* and *Christian Charity*: That all Wrath, Malice, Envyings and Revilings, may be laid aside; and that *Truth, sacred Truth*, may be every Man’s Aim.”<sup>118</sup> At this point, he enjoined “candid and impartial Consideration” to any reply, but then gravely singled out the antitype of such aims and dialogue as those who would “supply the Place of solid Arguments, with barbarous Criticisms, and pert witty Reflections upon his Opposers; studying to turn their Opinion and Arguments into Ridicule and Banter, instead of giving them a fair Confutation”. He specifically pointed to Mayhew and his *Sermons*, by giving as examples of such ridicule: “That there is as good a Foundation for affirming, that there are *Four* as *Three* Persons in the God-head; That we may, with as much Propriety, stile the *Virgin Mary, God, or Goddess the Mother, as Jesus Christ, God the Son*; reflecting upon all his Opposers as *Babblers of Nonsense and Contradiction*, and the like”. And just in case there may have been some confusion as to who was ultimately behind the Boston reprint of Emlyn’s *Inquiry*, Burr added this warning (perhaps indicating that he had read the particular footnote that concerned Job 38:7 in Mayhew’s *Sermons*):

such an one, I say, whether a Layman, or D.D. tho’ he might shine and blaze a while like the *Son of the Morning*, would quickly draw upon himself the Contempt of the *bad*, and the Pity of the *good*: All Men of Reason and sober Thought would despise him, for studying to render *that* ridiculous, which, however false, foolish and groundless some may think it to be, ought to be treated in the most serious Manner, ‘till it is shewn to be so...

Burr then reassured the Dedicator of his good faith and, yet, appropriate dislike of the tone displayed by Mayhew in his *Sermons*: “Good Sense and sound Reason I desire to attend to, wherever I see it; and whoever it comes from:-----But *Cant* and *Banter* should be *abhor’d* by all Men, especially in Things of a *religious Nature* and Importance.” He closed with a truly meek and inclusive prayer, particularly so in its use of the term “Mediator”: “The Lord prepare us all for that State and World, where *Paul* and *Barnabas* shall eternally agree: Where all Strife and Controversy shall cease; and, where we shall no more dispute *who* and *what* our glorious MEDIATOR is; but shall *see Him as He is*. To HIM be Glory both now and

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<sup>117</sup> 1 Peter 3:15.

<sup>118</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 91.

evermore. AMEN.”<sup>119</sup> Burr’s sincerity and his contrasting, even caring tenor were evident in this conclusion. He had acknowledged the difficulty of the doctrine without surrendering its essential efficacy. Furthermore, Burr’s choice to delay any observations upon the *Dedication* until after he had assessed and given fair answers to Emlyn’s *Inquiry* proved, in part, effectual—no reply was made.<sup>120</sup> And this may be the beginning of the misconception that Mayhew was of the “school of Clarke” rather than that of Emlyn.

In this study we have observed, that prior to Mayhew’s non-response to Burr’s reply, it is all but undeniable that Mayhew’s published views accorded more with Emlyn than with Clarke. However, the only real assurance of any subsequent adjustment in Mayhew was his silence in the dispute. His comments in *A Defence of the Observations* (1763) most readily support that he fervently believed in the divinity of Christ as the Son of God—but only “as revealed in scripture”. They serve to confirm that he was neither a Socinian nor Deist, nor an Athanasian. That he *may* have modified his views is perhaps indicated in his limited rebuttal that “in some of these very passages, the true scriptural account of Christ’s divinity is asserted and proved.” The use of and reference to “scripture account” may point to Emlyn’s influence, but directly after this statement, Mayhew lamented “the practice of some men” who claim that “rejecting mere human inventions and refinements respecting the doctrines of scripture, is the same thing with denying scripture-doctrines themselves”, a just as plausible reference to Clarke.<sup>121</sup>

Wherever Mayhew’s views may have ultimately settled, the abatement of this particular episode of the Trinitarian controversy can be ascribed to Burr’s candor and willingness to take seriously arguments that were asserted within scripture and according to—what he perceived beyond the levity—both reason and sincerity. His tenure as a college president and educator was apparent throughout. Unfortunately, for the debate and the discourse, Burr died shortly after publishing this demanding work, an earnest endeavor that he felt his Christian discipleship required.

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<sup>119</sup> Burr, *Supreme Deity*, 92.

<sup>120</sup> See Wright, *Beginnings of Unitarianism*, 208: “A few years of quiescence followed; then, in 1767, Simeon Howard was installed at the West Church as successor to Mayhew” who had died the year previous.

<sup>121</sup> Mayhew, *Defence of the Observations*, 110-13. See Oakes, *Conservative Revolutionaries*, 87.

## 4.2 – Views from the (Episcopal) Wilderness: Samuel Johnson

On September 12, 1722, the college at New Haven experienced a shock as its rector, the Reverend Timothy Cutler, was among five ministering graduates and two members of the university who proclaimed at commencement (via a benedictory English episcopal prayer and a subsequent meeting in the library with the trustees of the college) that their non-episcopal ministerial ordinations were invalid. In the words of Carl Bridenbaugh, this “great apostasy” constituted “possibly the most dramatic event in the ecclesiastical history of the American colonies”. Joseph J. Ellis puts it more succinctly— “All New England exploded.” Samuel Johnson, then nearly 26 years of age, was a principal member of the seven, and later recorded that “the country was full of a bitter clamor!” The colony’s Governor arranged for a “friendly argument” between the opposing sides the next month. Johnson took the opportunity to explain the situation as it was “evident to him” with reference to the Arian controversy of the fourth century. Johnson recalled that “from the facts and state of the first and purest ages of the church, that there never was a time, but when if he [referring to himself] had set up against episcopacy as Aerius did, he would have been excommunicated for a heretic and schismatic by the whole Catholic Church.” The debate ended on a dour note and three of the seven “could not stand it”. As a result, it was only four who soon left the shores of Congregational New England (most of them on yet another symbolically momentous 5 November) to seek “Holy Orders” under a bishop to satisfy (to their view) the requirements of apostolic succession.<sup>1</sup> Johnson ultimately obtained such an ordination from the Bishop of Norwich at the central London church of St. Martin-in-the-fields (per the noted juridical “appointment” of the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London). Johnson had elected to be (re-)baptized prior to this. The ordination would have, of course, included an examination, swearing the oaths of allegiance and signing the Thirty-Nine Articles. Johnson returned (on September 22) after several months of touring England (with unforgettable visits to the universities of Oxford and Cambridge) as a priest and missionary for the Church of England’s Society for the Propagation of the Gospel (SPG) assigned to the parish of Stratford

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<sup>1</sup> Both Bridenbaugh and Ellis report that three (Timothy Cutler, Samuel Johnson, and Daniel Brown) sailed to England for episcopal ordination, but James Wetmore is listed as well by Frantz and Gerlach. Ellis also reports that at the formal debate on 16 October 1722 (where Johnson was the chosen voice of the converts), that Cutler, Johnson, and Brown held firm but that four others (including Wetmore) “failed to survive the denunciations” (*New England Mind*, 81). In fact, from Johnson’s *Autobiography* we learn that Wetmore remained among the converts and sailed to England “a few months” after the others, joining them in June (Schneider, eds., Samuel Johnson, Vol. I, 15, 18). See footnote below for full citations.

in Connecticut (where he opened the first Anglican church in the colony), near New Haven and the Yale College library.<sup>2</sup>

Johnson's combining in his debate remarks the issues of Trinitarian belief and episcopacy, at arguably the seminal moment of his life, sets the stage well for our discussion of his subsequent writing and associations relevant to the Anglo-American discourse on authority in relation to the Trinitarian debate. Johnson never escaped the ecclesial wrangling involved with his advocacy of episcopacy amidst New England's dissenting establishments. However, he was able to advance an understanding of Trinitarian orthodoxy while establishing his own system of morality in colonial America's spate of new colleges in the aftermath of the revivals, albeit not without raising some questions. In this section, I will observe how Johnson allowed a certain subordination within the Trinity while yet maintaining his ostensible adherence to both the Athanasian Creed and Enlightenment systems of rationality (i.e., to both tradition and reason), but in that order. This tendency by Johnson, to uphold traditional categories and yet favor modern (or updated) understandings, was captured in his statement that "I apprehend it a great Damage to the Sciences that the old *Metaphysicks* are so much neglected, and that they might be rendered the more pleasant and useful by joining with them some Improvements of the Moderns", and perhaps followed from his understanding of progress.<sup>3</sup> This can be particularly observed in the significant changes made (and why) to the conclusion of his *Ethices Elementa* (1746) in the second edition published (as *Ethica* or Part II) in his *Elementa Philosophica* (1752), with a pronounced emphasis on the Trinity in the latter. That emphasis, however, must be read via the "analogous" subordinate understanding that he had advanced in *Noetica* or Part I of the same publication. First, however, I will offer some of the background, context, and connection that Johnson's figure allows in studying the Anglo-American discourse on authority. I will then proceed to an analysis of his texts that demonstrate his place within the Trinitarian debates

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<sup>2</sup> Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre*, 69; Joseph J. Ellis, *The New England Mind in Transition: Samuel Johnson of Connecticut, 1696-1772* (New Haven/London: Yale University Press, 1973), 78-81, 87; Herbert and Carol Schneider, eds., *Samuel Johnson, President of King's College: His Career and Writings, Volume I: Autobiography and Letters* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1929) 14-16, 18; John B. Frantz, "Samuel Johnson (1696-1772)", *Oxford DNB*; and, Don R. Gerlach, "Samuel Johnson (14 October 1696 – 6 January 1772)", *ANB*. For the process of ordination, see James B. Bell, "The Making of an Eighteenth-Century American Anglican Clergyman," in *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society, Third Series, Vol. 106* (1994), 93 and 103-04; and George E. De Mille and Don R. Gerlach, "Samuel Johnson and the 'Dark Day' at Yale, 1722", *Connecticut History Review*, No. 19 (Summer 1977), 58.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Johnson, *Elementa Philosophica: Noetica* (Philadelphia: B. Franklin and D. Hall, 1752), vii-viii, see also 76.

and his particular advocacy of Reason, Revelation/Scripture, and the Church (as a divine institution) in the discourse on authority.

Samuel Johnson, the son of a Connecticut farmer and fulling mill proprietor, had demonstrated “scholarly tendencies” by reading and writing at the age of four, and studying Hebrew at the age of five. He entered the colony’s collegiate school at Saybrook in 1710, graduating in 1714 and becoming the college tutor in 1716, the same year the college moved to New Haven.<sup>4</sup> This was the same year that the almost thirteen-year-old Jonathan Edwards began his studies at the college. Three years later, however, Johnson resigned amid an apparently petty row in the college caused by students from Wethersfield who had resented their merger with New Haven in 1718. The merger had been at the behest of Connecticut’s General Assembly, when the colony’s collegiate school was renamed Yale College (at the *de facto* suggestion of Cotton Mather)<sup>5</sup> and a new three-story building completed to house the college, including dormitories for its students and staff. Ellis states that “Johnson’s scholarship had become a pawn in a broader conflict” of grievances and that “there is simply insufficient evidence to conclude that Johnson offended the students with his emphasis on the New Learning.”<sup>6</sup> Johnson had read exhaustively in the 800-volume library procured for the college by Jeremiah Dummer in 1714 and substantially added to thereafter with the help of the school’s main benefactor, Elihu Yale. The library included a large stock of latitudinarian treatises compatible with and encouraging of the New Learning and the Newtonian worldview, concurrently supplied to the school in the works of Bacon, Boyle, and Locke, and donations from Newton himself.<sup>7</sup> In light of the subsequent events, it is not an insignificant aside that the large financial gifts and book deposits that Elihu Yale bestowed on the New Haven school were donated by a man dedicated to the SPG and his associations with missionary minded Anglican bishops who “desire[d] to reclaim the American settlements for the established church.”<sup>8</sup> That the 1722 harvest of Anglican converts was not coincidental

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<sup>4</sup> Frantz, “Samuel Johnson”, *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>5</sup> See Silverman, *Life and Times of Cotton Mather*, 299.

<sup>6</sup> Ellis, *New England Mind*, 52 (see pages 50-52).

<sup>7</sup> See Ellis, *New England Mind*, 34, 53-54; and Bremer, *Puritan Experiment*, 226. Silverman records that, “Dummer himself solicited a gift of books for the school from [Elihu] Yale, part of a library of perhaps a thousand volumes which he begged or otherwise obtained from people in London: [Richard] Steele sent complete sets of the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, Newton took down from his own shelves copies of his *Opticks* and his *Principia*” (Silverman, *Life and Times*, 298).

<sup>8</sup> I.B. Watson, “Elihu Yale, (1649-1721)”, *Oxford DNB*. Oviatt gave a fuller account (than Ellis, see *New England Mind*, 79) of both Elihu Yale and Jeremiah Dummer in relation to Yale’s membership in the Church of England and the college at New Haven’s Congregational theology (see Edwin Oviatt, *The Beginnings of Yale (1701-1726)* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1916) 377-378).

does not appear to have escaped the college's trustees, their suspicions went at least as far as Dummer, the college library's curator (and Connecticut's colonial agent) in England.<sup>9</sup>

Johnson maintained the plentiful harvest of English contacts that he had garnered on his trip to what Ellis has termed "his cultural home", indeed, it had been a cultural and intellectual trip that "stimulated and amplified his attraction to episcopacy" and the scholarly latitudinarian tradition.<sup>10</sup> Of all the colonial Americans to seek episcopal ordination in England, James B. Bell has asserted that Samuel Johnson was "[p]robably the keenest colonial Anglican observer of the English scene". Bell notes Johnson's daily journal entries of visits with "American friends and English officials", but also that he was "[m]indful of the politics of the church". Accordingly, he observes, that, "Johnson does not seem to have overlooked an opportunity to forge friendships at Oxford, at Cambridge, and among the established leadership of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, associations which he was to cultivate by regular correspondence for the rest of his life."<sup>11</sup> His most important transatlantic relationship, however, would be that of the Reverend (and later Bishop) George Berkeley, gained on the colonial shores of neighboring Rhode Island.

The immediate New England tremors of Yale's un/orthodox commencement exercises also prompted the first (indirect) contact between Benjamin Franklin and Samuel Johnson. For, at the time of the "apostacy" Bridenbaugh notes, that in the furor and fury that filled the presses, that "[t]he sole counsel of moderation in the newspapers came from 'Silence Dogood,' whom we recall was Benjamin Franklin."<sup>12</sup> The apprenticed teenage Franklin quoted at length "two Ingenious Authors of the Church of England" that had likely been "tainted with Whiggish Principles" (they were the writers of *The Spectator* and *The Guardian*) condemning the quick recourse in religion (and irreligion) to zeal, while also

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<sup>9</sup> See Ellis, *New England Mind*, 79. For more on Jeremiah Dummer, see footnote 6, as well as Silverman, *Life and Times*, 296-298, and Jonathan M. Chu, "Jeremiah Dummer (after June 1681-19 May 1739)", *ANB* entry, where he relates the Dummer himself probably converted to Anglicanism around the year 1725. For more on Johnson's "Anglicization", see Ellis, *New England Mind*, 55-81; it does not appear that the Thirty-Nine Articles as such were prominent in his decision, but rather a Church polity based on Scripture.

<sup>10</sup> Ellis, *New England Mind*, 84-85, 88. See also Gerlach, "Samuel Johnson", *ANB*.

<sup>11</sup> Bell, "American Anglican Clergyman," 106.

<sup>12</sup> Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre*, 71. Bridenbaugh also footnotes Cotton Mather's correspondence with Isaac Watts about the event, with Watts reply that "so far as I can hear it makes very little noise in London" (p. 69). Ellis offers a more satirical contrast to Bridenbaugh's highlight of Franklin when he writes of the fall out: "Benjamin Franklin reported that in Boston 'all the Pepel are runnin mad.' He advised all readers of the *New England Courant* to salvage something practical from the chaos by allowing henpecked husbands to renounce their marriage vows on the grounds that the minsters who performed the ceremony were not properly ordained" (*New England Mind*, 79).

cautioning against the “definitive” use of the term “*Church*”: “that important Monosyllable drags all the other Words in the Language after it, and it is made use to express both Praise and Blame, according to the Character of him who speaks by it”.<sup>13</sup> Franklin also quoted from *The Spectator* (No. 185) from 1711 October 2, which anticipated the principle later advised by Francis Hare, that, “Orthodoxy atones for all vices and heresy extinguishes all virtue”<sup>14</sup> with a similar observation: “...we may observe from the Behaviour of some of the most zealous for Orthodoxy, who have often great Friendships and Intimacies with vicious immoral Men, provided they do but agree with them in the same Scheme of Belief.” The author continued, “On the contrary, it is certain if our Zeal were true and genuine, we should be much more angry with a Sinner than a Heretick; since there are several Cases which may excuse the latter before his great Judge, but none which can excuse the former.”

Toward the end of a lengthy observation about the ills of zeal, the author wrote in favor of (ostensibly) all the established “Articles of Faith” against “all the great Points of Atheism” that could be formed into “a kind of Creed” that would “require an infinitely greater Measure of Faith”. The quotation is relevant for its detail of the supposed “Creed” of Atheism along with the arguments for maintaining the received (traditional) Articles of Faith. Each of these was either defeated or maintained upon balancing the principle of “the common Reason of Mankind” and “sufficient Reason” with the aforementioned “Measure of Faith”. Thereby, the overlapping spectrums of Reason and Faith at the time, upon which the careful balance of (Whig) social cohesion and separation lay, but also the competing appeal to the fundamental authorities of Tradition and Reason. “Atheists and Infidels...are wedded to Opinions full of Contradiction and Impossibility, and at the same time look upon the smallest Difficulty in an Article of Faith as a sufficient Reason for rejecting it.” Such stood in contrast to those “Notions that fall in with the common Reason of Mankind, that are conformable to the Sense of all Ages and all Nations, not to mention their Tendency for promoting the Happiness of Societies, or of particular Persons”. However, these notions Atheists “exploded as Errors and Prejudices” and would instead have “Schemes erected in their Stead that are

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<sup>13</sup> Franklin is quoting from *The Guardian*, whose founding Whig author (Richard Steele) also wrote in response to Collins’ *Discourse of Freethinking* that the author of the work “deserved to be denied the common Benefits of Air and Water” (No. 3). See also O’Higgins, *Anthony Collins*, 78. Steele had also donated “complete sets of the *Tatler* and *Spectator*” to the collegiate school’s library (see Silverman, *Life and Times*, 298). *The Guardian* ran from March 12 to October 1 in 1713.

<sup>14</sup> As quoted in Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 196.

altogether monstrous and irrational, and require the most extravagant Credulity to embrace them.” He continued by detailing the Creed of Atheism:

I would fain ask one of these bigoted Infidels, supposing all the great Points of Atheism, as the casual or eternal Formation of the World, the Materiality of a thinking Substance, the Mortality of the Soul, the fortuitous Organization of the Body, and Motions and Gravitation of Matter, with the like Particulars, were laid together and formed into a kind of Creed, according to the Opinions of the most celebrated Atheists; I say, supposing such a Creed as this were formed, and imposed upon any one People in the World, whether it would not require an infinitely greater Measure of Faith, than any set of Articles which they so violently oppose.

In such cases, Reason favored Tradition. Note that Newton’s laws of motion and gravity had by this time been placed as among Atheistic points. Recall also that Anthony Collins criticized the (largely Newtonian) Boyle lectures, where “on occasion...the Existence of God is often made a Question (which otherwise would be with few any Question at all)”.<sup>15</sup> The immemorial continuity and universality of the notions contained in traditional creeds and articles, alongside the testimony of personal and societal happiness, was the argument from “common Reason” for Tradition. What greater demonstration of truth could be had, or even wanted, than this?

Franklin himself (still as Silence Dogood) commented thoughtfully on the event, that, “In Matters of Religion, he that alters his Opinion on a religious Account, must certainly go thro’ much Reading, hear many Arguments on both Sides, and undergo many Struggles in his Conscience, before he can come to a full Resolution...” He then posited the possibility of “Secular Interest” and its capacity to “make quick Work with an immoral Man”, where he reflected directly on Johnson and his fellow converts. “But, by this Turn of Thought I would not be suspected of Uncharitableness to those Clergymen at Connecticut, who have lately embrac’d the Establish’d Religion of our Nation, some of whom I hear made their Professions with a Seriousness becoming their Order”. Johnson continued, “However, since they have deny’d the Validity of Ordination by the Hands of *Presbyters*, and consequently their Power of Administering the *Sacraments*, &c. we may justly expect a suitable Manifestation of their Repentance for invading the *Priests* Office, and living so long in a *Corab*-like Rebellion.”<sup>16</sup> The New Haven seven (soon to be four) had possibly (as was

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<sup>15</sup> Anthony Collins, *An Answer to Mr. Clark’s Third Defence of his Letter to Mr. Dodwell* (London: A. Baldwin, 1708), 88. See also David A. Pallin, “Should Herbert of Cherbury be Regarded as a ‘Deist’?” *The Journal of Theological Studies*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (April 2000), 125 n66.

<sup>16</sup> Benjamin Franklin, “Silence Dogood Essay 14,” (1-8 October 1722), Massachusetts Historical Society Collections Online. See also, Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre*, 71.

widely speculated) acted upon secular interest, but to Franklin it appeared that he could claim their immorality was more sinister, especially since Cutler had apparently kept his views secret for a decade and had held them even before taking his position as college rector.<sup>17</sup>

Franklin referenced the Old Testament story of Corah, or Korah<sup>18</sup> and his followers (recorded in Numbers 16), who assumed the duties of the priesthood without proper authority (in direct rebellion to Moses and Aaron, God’s chosen servants) and were subsequently devoured by the earth as a sign to the children of Israel of their unrighteous usurpation of the priestly office. Franklin, however, moderated this referential disgust with a warning to the Congregational majority that in their response “an indiscreet Zeal for spreading an Opinion, hurts the Cause of the Zealot. There are too many blind Zealots among every Denomination of Christians;” from which he (pre-)characteristically underlined the importance of moral behavior, “and he that propagates the Gospel among *Rakes* and *Beaus* without reforming them in their Morals, is every whit as ridiculous and impolitick as a Statesman who makes Tools of Ideots and Tale-Bearers.”<sup>19</sup> This was perhaps an unlikely beginning for two of British America’s greatest moral teachers, who forged different paths over the next two decades that found both sitting in Anglican pews (or in Johnson’s case standing in its pulpits), and subsequently collaborating on educational and (therein) print enterprises.

In the interim, Samuel Johnson had soon become the leader of the Episcopal interest in the colonies, as he battled the presently prevailing institutions of Presbyterian and Congregational Dissent in the north. Bridenbaugh stiles Johnson as “a great leader, an ecclesiastical general”. A primary aim for many in the Church of England ministry in America was to secure an episcopate in (and for) the colonies.<sup>20</sup> Johnson was able to pursue this aim without the unproductive and particularly “contentious zeal” that Cutler had

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<sup>17</sup> See Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre*, 68-69. Also, an alternative reading of this “Silence Dogood” letter is more satirical and sardonic, with “an immoral Man”—despite his altered opinion—seeking with “any Appearance of Credit [to] retain his Immorality” (in the same way one may speak of “retaining a (clerical) living”). The lower case “immoral” becomes the noun “Immorality”, indicating that perhaps Franklin was ribbing any in the clerical class who assumed their priesthood for “Secular Interest”, or the mere living allowance it offered.

<sup>18</sup> The eighteenth-century spelling of *Korah* in the King James Bible was *Corah* in the Bishops’ Bible, which italicized in the period’s print can easily appear to read “*Corab*”. See for example, 349. Ezekiel Hopkins, *The Doctrine of the Two Sacraments. The Way of Salvation: ...A Sermon against Rebellion* (John Nutt, 1712), 349.

<sup>19</sup> Franklin, “Silence Dogood Essay 14” (1722).

<sup>20</sup> See Nancy Rhoden, “Anglicanism, Dissent, and Toleration in Eighteenth-Century British Colonies,” in *Anglicizing America: Empire, Revolution, Republic*, edited by Ignacio Gallup-Diaz, et. al (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015), 135-40.

exhibited in Massachusetts.<sup>21</sup> He patiently and persistently culled many of the brightest Yale graduates into conformity.<sup>22</sup> He established himself as a first-rate educator and received an honorary doctor of divinity degree from the University of Oxford in 1744 for his writings defending and advocating the Church of England in America.<sup>23</sup> In his *An Introduction to the Study of Philosophy* (1743) and subsequent educational and philosophical works he channeled the idealism of George Berkeley, by then the Anglican Bishop of Cloyne in Ireland.

M.A. Stewart relates that the younger Berkeley was part of a small circle that met at the request of Queen Caroline that included both Samuel Clarke and Benjamin Hoadly, he sought to interest Samuel Clarke in his philosophical idealism but Clarke “dogmatically dismissed” him since it asserted a non-sensible reality. Also, he notes that Benjamin Hoadly and his brother, John, were hostile to Berkeley and “considered him a visionary”. Stewart includes, however, that as Berkeley matured, he found “accommodations with Newtonianism”. At least one such accommodation was most likely in reference to (what Johnson anticipated as) existential archetypes, that could roughly answer to Clarke’s critique of non-sensible reality.<sup>24</sup> Michael Jonik has explained Berkeley’s idea of reality or existence “to mean that matter independent of a perceiving mind does not exist,” and that “immaterialism was for Berkeley the highest form of empirical realism, if not common sense.”<sup>25</sup> However, related to the “accommodations with Newtonianism”, Jonik relates that Berkeley “later shift[ed] toward Platonism” perhaps, as Ellis had already posited, “due to Johnson’s influence”. But Jonik accepts Ellis’s conclusion, that “It is more likely that Johnson sensed what Berkeley was to discover on his own; namely, that a religious man’s concern for the world of ideas led almost inevitably to speculation on the origin of these ideas in the mind of God.”<sup>26</sup> In any case, Berkeley argued that ideas were, simply put, experience, and that experience was in fact the language of reality. Therefore, communion was a purely vertical affair unless the lateral relations of communal (i.e., instituted) religion were

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<sup>21</sup> Bridenbaugh, *Mitre and Sceptre*, 74.

<sup>22</sup> See for example, Bridenbaugh’s discussion of Johnson in relation to Thomas Bradbury Chandler (*Mitre and Sceptre*, 204-206).

<sup>23</sup> See Schneider, eds., *Samuel Johnson*, Vol. 1, 29-30. Johnson referenced his *Aristocles to Authades* and controversy with Jonathan Dickinson.

<sup>24</sup> M.A. Stewart, “George Berkeley (1685-1753),” *Oxford DNB*; Ellis, *New England Mind*, 164-65.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Jonik, “Mind and Matter in Early America: The Berkeley-Johnson Correspondence,” *The Pluralist*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (Spring 2016), 40 (39-48).

<sup>26</sup> Ellis, *New England Mind*, 165; Jonik, “Mind and Matter in Early America,” 46.

realized.<sup>27</sup> Thereby, this left true religion as the only antidote to secular communal loss (and potentially heightened the argument for the religious inherence of the state). This conceivably communal priority appears to have impacted Johnson's thinking about personhood (discussed later). Such a view on the possible importance of a Church-State establishment, however, did not come to Johnson through Berkeley. In fact, the elder Johnson concluded in his unpublished treatise and Platonic dialogue of the 1760s, entitled "Raphael or the Genius of English America," that Church and State should be separate.<sup>28</sup> This later position appears though to be contrary to Johnson's earlier conclusions regarding the Bangorian controversy, as related in his *Autobiography*.<sup>29</sup> Both Johnson's unpublished treatise and the Bangorian controversy are discussed at the end of this section.

Johnson's idealism was "ahead of its time" and his philosophical work(s) *Ethices Elementa* (1746) and *Elementa Philosophica* (1752), though admired by some, did not sell well.<sup>30</sup> However, this did not stop prominent men in both Pennsylvania and New York from offering him the presidency of their planned colleges. Johnson declined the first and accepted the second, becoming the first president of King's College in New York, later Columbia University, from 1754-1763. Franklin had personally visited Johnson prior to his letter inviting him to preside over the future College of Philadelphia (later University of Pennsylvania) and, unlike what LeMay suspects and Ellis ultimately intimates, it was more than mere practical interest that attracted Franklin to a mind such as Johnson's and his published works. Ellis states that Johnson's "philosophical sanction for moral behavior" was one that deists such "as Franklin and Jefferson could accept, once they had jettisoned the notion that God was the source of the archetypes", but he does not continue with any further analysis of Franklin's attraction to Johnson's "system of ethics", only that his publishing it "evidenced Franklin's admiration for Johnson's scholarship and provided the opportunity for the wily Franklin to maintain contact with a likely candidate for the college presidency." He also states that "Franklin never worried about the inconsistencies of Johnson's metaphysics. His problem with *Elementa Philosophica* was more fundamental; it lost his publishing house money."<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> See Stewart, "The philosophy of immaterialism" section in "George Berkeley", *Oxford DNB*.

<sup>28</sup> Ellis, *New England Mind*, 265.

<sup>29</sup> Schneider, eds., *Samuel Johnson*, Vol. 1, 22.

<sup>30</sup> Frantz, "Samuel Johnson", *DNB*. See also J.A. Leo Lemay, *The Life of Benjamin Franklin, Volume 3: Soldier, Scientist, and Politician, 1748-1757* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), 196-97.

<sup>31</sup> See LeMay, *Life of Franklin*, Vol. 3, 196; and Ellis, *New England Mind*, 170-71.

As has already been discussed, Franklin himself had been enthusiastic about the latitudinarian and moralizing sermons preached by a Presbyterian minister in Philadelphia Samuel Hemphill, and he began attending Church of England services when his campaign to support the young minister against the synod's discipline failed. A little more than a decade later, the doctrine (and related philosophy) of both Johnson's *An Introduction to the Study of Philosophy* and *Ethices Elementa* would have appealed to Franklin, in part because it followed similar routes that those sermons had traced in relation to morality and religion. For example, the *Introduction* started with a series of definitions and attendant programs that Franklin would have heartily approved in their double-helix advocacy of practical morality and education: "Philosophy is the Study of true Wisdom, or the Study of Truth and Right, in order to the Attainment of true Happiness.—Or it may be defined, The Pursuit of true Happiness in the Knowledge of Things as they really are, and in acting or practising according to that Knowledge." Johnson continued by explaining that "*True Wisdom* consists in discovering the best Ends, and the fittest Means in order to the Attainment of them, and in vigorously pursuing those best Ends by the fittest Means." He connected wisdom and action in a total endeavor that Franklin would have approved.

Now the great End that above all things concerns us, is, that we be truly *Happy* in the Whole of our nature and Duration:—And our true *Happiness* consists in that Pleasure, which attends the Contemplation of all things that come within the Compass of our Knowledge, and especially such as concern us, as being what they really are, and the Regulation or Government of all our Actions according thereunto; i.e. according to the Truth of Things, and the Laws of right Reason founded thereon.—And since this is the great End ultimately pursued through all the *Arts* and *Sciences*, they must be considered as the Means to our true Happiness.<sup>32</sup>

A discussion of a notion of the pursuit of happiness in eighteenth century discourse aside, Johnson's understanding of "*True Wisdom*" would become a fundamental article of his particular subordination that yet maintained Trinitarianism in his later *Elementa Philosophica*. Relatedly, speculation is also perhaps warranted about the doctrinal lure of the preceding *Ethices* for Franklin, where Johnson consistently distinguished (like Clarke) between "GOD" and Jesus Christ, which was just that much closer to Franklin's self-composed liturgy. In the end, it is certain that Johnson and Franklin were both "apostates" from their Dissenting heritage and converts to the New Learning, and while Franklin conceived of a more deistic reality compared with that of Johnson's (ultimately) Trinitarian existence, they both shared a belief in the rationality of God and the attendant accountable

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<sup>32</sup> Johnson, *An Introduction to the Study of Philosophy*, 1.

capacities, yet ultimate limits of human rationality. Ellis relates that Johnson had “been flirting with deism” in the 1720s, but that in a sermon delivered in September 1727 he “announced his repentance”. Ellis notes that therein Johnson “wondered how he could have believed that ‘Such a treacherous thing as our reason [could] be trusted in thinking upon such abstracted subjects’ as God and the Trinity.”<sup>33</sup>

Accordingly, Johnson read Anthony Collins and rejected his argument for the authoritative primacy of human rationality. However, he had also read Clarke’s work while adopting the Newtonian worldview and maintained something of the stamp of Clarke’s influence even as he devoted himself to the idealism of George Berkeley.<sup>34</sup> And, in fact, Johnson himself relates that he read Clarke more exhaustively as he became acquainted with the preceding decade’s Trinitarian debates. For, beginning in (or around) the year 1728, Johnson had made the acquaintance of Bishop Burnet’s son, then the Governor of New York, who attempted to make “a proselyte of him” to “Dr. Clark’s and Bishop Hoadly’s way of thinking”. Johnson was “furnished...with many of the best books that had been written by Clarke, Whiston, Hoadly, Jackson, Sykes, and others upon their side of the question, on the Trinitarian and Bangorean controversy (as it was called) which was then much in vogue.” Johnson related that he “read them greedily and could not but admire them as writers” and was “in the utmost danger...for a considerable time, of being finally borne down before their mighty reasonings”. However, Johnson, in the habit of impartial and careful examination “on both sides” of a question, accordingly read “Bishop Bull and Pearson, Dr. Waterland and several others of the best answers” to Clarke, et. al. on the Trinitarian controversy, and “Bishop Sherlock, Snape, Law, and many others of the best authors to Hoadly and his abettors”. Johnson, an Anglo-American, was experiencing at once a storm that had engulfed England for the better part of two decades. He found recourse to the Scriptures the only safe haven and guide: “But above all he [(speaking in the third person)] found it the only way to lay aside all preconceived schemes and philosophical hypotheses to account for the *modus* as to the Trinity etc. how these things could be (which it is quite beyond our faculties to conceive) and to consider the Scriptures themselves in a critical way in their original languages, to find out what they really teach”. Specifically, Johnson guarded himself against

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<sup>33</sup> See Ellis, *New England Mind*, 148-50, 151. The precise connection between Berkeleyan idealism and the doctrine of the Trinity has been discussed by scholars more in relation to Jonathan Edwards than with Samuel Johnson (for example, see Studebaker and Caldwell, *Trinitarian Theology of Jonathan Edwards*, 195-96; see also Fennema, “George Berkeley and Jonathan Edwards,” 265-290).

<sup>34</sup> Ellis, *New England Mind*, 148-53. See also Schneider, eds., *Samuel Johnson*, Vol. 1, 23.

“indulg[ing] speculations upon articles of faith as though they were subjects of philosophical inquiry and reasoning, but to consider them as revealed facts; and to inquire only into the nature of Scripture language, and whether the sacred writings do not in fact, teach a co-essential Trinity in the one essence of the Deity”. He knew language was important and distinctions were necessary to mark in his inquiry “not of distinct beings as persons are among us, but of what according to the nature of that language, accommodated to our low capacities might properly enough be called distinct persons; and whether they do not in fact teach that Christ and the Holy Ghost are God, in the same sense of the word, as when it is applied to the Father.”

One can hear a rebuff of Clarke in Johnson’s refusal to treat “articles of faith as though they were subjects of philosophical inquiry and reasoning” rather than “revealed facts”. However, one can also perceive a percolating desire in Johnson to adhere to “Scripture language” (as Clarke did), but with a clear understanding of its true “nature” as it was “accommodated to our low capacities”. Accordingly, even an appeal to the “primitive church” and Fathers was insufficient next to Scripture: “And as to the sense of the primitive church, many writers of which he read[,] the proper inquiry is, not what was the opinion of individuals, but whether it was not a certain fact from the Scriptures downward in every age, that a co-essential Trinity and proper divinity of Christ and the Holy Ghost, was universally taught and believed;” thereby determining that “to attest whether this be fact, we should consider the Fathers only as witnesses from age to age.” Clarke (et. al.) had helped to shift the grounds of debate more firmly to Scripture and away from scholastic formulations, and Johnson shifted with them. In 1734, Johnson had written that “the New Testament, which can no otherwise be established but by the testimony of the Fathers, who are likewise witnesses to Episcopacy.” Scripture, the Fathers, and Episcopacy all went together. “Does it not weaken the common cause of Christianity to weaken any one of the evidences of it?”<sup>35</sup> To return to his account in his *Autobiography*, Johnson ultimately concluded via this “method of enquiry, [that] what is called the orthodox doctrine soon appears to be incontestible”. This act “of self-denial...to [his] turn of mind, to submit his imagination to the obedience of faith” was difficult.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Herbert and Carol Schneider, eds., *Samuel Johnson, President of King’s College: His Career and Writings, Volume 3: The Churchman* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 98, see also pages 96-100 more generally with regard to Johnson’s views on the authority of the Fathers in relation to both Scripture and Episcopacy.

<sup>36</sup> Schneider, eds., *Samuel Johnson*, Vol. 1, 21-22.

Johnson had reached the proverbial juncture of faith and reason. Johnson claimed that, previously, in his desire to “see to the bottom of every thing” he was “extremely addicted to imagining or what they call reasoning upon the great objects of faith.” Johnson recalled that he had been “very apt to invent reasons and hypotheses for explaining the modus how and why divine things were thus represented to us, and to use the same liberty in speculating on articles of faith, as on phenomena of nature, till at length by a serious and close application of thought he was equally convinced of the folly of both, as being equally beyond the reach of our faculties”. Human reason failed to comprehend both “divine things” and the “phenomena of nature”. He juxtaposed two unities to demonstrate his stance of a finally (and universally) frustrated mortal reason: the example in nature of how “the unity, man, could consist of spirit, soul, and body” and the example in “divine things” of how “the unity, God could consist of father, son and spirit”. Thus, “Upon the whole he was at length convinced ‘that we must be content chiefly if not only both in nature and revelation with the knowledge of facts and their designs and connections, without speculating much further.’” Furthermore, he decided “That one great end of all God’s discoveries both in nature and grace, is to mortify our pride and self-sufficiency; ‘to make us deeply sensible of our entire dependence; and chiefly to engage us to live by faith and not by sight and in the practice of every grace and virtue in which our true perfection and happiness consists.’” Johnson’s content and factual faith had triumphed over prideful and self-sufficient reason.

He reflected that his conclusions were confirmed “in the course of his time” by observing “that Arianism and Latitudinarianism so much in vogue often issued in Socinianism and that in Deism and that in atheism and the most dissolute living”. For “the more gentlemen pretended to reason and deep speculation the more they dwindled in faith and the more they pretended to demonstrate what they called natural religion and morality, the more irreligious and immoral they grew, and that in proportion as they grew more conceited and self-sufficient.” Here, at the end of the slippery slope, Johnson “was melancholy to observe the gradual but deplorable progress of infidelity and apostasy in this age of pretense and reasoning from the well-meaning but too conceited Mr. Locke, down to Tindal, and thence to Bolingbroke, etc. etc.” In relation to his comment on Locke, he similarly referenced “Mr. Wollaston’s *Religion of Nature*, tho’ well meant was a great stumbling block to many and what he could never have done without the data in Scripture,

tho' he seemed not sensible of it."<sup>37</sup> Johnson was writing this, his *Autobiography*, in or around 1768, reflecting on his own journey of faith, fortitude, and (avoided or corrected) folly amidst the increasing transatlantic strife of the decade between the colonists and Parliament, an uptick in opposition to episcopal efforts in America (in part, due to Jonathan Mayhew), and a perception of a general loss of virtue.<sup>38</sup> He wrote to Archbishop Secker in 1765 that "the Bible and the episcopate...are both very fast sinking together in this aposticizing age, both at home and abroad."<sup>39</sup>

These earlier events were seen and conveyed from a distant perspective, and for perhaps that reason, it is in some degree understandable. Even so, it is difficult to fully surmise why he ended both his philosophical publications of 1746 and 1752 with Mr. Wallaston's prayer from *Religion of Nature*, with both referencing it throughout. His *Autobiography* shows that Johnson retained an appreciation of Clarke and his able responses to the likes of Collins. However, considering his stated conclusions following his reading of the Trinitarian debates, it is somewhat unexpected that Johnson's *Ethices* that mostly channeled Berkeley would then conclude with what can be readily construed as an assumption of Clarke's hierarchical Trinity. Particularly telling is that "GOD" was only used in reference to the Father. Upon receiving feedback that the work's conclusion was, at best, ambiguous, he added clear affirmations of the "Athanasian Faith" in the *Elementa Philosophica*.

Relevant to the *Ethices* conclusion and subsequent discussion, Johnson had previously recommended Samuel Clarke's work among that of the other interlocutors of the preceding decades' Trinitarian debate. He did this in "A Catalogue of some of the most valuable Authors on each Part of Philosophy" to be read in concert with his *Introduction to the Study of Philosophy* (1744). He also recommended Clarke's Boyle lectures but under a separate heading. These works by Clarke, however, were mere drops in a sea of recommendations, they were among not only Bacon, Newton, Locke, LeClerc, Whitby, and Whiston, but a host of other writers ancient and modern that were considered key to apprehending the several respective discourses of Rational, Natural and Moral Philosophy that he had outlined.<sup>40</sup> Also, in 1741, responding to a separate accusation that he subscribed to Clarke's understanding of

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<sup>37</sup> Schneider, eds., *Samuel Johnson*, Vol. 1, 22-23.

<sup>38</sup> See Ellis, *New England Mind*, 259-61. See Mullins, "Sceptre and Surplice" in *Father of Liberty*, 123-150.

<sup>39</sup> As quoted in Ellis, *New England Mind*, 255.

<sup>40</sup> Samuel Johnson, *Introduction to the Study of Philosophy* (London: J. Rivington, 1744), 24-26.

original sin and promoted Clarke’s sermons, Johnson insisted that he “never undertook to justify his [Clarke’s] doctrine of original sin, which I even allowed to be expressed too loosely and unguardedly”, he admitted, however, “only I was willing to put a more favorable construction on it than you did”. Johnson continued, “nor do I remember I ever advised Darby people to read his [Clarke’s] sermons in public, but I am sure I advised them not to do it, and lent them another book to read that they might not read his.”<sup>41</sup> Johnson had read Clarke, perhaps even sympathetically, but he did not recommend him outside the academic discourses where it seems he could be appropriately moderated. His *Ethices Elementa*, therefore, concluded in a surprising manner—using only scripture terms to refer to God and the relations between members of the Godhead.

As a result, Johnson’s *Ethices* (alternatively titled *A New System of Morality*) exhibited a non-explicit subordination in the doctrine of the Trinity as he concluded. The context was his brief exposition on God’s relation and interest in mankind while affirming the necessity of “*Reveal’d Religion*” (which was, he argued, an extension of the Religion of Nature, or Moral Philosophy).<sup>42</sup> In the fourth paragraph, Johnson cited the possession of “abundant Evidence both from prophesy and Miracles, and undoubted Tradition ever since” for the all-important fact of revealed religion: “That GOD, ...did at length send a glorious Person, under the Character of *his own Son*, into our Nature,

who had had inexpressible *Glory with him before the World was*; being the *Brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person*, and by whom he visibly displayed and exerted his *Almighty Will and Authority* in the Creation and Government of the World, and *in whom dwelt the Fulness of the Godhead bodily* in his incarnate State. – This glorious Person GOD sent among us to act as a Mediator between him and us. – For as we are Sinners, it was very fit he should treat with us by a Mediator, and as we are Men, it was no less proper that he should do it by one that should appear in our own Nature, and converse familiarly among us, that he might the better instruct us by his Example as well as his Precepts.<sup>43</sup>

Johnson here articulated (what could be presumed was) a subordinate second person of the Trinity, or Godhead. This “Person” was not (at least explicitly) equal in glory but instead had “inexpressible *Glory with him* [GOD] *before the World was*” (John 17:5) and (more tellingly) was in “*the express Image of his* [GOD’s] *Person*” (Hebrews 1:3). God was therefore a

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<sup>41</sup> A letter from Johnson to Jedediah Mills in November 1741, as it appears in E. Edwards Beardsley, *Life and Correspondence of Samuel Johnson, Missionary of the Church of England in Connecticut and first President of King’s College, New York* (New York: Hurd & Houghton, 1874), 122.

<sup>42</sup> Samuel Johnson, *Ethices Elementa. Or the First Principles of Moral Philosophy*, (Boston: Roberts and Fowle, 1746), 63.

<sup>43</sup> Johnson, *Ethices*, 64-65.

person (not three). Accordingly, God was not the Godhead (as Athanasians believed). Importantly, the final clause of the first sentence (underlined, referencing Colossians 2:9) could be understood as differing from the previous clauses, where “his incarnate State” seemed to plausibly refer to the person of the Son only, and not to the person of “GOD” (presumably, the Father) as the prior clauses had. Subsequently, Johnson stated that this “Person” in “this incarnate State...abundantly prov’d ...that he was indeed a Teacher come from GOD [John 3:2]...clothed with Divine Authority”; and that “it pleased GOD to appoint that his Son, (voluntarily submitting to it,) should die...”—again, “GOD” was a person and (ostensibly) not the same entity as “his Son”. The “blessed JESUS...did, in GOD’s Name, promise and ascertain Pardon to our sincere Repentance”, note that Jesus promised “in GOD’s Name” rather than “as GOD”. Johnson later brought the third member of the Godhead into this understanding: “[GOD] has also, for CHRIST’s Sake, sent his [GOD’s] Holy Spirit, (by whom he has always immediately exerted his Almighty Power in the Creation and Government of the World,)...”.<sup>44</sup> And Johnson offered a final, summative, example of seemingly implicit Trinitarian subordination where he at least appears to emphasize GOD’s person as directing the other persons of the Godhead:

GOD has been pleased to derive down all his Blessings and Favours to us by the *Mediation* of his blessed *Son* and the *Influence* of his *Holy Spirit*; so it is fit, as he hath taught us, that all our Worship and Service, our Prayers and Praises, should be offered up to him, by the Assistance of his Holy Spirit, and through the Mediation of his dear Son, as the Condition of their obtaining Favour and Acceptance with him [GOD].<sup>45</sup>

The first term of the phrase “derive down...to us by the Mediation of his blessed Son and the Influence of his Holy Spirit” seemed to imply the non-derivative status/supremacy of the Father and his role in the Godhead. Prior to this Johnson had identified GOD as “the *Father of Mercies*” (2 Corinthians 1:3), the only explicit reference to God the Father in his entire explication of “the *Connection* between the *Law* or *Religion* of *Nature*, and *Christianity*”.<sup>46</sup> To scrutinizing eyes, therefore, Johnson could have been tacitly affirming that God the Father was supreme and his Son and his Spirit subordinate, to the detriment of embattled Athanasian orthodoxy.

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<sup>44</sup> Johnson, *Ethics*, 65-66.

<sup>45</sup> Johnson, *Ethics*, 67.

<sup>46</sup> Johnson, *Ethics*, 64, 63.

Lastly, in the final, lengthy sentence of his *Ethices*, exhorting repentance and faithful living “towards GOD and Man”, he uncomfortably (sans clear Athanasian affirmations) maintained the difference between the first and second persons of the Trinity, referring to the second as “this great Prophet, his [i.e., GOD’s] visible Representative and Vicegerent”. And the truth of Christianity could be “founded in *Nature*, or merely depending on *Revelation*” to produce the faith that leads to repentance.<sup>47</sup>

Now, therefore, all those who do firmly believe all the great Truths of this Holy Religion whether *Natural* or *Revealed*...do heartily *repent* and forsake their Sins and return to their Duty, and faithfully live and act in all their Behaviour both towards GOD and Man, from a Sense of Duty to GOD their great Creator, and JESUS CHRIST their great Lawgiver and Mediator, and persevere *faithful to the Death in Obedience* to the Will and Law of GOD, made known to them by this great Prophet, his visible Representative and Vicegerent; as they are said to be true *Christians*, and to belong to that heavenly Community which is called his *Kingdom*, (whereof he is the Head, Lord and *King*) even while they continue in this present State; so they shall through his Merits and Mediation, be accepted with him here; and inconceivably and forever happy with him, in his glorious Kingdom in the Life to come.<sup>48</sup>

In Johnson’s *Ethices*, God was everywhere the Father and Jesus Christ was wholly on his errand. Christ was our “Lawgiver and Mediator,” but not God’s co-equal, co-eternal, and consubstantial Son.

Johnson’s concluding expressions, that did not clearly affirm the Athanasian Godhead of the Son, did not go unnoticed, though the preceding chapters’ perceived Christian verity tempered any suspicions. The aged and prominent Boston minister Benjamin Colman (1673-1747) wrote to Johnson (on 2 June 1746) about his particular “pleasure” in reading the *Ethices* “which I cannot easily express.” Colman called it “the most perfect piece of *Ethics*...that I have seen in any language” and that “it is strongly adapted to inform the mind and affect the heart; and under the blessing of the Holy Spirit to form both into all the emotions of virtue and piety, in its connection with and submission to the Sacred Scriptures, and the revelation of Jesus Christ, who is the end of the law for righteousness to us sinners.”<sup>49</sup> Johnson had gained a firm friend in one of the pillars of the Congregational way, so much so

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<sup>47</sup> In the “Advertisement” to his *Ethices Elementa* (first page after the title page), Johnson clearly stated that “Natural Reason” could not “have fully discovered all these Principles of Truth and Duty...without the Help of Revelation.” But, however such “Truths and Duties” were discovered, when duly considered, they always evidenced their foundation “in the first Principles of Reason and Nature”.

<sup>48</sup> Johnson, *Ethices*, 67-68.

<sup>49</sup> Beardsley, *Life and Correspondence of Samuel Johnson*, 123.

that Colman's one point of critical scrutiny warranted a private letter rather than any published criticism. Coleman wrote,

Yet, sir, I also freely own to you that your words, page 64, "of God's sending a glorious person under the character of his own Son, who had an inexpressible glory with Him before the world was;" although enforced by the following Scripture expressions, "the express image of his person, and the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in Him bodily in his incarnate State;" seem not enough to me in honor of revealed religion, the Holy Scriptures; by which it is Sir that our reason is illuminated and raised to such a gracious height; as that you, my honored brother, after the diligent study of them for many years, have by their help and the assistance of the blessed Inspirer of them (I am willing to add), been enabled to write this correct and exalted book of Ethics.<sup>50</sup>

In other words, Colman could not countenance that this "exalted" work could have been written by anyone who was not a diligent student of the Holy Scriptures and, thereby, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. As such, he gave its author the benefit of the doubt in relation to a single (albeit, ultimately fundamental) instance of insufficient expression, a lone "defect" as he put it that warranted consideration (and "brotherly" inquiry) rather than rejection of all that had preceded it.

Upon all Sir, to lay my whole intention before you in this latter part of my letter, I request you consider whether those words: "a glorious person under the character of his own Son in our nature, who had an imperishable glory with Him before the world was," with what follows of Scripture expressions in that pious paragraph, is sufficient to answer unto the doctrine of the eternal Godhead of Christ, as it is explained to us in the Athanasian Creed, daily read in your worshipping congregations?

To this, Colman added to an assurance of his discretion in making such an observation: "This is the defect that occurs to me in the close of your excellent treatise; which yet I have not observed to any one but yourself. And I hope, Sir, that this freedom, after the high brotherly regards I have been expressing, will be candidly taken by you."<sup>51</sup> The reference, by a respected Congregational minister, to "your worshipping congregations" may have alarmed Johnson and alerted him to his overarching duty and concern for the advancement of episcopacy. This was not the first time that Johnson's views on the divinity of the Son had been questioned, nor would it be the last, and that in relation to his advancement of episcopacy.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Beardsley, *Life and Correspondence of Samuel Johnson*, 124.

<sup>51</sup> Beardsley, *Life and Correspondence of Samuel Johnson*, 124-125.

<sup>52</sup> See Samuel Johnson, *A second letter from a minister of the Church of England to his dissenting parishioners* (Boston, 1734), 89. See also Schneider, eds., *Samuel Johnson, Vol. III*, 100. Here, Johnson also seemed to

Johnson responded (on 12 June 1746) to the letter and single point of criticism with self-deprecating decorum and gratitude, acknowledging Colman's discreet communication "as a singular act of friendship". Johnson saw that Colman's "kind aim was that nothing that I offer should be either liable to misconstruction, or of any mischievous tendency to the disadvantage of our common faith." Accordingly, Johnson assured him of his tenacity toward "the Athanasian Faith": "In answer, therefore, to your kind suggestion, I beg leave to say, that as I am sincerely tenacious of the Athanasian Faith, so I beg those expressions may not be understood to be inconsistent with it, but rather expressive of it as they appear to me to be, and that you will do me the favor to assure any gentlemen of this who may be apt to suspect me."<sup>53</sup> This reply was such to demonstrate that Johnson was not truly remiss on the point, that he saw "those expressions" as wholly consistent with Athanasian orthodoxy. He serenely explained to Colman that "[t]he only reason of my expressing myself as I did was, because I was not willing to meddle with anything controversial, and therefore chose to confine myself to the language of the Sacred Scriptures."<sup>54</sup> Colman's very concern was Johnson's specific defense. Such a confrontation between the creedal distillation of doctrine from and the express language of Scripture should not surprise us, but the benefit of the doubt assumed by Colman should. Colman was inclined and able to delay judgment and assume better because of the apprehended tendency of the whole. But Johnson's implication that creedal language was a detriment to his program also demonstrated a shift, among at least some Anglican clergy, to favor scriptural terms as a unifying principle (in part, as a result of Clarke's *Scripture-Doctrine*).

Johnson continued his letter to Colman by nonetheless offering, perhaps to placate any residual concerns Colman may have had, "if it were not too late,

I could wish one word were inserted which would put the matter out of all ambiguity. I would express it thus: "Who was truly God of God, and had inexpressible glory with Him from all Eternity, before the world was," and I should be highly obliged to you, if you will desire the printer (provided it be not too late) to insert those words, *Was truly God of God from all Eternity*, in their proper place.<sup>55</sup>

Johnson proposed the Nicene expression "God of God" added to with the phrase "from all Eternity" (perhaps from the Arminian *Institutiones Theologicae* (1650) by Simon Episcopius,

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discuss Clarke's *Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity* and his awareness of the ongoing disputes over the Trinity and the language of Scripture.

<sup>53</sup> Beardsley, *Life and Correspondence of Samuel Johnson*, 125.

<sup>54</sup> Beardsley, *Life and Correspondence of Samuel Johnson*, 126.

<sup>55</sup> Beardsley, *Life and Correspondence of Samuel Johnson*, 126.

Johnson does not say).<sup>56</sup> Ultimately, he had offered what could not be done (the work had already been published), and only in the statement of “could wish” rather than “would wish”, but the letter seems to have settled Colman’s concerns sufficiently. Johnson, however, was himself sufficiently convinced of his own danger that he did indeed insert a lengthy affirmation of the Athanasian Trinity in his next iteration, or second edition.

I will note here that almost eight years later Johnson was still having to defend his belief in the divinity of Christ. In a heated dispute over whether the liberty of episcopal worship would be granted to students of Yale, Johnson exchanged letters with Thomas Clap, president of the college (the same involved in the Breck Affair). At one point in their correspondence, Johnson wrote to Clap on 5 February 1754, that “I wonder how you came to apprehend I had any scruples about the divinity of Christ.” It is likely that this was simply on account of his presumed Arminianism, but it may have also been due to the same concerns that Colman expressed. Johnson assured Clap of their agreement on Christ’s divinity and satisfaction, in perhaps his strongest statement in favor of the Athanasian Trinity up to that time, albeit one that centered still on the Church of England: “I would desire you to understand, that my zeal for the sacred *Depositum*, the Christian faith, founded on those principles, — a coessential, coeternal Trinity, and the Divinity, incarnation, and satisfaction of Christ, — is the very and sole reason of my zeal for the Church of England, and that she may be promoted, supported, and well treated in these countries [i.e., the colonies]”. He added that he saw the Church as “the only stable bulwark against all heresy and infidelity which are coming in like a flood upon us”. He blamed the growth of error on “the rigid Calvinism, Antinomianism, enthusiasm, divisions, and separations, which, through the weakness and great imperfection of your constitution (if it may be so called), are so rife and rampant among us.” For, he explained, this recognition of the inability of the New England churches to stem the tide of error was why he conformed to the Church of England in the first place. And still he believed, that “that no well-meaning *Dove* that has proper means and opportunity of exact consideration, will ever find rest to the sole of his foot amid such a

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<sup>56</sup> The phrase had been used by at least John Owen and Immanuel Bourne in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Owen’s use in his *Vindiciae Evangelicae* (1655) was a citation of Simon Episcopus’s *Insitutiones Theologicae* (1650) and Bourne used it when answering the question “How and when was Christ our Saviour God?” Of course, either Owen’s anti-Arminian text or Bourne’s book may have been the source as well as Episcopus, in which case Bourne’s treatment of the question would seem to interest Johnson more with its emphasis and extended discussion on the Father’s mind reflecting on himself. For example, see the discussion in Bourne, *The Light from Christ* (1646), 106-111. For the Owen reference, see *The Works of John Owen, DD*, Vol. XII., ed. William H. Goold (New York: Robert Carter & Brothers, 1853), 183).

deluge, till he comes into the Church as the alone *ark* of safety”. That safety was ensured by the “Articles [i.e., Thirty-nine Articles], Liturgy, and Homilies taken together and explained by one another, and by the writings of our first Reformers, according to their original sense”. Furthermore, the sense of these bulwarks “is neither Calvinistical nor Arminian, but the golden mean, and according to the genuine meaning of the Holy Scriptures in the original, critically considered and understood.”<sup>57</sup> Johnson was adamant that the surety for sound doctrine—including the Athanasian Trinity—was in sound church polity.

In the second edition (again, printed by Franklin in 1752), Johnson made good on his “wish” to Colman and put in the satisfactory words: “That GOD...did at length send a glorious Person in our Nature, whom He declared to be His own SON, and who, being *truly GOD of GOD*, had inexpressible Glory with Him, even from Eternity, before the World was, ...” However, perhaps in an attempt to shore-up his Athanasian bona fides, Johnson inserted a wholly new paragraph that repeatedly affirmed that Trinity. Johnson’s previous articulation in solely scriptural terms became an explicit assertion of Athanasian language with use of the previously absent term *Trinity* and an accompanying analogy from Nature, or the “Sensible [world]”. A longer quotation conveys the originating context of the emblematic and instructive Garden of Eden from which Johnson unfolded the narrative of Triune redemption:

From which Account [of the Origin of Mankind] rightly understood, it appears, that as GOD had, very probably before the Fall, made the Garden of *Eden* an Emblem and Means of Instruction, both in Philosophy and Religion, and explained his *necessary Existence* and *Personality* in a *coessential Trinity*, signified by the divine Names, and represented by the Sun as an Emblem, in his threefold Condition of *Fire, Light, and Spirit* (He being to the intellectual World analogous to what the Sun is to the *Sensible*) so it is no less probable that he set up the *Cherubims* with the *Flame* and *Sword* as Hieroglyphics or Emblems of the Gospel, to teach Man, after the Fall, how to obtain Pardon, and regain the Immortality he had lost, which was represented by the Tree of Life; by instructing Him, not only in the Knowledge of the *Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost*, but also of the *Incarnation, Sacrifice, Satisfaction* and *Intercession* of the *Son of GOD*, in the Fulness of Time to appear as the *Instructor, Redeemer, Lord and Judge* of Mankind and of the Presence and Assistance of the *Spirit of GOD* for our Renovation and Sanctification.

Whether such instruction actually took place in the Garden of Eden, Johnson believed that “[a]t least this is certain, that *Sacrifice* must have been then instituted as an emblematical Means of Reconciliation, and Hopes were given of a glorious Person, who should recover them from the Mischief into which the Tempter had seduced them; all which were doubtless

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<sup>57</sup> Beardsley, *Life and Correspondence of Samuel Johnson*, 204-05.

more particularly explained to them, than is accounted for in the very short History of the Fall”.<sup>58</sup>

Johnson had indeed asserted his Athanasian assurances of a “coessential Trinity” to any who had doubted his subscribing credentials. However, Johnson had also maintained the proprietary status of God in relation to the Son and the Spirit. He referred to “the Son of GOD” and “the Spirit of GOD” but never “the Father of GOD”—the Father was arguably still *the* principle from which the Godhead was derived and dependent on.<sup>59</sup> It appears, therefore, that Johnson had not wholly departed from his earlier views, but rather that he had significantly added to (or modified) them. In this modification, it is telling that his use of the analogy “to the intellectual World” from that of “the Sensible” in the Sun’s “threefold Condition of *Fire, Light, and Spirit,*” was a principal example used by John Hutchinson (1674-1737), whom he cited.<sup>60</sup>

To understand the modification and the analogy from nature, a brief understanding of the Hutchinsonians is necessary. Since Clarke’s publication of *The Scripture-Doctrine of the Trinity* in 1712 and his episcopally-backed escape from formal censure in 1714, the Church of England clergy and bishops had continued to debate the merits of his argument. Newtonianism had become even more widely established and much of its attendant theology (promulgated perhaps most prominently by Clarke) had received more nuanced hearings and further explications. (Hence, it appears, Johnson’s articulations in 1746 in his *Ethices Elementa*). However, as John C. English reminds us, Newton’s apotheosis had not been accepted by all, particularly the followers of John Hutchinson.<sup>61</sup> The Hutchinsonians were able to publish his works in 1747 and 1749 in a series of twelve volumes. Rather than engage the arduous task of refuting the widely respected and accepted Newton they sought to assert Hutchinson’s relevance by emphasizing areas of consonance between the two. However, one of the primary points of departure was their understanding of the Trinity. It was no secret that Newton’s theories had led to both William Whiston and Samuel Clarke’s works on the Trinity, wherein (particularly Clarke’s) the aseity of the Father was emphasized, highlighting the derived (and thereby, ostensibly subordinate) status of the Son and the Spirit. Hutchinson and his followers sought to maintain the Athanasian Trinity as it had been traditionally

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<sup>58</sup> Samuel Johnson, *Elementa Philosophica: Ethics* (Philadelphia: B. Franklin and D. Hall, 1752), 93-94.

<sup>59</sup> Compare with Clarke, *Scripture Doctrine* (1712), 433-44.

<sup>60</sup> See John C. English, “John Hutchinson’s Critique of Newtonian Heterodoxy,” *Church History*, Vol. 68, No. 3 (Sep., 1999), 586-88. Hutchinson used the term “air” instead of Johnson’s “Spirit”.

<sup>61</sup> English, “Hutchinson’s Critique”, 581-82.

understood, an eternal three-personal Being, on the basis of the Hebraic (i.e., linguistic) exegesis of the Old Testament, particularly Genesis (which was explicitly contrary to Clarke's ratio-*Novum Testamentum* approach).<sup>62</sup> Johnson related in his *Autobiography*, just after his conclusion for "what is called the orthodox doctrine", that the Trinitarian controversy had been "revived" by Bishop Clayton's *Essay on Spirit* in 1751, but that "this was effectually baffled by the excellent writings of Dr. Randolph and Mr. William Jones, both of Oxford" and both of whom were Hutchinsonians, the latter a leading one.<sup>63</sup> Johnson was reflecting a push, relevant to his modifications, among some academics and clergy to transition back to traditional assertions of the Athanasian Creed, one that he followed.

It appears, therefore, that Johnson in the *Ethices* was following the then vogue patterns of Clarke, and in the *Elementa Philosophica* had amended his approach to the then fashionable (at least in Oxford, a primary pulse for Johnson's understanding of Anglican discourse) patterns of Hutchinson. For instance, when discussing "the Author of our Nature" in the *Ethices*, Johnson referenced Clarke's (as well as Burnet's) Boyle lectures when speaking of "the necessarily existent Being", and his explication does indeed follow from that of Clarke.<sup>64</sup> Clarke had performed a widely appreciated service in his Boyle lectures, however, it was difficult to extricate his demonstration from his accompanying theology. This made many churchmen awkwardly dependent on Clarke, advancing his Newtonian theology in the threat of deism but occasionally having to distance themselves from some of his conclusions, or at least their direction. In Johnson's case, it appears that he advanced the theology, with significant Berkeleyan inflections, but that he also went along with the (necessarily) implicit conclusions about the Godhead. One could avoid Clarke's fate by sticking with the argumentative principle of Scripture-terms and yet keep from any trouble by simply not asserting any explicit or positive statement about the specific Triune relations. In contrast, in the same passage of *Elementa Philosophica*, Johnson keeps the reference to Clarke but, immediately following, added two full paragraphs, the first with a specific reference to Hutchinson's *Moses Sine Principia* that fundamentally asserted the name of Jehovah as signifying "The Essence existing".<sup>65</sup> This, and the previously discussed change to

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<sup>62</sup> See English, "Hutchinson's Critique", 581-97; more particularly, 582, 583-84, and 587-89.

<sup>63</sup> Schneider, eds., *Samuel Johnson*, Vol. 1, 22. See English, "Hutchinson's Critique", 593; and Derya Gurses, "Academic Hutchinsonians and their quest for relevance, 1734-1790", *History of European Ideas*, 31 (2005), 418.

<sup>64</sup> Johnson, *Ethices*, 24.

<sup>65</sup> Johnson, *Elementa Philosophica: Ethics*, 26. Johnson also added a reference to Acts 17:28. In the same chapter three other paragraphs were added, as well as references to "Norris's *Ideal World and Miscellanies*,

the conclusion, simply demonstrate that between the publication of *Ethices Elementa* and the later *Elementa Philosophica*, Johnson had been influenced significantly by Hutchinson's works, among others, but also that Hutchinson had specifically influenced his thought regarding the Trinity, perhaps even rekindling the embers of traditional Athanasian orthodoxy.<sup>66</sup> In contrast, Ellis discusses Hutchinson's influence on Johnson, but largely years later, placing the "sudden shift" in 1757 when Johnson wrote to his son that "I have been now more thoroughly canvassing [Hutchinson] in regard to the philosophical as well as the theological part, [...] and to my unspeakable satisfaction am much convinced it is, in both, entirely satisfactory." Ellis saw Johnson's fascination with Hutchinson to reside in his linguistic theories relating to Hebrew grammar. He states that "Johnson's belief in Hutchinson was much like Berkeley's belief in tar water—a sad, misguided phase of a generally distinguished career" and "signaled his demise as a critical thinker".<sup>67</sup>

But what was Johnson's understanding of the Athanasian Godhead? Some insight may be gained by looking at his *Noetica*, where a proprietary subordination is found "in the Author" but co-equality, co-essentiality, and co-eternality are upheld. Johnson explained that "*Principle* [as a word]...originally signifies the *Beginning* of a Thing, or that from whence any Thing takes its Beginning, Origin, or Derivation: and in this Sense it is nearly allied to the Word *Cause*. Thus," he continued, "God may be said to be the Principle or Origin of all Things." He then offered this relevant explanation with Trinitarian terms and imagery:

And as the essential Constituents whereof any Thing consists, have been ranked among the Causes, they are also called the Principles of which it consists, and into which it may, at least in Conception, be resolved; as Man of Soul and Body, Bodies of the four Elements, a Triangle of its three Sides and Angles &c.-----And as the Properties and Powers of Things have been supposed to flow from their Essence; hence That in any Thing which is supposed to be the Foundation or original from whence its Properties, Powers or Actions derive, is called the Principle of them; as Equality with two Right Angles form the Nature of a Triangle; Perception and Self-exertion form the Nature of the Soul, &c.

Equality for "the essential Constituents...ranked among the Causes...also called the Principles of which it consists." However, "That in any Thing which is supposed to be the Foundation or Original form whence its Properties, Powers or Actions derive, is called the

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and Cambray's *Demonstration*" and "Turnbull, Vol. 2", with multiple references to Berkeley's *Alciphron, or Minute Philosopher*.

<sup>66</sup> Hutchinson also wrote a lengthy volume entitled, *The Names and the Attributes of the Trinity of the Gentiles* (1749).

<sup>67</sup> Ellis, *New England Mind*, 227-29, 231, and more generally see pages 227-32.

Principle of them”. Johnson may have been harboring a conception of the Trinity as consisting in the unity of Principle-of-Principles, wherein the co-equality and coessentiality is thereby upheld in a “ranked” constituent causal status.<sup>68</sup> Previously, when discussing the “intuitive intellectual Light, whereof I am conscious” and from what it is derived, Johnson stated that he could only humbly conceive of it as “deriving...from the universal Presence and Action of the DEITY, or a perpetual Communication with the great *Father of Lights*, or rather his eternal *Word and Spirit*.” The “Word and Spirit” are the Father’s, the Father is not theirs.<sup>69</sup> Ostensibly, then, the Father was the proprietary Principle from whence the constituent causal Principles flowed.

Perhaps more tellingly, Johnson possibly articulated a form of subordinationism within the Trinity that was unique to him. In the *Noetica*, Johnson explained the “First Cause” in a Clarkean fashion, but then in his exposition of “final Causes” and “truly *efficient Causes*” (or, “*intelligent active Beings or Spirits*”) he stated that

We are conscious, when we produce any Effect, that we act with some End, View, or Design, which determineth us, or rather, properly speaking, upon the View of which we determine ourselves, to act so rather than otherwise, and to chuse and make use of such and such Means, rather than others, as being most fit and useful in order to accomplish our End; and therefore we say, *He that wills the End, must will the Means conducing to the Attainment of it*; and the effect to be produced being the ultimate End, and the Means the subordinate Ends which we have in View.

This determining capacity is an intra-personal phenomenon. He explained that “herein consists the proper Notion of *Wisdom*, viz. *In the right Judgement and Choice of Ends and Means; the best Ends and the fittest Means; and in a vigorous Activity in the Application of the Means in order to attain the End*.” And then stated the “analogous” conclusion: “Thus it is in human Affairs; and from what we observe in the Course of Nature, in which there is an evident Subordination of Ends and Means, we unavoidably infer that there must be something analogous to this in the Author of it, not because He needs Means for Himself, but that He may make the Series or Course of Nature the more intelligible and instructive to us.”<sup>70</sup> God, “the Author of [Nature]” chose within himself the subordinate Means and subordinate Ends to accomplish his ultimate End, or Effect.

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<sup>68</sup> Johnson, *Elementa Philosophica: Noetica*, 25.

<sup>69</sup> Johnson, *Elementa Philosophica: Noetica*, 13.

<sup>70</sup> Johnson, *Elementa Philosophica: Noetica*, 21-22

In effect, Johnson was conceiving of the Godhead as a potentially chosen designation (for the willing), wherein the Father, in his Wisdom, chose the “fittest Means” to accomplish the “best Ends” in and of himself, and which are, therefore, co-eternal, co-equal, and consubstantial as his proprietary-self. The “Discovery” of this intelligibility and instruction in “the plain Signatures of Design and Contrivance, and the Dependence and Connection of Ends and Means” is “the best Part of the Study of Nature”. To put it more directly, the “Author” of nature has subordinated the chosen Means (and Ends) of his “right Judgement and Choice...in a vigorous Activity in the Application of the Means in order to attain the End.” Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit are “the Means [or] *subordinate* Ends which we have in View” for the Father’s “ultimate End”, or “Effect” (which we do not have in view). The second and third person of the Godhead are connected subordinate Ends and Means within the Father’s Wisdom and Author/ity, of which they are wholly re/representative. The Father does this, Johnson explained, that “He may make the Series or Course of Nature the more intelligible and instructive to us.”<sup>71</sup> Johnson appears to have asserted a unique subordinationism that maintained the co-eternal, co-equal, and consubstantial Trinity of the Athanasian Creed, by contemplating a God that held proprietary rights within himself to his re/presentation in *his* Son and *his* Spirit, that which *of himself* instructs and makes himself (God) intelligible to his human creation.

Later, when Johnson discussed the (all-important) term “Person” he explained it according to Locke (and Clarke), and therefore according to the principle of property. Johnson explained that “as by a *Spirit*, which is also called a *Person*, we mean a distinct, conscious, intelligent Agent”. An individual’s “Identity consists in being conscious of a Series of Perceptions and Actions that he knows to be his own and not another’s, by which therefore he knows he is the same Person now with himself twenty or fifty Years ago, which continued Consciousness is his distinct individuating Property.” He continued in a manner that warrants some unpacking as it appears Johnson, more than either Locke or Clarke, asserted a communal reality for multiple persons (that therein may reflect the influence of Berkeley’s thought on Johnson, mentioned earlier).

Whereas *Peter* is not the same with *Paul*, but another Person, each having distinct individuating Properties, the one being conscious of a different and distinct Series of Perceptions and Actions from the other: and another appears to me the same with himself at different Times, or to be a different Person, according as from his Words

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<sup>71</sup> Johnson, *Elementa Philosophica: Noetica*, 22. This also would fit with the Messianic reading of Isaiah wherein the voluntarily chosen receive the mantle of representation. See Isaiah 6:8.

and Actions, he appears to be conscious or not conscious of the same Perceptions and Actions. This is the usual and common Sense of the Word *Person*, which, however, is sometimes used to signify not a distinct Being, but a distinct Capacity: In which Sense the same Intelligence may sustain diverse persons, by acting in so many different Characters or Capacities.<sup>72</sup>

According to M.A. Stewart, Berkeley believed that experience is “the sole basis of the design argument” for God’s existence and “functions as a language”, and that “language without controlling intelligence is inconceivable.” Also, that he saw that immaterialism’s “implications are speculative rather than practical”, and it is only in religion that those “converge”.<sup>73</sup> The Berkeleyan sense seems, therefore, to prioritize religion as communion within an overruling intelligence, as here articulated by Johnson. That Johnson seemingly equated Intelligence and Being (with constituent and diverse members) can be understood relative to the epistolary New Testament chapters containing Ephesians 4:6 and 1 Corinthians 12:4. Beyond that, his ‘person-as-distinct capacity’ can be readily compared to Dixon’s assessment of the shift from Locke’s ‘person-as-consciousness’ to Clarke’s sense of ‘person-as-intelligent agent’.<sup>74</sup> Namely, that a person can be an agent with distinct capacity to act within and by a *shared* intelligence. Johnson’s view strongly asserted a communal being of diverse and distinct persons, or multiple persons subsisting in the same sustaining intelligence. However, he then passed on any comment on the Trinity: “I need say nothing here of the Sense of this Word, as used *in Divinis*.”<sup>75</sup>

We are, therefore, left (not necessarily surprisingly) without a clear statement from Johnson regarding relations within Deity and his position on the Trinity remains ambiguous. What we can ascertain is that Johnson articulated himself in the *Ethices Elementa* according to Clarke, and in the *Elementa Philosophica* in greater accord with the Hutchinsonian insistence of Athanasian orthodoxy. We can be certain that Johnson wanted to appear as a stalwart in the Athanasian Faith and yet pursue greater understanding via the categories made available through the New Learning, and that, as such, he held views that sought to delineate to some degree the intra-relations of God and the Godhead through a proprietary principle of Wisdom.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Johnson, *Elementa Philosophica: Noetica*, 39-40.

<sup>73</sup> Stewart, “The philosophy of immaterialism” in “George Berkeley,” *Oxford DNB*. See footnote 28.

<sup>74</sup> See Dixon, *Nice and Hot Disputes*, 169.

<sup>75</sup> Johnson, *Elementa Philosophica: Noetica*, 40.

<sup>76</sup> His Son is Him, His Spirit is Him, and He is GOD: this articulates something of the nuance Johnson seemed to be advancing; that God is the possessor of his Son and his Spirit, both of which find their generation and origination in him, and as they are in him they are equal to him in all—but it is God that directs his own.

Also relevant to the discussion of Johnson's proprietary subordination is Cotton Mather's explication of the Trinity in 1713, that held an arguably similar "Natural Subordination" within the Godhead: "Tho' the Father be the Fountain of the Deity, and the Son Begotten of the Father, be in this Regard Subordinate unto the Father, and the Holy-Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son be therein Subordinate unto the Father and the Son, yet they are all Equal, in Power, in Knowledge, in Goodness, and in Glory." Mather later continued, "...The Kingdom, which is thus managed by the Son of God in our JESUS, will cease, when the Illustrious Ends of it are all accomplished; and Then, the Son of God no longer having such a Distinct Kingdom of His own, shall return to His Natural Subordination to the Father, and Reign with the Father and the Holy-Spirit, One God, Blessed for ever".<sup>77</sup>

Colman's feedback pointed directly to the danger in which Johnson had placed himself, and Hutchinson assisted in giving him the Athanasian backbone to assert the coessential Trinity, but what fueled the potentially novel constructions in the *Noetica*? Further study, of course, must be done to distill the inputs and outputs of Johnson's thought, but for our purposes it is sufficient to understand Johnson as a person inhabiting the vicissitudes of (an anachronistically imperial) Anglicanism in the age of Newton. An age where dependencies and incompatibilities were at once molding the modern Anglo-American world's divisions of religion and science as the impersonal categories of epistemological authority to arbitrate the competing sovereign claims of personalized institutions and of individual persons. The fundamental appeals to Scripture, tradition, and reason were absorbed by these categorical divisions according to the competing epistemologies and their priorities. For Johnson, such a division did not yet fully exist (only in the proto-form of "*holy Religion, whether natural or revealed*"),<sup>78</sup> and he pursued "Truth and Goodness" with an equally fundamental surety of the ultimate coherence and unity of Scripture with tradition and reason, a coherence and unity maintained by the divinely instituted Church.

In the passages of the *Ethices* that appeared just prior to those that concerned the Godhead, Johnson expounded a clear assertion of Reason and Conscience as the great arbiters of true religion. Therein, Johnson elevated Conscience "as the Voice of GOD himself" and accordingly taught a reverence for it. Sin was "an unreasonable" or "vicious" act for which "my own Conscience will not cease to reproach me" since it is "contrary to GOD and all that

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<sup>77</sup> Mather, *Injuries Unto our Saviour*, 30, 40-41.

<sup>78</sup> Johnson, *Elementa Philosophica: Ethica*, 99.

is right and reasonable". And, therefore, a sinner (in the first person) must "reform and return to my Duty and be governed by my Reason and Conscience". Later, Johnson advocated "*Self-Denial and Mortification*" to overcome "any vicious Habit...so as to be at Liberty to follow the Dictates of my Reason and Conscience, and to act up to the Dignity of my rational Nature, and my Relation to GOD, and my Fellow-Creatures, and so become what *I ought to be.*"<sup>79</sup> For Johnson, Reason and Conscience were God's government of the soul, conformity to them was conformity to God's will. However, Johnson subsequently identified the foundations of authority in the practical necessity of Revelation. He acknowledged that "the general Rate and Bulk of Mankind" were kept from "evident...Truths and Duties" and "the distinct practical Knowledge of them" by the many "Cares and Businesses, and the Pleasures and Amusements of this Life". He therefore concluded that "an express Revelation is highly expedient, or rather necessary as a Means to render them, in any tolerable Measure capable of answering the End of their Being" (i.e., Happiness). Furthermore, the episcopally ordained Johnson reminded his readers that "no Philosopher or Teacher, without sufficiently attested Commission from GOD, even if he could discover all these *Laws of Nature*, could have Authority enough to enjoin them as the *Laws of GOD*; and that this would be the most direct and compendious Method of answering this End." The order of commissioned clergy was therefore the means of disseminating those "Truths and Duties" (discoverable in the Laws of Nature) to the "Bulk of Mankind" as the authoritative Laws of God. Johnson was a practical rationalist, who thereby saw the impracticality of believing in the sustained rationality of most people in their circumstances. God had (already knowing this predicament) appointed the means of alerting so many to his Laws.<sup>80</sup>

Just before concluding *Elementa Philosophica*, Johnson enjoined the reader to recognize the "social Combinations" promoted by God who appointed "the constant Exercise of *social Religion*" in "that holy Community" maintained by the instituted rite of baptism and means of "the *holy Eucharist*". Johnson insisted that this communal religion was intended to "promot[e] our happiness, which is the great End of our Being". The rite of baptism and partaking of the Eucharist welded individuals together and kept their thoughts focused on Christ's sacrifice and sealed them to "the Covenant of Grace". But these instituted means led Christians "moreover to persevere in Love and Unity, as Brethren and Fellow Members of that holy Community of all good Men and Angels, whereof [Christ] is the Head and Lord."

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<sup>79</sup> Johnson, *Ethices Elementa*, 60-61.

<sup>80</sup> Johnson, *Ethices Elementa*, 63-64.

Just prior he had stated that “GOD hath by his Son JESUS CHRIST, the great *Messenger of his Covenant*” ordained this community and these means.<sup>81</sup> Johnson continued by emphasizing the “*Order of Men*” appointed to administer and preside, explain and inculcate, this “social Religion and Worship” and “Divine Philosophy”, wherein the Church was considered “the School of CHRIST, wherein immortal Spirits cloath’d with Flesh, are to be trained and bred up as Candidates for eternal Glory.”<sup>82</sup>

The episcopally organized Church was, for Johnson, the mainstay of coherence and promise of communal living in a quickly unraveling world. In a letter to Bishop Secker (25 October 1754), Johnson stated plainly his fears about the opposition episcopacy faced: “...I rather fear the age is growing worse and worse so fast, that the freethinkers and dissenters, who play into one another’s hands against the Church, will never drop their virulence and activity, by all manner of artifices, till they go near to raze the very Constitution to the foundation, both in Church and State.” In addressing the difficulties of establishing a college favorable to the Church of England in New York, Johnson again linked the perceived extremes of factional opposition, pointing to “a small busy faction of dissenters headed by four or five bigoted violent freethinkers”. Johnson even owned that any growth of the Church of England in New England was due not to the endeavors of its missionaries financed by the SPG, but “to their [the Dissenters] own wretched divisions, separations and confusions among themselves, occasioned by their late enthusiasm, and to the growth of Latitudinarianism, Arianism, Socinianism, Pelagianism, and even infidelity occasioned thereby”. These, he declared (as he had previously) “lead many honest people, who can find no sure footing elsewhere to retire into the Church as the only ark of safety amid such a deluge of corrupt opinions and practices.”<sup>83</sup> To Johnson, the Trinitarian debates had helped to fuel the disarray that drove the growth of the episcopal Church in New England and other colonies.

Concerning the relationship between Church and State, Johnson concluded, by applying the same “method of inquiry” he used in his Trinitarian searches to the Bangorian Controversy, that the result “was equally decisive against Hoadly” as it was Clarke. For thereby “it abundantly appeared that Christ and his Apostles did establish a certain form of

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<sup>81</sup> Johnson, *Elementa Philosophica: Ethica*, 98-99.

<sup>82</sup> Johnson, *Elementa Philosophica: Ethica*, 99.

<sup>83</sup> Herbert and Carol Schneider, eds., *Samuel Johnson, President of King’s College: His Career and Writings, Volume II: Philosopher* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002, 333-35. First published in 1929.

government in his church, as to the essentials of it, and not leave it to be variously modelled and settled by human authority as might best suit worldly conveniences.”<sup>84</sup> However, it appears that Johnson’s concern was with regard to the verity of a divine institution and its freedom from “human authority...best suit[ed to] worldly conveniences.” Again, Johnson was writing this (his Autobiography) during a particularly reflective period of his life in the late 1760s. Around this same time he wrote a piece titled, “Raphael or the Genius of English America,” wherein he concluded (privately) in favor of the separation of Church and State. It is clear that the earlier Johnson had been more anxious to support the Church-State establishment enjoyed in the empire’s capital, but it appears that a lifetime of disputes with Dissent over the *episcopal* claims to establishment in the colonies and empire had moderated his reflections. Ellis speculates that “Johnson’s personal experience as an Anglican missionary in New England had alerted him to the ways that established churches could use their political influence to oppress religious minorities.” Ellis offers further insight from Johnson’s “Raphael” that tied the purity of the church to its separation from corrupt political leaders, remarking that “[o]ne of the central ironies of Johnson’s life was that his experience as a colonial Anglican tended to confirm the old Puritan conviction that any church-state connection defiled the spiritual purity of the church.” Ellis summarized “Raphael’s” concern and solution:

In times of widespread corruption, said Raphael, the church that was connected to the government invariably fell victim to the venality that infected the political leaders. As a result the church should be made a “distinct thing from civil government in order to assure that there was as little temptation as possible to the officers of religion to betray its interests and rights to those of the world.” Johnson made it clear that his chief worry was not clerical infringement on civil liberties, but the corruption of religious leaders by politicians.<sup>85</sup>

And while political institutions needed reform, ultimately the problem was not institutional, but personal, a lack of virtue.<sup>86</sup> “In Johnson’s view, institutions were no better than the men who ran them. The only way to reform society was to reform men.” Hence, Johnson’s lifelong devotion to education.<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup> Schneider, eds., *Samuel Johnson*, Vol. 1, 22.

<sup>85</sup> Ellis, *New England Mind*, 264-65. Note also that Johnson continued his Berkeleyan metaphysics in his Raphael’s being: “the guardian or genius of New England”, “one of an order of intelligence superior to you, not clothed with flesh and blood” (as quoted in Ellis, *New England Mind*, 258).

<sup>86</sup> Ellis, *New England Mind*, 263.

<sup>87</sup> Ellis, *New England Mind*, 266-67.

Again, for Johnson, Conscience was “the voice of GOD” yet Reason was ultimately insufficient (in the present circumstances) and necessitated both revelation in Scripture (as he himself experienced via the literature of the Trinitarian debate) and the appointed “social Religion” provided in the Church (as he had conformed with) to effect God’s scheme for the happiness of all mankind. As such, Johnson appears to have followed the Anglican mean in relation to the Trinity, and while he either added to or modified his conceptions accordingly, he consistently sought to suffuse the Athanasian standard with his learning, and thereby conceived of potentially novel advances within it. Indeed, much of the early-eighteenth century Anglo-American discourse on authority found both an audience and a conduit in the constantly learning and educating Reverend Samuel Johnson.

#### **Conclusion (Chapter 4)**

The ministerial and civil activity surrounding Robert Breck’s installment as pastor, similar to that surrounding Samuel Hemphill’s synodal trial, contrasted with Jonathan Mayhew’s controversial ordination and subsequent publications refuting and mocking the Athanasian doctrine of the Trinity demonstrate the weakening of the Church and State alliance in the Anglo-American discourse on authority. Aaron Burr, Sr.’s response to Mayhew indicates not only the designated forum for doctrinal controversy, but also the rising reliance on the authority provided by both the book of nature and the book of revelation. The long and varied career of Connecticut’s Samuel Johnson demonstrates the struggles of even the most committed Anglicans to faithfully navigate the theological waters in the age of Newton. The strife surrounding doctrinal disagreement over the Trinity, in contrast to Thomas Emlyn, had been relegated to the court of public opinion rather than the ecclesiastical and civil courts.

## Chapter 5

### Conclusion

In the foregoing chapters, I observed the manner in which the Trinitarian debates can act as a prism for understanding the Anglo-American discourse on authority in the early eighteenth-century. I have highlighted episodes on both sides of the Atlantic where the Trinitarian debates activated the discourse on authority and contributed substantive material for arguments over the authority of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason. I have attempted to maintain a single lens by which to view the physically distant though connected debates, trials, and controversies of the Anglo-American discourse. I have focused on the practical discourse between the sovereign claims to authority by champions of Church, State, and Conscience and their appeals to Scripture, in varying relation to Tradition and Reason, to either augment or substantiate those claims. Historically speaking, controversy over the doctrine of the Trinity appears to be a tributary to imperial conflict, one that consistently appears prior to a delta of ecclesial and political fractures. In the early eighteenth century, the Trinitarian debates contributed toward a refining process of institutional practices and societal attitudes in regard to the varying claims to sovereign authority. These refinements, that cultivated greater social support for State protections of individual Conscience and argumentative weight to the authority of Scripture and of Reason, were then available to the architects of a new age seeking to re-channel the American delta in the decades to come.<sup>1</sup>

As a representative reconstruction, this study adds significant detail to both the period's Trinitarian debates and discourse on authority. These details allow for greater nuance in the mapping of Trinitarianism and a better understanding of the foundations for the separation of Church and State and the parallel growth of State protections for individual Conscience. I have demonstrated that the Trinitarian debates of the early-eighteenth century, while not the ideological substance that the heresy-radicalism thesis claims, were in fact a significant medium for activating the discourse on authority between the institutions of Church and State in relation to individual Conscience. In particular, I focused on the salience of Lockean categories for societal and individual rights to the discourse on authority, especially for voluntary societies. I also demonstrated that the Trinitarian debates provided a

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<sup>1</sup> A ready example, that demonstrates this societal esteem (including State protections) for the authority of individual Conscience in religious matters and the argumentative appeal to both Scripture and Reason, is Thomas Paine's *Common Sense* (1776).

substantial amount of material for the discourse on the authority of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason—recognizing that the authority of Scripture was seen as foremost but was ultimately reliant on interpretive paradigms afforded by recourse to either Tradition or Reason.

In the background chapter, I observed that just as Martin Luther had elevated the authority of Scripture, Erasmus of Rotterdam was undermining it through questions of the authenticity of the Johannine Comma. This same tension would remain throughout the Trinitarian debates, where Scripture-Rationalists insisted on the authority of Scripture as interpreted by Reason. The Reformation and a further Reformation were also in tension and this was displayed throughout the study. By revisiting some of the principal episodes of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries relative to the debates over the doctrine of the Trinity and their relation to the discourse on authority, significant insights into the processes of historical development are made available. For example, William Pynchon's choice of Massachusetts over Connecticut, that then placed Springfield under the colonial jurisdiction that would favor Robert Breck's ordination a century later, despite opposition from the Connecticut River Valley clergy. Following the Glorious Revolution and subsequent Act of Toleration (and the failure of those pursuing comprehension), Lockean categories and solutions were widely applied to the discourse on authority and the controversies that inhabited it during the early eighteenth-century. This was particularly true with regard to voluntary (religious) societies and their right to self-definition in opposition to individual claims of conscience and attempts to thereby alter the basis of membership in these societies.

In the main chapters (2, 3, and 4), I have displayed in detail how the trinitarian debates in the early- and mid-eighteenth century provided many of the principal and practical inflection points in the post-Reformation discourse on authority. That discourse engaged the use of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason to shore up claims made by individuals upholding the sovereign rights of Church, State, and/or Conscience. The trials and semi-trials for beliefs deemed heretical, conducted by both established and dissenting Churches, are a prime resource for understanding the discursive relationship between doctrinal debate and shifts within the ongoing crisis of authority. The methods of argument displayed in publications, charges of heresy and subsequent trials, controversial ordinations and pulpit settlements, as well as academic curricula, all demonstrate the attempted utility of appeals to Scripture, Tradition, and Reason, and an awareness that claims to sovereign authority for either the Church or State were increasingly challenged by the purported equal claim of individual Conscience. The theological factions of Subordinationism, Athanasianism, and Deism are

helpful for assessing the categorical priorities of each within the banquet of authorities relative to their doctrinal assertions.

Accordingly, this study helps demonstrate that Locke's univocal use of person became prominent among Subordinationist writers, beginning with Emlyn and extending through at least Whiston, Clarke, and Mayhew. I identified the trial of Thomas Emlyn as the first of a series of trials in the initial decades of the century that concerned in whole or in part the doctrine of the Trinity, as received by the Church of England. The case of Emlyn demonstrates the continuity of post-Reformation categories for understanding institutional Church-State authority in relation to the authoritative claims of individual Conscience. But (in contrast to Luther) Emlyn held that for the Christian, it was Scripture that needed to be anchored by Reason (rather than one's Conscience by Scripture), indicating the shift in the post-Reformation discourse. I subsequently focused on the university consistory that expelled William Whiston from Cambridge, occasioned perhaps most immediately by the Tory election that itself had resulted in good measure from Henry Sacheverell's parliamentary impeachment trial (where Whiston had been referenced).<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, the attack on Samuel Clarke's *Scripture Doctrine* can be seen as a direct response by Convocation to the criticisms of Anthony Collins in his *Discourse of Freethinking*. To Collins, the conflicting understandings among established clerical authorities about the doctrine of the Trinity exhibited the necessity of the layman's *freethinking*, which was essential anyway for each individual's salvation. Additionally, I demonstrated that Collins, rather than declare the abolition of authority relative to reason, sought to establish the authority of God-given reason above that of the less certain origins of Divine Right in the (therefore coercive) Church-State settlement. He did this by endorsing a subjection of revelation to reason.

Clarke's escape from the charges against him by the Lower House of Convocation was made possible by his agreement to admit the eternal generation of the Son, which (I point out) he did based on the equivocal understanding of the term *eternal*, in direct contrast to his acceptance of a univocal understanding of the term *person*. This study also found that while Whiston combined the discoveries of Newtonianism with a historical/political focus on the patristic debates over the Trinity, Clarke combined the discoveries of Newtonianism with

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<sup>2</sup> See *The Tryal of Dr. Henry Sacheverell, Before the House of Peers, For High Crimes and Misdemeanors* (London: Jacob Tonson, 1710), 220. See also Duffy, "'Whiston's Affair,'" 137.

*apriori* principles and historical/philological concerns about the term *homoousia*. Clarke employed a historicized linguistic hermeneutic to argue that the term *homoousia* had undergone a significant shift in meaning from the time it was used at Nicaea. As others have also argued, Clarke's close call with the flex of Convocation's institutional muscle played a significant role in Hoadly's argument against the temporal claims to authority by the Church relative to the State.

This study found that Clarke's arguments in *Scripture Doctrine*, particularly with regard to the drift of language, appear to have significantly informed Hoadly's arguments in that sermon that were in fact related to the Trinitarian debates. The Bangorian controversy marked the early Hanoverian attempt to shrink the power of the Church relative to the State's concern for the monarchy's subjects. It also marked the nascent alliance between the burgeoning State and the rational (i.e., divinely endowed) individual, through legal protections for (and defense of) individual Conscience. Regarding Hoadly and his relation to the Trinitarian debates, I have brought into consideration his sermon on "The Nature of the Kingdom, or Church, of Christ" (1717), something that the latest scholarship on Hoadly's theological views does not do. My reading of this source maintains that Hoadly was indeed concerned that worship of the Father in the Primitive Church had been corrupted.

In contrast to the claim that prior to the mid-eighteenth century the doctrine of the Trinity was neglected in New England, I found (with others) that such was certainly not the case for the incredibly prolific Cotton Mather. Mather was very aware of the Religious Society of Friends' apparent and real departures from the creedal doctrine of the Trinity, and was quite occupied (as other scholars have noted) with the fallout from his "learned Friend" William Whiston's challenge to Athanasianism. Accordingly, the Athanasian Trinity remained foremost among his three ecumenical "Maxims of Piety" upon which all Christians could unite. Mather's concern over the maintenance of the doctrine of the Trinity helps to demonstrate how each side of the doctrinal debate favored aspects of Locke's solution. Athanasians among English Dissenters (such as Mather) largely favored a society's right to define the terms of membership in a religious society, and the Hemphill Affair demonstrated the conservative capacity Athanasians saw in the Lockean assurance of the rights of societies.

I observed that the primarily Anglican controversies and trials that took place following the first decade of Protestant toleration—that saw the adoption of Locke's theological and civil categories by significant participants in the Trinitarian debates and the

discourse on authority—largely supplied the doctrinal content and ecclesial frameworks that were then displayed in the Dissenting controversies at Exeter and Salter’s Hall. The ejection of James Peirce and Joseph Hallet came by the somewhat irregular means of neighboring ministers, though the ministerial association in London had been appealed to. Furthermore, the controversy over the ministerial ordination and securing of a pulpit for Hubert Stogdon would prove to be a perennial struggle for young ministers in English Dissent, displayed at Philadelphia and New England with regard to Samuel Hemphill, Robert Breck, and Jonathan Mayhew. Hemphill, a Presbyterian, would be expelled from the Philadelphia synod despite the significant endeavors by Benjamin Franklin to help him. Breck, a Congregationalist, would survive the attacks of the Hampshire Association of Ministers, and Jonathan Mayhew, also a Congregationalist, would be ordained in Boston a decade after Breck in a similar manner, and both by non-neighboring ministers. In each case, concerns directly bearing on or related to the doctrine of the Trinity played roles in opposition to the ministerial candidates.

The activating role of the Trinitarian debates did not sideline them in the discourse on authority. I found that concerns for purity did not diminish in the pursuit for unity. Those concerns were maintained throughout the subscription controversies of Exeter and Salter’s Hall, and both the Hemphill and Breck Affairs. Additionally, I detailed how the younger Benjamin Franklin sought to doctrinally reform Presbyterianism from within, but was defeated by the Lockean principles applied by his denomination. In my study, Franklin appears much more theologically aware and sincere than is often accorded the lifelong satirical genius, manifesting arguable connections with the Radical Reformation in his “Articles of Belief”. Also, parallel to the Hemphill Affair, the Breck and Mayhew ordinations provide the western and then eastern examples of a shifting and doctrinally divided Congregational polity in Massachusetts.

Jonathan Mayhew provoked strong antipathy from Athanasians who balked at his open disavowal of their understanding of the Trinity. Against the latest scholarship, my study found that Mayhew was much more akin to the Subordinationism (that could be labeled Arianism) of Thomas Emlyn, and was at times patently Arian. This stands in deep contrast to Clarke’s Subordinationism (that claimed to be Trinitarian) that merely highlighted the aseity of the Father within the Triune relations and the resulting consequences for proper worship by humans. This is significant because Clarke is often placed alongside Emlyn and Mayhew in a rather sloppy category of Arianism, and his subordinationist-Trinitarianism is unnecessarily bogged down in scholarly discussions by such would-be categorical

associations. Furthermore, Mayhew's exegesis displays marks suggesting a possible connection to the Elohim controversy of the mid-eighteenth century, though links to Robert Clayton and his Hutchinsonian opponents are not strongly apparent.

In contrast to the vast scholarship that has focused on Jonathan Edwards's Trinitarian theology, I focus on his known roles within the Breck Affair and the response to Jonathan Mayhew's publications against the Athanasian Trinity. This focus on the discourse on authority herein places Edwards in better context for further studies on his doctrinal contributions during the period. An assessment of his relationship with the discourse on the authority of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason will largely need to be addressed in another study. However, with an unmagnified Edwards, the discourse holds more space for figures like his son-in-law, Aaron Burr, Sr., who (unlike Edwards) did publish a marked defense of the Athanasian Trinity during his lifetime. No systematic assessment of Burr's, *The Supreme Deity of Jesus Christ* (1757) has been previously undertaken. My own study merely introduces such an assessment via the discourse on authority, but it is clear that Burr offered a strong defense of the dual nature of Christ according to the Athanasian scheme, as well as upholding that the "whole Current and Tenor of Scripture" was in its favor.

An episcopal view of the transatlantic nature of the Trinitarian debates can be helpfully found in Samuel Johnson of Connecticut, who had been heavily influenced by George Berkeley (as had Jonathan Edwards). Samuel Johnson articulated himself in his *Ethices Elementa* according to Clarke, and in his *Elementa Philosophica* in greater accord with the Hutchinsonian insistence of Athanasian orthodoxy. In this he exhibits the vicissitudes of Anglican thought during the eighteenth-century. We can be certain that Johnson wanted to appear as a stalwart in the Athanasian Faith and yet pursue greater understanding via the categories made available through the New Learning, and that, as such, he held views that sought to delineate to some degree the intra-relations of God and the Godhead through a proprietary principle. His debt to Berkeleyan thought is apparent but not as pronounced as we might expect with regard to the Trinity.

My study has helped to more accurately map the placement of individuals within the spectrum of Trinitarian theologies that exclude Arius's non-Trinitarian theology but basically allow for other ante-Nicene, Nicene, and Athanasian formulary and frameworks. For some, the argument was that the Athanasian Creed did not determine the Nicene Creed, both Whiston and Clarke made this case. Whiston, however, believed the Son to be lesser in his

attributes of power and knowledge, whereas Clarke upheld his equality with the Father in these attributes, only highlighting the Father's supremacy in his self-existence. The Son was eternal as the Father, but not independent of the Father. Samuel Johnson of Connecticut had a similar view via a proprietary principle applied to the Godhead, where the Son and Spirit belonged to the Father's Being and were therefore united to the Father but not independent of him, and everything they did was through the power and will of the Father. Also, Athanasianism and certain forms of Subordinationism were compatible, so long as the Son was only personally subordinate but not essentially (Mather). Clarke argued that the Son was not self-existent but that he was from the Father eternally, not an Athanasian formula but one that accorded with Nicaea. Emlyn appears to fall into Arianism proper, that the Son is both personally and essentially or substantively created. Mayhew also appears to be best placed within the Arian camp, since he believed that the Son was an exalted being originally from the order of the angels. Just as Athanasians could fall into Sabellianism, Subordinationists could fall into Arianism. Deists of course, such as Anthony Collins, did not register as Trinitarians. However, in the case of Franklin, understanding the currents of the Trinitarian debate placed his own private writings on "the Infinite" in a more understandable light. Collins it appears was more concerned with correctly historicizing scripture and appropriately channeling a much more atrophied clerical authority.

In relation to the use of Scripture, I placed it as among both Tradition and Reason because, unlike sovereign authorities, there was no (at least mortal) person who could maintain its claims qua Scripture (i.e., Scripture was written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit). This stood in contrast to how, institutionally, the monarch does so in a kingdom or a ministerial/priesthood officer in a church or how, individually, a person does the same in the maintenance of good conscience. Whereas the institutionally organized Church and State or an individual Conscience could be appealed to as authorities to settle disputes, to whom or to what does the Church or State or individual Conscience appeal when the authority of either is challenged. Furthermore, who or what has the authority to settle a doctrinal dispute. Within the debate, as observed in this study, Scripture occupied a sort of middle status between sovereign authority and secondary support, though of course this depended on which participant was asserting or dismissing its authority. By the early eighteenth century, the claim that the Holy Scriptures were "the only Rule of Truth" had begun to clash in significant ways with the historical nature of the texts, not only as they had been transmitted over millennia, but also situationally written by their human authors as well. Even so, its authority

was foremost among many of the interlocutors in the debate vying for the sovereign/divine rights of the Church, State, or individual Conscience against competing prerogative claims. Tradition, particularly that of the Church Fathers including their councils and creeds, and Reason, as the principal arbiter of justifiable precepts, were each claimed to most accurately convey the meaning of Scripture and of human relations with the Divine. In their turn, each were either claimed to be God-given or accused as the merely corrupt tool of men striving for dominion over others.

Following the Act of Toleration and in the course of the Trinitarian debates, I observed that the combined authority of Church and State weakened and that growing claims for, and even civil experiments aimed at, the protection of individual Conscience were made. This is observed in the prorogation of Convocation following Benjamin Hoadly's Clarkean sermon that sparked the Bangorian Controversy, as well as the earlier establishment of the colonies of Rhode Island and Pennsylvania. Salter's Hall exhibited this same impulse among Dissenters, and Franklin unsuccessfully sought to encourage a similar alliance between at least one form of institutionalized Christianity (Presbyterianism) and the protection of Conscience. Between the Breck and Hemphill Affairs, and including the ordination of Jonathan Mayhew, Congregationalism proved more impotent than Presbyterianism at ensuring doctrinal discipline among its ministers. Accordingly, the trials and ordination controversies seemed to wane as the mid-eighteenth century approached and doctrinal controversy was largely relegated to the battlefields of print and university curriculums, such as Mayhew's publications, Burr's response to the reprint of Emlyn's *Scripture Account*, and the varying iterations of Johnson's published systems of education.

The Trinitarian debates were both causal and symptomatic in relation to the weakening of this combined Church-State authority. They were causal in that they often provided the impetus for friction between the Church aims of purity and the State aims of unity. They were symptomatic in that such frictions were not new, and the prior Erastian settlements ensured that the State's role in these disputes was necessary. Furthermore, the Trinitarian debates were more significant in relation to the discourse on authority than other doctrinal controversies because of the legal restrictions that accompanied belief in a non-Athanasian Trinity or in no Trinity. In a telling contrast, Arminianism grew in the Church of England relatively unhampered.

My study did not account for the myriad of other participants in the Trinitarian debates or the discourse on authority in the early eighteenth century. Figures such as Isaac Watts and Daniel Whitby, James Foster and Nathaniel Lardner, Charles Chauncy and Ebenezer Gay, Philip Doddridge, and Matthew Tindal, to name only a few, all could have played a more prominent or signifying role in this study. For reasons of scope, I did not incorporate English Roman Catholic, nor, in large part, Continental perspectives into the Trinitarian debates or discourse on authority. Scholarship that addresses the continental as well as the Roman Catholic perspectives and contributions to the debate are necessary to gain a more complete understanding of this discursive nexus between religious doctrine and civil authority, and that in ways that could well alter my own assessments offered herein.<sup>3</sup> Likewise, an accounting for the Anglicanism of the southern colonies, particularly Virginia, and not only that of Samuel Johnson's in Connecticut and New York, would undoubtedly add to a better understanding of how the doctrinal debates were received and engaged in that much different, perhaps less embattled context during the period. Furthermore, I have largely focused on either Paterology or Christology in relation to the Trinitarian debates, a study that also included an equal or more pronounced emphasis on the person of the Holy Spirit would be very welcome, as there is a ready discourse available in the primary sources.<sup>4</sup>

Overall, the implications that my study points to (for the discourse on authority in the later eighteenth-century) are brought to light in the scholarship of Evan Haefeli who argues that the growth of pragmatism (noted by Frank Furedi) played a role in the loyalties of colonists during the American Revolution. Furthermore, in my study the foundations for the gradual separation of Church and State in favor of more pronounced State protections for individual Conscience become apparent. Church and State evolved into Conscience and State, with significant protections for "Religion" rather than a specific institutional church or even a collection of churches. Despite American Founding era visions (by Washington, Adams, and Jefferson) of such protections, they had reportedly already been challenged with talk of "a *dominant religion*" as early as 1783.<sup>5</sup> Lockean categories were made (or at least

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<sup>3</sup> See Pelikan, *Christian Tradition*, Vol. 5, 68-69.

<sup>4</sup> For example, Samuel Mather, *A Discourse Concerning the Godhead of the Holy Ghost... Wherin the Sentiments of Dr. Clarke are consider'd* (London: Eman. Matthews, 1719).

<sup>5</sup> Moses Mendelssohn, *Jerusalem: or on Religious Power and Judaism* (1783), trans. by Allan Arkush (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1983), 139: "Alas, we already hear the Congress in America striking up the old tune and speaking of a *dominant religion*."

were manifestly) ubiquitous by the eve of the American Revolution, in part due to the institutional trials required to maintain Athanasian orthodoxy.

The nexus of doctrine and discipline surrounding the Trinity indeed reveals a refracted post-Reformation discourse on authority, one that held shifting alliances and combinations that increasingly favored both a State supported plurality of religious societies, and that in conjunction with the divinely mandated autonomy and authority of individual Conscience. The guide of Scripture was uncertain and therefore became more pronounced, an emphasis that grew in the nineteenth century and continued through the twentieth. Just as Roman Catholics emphasized papal and conciliar authority (i.e., Church and Tradition) in the wake of the Reformation, many Protestants became more strident in their assertion of Scripture supremacy (coupled with either the ancient creeds or a critical rationality) in the wake of the Enlightenment. For many who engaged in the Trinitarian debates, tradition was increasingly seen as a mere euphemism for corruption or the opinions of equally fallible men. Instead, Reason (whether common or regenerate) was tempered by both Scripture and Tradition. But Reason, as a category of authority, had acquired a greater authority in the discourse by its proximity to individual Conscience and the greater accessibility a burgeoning population had to its vehicles of arbitration in a blossoming print culture. Even so, both Scripture and Reason became the prime (even if not combined) arbiters in the American scene, as evidenced in part by Burr's response to Mayhew, that it should be noted involved no immediate institutional warrants or consequences for their publications. The subsequent century of time would see the formal institutionalization of these authoritative, often experiential frameworks and priorities in American society, its religious culture and government, only to be challenged by the next iteration of hierarchized priorities within the continually unfolding post-Reformation discourse on authority.

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