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Ute Dreher

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Faculty of Arts  
Centre for Seventeenth-Century Studies  
January 2000

***A Case Study of***  
***Lawrence Clarkson (1615-1667)***

Thesis submitted for the degree of  
M.A. by Research

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Ute Dreher

'A Case Study of Lawrence Clarkson (1615-1667)'

*Abstract*

As the title indicates, my thesis is a case study of the religious radical Lawrence Clarkson (1615-1667). Chapter One, 'Lawrence Clarkson (1615-1667): Journeys of a Religious Radical' places Clarkson's biography in its socio-historical context. With his autobiography *The Lost Sheep Found* (1660) as a guide book, it follows him on his spiritual and geographical journeys through seven "churches" or religious groups from 1630 to 1660 - notably Antinomians, Baptists, Seekers and Ranters. It takes a close look at the fellow-radicals he met on the way and the controversies he got involved in, and thus integrates him in the religious landscape of mid-17th-century England. In this chapter will also be found discussions of his early religious tracts. The focus of Chapter Two, 'The Captain of the Rant and the Learned Dr. Crisp: *A Single Eye* and Tobias Crisp's Sermons', is theological. Based on a close textual comparison, and scriptural "dissection", of Tobias Crisp's sermons and Clarkson's Ranter tract *A Single Eye*, it explores Crisp's influence on Clarkson with regard to Clarkson's conceptions of sin and the elect, his celebration of practical antinomianism, and his mysticism. It also places *A Single Eye* in the context of other Ranter writings.

The in-depth examination of the theological relationship between Clarkson and Crisp constitutes a major contribution to the study of radical religion in the mid-17th century. My thesis reveals Clarkson as a much more theologically sophisticated and significant figure than has hitherto been acknowledged. His importance does not only lie in his identity as a particularly flamboyant Ranter prophet, but extends to the Antinomian movement as a whole. Furthermore, as a religious "traveller", he offers us some unique insights into the sectarian milieu of mid-17th-century England.

*To my Parents*  
*and to*  
*Rosabel and our Sisters*

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## *Abbreviations*

Note: Abbreviations generally follow the pattern of author's/editor's surname and, where more than one work by the same author has been used, date of publication. In the case of Christopher Hill's works, this refers to original dates of publication. The bibliography should be consulted for further details. With regard to some works, however, combinations of letters and/or dates have been used. The latter are listed below in their alphabetical order.

### Primary Sources

1643a: Tobias Crisp: *Christ Alone Exalted: In Fourteene Sermons* (London, 1643)

1643b: Tobias Crisp: *Christ Alone Exalted: In Seventeene Sermons* (London, 1643)

1648: Tobias Crisp: *Christ Alone Exalted in the Perfection and Encouragement of the Saints, in Severall Sermons*, with an Introduction by Henry Pinnell (London, 1648)

1690: Tobias Crisp: *Christ Alone Exalted: Being the Substance of Ten Sermons Preached by that Faithful and Blessed Dispenser of the Gospel, Tobias Crisp, D.D. As they were Found Written in his own Hand, and are now Added to the Rest of his Works, Being the Fourth Volume Never Before Printed*. In: Samuel Crisp (Ed.): *Christ Alone Exalted: Being the Compleat Works of Tobias Crisp, D.D.: Containing XLII Sermons on Several Select Scriptures* (London, 1690)

1832: Tobias Crisp: *Christ Alone Exalted: The Complete Works of Tobias Crisp, Containing 52 Sermons, to which are Added Notes, with Memoirs of the Doctor's Life &c., by J. Gill*, seventh edition, 2 vols (London, 1832)

APH: Abiezer Coppe: *An Additional and Preambular Hint to Richard Coppin's Divine Teachings. As a General Epistle. Written by ABC*. (1649), in Nigel Smith (Ed.): *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the 17th Century* (London, 1983), pp. 72-79

BS: Benet of Canfield (William Fitch): *A Bright Starre, Leading to, & Centering in, Christ Our Perfection*, published by Giles Randall (London, 1646)

CJ: *The Journals of the House of Commons* (London, 1742-1789)

CR: Abiezer Coppe: *Copp's Return to the Wayes of Truth* (1651), in Nigel Smith (Ed.): *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the 17th Century* (London, 1983), pp. 124-157

DPD: Anon: *Divinity and Philosophy Dissected, and Set Forth, by a Mad Man* (Amsterdam, 1644)

FFR: Abiezer Coppe: *A Fiery Flying Roll* (1649), in Andrew Hopton (Ed.): *Selected Writings of Abiezer Coppe* (London, 1987), pp. 15-55

HD: Joseph Salmon: *Heights in Depths and Depths in Heights* (1651), in: Nigel Smith (Ed.): *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the 17th Century* (London, 1983), pp. 203-223.

JMC: *A Justification of the Mad Crew* (1650), in J.C. Davis: *Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the Historians* (Cambridge, 1986), appendix 1, pp. 138-155

LAY: Lawrence Clarkson: *Look about You, for the Devil that you Fear is in You* (London, 1659)

LJ: *The Journals of the House of Lords, 1578-1714* (London, 1767ff).

LSF: Lawrence Clarkson: *The Lost Sheep Found* (1660), facsimile reprint (Exeter, 1974)

R: Joseph Salmon: *A Rout, A Rout* (1649), in Nigel Smith (Ed.): *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the 17th Century* (London, 1983), pp. 189-200

RR: Anon.: *The Routing of the Ranters* (1650), in J.C. Davis: *Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the Historians* (Cambridge, 1986), appendix 3, pp. 161-167

RM: Anon.: *The Ranters Monster* (1652), in J.C. Davis: *Fear, Myth and History: The Ranters and the Historians* (Cambridge, 1986), appendix 8, pp. 190-194

RSZP: Abiezer Coppe: *A Remonstrance of the Sincere and Zealous Protestation of Abiezer Coppe* (1651), in Nigel Smith (Ed.): *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the 17th Century* (London, 1983), pp. 118-123

SE: Lawrence Clarkson: *A Single Eye* (1650), in Nigel Smith (Ed.): *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the 17th Century* (London, 1983), pp. 161-175

SSS: Abiezer Coppe: *Some Sweet Sips of Some Spiritual Wine* (1649), in Nigel Smith (Ed.): *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the 17th Century* (London, 1983), pp. 42- 71

TG: Anon: *Theologia Germanica, Or: Mysticall Divinitie*, published by Giles Randall (London, 1648)

TRFP: Lawrence Clarkson: *Truth Released from Prison to its Former Libertie* (London, 1645/6).

VG: Nicholas of Cusa: *Opthalmos apiloys or The Single Eye: Entitled The Vision of God*, published by Giles Randall (London, 1646)

### **Reference Works**

BDBR: Richard L. Greaves and Robert Zaller (Eds.): *A Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals in the Seventeenth Century*, 3 vols (Brighton 1982-84)

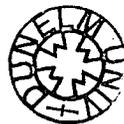
D. N. B.: *Dictionary of National Biography. From the Earliest Times to 1900*, edited by Sir Leslie Stephen and Sir Sidney Lee, 22 vols (Oxford, 1917ff)

## PART I

### INTRODUCTION

In the flood of sectarian opinion that swept England in the mid-17th century, the Ranters stand out as a particularly scintillating example of the cultivation of radical religion. They combined millenarian intensity with political anger and expectation. Linguistically, they left all conventions behind, embedding well-known biblical tropes in a very idiosyncratic form of mysticism and glossing them over with personal narrative. Their writings are marked by an unprecedentedly surreal quality and possess an immediacy which distinguish them from any other religious treatises or straightforwardly political pamphlets of the period. Of this, Abiezer Coppe's *Some Sweet Sips of Some Spirituall Wine* (1649) and the notorious *Fiery Flying Roll* (1649) are the prime examples. In addition, the Ranters deliberately cultivated prophetic behaviour and style. Lawrence Clarkson in particular gained considerable notoriety for extending the perfectionism he preached to a desire to make people "free", i.e. to release them from conventional sexual restraints.<sup>1)</sup> Short-lived and obscure, the Ranter movement created a sensation, provoked a national outcry in defence of morality, and triggered off a spate of hostile and sometimes bizarre yellow-press tracts in the early 1650s.<sup>2)</sup>

In the 1960s and 1970s, historians of religious and political radicalism rescued the Ranters from amorphous obscurity. J.F. McGregor's invaluable Oxford B.Litt thesis *The Ranters: A Study in the Free Spirit in English Sectarian Religion, 1648-1660* (1968), followed by A.L. Morton's *The World of the Ranters* (1970) and Christopher Hill's *The World Turned Upside Down* (1972) are the most important fruits of this new interest. In the next decade, the Ranters were rediscovered by literary historians, most importantly Nigel Smith, whose *Collection of Ranter Writings* (1983) made their tracts available to a wide public for the first time since the 1650s.



Lawrence Clarkson (1615-1667), the "Captain of the Rant"<sup>3)</sup> has hitherto been studied only within the Ranter movement, although, significantly, prior to the production of detailed studies of individual sectaries like Coppe and the maverick Thomas Tany in the late 1990s<sup>4)</sup>, he seems to have fascinated scholars of 17th-century religious radicalism more than any of the other prophets. Thus, Clarkson is the only 'proper' Ranter to whom Morton dedicated a separate chapter, and Barry Reay examined his life and works at length in *The World of the Muggletonians* (1983). Even J.C. Davis, in his deconstructionist *Fear, Myth and History* (1986), had to admit that *A Single Eye* constituted the core Ranter publication<sup>5)</sup>, making Clarkson the only Ranter whose Ranter identity he failed to argue away.

Most discussions of Clarkson take place in a socio-historical context. As Reay has noted, he makes an exceptionally approachable object of study in that he differed from most autodidactic radicals of his time in publishing an autobiography, *The Lost Sheep Found*, in 1660. This formed part of a total of five tracts<sup>6)</sup> he wrote in 1659-60 in order to demonstrate the validity of his claim for the leadership of the sect subsequently known as the Muggletonians. Although its reliability as a source of biographical information has recently been questioned on the grounds of its specific religious agenda<sup>7)</sup>, it remains best known for Clarkson's sketch of his life, covering the period from 1630 to 1660. I do not share Davis's scathing scepticism regarding the historical accuracy of *The Lost Sheep Found*, for despite his condemnation of his former beliefs and ways of life as erroneous, Clarkson does not hesitate to describe them to us in vivid detail and with surprising frankness. As a result, the tract's proclaimed educational value<sup>8)</sup> recedes into the background. Clarkson may have seen himself as a type<sup>9)</sup>, a Reevonian "prodigal" son<sup>10)</sup>, but what he did in *The Lost Sheep Found* was to provide us with a fascinating piece of travel narrative, extraordinary in its combination of spiritual and geographical journeys, which ultimately constitutes a celebration of the sectarian milieu of revolutionary England. It shows us Clarkson's veritable spiritual pilgrimage through the churches and beliefs of the 1640s and 1650s - what he retrospectively termed "many a sad and weary Journey through many Religious Countreys"<sup>11)</sup>, though he evidently enjoyed his travels when he

was actually undertaking them. Clarkson eventually found his religious home among the followers of John Reeve (1608-1658), and wrote *The Lost Sheep Found* perceiving himself to be "the onely true Messenger of Christ Jesus, Creator of Heaven and Earth"<sup>12</sup>). By 1660, however, he had come a long way.

Chapter One attempts to put Clarkson's biography in its historical context. I am hoping to show that Clarkson's importance lies not only in his fame as a Ranter, although it is in this rôle that he surfaces in modern scholarly accounts, but that, like Abiezer Coppe,<sup>13</sup>) he came to the Ranters an already well-known figure, and thus played a more vital part in the landscape of mid-17th-century religious radicalism than is obvious at first sight. Particular emphasis will thus be placed on Clarkson's religious development leading up to his Ranter period, whilst his subsequent Reevonianism will only be sketched briefly, as an in-depth study would go beyond the scope of this thesis. In the first chapter will also be found expositions of Clarkson's early works, *The Pilgrimage of Saints* (1646) and *Truth Released from Prison to its Former Libertie* (1646). Even though it lacks the originality and immediacy of *A Single Eye*, *Truth Released from Prison* has been unfairly overlooked by historians. The only scholar to mention it in any detail is Jerome Friedman,<sup>14</sup>) whose rather distorted interpretation of the tract seems to have missed its main agenda. It constitutes Clarkson's contribution to the debate on lay preaching in the 1640s and 1650s, in which he was heavily involved as an itinerant minister. On the other hand, I have decided not to dwell on his third pamphlet, *A Generall Charge* (1647). There are two reasons for this. Firstly, my focus is on religion, and *A Generall Charge* constitutes Clarkson's only exclusively political tract. Secondly, Reay and Friedman have treated it in detail in *The World of the Muggletonians* and *Blasphemy, Immorality and Anarchy*, respectively, and there is little I could add to the discussion. Suffice it to bear in mind that its existence does away with the myth of Clarkson representing a largely non-political strand within Ranterism. Usually, Coppe and Salmon are thought the most political of the Ranters, yet Clarkson got his ideas into print before either of them, and Coppe's début tract *Some Sweet Sips* (1649) focuses on an exposition of the Song of Songs. Moreover, as Reay has shown, the significance of *A Generall Charge* lies in its adoption of Leveller

and Digger positions prior to their publication by the Levellers and Winstanley, whom both Clarkson and Coppe would later criticise. This suggests that Clarkson had considerable potential as a political thinker, and perhaps *A Generall Charge* only scratches at the surface.

Chapter Two will consist of a theological examination and contextualisation of Clarkson's ideas during his Ranter period. In *The Lost Sheep Found*, Clarkson mentions the learned Antinomian divine Tobias Crisp (1600-1643) as a major influence on his religious development. This may throw some light on the provenance of Clarkson's theological notions and the imagery later used in *A Single Eye* (1650) and *The Lost Sheep Found*, for which his humble and largely obscure northern background provides little explanation. I intend to follow this lead, and trace possible influences of Crisp on Clarkson. It does not attempt to be an all-embracing study, and in the interests of lucidity and detail, I have tried to limit myself to selected aspects. My theological interest in this chapter is in Clarkson as a Ranter. For this reason, I am going to focus on his one Ranter tract, *A Single Eye*, which provides an illuminating example of autodidactic, plebeian mysticism, pantheism and antinomianism. Two important qualifications have to be made regarding the scope of this study. I have decided not to deal with Clarkson's ideas on mechanic preaching and the everlasting gospel. The Joachite belief in three subsequent ages or dispensations, the age of the Father (revealed in the Old Testament), the Son (as testified to in the New Testament) and the Holy Spirit, when all ordinances and formal faith would be discarded in favour of the teachings of the inner spirit, formed the core tenet of the Muggletonians.<sup>15)</sup> Crisp's sermons are interspersed with references to different dispensations<sup>16)</sup>, but Clarkson in *A Single Eye* does not seem to be preoccupied with the everlasting gospel, whose most eloquent exponents in Ranter circles were Joseph Salmon, Jacob Bauthumley and Richard Coppin (who distanced himself from the movement).<sup>17)</sup> The same applies to the defence of mechanic preaching and the cultivation of the rôle and trope of the holy fool. Both constitute intimately intertwined characteristics of Ranter pamphlets and behaviour,<sup>18)</sup> yet from *A Single Eye* they are conspicuously absent, with the latter being indeed the only major Ranter tract which is silent on the

confounding of the wise and the exaltation of divinely inspired "fools". Perhaps significantly if we want to assess Clarkson's status within the Ranter milieu, in *Truth Released from Prison*, which Thomason dates 5 March 1646, we find both. In its arguments and use of scripture, it bears some resemblance to passages from Crisp's sermons dealing with the holy fool topic.<sup>19)</sup> However, by 1650, Clarkson had moved on. But let us start at the beginning.

PART II

Chapter One:

LAWRENCE CLARKSON (1615-1667):  
JOURNEYS OF A RELIGIOUS RADICAL

1.1 BEGINNINGS: FROM PRESTON TO LONDON

Lawrence Clarkson was born in Preston in Lancashire in 1615, the son of Anglican parents, who brought him up "in the Form and Worship of the Church of England."<sup>20</sup> Lancashire had long been one of the "dark corners of the land", "a frontier country"<sup>21</sup>), where Protestantism had made little headway against a very strong Catholic tradition. The latter had indeed been reinforced in the 1560s by William Allen and Thomas Vaux. In an attempt to establish reformed religion more firmly in the county, four itinerant Queen's Preachers were sent to Lancashire in 1599 in a curious anticipation of the Committees for the Propagation of the Gospel in Wales and in the North, which Parliament would set up in 1650. The county's Catholicism and its braving of the ministers' evangelizing efforts by a deliberate adherence to "heathenish" pastimes proved difficult to eradicate, however. At the beginning of the 17th century, one of the King's preachers complained about "profane pipers" who would play their instruments during service and thus thwart his mission.<sup>22</sup>) In a tract first published in 1608, the Reverend John White attributed this Anti-Sabbatarianism to a Catholic influence: the recusants "were the ringleaders in riotous, drunken and seditious assemblies, profaning the Sabbath by quarrels, brawls, stage plays, church ales, 'and all heathenish customs'."<sup>23</sup>) This turn-of-the-century impression finds a surprising echo in Clarkson's memories of "our Popish Countrey of Lancashire" in the 1630s, where "the Lords-day was highly profaned by the toleration of May-poles, Dancing and Rioting."<sup>24</sup>) According to White, the preachers had a civilizing effect on their congregations. James I made a special case of Lancashire by condoning Puritan

ministers there, a step which illustrates how precarious the situation in this "dark corner" was deemed to be by the authorities.<sup>25)</sup>

Interestingly, one of Thomas Edwards's correspondents in *Gangraena*, a "godly" Lancashireman, contrasts Presbyterian Lancashire with Independent and sectarian Cheshire: "We have through the mercy of God a learned and orthodox Clergy in our County, sound and orthodox ... but *Cheshire* is miserably become a prey to the Sectaries, they have set up already two or three Independent Churches, and are setting up two or three more."<sup>26)</sup> This contrast applied although Timothy Taylor and Samuel Eaton, respectively teacher and pastor of the gathered church at Dukinfield, Cheshire, one of the earliest congregational churches in England, though not necessarily, as Edwards claimed, "the first Independent Church visible and framed that was set up in *England*, being before the Apologists came from Holland, and so before their setting up their churches here in *London*"<sup>27)</sup>, were "wonderfull active both in *Cheshire* and *Lancashire*", going from place to place.<sup>28)</sup> Eaton, who has been called "the principal director, and in some respects the founder of the Lancashire and Cheshire congregationalism"<sup>29)</sup>, and his two brothers had emigrated to New England in 1637 in the company of John Davenport, founder of New Haven.

Christopher Haigh has shown how patterns of recusancy varied sharply between - sometimes neighbouring - regions in the county. The notion of a unifiedly "Popish Countrey" is misleading, yet at the beginning of the 17th century, Preston was among the thirteen most strongly Catholic parishes within the Catholic deaneries of Amounderness, Warrington and Leyland. In 1639, it boasted two secular and two Jesuit priests. On the other hand, however, the labours of the evangelizing ministers were bearing fruit in the town by 1630 when Clarkson, then a susceptible 15-year-old, began his spiritual quest by calling in question the episcopal religion of his parents. Although the official incumbent, a Mr. Starby, was, in Clarkson's eyes, "a pitiful and superstitious fellow" - i.e. an Anglican, probably, as we shall see, of a Laudian persuasion - there is evidence for a Puritan community which grouped around the town's lecturer, a Mr. Hudson. Clarkson is not very clear on this, but Hudson, acting upon his congregants' suggestions, seems repeatedly to

have invited visiting preachers, whose stern Puritan zeal contrasted starkly with the merry, pagan world of maypoles and dancing. These preachers "when they came, would thunder against Superstition, and sharply reprove sin, and prophaning the Lords-day; which to hear, tears would run down my cheeks for joy."<sup>30)</sup> Clarkson's religious life then follows a typically Puritan pattern. Sceptical of the new Laudian ceremonialism, which ordered that parishioners had to take the sacrament kneeling at the newly-erected altar rails rather than sitting in the pews, he left his own parish, where Laud's regulations seem to have been strictly enforced by the "superstitious" Mr. Starby, in search of ministers who dispensed the sacrament in the old way, and whose preaching was more to his taste. "I spared no pains to travel to Standish [near Wigan] and other places, where we could hear of a Godly Minister, as several times I have gone ten miles, more or less, fasting all the day ... and though I have been weary and hungry, yet I came home rejoicing."<sup>31)</sup>

The Puritan emphasis on the sermon stood in marked contrast to Laud's focus on the ceremonies, and by going to other parishes to hear a good sermon, the godly disrupted the parish system, which at least in theory rendered them liable to heavy fines.<sup>32)</sup> Such behaviour anticipated their demand for the election of a minister of their own choice, and the formation of sectarian gathered churches which cut across parish boundaries. Compulsory attendance of Sunday services at one's parish church was only officially abolished in 1650. Whilst young Clarkson was not brought before the church courts for his failure to comply with this regulation, his absence did not escape the notice of the obviously industrious Mr. Starby, who alerted old Mr. Clarkson. What followed must have been a domestic drama. Clarkson's father seems to have made a determined, though abortive, attempt to bring his son back into the fold of Anglicanism, forcing him to read set prayers when Clarkson himself was striving to learn the Puritan art of extempore prayer. Clarkson came to think of his conformist father, who would not leave him alone, as a "wicked man"<sup>33)</sup>, and in one of the most moving passages of the tract tells us how his conscience forbade him to ask his blessing, so "that often times in the winter mornings, after I have been out of my bed, I have stood freezing above, and durst not come down till my father was gone abroad."<sup>34)</sup> Perhaps this strained relationship with his family played

some part in his eventual decision to leave Lancashire for London at the outbreak of the war, shortly after his own conversion to Presbyterianism. Interestingly, Clarkson's domestic difficulties stood in marked contradistinction to the background of his future fellow-Ranter Jacob Bauthumley (1613-c.1685), who was the son of a prominent Leicester nonconformist, the shoemaker William Bauthumley (died 1634). William was excommunicated in 1619 - a fate shared by Jacob in 1634 - and brought his son up in a semi-separatist congregation.<sup>35)</sup>

It should be noted that Clarkson's early Puritanism was marked by austerity and even self-castigation. It constituted a prolonged struggle against his inadequacies as a believer, though in marked contrast to other Puritan biographies, there is no hint that he imagined himself battling against sexual vices or gambling. Instead, we find an obsession with prayer: "so was my zeal, that I have many times privately prayed with rough hard Sinders under my bare knees, that so God might hear me; and when I could not end my Prayers with tears running down my cheeks, I was afraid some sin shut the attention of God from me."<sup>36)</sup> This is a long way from Clarkson's joyful savouring of life to the full which would so notoriously characterise his Ranter period.

In London, Clarkson continued his search for godly ministers. Among the Presbyterian divines he mentions are the virulently anti-episcopal Thomas Case (1598-1682), who had come to London from Manchester in 1641 and was appointed lecturer of St. Mary Magdalen, Milk Street and, later, St. Martin's-in-the-Fields and St. Mary Aldermanbury, and Edmund Calamy sen. (1600-1666), curate of St. Mary Aldermanbury from 1639 onwards, who opposed the use of "superstitious ceremonies"<sup>37)</sup> and advocated the propagation of the gospel in the dark corners of the land. Clarkson attended sermons almost daily, and was eager to partake of communion.<sup>38)</sup> He also became preoccupied with questions of salvation.

The early 17th century saw the emergence of two main strands in English Puritanism<sup>39)</sup>, which became closely connected with the names of such influential preachers as William Ames and William Perkins on the one hand and Richard Sibbes and John Cotton on the other. Primarily concerned with the degree of conditionality in God's covenant of grace,

they represented an elaboration of two traditions of 16th-century continental covenant theology which in turn originated with Zwingli/Bullinger and Calvin, respectively. Ames conceived of God's promise of salvation in terms of a conditional, bilateral contract or bargain, which called for human participation. Faith was a prerequisite for salvation and individuals should prepare their hearts for the influx of grace - hence the designation of Ames' followers as "preparationists." William Perkins, the "intellectual grandsire of the entire Amesian circle"<sup>40)</sup>, identified ten stages by which a Puritan, eager to fathom God's inscrutable will, could at least attempt to find out whether or not he or she belonged to the elect. This preoccupation with predestination and what Edmund S. Morgan has illustratively termed the "morphology of conversion"<sup>41)</sup> generated an emotional anxiety which often brought about religious melancholy - the despair over the state of one's soul<sup>42)</sup> - and in some cases ended in suicide. Both Clarkson and Coppe describe their desperate youthful attempts to live up to the demands of this kind of Puritanism<sup>43)</sup>, with Coppe giving particularly lurid accounts of his painful and protracted spiritual rebirth<sup>44)</sup> many years later. The prominent Fifth Monarchist John Rogers<sup>45)</sup>, the figure-head of the free-grace movement, John Saltmarsh<sup>46)</sup> and probably Bauthumley<sup>47)</sup>, to name but a few examples, contemplated suicide. Clarkson was introduced to preparationism via the books of the clergyman Thomas Hooker (1586?-1647), who after a three-year exile in Holland had emigrated to New England in 1633. Hooker's teachings, he claims, "so tormented my soul, that I thought it impossible [sic] to be saved; however, I labored what in me lay, to finde those signs and marks in my own soul, and to that end neglected all things that might hinder it."<sup>48)</sup>

## 1.2 FIRST ENCOUNTERS: AMONG THE LONDON ANTINOMIANS

Clarkson grew disillusioned with the Presbyterians once they had turned from persecuted opposition to persecuting ruling party. After a brief time among the "more moderate"<sup>49)</sup> Independents, the preaching of Dr. Tobias Crisp (1600-1643) converted him to Antinomianism. Clarkson emphasises Crisp's key role in his theological development. His imbibing of Crispian theology was twofold, as he not only went to hear him in London, but also "seriously perused" the collections of his sermons. When the latter were published posthumously in three volumes in 1643 and 1648, the Westminster Assembly allegedly contemplated burning them for blasphemous contents.<sup>50)</sup> The first volume, *Christ alone exalted in fourteene sermons*, contained a lengthy preface by Robert Lancaster, an erudite divine who enjoyed an excellent reputation as a classical scholar, and would hold benefices at Quarley and Amport in 1650 and 1656, respectively.<sup>51)</sup> In 1643, Lancaster and Giles Randall were involved in the posthumous publication of John Eaton's *Honey-Combe of Free Justification*, which according to Thomas Bakewell resurrected Antinomianism in Britain.<sup>52)</sup>

The mention of the word "seriously" with regard to Clarkson's reading of Crisp underlines how much importance he himself accorded to Crisp's influence. He engaged in an in-depth study of the biblical passages mentioned in Crisp, such as Numbers 23.21, *He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel*<sup>53)</sup>, in order to arrive at a genuine and critical understanding of his teachings. Crisp's central belief that God sees no sin in the elect whatever their religious persuasions stood in marked contrast to the stern, conscience-harrowing preparationism Clarkson had embraced a few years earlier. After Crisp's death, Clarkson turned to the teachings of the two London divines John Simpson and Giles Randall. John Simpson (1615-1662), the later Fifth Monarchist, was appointed lecturer of St. Dunstan's in the East, the parish of his birth, on 22 March 1641/2.<sup>54)</sup> With 260 houses, St. Dunstan's was the second-largest London parish included in Lambeth Palace MS 272, only exceeded in size by All Hallows, Barking, with 300

houses. John Milton lived at St. Dunstan's in 1638.<sup>55)</sup> On Sunday afternoons and Tuesday mornings, Simpson also preached at St. Botolph's, Aldgate, being maintained there by the parishioners. St. Botolph's was a poor living, whose incumbent, Thomas Swadlin, complained about his meagre stipend in 1638: "And no allowance to myself, the priest of the parish, but only the casualties of Burials, Weddings, and churchings, the chiefest of which being burialls I may say, if people do not die I cannot live."<sup>56)</sup> He seems to have resented Simpson's intrusion, but on 29 April 1642, Parliament confirmed the latter's post as a lecturer in the parish and forced Swadlin to admit him to the pulpit.<sup>57)</sup> Still described as "an orthodox Divine" in the parliamentary order, Simpson became one of the leading Antinomians in the City, and on these grounds lost his lectureship at St. Botolph's on 9 October 1643.<sup>58)</sup> Although he was banned from preaching from October 1643 to October 1646, Simpson continued to do so publicly, notably at St. Paul's Cross in February 1643/4, where he interrupted a sermon by the Presbyterian Cornelius Burges.<sup>59)</sup> In August 1644, he was reported to have claimed "That Jesus Christ is in Hogs and Dogs, or Sheep; yea, that the same Spirit that ruleth in the Children of God, ruleth in the Children of Disobedience."<sup>60)</sup>

Clarkson only mentions a "Mr. Simpson" in his account, and as a result Simpson's identity seems to have given rise to some confusion. Morton and Davis evade identifying Simpson by paraphrasing Clarkson's statement, while Barry Reay, in his otherwise magisterial article, wrongly gives Clarkson's "Mr. Simpson" as Sidrach Simpson, although he quotes no sources for his mistake.<sup>61)</sup> Although both Sidrach and John Simpson were in London in the early 1640s, a look at the anti-Antinomian tracts of the period clearly reveals John Simpson's identity. In the lengthy preface to his 1644 anti-antinomian sermon, *God's Eye on his Israel*, Thomas Gataker calls Randall, Simpson and Lancaster "those three grand patrons of the Antinomians"<sup>62)</sup> and gives a hostile account of their examination before a Star Chamber Committee in the same year. The men evidently acquired some notoriety as a pair or trio, and it seems that when Clarkson in 1660 bracketed Simpson's and Randall's names together, he was relying on his contemporaries' ability to identify them. The two entries in the *Commons Journal* of 9 August 1644 that

deal with the establishment of a committee to examine Randall, Simpson and others for Anabaptism and Antinomianism mention that Simpson had been banned from preaching by the House.<sup>63)</sup> This clearly identifies him as John Simpson the lecturer.

Giles Randall (c.1608-?1654) emerges as a much vaguer figure, who comes to life in the hostile writings of Thomas Edwards, Thomas Gataker, Thomas Bakewell and others. Originally from Chipping Wycombe in Buckinghamshire, he attended Lincoln College, Oxford, from 1624 to 1626, and in the mid-1630s was vicar of Easton in Huntingdonshire. It is not clear if any work of his own ever made it into print. The anonymous *Divinity and Philosophy Dissected*, a highly mystical tract published in Amsterdam in 1644, has sometimes been attributed to him. His involvement in the publication of John Eaton's *Honey-Combe* has already been mentioned. Randall's major significance, however, lies in his publishing translations of Nicholas of Cusa's *De Visione Dei* (*The Vision of God, Or, The Single Eye*) (1646), the anonymous *Theologia Germanica* (1648) and the third part of Benet of Canfield's *Rule of Perfection*, entitled *A Bright Starre* (1646). He thus forms a crucial link between mid-17th-century English radicalism and medieval and early modern continental mysticism. In the mid-1640s, Randall preached in the Spittle-Yard without Bishopsgate, where "he doth delude the people with the deceitful doctrine of Familisme."<sup>64)</sup> A sermon he delivered on August 30th, 1646, reveals a pantheism similar to Simpson's: "*The heavens declare the glory of God; that is ... all the creatures and all actions are Sacraments, and do set forth the death of Christ; common ordinary eating and drinking do set forth the death of Christ, and are done as Christ said, Do this in remembrance of me.*"<sup>65)</sup> This foreshadowes Clarkson's celebration of the divine in "feasting and drinking, so that Tavernes I called the house of God ... and Sack, Divinity"<sup>66)</sup> in 1650. Thomas Bakewell's repeated mention of Randall's "sack-bottle" is highly suggestive in this pantheistic context, although Bakewell merely adduces it to illustrate Randall's hard drinking "loose" lifestyle.<sup>67)</sup> The latter distinguishes him from the respectable divines Simpson and Crisp, whose notoriety rested solely on their antinomian doctrines. Edwards's remark that "There were three great rooms full of people to hear him"<sup>68)</sup>, testifies to Randall's popularity. Through his sermons in the

Spittle-Yard, continental mystical thought and imagery percolated down to the middling and poorer sort of London's population, where Clarkson, like the Thames Street grocer Mr. Cullumbeame<sup>69</sup>), or the Hackney bricklayer Mr. Marshall<sup>70</sup>), could easily assimilate them.

Interestingly, it is in his antinomian period that Clarkson first seems to have gained some standing in the sectarian circles he moved in and "began to be some body amongst them." He also had developed "a notable gift in prayer"<sup>71</sup>) - what a change from his first attempts in Preston! - and had reached assurance of his salvation, considering himself to be one of the saints. Clarkson soon fell under the spell of Captain Paul Hobson (died 1666), a tailor from Buckinghamshire<sup>72</sup>) who had joined a separatist church in London in 1639 and turned Particular Baptist in the early 1640s. Hobson vigorously objected against Arminian "legalism" and holy duties such as prayer: "I was once as legal as any of you can be, I durst never a morning but pray, nor never a night before I went to bed but pray; I durst not eat a bit of Bread but I gave thanks; I daily prayed and wept for my sins, so that I had almost wept out my Eyes with sorrow for sin: But I am perswaded when I used all these duties, I had not one jot of God in me."<sup>73</sup>) This is a denunciation of the preparationism and obsession with prayer - the hard cinders and tormented conscience - that had earlier characterised Clarkson's spiritual life. Anne Laurence calls Hobson "probably the best-known of the lay preachers in the army"<sup>74</sup>), who "where ever he came ... would Preach publicly in the Churches, where he could get Pulpits, and privately to the Souldiers."<sup>75</sup>) According to Richard Baxter, Hobson played a major rôle in the spreading of Antinomianism in the Army.<sup>76</sup>) Clarkson followed him to Yarmouth as a soldier in the spring of 1644 when Hobson accepted a captaincy in Col. Charles Fleetwood's regiment of horse.<sup>77</sup>) Under Hobson's tuition, Clarkson became a lay preacher.

### 1.3 SOLDIERS AND TUB-PREACHERS

The 1640s and 50s were, in Christopher Hill's often-quoted words, "the great age of 'mechanick preachers'"<sup>78</sup>) - unordained and in some cases illiterate men and women who interpreted the Scriptures, spoke in private houses or other meeting places, claimed pulpits and toured the countryside. The emergence of large-scale lay preaching in these decades sprang from several factors. The breakdown of episcopacy and the quest for a religious settlement created a vacuum, an atmosphere where not only the bishops but the ordained clergy as a whole came under attack. At the same time, the Puritans in particular cultivated the habit of discussing sermons after the preacher had finished - it would lead to the Quakers' notorious interruption of services a decade later. Coupled with an exposition of the Scriptures and individual soul-searching, this favoured a milieu in which lay preaching could evolve and flourish, as these discussions often developed into house meetings. Clarkson hints at his attending the latter in *The Lost Sheep Found*. In Leicester in the first half of the 17th century, both William and Jacob Bauthumley repeated sermons at home, which did not escape the notice of the local ecclesiastical authorities. The most famous house meetings, however, were probably the weekly gatherings held in Anne Hutchinson's house in Boston in Massachusetts in the 1630s. Mrs. Hutchinson resolutely distanced herself from allegations of lay preaching, claiming only to have expounded and elucidated John Cotton's sermons - i.e. what Clarkson did when he carefully studied Crisp's sermons - but it is clear what these informal meetings could lead to. Interestingly, Mrs. Hutchinson, far from setting precedents in this respect, found house meetings led by women a common practice in Boston upon her arrival from Lincolnshire in 1634. Tobias Crisp himself recommended private expositions of scripture, citing the example of the men of Berea in Acts 17.10ff, *They received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so* (Acts 17.11), which, significantly, Hutchinson also adduced.<sup>79</sup>)

The Puritan's emphasis on the individual's relationship with God thus played a crucial role in the emergence of lay preaching, and in many cases was combined with a rejection of university-trained scholarship in favour of religious experience dissociated from formal qualifications. Robert Carye, a soldier at Dartmouth, wrote "To his much honoured Captaine, Paul Hobson", on June 12th, 1646, "John saith ... That which we have seen with our eyes, and our eares have heard, even the word of life, that declare we unto you: Such kinde of preaching and declarations of Christ, from experience of it in the heart, the Priests of England (but especially of these Westerne parts) are unacquainted withall."<sup>80)</sup> Laymen usually based their calling to preach on biblical passages like John 6.45, *It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God*; Isaiah 54.13, *And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children*; and I Corinthians 3.19, *For the wisdom of the world is foolishnesse with God. For it is written, He taketh the wise in their own craftiness.*<sup>81)</sup> Thus, a learned Oxfordshire divine could be disturbed by a soldier who "did openly and boldly in the Church affirme that he was raised up of God immediatly [sic], and inspired with extraordinary revelations."<sup>82)</sup>

The rife-ness of lay preaching in the 1640s posed a considerable problem to Parliament. On 15 November 1644 the Commons resolved to forbid anyone but ordained clergymen to preach. This was made into an ordinance of both Houses on 26 April 1645.<sup>83)</sup> Yet contemporary sources, above all Thomas Edwards's *Gangraena*, abound with anecdotes of laymen and women scorning Parliamentary legislation. A particularly illustrative story comes from Exeter. In the summer of 1646, the town was the scene of a violent clash between the city authorities and soldiers garrisoned there, which started when the city's committee objected to "the frequent preaching of Captaines at the castle, Guild-Hall, and in private houses, and of the drawing away of the people."<sup>84)</sup> A reading of the ordinance in the cathedral before the morning sermon provoked the contempt of the city's deputy governor and Captain Vernon, who not only continued to hold afternoon exercises in the castle, but also had the publisher of the ordinance imprisoned. "The whole Church was in an uproare and the City is in disorder; what the consequence may be we know not, we have been and are still affronted by the Garrison, and the civill power is in a manner

trampled under foot. We conceive the publike presumption [on the part of the deputy governor and Vernon] to interpret an Ordinance of Parliament, and to commit to prison the publisher of it, is such an act as cannot be paralld [sic] in the whole Kingdom."<sup>85)</sup> Even letters that members of the committee wrote to Parliament to inform it of the situation in Exeter were intercepted and in one case exchanged by officers of the garrison, while Vernon and his associates "laughed and jeered" at their contents.<sup>86)</sup>

It is significant that Clarkson's career as a lay preacher should begin in the army. As the example from Exeter demonstrates, lay preaching was particularly rife among the soldiers. The Army acquired the reputation of being a hotbed of sectarianism. "Our Armies", complained Edwards in 1646, "are the Nurseries of all errors and all our evils."<sup>87)</sup> Here, Clarkson joined "Paul Hobson the Taylor, and Lievtenant [sic] Colonell Hewson the one-eyed Shoemaker"<sup>88)</sup>, as well as the unnamed quartermaster in a regiment of horse who delivered a sermon in a country church "for he had a command from the Spirit to preach ... though they might say he was no scholar."<sup>89)</sup> Education, university training and ordination did not inevitably qualify men for the ministry and the interpretation of the Bible. At Aston Rowant in Oxfordshire, "one Floid", a twenty-year old preacher to Major Huntingdon's troop and - notably - an acquaintance of Giles Calvert's, preached a Sunday sermon on June 14th, 1646, during which he postulated "That Lay-men, Weavers, Tinckers and Coblers being gifted might be Preachers ... Learning was not any meanes or help to understand the meaning of the Scriptures ... any Chamber, Barne or Stable, or other place was as holy as the church ... there was no holynesse in the Temple, for God destroyed it, nor in any Church."<sup>90)</sup> Despite some sectaries rejecting the notion of a church building as a consecrated place - a strand of belief which constitutes one of the basic assumptions of pantheism and of an internalized, individualized religion, and would figure prominently in Seeker, Ranter and Quaker thought - the preaching soldiers and officers - like Floid - seem to have delivered their sermons in parish churches wherever possible, often clashing with the local incumbents. Edwards in particular paints a fascinatingly detailed and at some points shocking picture of this aspect of the civil war. Paul Hobson comes into prominence. "Many ministers", Edwards writes, "have been put

by preaching, and kept out of their Pulpits by force of arms, Captains and Troopers coming up into the Ministers Pulpits with their swords by their sides, and against the mind of Ministers and people: Thus Paul Hobson hath done in Northamptonsh. [sic] Buckinghamshire."<sup>91)</sup> In Devizes on September 6th, 1646, the parish incumbent was chased from the pulpit during the Sunday sermon by "one Captain Pretty", "one Master Ives" and the sectary Thomas Lambe, who were accompanied by "divers soldiers armed in a most irreverent manner, to the abominable disturbance of the whole congregation."<sup>92)</sup> Edwards bitterly resented the sectaries' abusive conduct towards ministers without taking the latters' age, infirmity, godliness or learning into account, while the clergymen themselves allegedly treated the sectaries fairly. This "exceedingly aggravates the Sectaries sinne, and shoves them to be monsters rather then men, not onely to be void of all Religion and charity, but of humanity and common civility."<sup>93)</sup> Although speaking of sectaries in general, Edwards must primarily have had the soldiers in mind, and the case of a Mr. Skinner, the 70-year old incumbent of Aston in Oxfordshire. Skinner's ordeal began in October 1646, when he was molested by Lt. John Webb, Colonel Hewson - whom Edwards styled the most renowned army preacher alongside Hobson - and other soldiers. Webb - not to be confounded with the Ranter Thomas Webbe - "with a loud voice publicly interrupted" Skinner's sermon, "cal'd him a foole three times, Popish Priest, tub-preacher ... black frog of the Revelation" and claimed "that he himselfe was a minister of Jesus Christ."<sup>94)</sup> During the afternoon sermon on the same day, Webb besieged the reading pew and, in a well-known gesture of irreverence, ordered his soldiers to keep their hats on. When Skinner "gently" removed Webb's hat, he only narrowly escaped custody:

*"Web* in a fury cried out, my soldiers and Constable pull him down, cast him in hold till tomorrow, and then bring him before me, at which command two fellowes went to pull him down with violence, but some of the neighbours laying hold on them whilst they were drawing their swords, by Gods good providence this old Minister of 70. yeares of age esaped their hands ..."<sup>95)</sup>

Details of similar incidents reached Edwards from Gloucestershire, where some clergymen were "pulled out of their Pulpits" by soldiers, in some cases "only for reproving them."<sup>96)</sup> On November 1st, Skinner was further molested by Col. Hewson,

while in the previous June, some local sectaries had combined with the soldiers and interrupted one of his sermons. This incident reveals Skinner as a conscientious minister whose endeavours fell on deaf ears in an at least partly disaffected parish. According to Edwards's witness, a parishioner called Margaret North "cried to him with a loud voice, M. Skinner, M. Skinner, you take great pains with us in preaching twice every Sabbath and Catechizing, but all comes but to one Sermon in the end of the year"<sup>97)</sup> - a situation which must sound disturbingly familiar to some present-day country vicars. South-East Oxfordshire saw a great deal of lay activity on the part of soldiers. The deconstruction of traditional authorities impinged upon the church buildings themselves, some of which were desecrated. Mr. Skinner's colleague in Lewknor did not necessarily fare better than his neighbour: He was

"driven from thence [his church] by the Lay-preaching Souldiers, who ... have for certaine daies made a prison of that Church, and have burnt up the seats and boords in the Church, so that it now lyes wast and destitute of a Minister; and these preaching souldiers refuse to preach now in that Church they have laid wast, but come to Churches where there are Ministers who preach constantly, as at Aston, and divers other places, and trouble them in their preaching and performing the services of God."<sup>98)</sup>

In nearby Wallington, Hewson and one Major Axston preached in the church while their soldiers "made a fire in the Chancell, and tooke Tobacco in the time of Prayer and Preaching."<sup>99)</sup> Some ministers also suffered bullying at the hands of soldiers quartered in their houses. One of them summed up the situation in pithy and moving words:

"The Romane Clergy have been *Solomons flagellum* on us many years. I but now the Lay-Clergy, these preaching Souldiers are worse, they be *Rehoboams*, whips of Scorpions, worse then *Solomons* and *Rehoboams*, yea then the Spanish whip in 88."<sup>100)</sup>

There is no indication that Clarkson's early forays into lay preaching were marked by similar disruptions. According to his own account, he first preached "at Mr. *Wardels* parish in *Suffolk*"<sup>101)</sup> - i.e. either Burgh Castle or Belton, both of which were the incumbencies of William Wardel in the 1640s and 1650s. He soon left Yarmouth for Norwich and on a fast day delivered a sermon at Russel, where he obtained an invitation to Pulham Market in Norfolk. His preaching found favour with the local Puritans, who

established Clarkson as their lecturer. In this position, he received a salary of 20s per week and judged his situation "Heaven upon earth."<sup>102)</sup> Roughly adding up to £52 a year, it put him on a par with ordained ministers, whose annual income varied between £10 and £100. A West Midlands vicar in 1650 would have earned an average of £42 a year - less than Clarkson, who had never been at university.<sup>103)</sup> Clarkson's insistence on free grace attracted attention well beyond Pulham Market itself, and nonconformists from the surrounding parishes came to Pulham to hear him preach. His popularity incurred the resentment of local ministers, who accused him of being a "sheep-stealer"<sup>104)</sup> and repeatedly challenged him in public. Let down by his former benefactors, Clarkson was eventually forced to leave the area. He accepted an invitation from the prominent nonconformist Robert Marchant to stay with his family at Weybread in Suffolk - notably because he had fallen in love with Marchant's daughter, Frances. But he was not sedentary for long. Soon he found himself an itinerant minister in Suffolk and Norfolk. On his travels he met a fellow-itinerant, John Tyler of Colchester, who introduced and converted him to antipaedobaptism.<sup>105)</sup>

#### **1.4 THE GREAT ANABAPTIST**

The encounter with Tyler marked the beginning of Clarkson's Baptist period. Always eager to examine, study and discuss a faith he was susceptible to, the countryside proved too spiritually unchallenging for him, so he travelled to London for further enlightenment. There, he was befriended by Thomas Patient.<sup>106)</sup> Patient, who died in 1666, constituted a leading figure among the London Baptists. He had emigrated to New England in the 1630s. However, when, in 1644, Massachusetts introduced a law which ordered the banishment of all Baptists, Patient, newly converted, perforce returned to London. He became joint pastor with William Kiffin of the Baptist Church in Devonshire Square, and signed the *Confession of Faith* of the London Particular Baptists. In 1649, he subscribed to the *Humble Petition and Representation* to the House of Commons, in which the metropolitan Baptists rejected Leveller radicalism. Interestingly, in the following year

Patient also supported the anti-Ranter tract *Heart-bleedings for Professors Abominations*, thus turning against his former protégé. In the 1650s, he became one of the most influential Baptists in Ireland before returning to England in the 1660s. After a period with a Particular Baptist church in Bristol, he eventually rejoined his old congregation in Devonshire Square, where William Kiffin still served as elder, a position which Patient was soon to share with him. Only a few months after his arrival, Patient died of the plague in July, 1666.

Patient baptised Clarkson in the Thames near the Tower on November 6th, 1644. A week later, Clarkson returned to the Marchant family at Weybread, and soon resumed his proselytising activities in Suffolk. It must have been in this period, as a newly-converted and fervent Baptist, that he married Frances Marchant. The 17th century saw what Christopher Hill has termed "the Puritan sexual revolution"<sup>107</sup>), in which the notions of property marriage and love outside marriage were rejected in favour of a new ideal of marital relationships based on mutual affection. Some sectarian congregations greatly simplified the public rituals of marriage. The replacement of an elaborate wedding ceremony in church by a simple declaration before the congregation became a well-known practice among the Quakers, but in fact dates back to pagan and early medieval customs, to be picked up again by the Lollards in the 14th and 15th centuries, and the Familists in the 16th. Interestingly, both Baptists and Quakers were particularly widespread in areas which boasted a strong Lollard tradition. In the Chiltern Hills of Buckinghamshire, for example, 90% of the families known as Lollard in the early 16th-century were still living in the area after the Restoration, with 81% having turned Baptist or Quaker, so that we can observe not only a geographical, economic and theological continuity from Lollardy to later forms of heresy, but also a much more direct hereditary one.<sup>108</sup>)

It is Clarkson, though, who, in the context of his examination before the county committee at Bury St. Edmunds two months after the ceremony, provides us with the most detailed and illustrative account of a Baptist marriage in the 1640s, and who most succinctly and movingly voiced the ideal of a Puritan love match. Being "beloved of other friends daughters far above her in estate", he chose Frances not on the grounds of her

dowry, but "for her knowledge and moderation of spirit", which engendered his love of her.<sup>109)</sup> These words suggest that Frances was a fellow-saint with a clear potential of a helpmeet. Many years prior to the Ranters' denunciation of "stinking family duties"<sup>110)</sup> and advocacy of free love, Clarkson told his judges that "Marriage is no other, but a free consent in love to each other before God."<sup>111)</sup> The wedding took place in the Marchants' house at Weybread. The couple had secured the consent of Frances's parents and the congregation, and Clarkson himself officiated in the presence of approximately twelve congregants. He gave the audience an account of their relationship and then, "before them all I took her by the hand, and asked her if she was not willing to take me for her husband during life?" His interrogators at Bury took umbrage at Clarkson's performing the dual role of both groom and quasi-priest, calling the wedding "a strange marriage" and questioning its validity, but Clarkson defended it vociferously. Given his view of marriage as a love match before God, "who was sufficient to publish the contract as my self?" Even though the wedding may seem peculiar at first glance, the committee members' reaction is surprising, since the poor often evaded expensive marriages in church even in the late 17th century. According to ecclesiastical - though not civil - law, an oral exchange of promises before witnesses, the so-called spousals, was valid, legally binding and irrevocable, and could render null and void a later marriage to another partner, solemnised in church. Although many Englishmen and women - including Clarkson's interrogators - were unaware of the full legal validity of a verbal engagement, the latter remained in force until the passing of Lord Hardwicke's Marriage Act in 1753.

As a direct consequence of their endeavours to form a pure church on the basis of apostolic injunctions, separate from the depraved, unbelieving and ultimately condemned rest of the world, the Particular Baptists exerted a rigorous moral control over their adherents. Frances indignantly rejected the notion of sex before marriage when interrogated at Bury.<sup>112)</sup> Mixed marriages were equally discouraged, and it was held to be lawful and even obligatory for a believing Baptist to leave an unsanctified spouse. This notion, which undermined the sanctity of marriage, made the imagination of contemporary heresiographers run riot. Thus, Thomas Edwards dwells repeatedly and at

length on the picaresque story of the London Baptist preacher Mrs. Attaway and her lover William Jenney, both of whom abandoned their allegedly reprobate (and, in Jenney's case, protesting) partners in order to elope together.<sup>113)</sup> In marked contradistinction to such sectarian domestic strife and despite his notorious indulgence in casual sex in the 1650s, Clarkson's marriage turned out to be surprisingly stable. Frances seems to have stood by her flamboyant husband during his repeated changes of faith, whilst he was always careful to support her financially, even during long periods of absence.<sup>114)</sup>

Prior to the emergence of the Quakers, the Baptists were numerically the most successful religious movement in the 17th century. J.F. McGregor has estimated the number of Baptist congregations in 1660 at more than 250.<sup>115)</sup> Numerical strength and a common denomination, however, belie the fact that they did not constitute a unified sect. The two major strands within the faith, the strictly Calvinist Particular Baptists and the universalist General Baptists, shared a rejection of paedobaptism and an adherence to what they believed to be apostolic ceremonies, but apart from this provided a receptacle for widely divergent beliefs and practices, which tended to the fragmentation of the movement. According to McGregor, General and Particular Baptists formed "two autonomous elements of an amorphous movement of radical Puritanism."<sup>116)</sup>

Likewise, the term "Anabaptist" could be adduced by hostile 17th-century commentators to describe almost any sectary, not even necessarily someone who espoused antipaedobaptism. Robert Baillie, one of their most thorough critics in the 17th century, speaks of "severall sects" within Anabaptism.<sup>117)</sup> In his *Heresiography* (1645), Ephraim Pagitt lists no less than thirty-two, including such peculiar groups as "Silentes", who "answer all questions of Religion with much silence", "Semper Orantes", who "would always pray and neglect all other ordinances" and, more suggestively, "Plunged Anabaptists", probably Dippers.<sup>118)</sup> According to Baillie, "antipaedobaptisme" only gradually emerged as the "most principall and distinctive Doctrine"<sup>119)</sup> of the 16th-century Baptists, their earlier focus having been on piety in conversation and lifestyle. It shifted when the sect, as a consequence of its emphasis on purity, began to form gathered churches, and to reject parish churches as "mixed" and hence "corrupted."<sup>120)</sup> In this

context, adult baptism became the symbol of rigid separation. Demonstrating the amorphous nature of mid-17th-century Anabaptism, Baillie concluded that virtually any theological and religious aberration could be found among contemporary English Baptists - from manifold and sometimes conflicting views on adult and infant baptism to antinomianism, pantheism, mortalism, millenarianism, Seekerism, atheism and a downright crude rejection of anything that had ever been held sacred or holy. Curiously, he bewailed the sect's failure to exercise any sort of control over, and to channel, this internal proliferation of beliefs, which rendered the English Anabaptists worse than their continental ancestors as it bespoke a lack of "zeal."<sup>121)</sup>

Often "Anabaptist" was used synonymously with "Familist", originally coined with reference to members of the 16th-century sect of the Family of Love, which had been declared illegal in England in 1580 and 1610, respectively,<sup>122)</sup> and consequently been driven underground. By the 1640s, "Familist", like "Anabaptist", was applied much more loosely. Indeed, nothing could illustrate this vagueness more aptly than the range of beliefs Baillie and Pagitt ascribed to their Anabaptists. It is important to note that, in marked contrast to modern-day sectarian organisation, the boundaries between the sects, movements, religious moods and milieux of revolutionary England were fluid and amoebic. Yet what Baillie in particular saw as an unprecedentedly rampant proliferation of beliefs within one *ueber*-sect is largely due to his very generous application of the term "Anabaptism" or "Anabaptist". The Anabaptists' "deluge of all manner of hereticall and blasphemous errors" was "overflowing the Land much more than any place of Christendome in any by-gone time"<sup>123)</sup> because, with regard to terminology, Baillie, Pagitt and others had opened the floodgates.

In the English mind, "Anabaptist" did, however, remain closely associated with the Munster Anabaptists, a group of radically millenarian sectaries who, under the leadership of the messianic John of Leyden, had occupied the North German city of Munster in 1534.<sup>124)</sup> In a marked deviation from the Anabaptist principle of pacifism, they had turned their new Jerusalem into a site of bloodshed and murder whilst also practising communism and polygamy until their defeat by the Bishop of Munster's forces in 1536.

Combining violence, anarchy, subversion, communism, sexual licence and mysticism, the Munster tragedy proved a strong weapon in the hands of the critics of future generations of sectaries. Its spectre haunted 17th-century religious radicals in both Old and New England. According to John Winthrop's own testimony, it was partly responsible for the hysterical reaction of the Massachusetts authorities against Anne Hutchinson and her followers in 1636-38.<sup>125)</sup> When Hugh Peter, one of Mrs. Hutchinson's most relentless judges, returned to England in the 1640s and championed liberty of conscience, he was attacked in print by Thomas Edwards, who flung the atrocities of the Munster Anabaptists in the face of Peter's mild characterisation of "the harmlesse Anabaptists" of mid-17th-century England.<sup>126)</sup> Edwards saw clear parallels between the radical reformation in 16th-century Germany and the situation in England in the mid-1640s. He regarded John Lilburne as a modern-day John of Leyden and likened William Dell to Thomas Muntzer.<sup>127)</sup> Baillie, whilst not being quite so specific, likewise saw direct theological and dogmatic parallels between contemporary Baptists and their Munster ancestors. Indeed, in his view actual 17th-century Baptist teachings and practices were more clearly mirrored in 16th-century continental Anabaptism than in the *Confession of Faith* of the London churches.<sup>128)</sup>

This historical background must be borne in mind when discussing Clarkson's activities from 1644 onwards. Between November 1644 and January 1644/45, Clarkson seems to have won a considerable following, one of his earliest converts being his bride. He embraced the Particular Baptists' elitist awareness of themselves as the only true church in this world. His baptism at the hands of Thomas Patient had been by total immersion or "dipping" as it was more widely known. This constituted a cleansing ritual, in which the convert quite literally shed his or her old sinfulness, but also stood for Christ's death and resurrection. The practice as such had only emerged recently, between 1640 and 1642.<sup>129)</sup> Although not all Baptist congregations adopted it, its outward visibility, combined with an air of startling novelty, drew a distinctive line between Baptists and other sects and religious groupings of the period. In the popular imagination, dipping soon became their major characteristic, a peculiar ritual they could easily be recognised by. It was not

without its dangers. In the summer of 1645, a convert near Ashford in Kent "was Dipped three times, because being afraid of the water, all the body was not under the water, but he was almost drowned and strangled by the water. And the last Summer an old man being dipped about Ashford, as soon as he came above the water, swore, Godsfoot you had almost strangled me; of both these there were many Ear and Eye-witnesses."<sup>130</sup>) If done in cold water, dipping also exposed converts to the risk of catching a potentially fatal cold. Furthermore, we must not imagine it being a solitary, private affair. Tales of mass dippings abounded. In such circumstances - the presence of a number of people immersed in cold and sometimes polluted water - diseases could easily spread. Thomas Edwards mentions the story of a woman who "fell desperately sick"<sup>131</sup>) after her dipping in December 1645. Ann Martin, an Essex woman, died a few weeks after Samuel Oates, one of the most famous Dippers of the 1640s and father of Titus, had baptised her in a cold river in March 1646 "and upon her deathbed expressed her dipping to be the cause of her death"<sup>132</sup>) - unfortunately for Oates, who had to answer these charges at the Chelmsford assizes the following month and was subsequently imprisoned at Colchester. In Frances Clarkson's own testimony, given before the county committee at Bury during her husband's interrogation, we can detect an awareness of danger. She denied having been "amazed, or almost drowned" during the ceremony as "the obedience to the Command of God did shut out all fear and cold"<sup>133</sup>) - yet the wording makes clear that only religious conviction could make her undergo an otherwise hazardous ritual. In fact, her words echo the defence of dipping adduced by one of Samuel Oates's followers. Oates continued to preach and dip in Essex after the Chelmsford assizes. In Dunmow, he was challenged by a group of locals, one of whom had attended the assizes. Trying to reason with Oates, he did not broach the highly controversial subject of the lawfulness or validity of paedobaptism, but rejected dipping on disarmingly practical grounds, maintaining "that in prudence it could not well be done, to doe that which in ordinary reason would destroy the creature, viz. in cold weather to dip weakly persons."<sup>134</sup>) Oates's follower, on the other hand, disclosed that the Baptists based their advocacy of dipping on a literal interpretation of Isaiah 43.2, *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the*

*rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee* - a belief which shocked his liberal-minded contestant. In marked contrast to these negative reports, a gentlewoman from Canterbury claimed that immersion had cured her "of an incurable disease"<sup>135)</sup>, and the Baptists seem to have attempted to publicise her story to redress the balance, although with little success. Their tendency to conduct dippings at night in order to avoid detection<sup>136)</sup> further enhanced the impression of a secret society based on obscure and allegedly shocking practices. The association of some of these religious radicals with the Parliamentary forces brought the Parliamentary cause itself into disrepute. Notice reached Edwards of a trooper in Colonel Rich's regiment, who "rebaptized hundreds" in Wales. One woman nearly drowned during the ritual. Swallowing cold water, she fell ill and died "within a day or two."<sup>137)</sup> The trooper himself obviously enjoyed the patronage of some powerful figures in the army, as an attempt to have him arrested failed due to the intervention of a higher authority. His activities had some impact on the locals' perception of Parliament, and illustrate the latter's difficulties in coping with, and controlling, lay preaching. "A religious Commander who comes from thence", complained Edwards, "tells me, the preaching and dipping of this Trooper and other such, makes the Countries being newly reduced, have an ill opinion of the Parliament; and many of the people say, these are your Preachers at London, and such Preachers as the Parliament sends; for they being ignorant people, think verily these men are sent forth by the Parliament to preach to them."<sup>138)</sup> It is in this context that Edwards's boundless anger at Hugh Peter's defence of the Baptists and his plea for liberty of conscience must be seen: "Are they harmlesse who in contempt of Baptisme have pissed in the Font, have fecht [sic] a horse into the Church and baptiz'd it? Who assault with violence godly Ministers, put them out of their Pulpits by force, openly affront them, and invade their Pulpits whether they will or no: Who make tumults and Riots in Countries: Who kill tender young persons and ancient with dipping them all over in Rivers, in the depth of Winter ..." <sup>139)</sup>

Many radicals served their religious apprenticeship with the Baptists. Coppe and Andrew Wyke, who would be in gaol together in Coventry in 1650, likewise came into

prominence as Baptists in the mid-1640s, and were first imprisoned for rebaptising adults. Coppe became preacher to the garrison at Compton House in Warwickshire in April 1646.<sup>140)</sup> According to Richard Baxter, who ministered to the garrison at nearby Coventry, he "continued a most zealous Re-baptizer many years, and re-baptized more than any one man that ever I heard of in the Country, witness Warwickshire, Oxfordshire, part of Worcestershire, &c."<sup>141)</sup> During his imprisonment, probably in Coventry in 1646, Coppe gave the number of his converts as amounting to more than 7000.<sup>142)</sup> Coventry was a long way from East Anglia, but the Suffolk county committee at Ipswich and Bury St. Edmunds which interrogated Clarkson in January 1645 on June 3rd, 1646, committed to prison Andrew Wyke, a native of the county who had "turned great Preacher and Dipper."<sup>143)</sup>

When Clarkson took to preaching and practising Baptist doctrines in Suffolk in late 1644, he, and later Wyke, formed one element in an entire chain of Baptist ministers who were touring East Anglia and the South East in the mid-1640s. Thomas Lambe, Henry Denne and Samuel Oates have already been mentioned. They formed a close-knit community. Lambe's General Baptist congregation in Bell Alley, Coleman Street, constituted the biggest Baptist church in London.<sup>144)</sup> Henry Denne, an ordained clergyman, was based in Cambridgeshire - Edwards mentions him as living in Elslly and Caxton. During a visit to the capital, he joined Lambe's congregation, and thereafter seems to have commuted between London and East Anglia. The Bell Alley congregation dispatched him to preach universal redemption to audiences in Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and other parts of East Anglia. In the summer of 1646, he travelled all about Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire.<sup>145)</sup> Oates (1614-1683)<sup>146)</sup> was a weaver from Norwich who had been baptised by Lambe in 1642. The two men remained closely associated during the following years. Leaving Norwich for London in 1645, Oates - like Denne - exercised his ministry in Lamb's church, and subsequently accompanied Lambe on a preaching tour which led through Surrey and Hampshire to Portsmouth. His own travels took him to Essex, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire, Leicestershire and Rutland. In March 1647, the Rutland parish clergy turned to the High Sheriff of the county to start

proceedings against Oates, which apparently came to nothing, for in December of that year, ministers in Rutland, Lincolnshire and Northamptonshire collectively petitioned Parliament on this account. In their complaints against Oates, we find him accused of an odd mixture of sexual immorality and political activism. They charged him with baptising women naked - a trope to which I shall later return - and of persuading married women to forsake their families and accompany him. Furthermore, he allegedly championed the *Agreement of the People*. In contrast to his notoriety in the 1640s, Oates seems to have dropped into comparative obscurity in the 1650s, although he took part in the debate preceding the calling of Barebone's Parliament, suggesting the composition of a list of nominated candidates from which the members of the new assembly should then be drawn by lot. He belonged to the General Baptist church at the Chequer without Aldgate in London. In 1663, he was suspected by the authorities - probably wrongly - of participation in the Yorkshire Plot. The 1660s were a decade of conformity for Oates as he officially returned into the fold of the Church of England and, in 1666, accepted the incumbency of All Saints, Hastings, which he held for seven years. In 1673, however, he returned to London, where he rejoined the congregation of his old mentor, Thomas Lambe.

The warrant under which Clarkson was arrested in January 1645 links him to one of the most influential and colourful Baptists in the 17th century - Hanserd Knollys (1599-1691).<sup>147</sup>) The Lincolnshireman Knollys came in contact with Puritanism during his studies at Catherine Hall in Cambridge. After his graduation, he returned to his native county to take up a teaching post at Gainsborough Grammar School. He was ordained in 1629 and soon after beneficed at Humberstone. In the early 1630s, he experienced a religious crisis, which led him to renounce first his living and, in due course, his ordination. In this situation, he consulted John Wheelwright (c.1592-1679), the vicar of Bilsby in Lincolnshire from 1623 until 1633. Wheelwright espoused free grace, and told Knollys that "he was building his soul on a covenant of works and was a stranger to the covenant of grace."<sup>148</sup>) Shortly afterwards, Knollys underwent a conversion experience. Acts 26.16, *But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen,*

*and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee*, turned him into an exponent of free grace. He engaged in several further discussions with Wheelwright, until the latter emigrated to Massachusetts in early 1636, whither Knollys followed him in the summer of 1638. By this time, Wheelwright, who was married to Anne Hutchinson's sister-in-law, had become imbroiled in the Antinomian Controversy. His controversial fast day sermon of January 19, 1637, had led to his - equally controversial - banishment from the colony by an order of the General Court the following March, but it was not until November 1637 that he departed for Exeter in New Hampshire. He only returned to Massachusetts twenty-five years later, in 1662. In 1637, in the midst of the Antinomian Controversy, the General Court severely tightened the control of immigration to the colony by introducing an alien law which allowed it to reject any immigrant who displayed "dubious" religious views - a measure aimed directly against the Antinomians.<sup>149)</sup> Although Knollys did gain admission after a detailed examination of his beliefs in Boston - which he took offence at - his connection with Wheelwright and his enthusiasm for free grace did nothing to endear him to its leaders. Winthrop himself noted that he was unwelcome "for holding some of Mrs. Hutchinson's opinions", and in due time exiled him to New Hampshire. The latter was thought in 1638 to provide a receptacle for the Antinomians, although the comparative religious freedom enjoyed by its inhabitants ended abruptly in 1641 when the Massachusetts government gained control over the colony, and proceeded to eradicate all forms of dissent. Knollys founded a church in what became Dover, where he and Anne Hutchinson's old adherent Captain John Underhill plunged themselves into a highly publicised quarrel with the preparationist minister Thomas Larkham, thus re-enacting the Antinomian Controversy on a small scale. It led to Larkham's excommunication by Knollys, and attempts at downright physical violence on both sides. Knollys himself was forced to leave the church when he had to admit to charges of immorality involving two maidservants. Edwards claims he was expelled from the colony. Ironically, Larkham, another misfit, though not formally banished, had already left for England.<sup>151)</sup>

On 24 December 1641, Knollys arrived back in London, subsequently earning a living as a schoolteacher and, briefly, an army preacher. A series of controversial sermons near

the Exchange earned him the reputation of being an Antinomian, and led to his being examined by a group of ministers at Edmund Calamy's house. He joined Henry Jessey's Independent congregation, and sparked off an intense debate concerning the validity of infant baptism. When the issue eventually split the congregation, Knollys and his adherents formed a Baptist church, which initially met next door to St. Helen's parish church. According to hostile neighbours, who may have exaggerated figures, it boasted more than 1000 members.<sup>152)</sup> On 29 June 1645, Knollys rebaptised Henry Jessey.<sup>153)</sup> In August, he prayed for the Leveller leader John Lilburne during a Sunday service. Shortly afterwards, the congregation was forced to give up its meeting-place near St. Helen's, and moved to Finsbury Fields, where Knollys had to remove the wall between two rooms in order to create enough space for his audience.<sup>154)</sup> In the mid-1640s, Knollys emerged as one of the principal spokesmen of the Particular Baptists, who engaged in a series of public disputations and plunged himself into a pamphlet war on behalf of the sect. He was brought before several committees - usually to escape imprisonment due to the interference of influential friends.<sup>155)</sup> His preaching tour of Suffolk in early 1645 was characterised by the militancy and disrespect of parish clergy I have discussed above. Knollys "played his Rekes not only for Preaching strange Doctrine, but in such a tumultuous, seditious, factious way, ... with some armed men accompanying him, and Preaching in the Churchyard, when he could not in the Church, and getting up the Pulpits when the Sermons or Lectures had been ended, against the will of the Ministers and parish, so that there were several Riots and tumults by his means"<sup>156)</sup>, which led to his examination in Ipswich.

I have not discovered any clear evidence that Clarkson and Knollys knew each other personally. Yet the two men touring Suffolk as itinerant Particular Baptist ministers at the same time, and their names appearing on the same warrant, does form a link - albeit a tenuous one - between the "Captain of the Rant" of the early 1650s, and, through Knollys's connection with Wheelwright, the New World's first and most notorious Antinomians, whose activities had a lasting effect on the shaping of society, religion and consciousness in New England. Moreover, Clarkson and Knollys moved in the same

circles in the early 1640s. As in Clarkson's case, Knollys's Antinomian period had predated his conversion to Particular Baptism. Significantly, perhaps, the only prominent London-based Antinomian Edwards mentions him in connection with is John Simpson, whose sermons had captivated the young Clarkson after Tobias Crisp's death in 1642/3. Edwards was under the impression that Knollys "and Mr. *Simpson* the Antinomian, set their hands to a Paper drawn up of some Propositions concerning the Moral Law and the Ten Commandments delivered by *Moses*"<sup>157)</sup> - an interesting possibility, though unfortunately one of which no further evidence seems to survive. In the 1650s, Knollys's congregation, which was based in Coleman Street, London's sectarian heart, maintained contact with Paul Hobson's church in Newcastle. Knollys never renounced his championship of free grace. In 1690, one year before his death, he - with Increase and Nathaniel Mather and George Cockayne - was among the twelve ministers who officially approved of and endorsed Samuel Crisp's complete edition of his father's sermons - a highly controversial publication which would spark off a second Antinomian controversy.<sup>158)</sup>

The critics of religious radicalism in revolutionary England were quick to draw attention to the sectaries' alleged or genuine immorality, and the Baptists, with their approval of believers abandoning unsanctified spouses, rendered themselves particularly vulnerable to this strand of criticism. Particular emphasis was, however, placed on sectarian ministers seducing and sexually exploiting their gullible female converts. "If I should here set downe all the instances in this kind that I have had from good hands, and relate the stories at large, I should fill some sheets", Edwards hinted. "A famous Sectarian Preacher in the Isle of *Ely* betweene a Cobler and a Shoemaker, ... is now accused by many women for tempting them, and solliciting their chastity," whilst, even more luridly, "a Fidler here in London a great preacher ... hath been taken in the act."<sup>159)</sup> The moral hypocrisy of the outwardly "very humble" Baptist Thomas Gunne, who was discovered to have had a clandestine affair with his married landlady, contributed to Clarkson's eventual disillusionment with the Baptists.<sup>160)</sup> According to Edwards, the Dippers deserved special

mention in this respect, as the very act of dipping - associated in the sensationalists' imagination with nudity and night - invited sexual intercourse between the administrator of baptism and his young protégée. Edwards went so far as to strip baptism by total immersion of any theological significance and ascribe its emergence primarily to the opportunist designs of sex-mad laymen styling themselves ministers.

"It was no wonder ... many such turned Dippers to dip young maids and young women naked, for it was the fittest trade to serve their turns that could be, and no question but it was found out and propagated with so much industry as being fed by lust, that a company of unclean men under the pretence of Religion, might have thereby faire opportunities to feed their eyes full of adultery in beholding young women naked, and in handling young women naked, being about them in dressing and undressing them."<sup>161)</sup>

Edwards likened these Baptist preachers to the false prophets mentioned in II Peter 2. The Dippers, he claimed, had *eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sinne; beguiling unstable souls.*<sup>162)</sup> Before the Ranters,

"... there have been and are a company of lusty young men betweene twenty and thirty yeeres of age that are Dippers, and their cheif [sic] commodity they trade in, is in young maidens and youdg [sic] women, and that in the night ofttimes, and these fellows living in idlenesse, going from Country to Country, being feasted and well fed, and having converse so much with women in preaching to them alone, and washing them, what can be expected else but a great deale of filthinesse?"<sup>163)</sup>

In Essex, Samuel Oates was rumoured to be responsible for a peculiar rise in the birth rate in the places he had visited, as many young women whose marriages had been childless for years allegedly suddenly found themselves pregnant. One woman even tried to bring this kind of sectarian adultery to the attention of the House of Commons.<sup>164)</sup> Edwards, in contrast to Baillie, who names him alongside Oates, Lambe and Denne as a proponent of Antinomian Anabaptism<sup>165)</sup>, does not mention Clarkson in connection with the more titillating aspects of the Baptist existence. Yet his "company of lusty young men" in their twenties or early thirties curiously adumbrates the Ranter prophets' flamboyant promiscuity a few years later. Edwards was a highly prejudiced writer who heavily relied on information forwarded to him by like-minded acquaintances and clergymen from the counties. Although some of his reports might be dismissed as exaggerated, and his indulgence in sensationalism is evident, his description of the Dippers in some respects

foreshadows and helps us to contextualise Clarkson's own experiences as an itinerant Seeker. On a preaching tour of Kent, which took in Bilsrekey, Gravesend, Dartford, Maidstone, Canterbury and Sandwich, Clarkson drew heavily on his fame as the author of *The Pilgrimage of Saints*, a Seeker tract published in January 1646.<sup>166</sup>) Numerous Baptists extended their hospitality to the impecunious Clarkson. In Gravesend, he was treated to a sumptuous meal by an inn-keeper, who "bid me take no care, for I should want for nothing"<sup>167</sup>), and stayed with Cornet Lockyer. In Canterbury, he seduced a young fellow-Baptist who, unaware of the existence of his wife (to whom Clarkson returned, with six pounds in his previously empty pockets, immediately afterwards), was foolish enough to lend credence to his promises of marriage. The story so outrageously ties in with Edwards's lurid anecdotes of sectarian seduction that it has to be quoted at length:

"Coming to *Canterbury* there was some six of this [i.e. the Seekers'] way, amongst whom was a maid of pretty knowledge, who with my doctrine was affected, and I affected to lye with her, so that night prevailed, and satisfied my lust, afterwards the mayd was highly in love with me, and as gladly would I have been shut of her, lest some danger had ensued, so not knowing I had a wife she was in hopes to marry me, and so would have me lodge with her again, which fain I would, but durst not, then she was afraid I would deceive her, and would travel with me, but by subtilty of reason I perswaded her to have patience, while I went into Suffolk, and settled my occasions, then I would come to marry her, so for the present we parted, and full glad was I that I was from her delivered."<sup>168</sup>)

Unfortunately for Clarkson, the girl, upon his failure to return as promised, investigated into his whereabouts, and travelled about Kent in search of him. Thus, the affair and Clarkson's obvious flippancy were made public in Seeker circles. As a direct result, he was given an unexpectedly cool welcome when he eventually resumed his preaching in the county - an experience he was already familiar with, for Clarkson, judging by his own account, seems to have managed to captivate his audiences and new acquaintances, and yet failed to make the fascination last - possibly a consequence of sexually unacceptable behaviour on his part, although the seduction of the maid of Canterbury is the only such folly he actually admits to in his pre-Ranter years. During his Baptist period, there is no indication of sexual irresponsibility.

Clarkson was apprehended in January 1645 whilst delivering a sermon in a private house near Eye, and brought before the Suffolk County Committe at Bury St. Edmunds.

His account of this episode corroborates my earlier observations on the perception of Baptists in the 1640s, and at the same time offers some rare glimpses of genuine Baptist practice. Frances insisted on accompanying her husband to Bury. On the journey the couple were exposed to the curiosity of countryfolk. In Eye, they found the streets lined with people anxious to catch their very first glimpse of "a great Anabaptist."<sup>169)</sup> Brought up on lurid tales of John of Leyden and his followers, the villagers clearly expected him to be "a strange creature", implicitly deformed and monstrous - to be taken by complete surprise at the sight of a "very pretty couple" on horseback, which immediately won their sympathies. The examination before the county committee itself took on the shape of a farce. Clarkson's interrogators were obsessed with the sexual connotations of dipping to the exclusion of any theological investigation. It all centred on dipping naked or reluctant women, culminating in the rather vivid accusations of Clarkson on horseback pushing people into rivers against their wills, and of indulging in riverbound sexual intercourse with a girl at Framlingham - spelt Framingham in *The Lost Sheep Found* - immediately after dipping her and her five sisters naked. His reply to this last-mentioned charge has gone down in history, exposing the folly of the committee-members: "Surely your experience teacheth you the contrary, that nature hath small desire to copulation in water, at which they laughed."<sup>170)</sup> Clarkson, supported by Frances, quietly denied all the charges pressed against him, thereby deconstructing popular myths of dippings in the nude and morally questionable mass dippings. According to his own testimony, he never baptised six converts at a time, neither did he join a convert in the water, but, as in Frances's case, "stood on the bank side."<sup>171)</sup> Most interestingly, Frances mentioned a special set of garments which believers were given to wear during the ritual for very practical reasons, as it would have been a health hazard to walk home in wet clothes in the cold - nude maidens were banished to the realm of rumour and fabrication. After the ceremony, Frances went to bed - alone.

The county committee was prepared to deal leniently with Clarkson, who steadfastly defended his faith even in the face of looming punishment. Instead of being thrown into the common gaol, he was detained at a "house where only men of Quality are kept in

Custody."<sup>172)</sup> The committee even went so far as to order his reluctant keeper, a Captain Poe, to make special arrangements for Clarkson and charge him only four shillings a week for bed and board when he turned out to be unable to meet Poe's financial demands of half a crown - equivalent to two and a half shillings - per meal. Thereafter, Clarkson, who knew poverty and the vicissitudes of itineracy, seems to have rather enjoyed the six carefree months he spent at Poe's well-furnished house. They bore little resemblance to a spell in an unhygienic, disease-ridden early modern prison. Clarkson was financially supported by Baptists in the Army and the Baptist churches in London and Colchester - a clear sign of his fame and popularity in sectarian circles. He preached freely in his room, until Poe tipped him off to the authorities, who ordered that he be no longer allowed to receive visitors. Undaunted by this, Clarkson declared the Baptist message to crowds passing in front of his window on their way to church on Sundays - a curious anticipation of the activities of his later fellow Ranters Joseph Salmon and Andrew Wyke, who preached through the prison windows during their confinement, with Abiezer Coppe, in Coventry gaol in the spring of 1650.<sup>173)</sup> In Bury, this proved more disruptive to the town's religious day-to-day life than indoor sermons delivered to a selected audience, and eventually the clergy and town authorities prevailed upon the committee to lift the spell of close imprisonment. Henceforth, Clarkson was allowed to move freely about the house and - somewhat to his own surprise, it seems - even to sit at the street door, as the authorities "feared not our going away, onely they were afraid I should dip some."<sup>174)</sup> After some months, however, the amenities in Poe's house apparently palled on Clarkson. When repeated attempts on the part of his friends to effect his release failed, Clarkson himself petitioned the committee in July 1645:

*"The humble Petition of Laurence Clarkson humbly sheweth, That whereas your Petitioner hath been above six Moneths in Bonds for Dipping: in which time he hath taken great pains, both by Dispute and searching the Scriptures, in which he doth finde, and is convinced, That he ought not to Dip any more, neither after the day of his convincement, being the 10. of Iuly [sic], will your Petitioner either Dip, or teach for the same, but only wait upon God for a further manifestation of his truth: So expecting your Worships Answer, shall daily pray*

Laurence Clarkson<sup>175)</sup>

He appeared before the committee on July 15th. Edwards reproduces the entry in the committee-book in the first part of *Gangraena*:

"This day *Laurence Clarkson*, formerly committed for an *Anabaptist*, and for Dipping, doth now before this Committee disclaim his Errors: And whereas formerly he said he durst not leave his Dipping if he might gain all the Committees Estates by it; Now he saith, that he by the holy Scriptures is convinced that his said opinions were Erroneous, and that he will not, nor dare not practise it again if he might gain all the Committees Estate by doing it; And [sic] that he maketh his Recantation, not for fear or to gain his liberty, but meerly out of a sense of his Errours, wherein he will endeavour to Reform others: And thereupon he is discharged of his imprisonment ..." <sup>176)</sup>

Edwards dismissed this recantation as "a Jesuiticall Equivocation, and deep Dissimulation" <sup>177)</sup> - a harsh judgement implicitly endorsed by the 19th-century historiographer of Puritanism, Benjamin Brook. The reason for the heresiographer's ire was that Clarkson "turned from Anabaptist and Dipper, to be a Seeker, and to deny the Scriptures to be the Rule of a Christian, or that in Doctrine or Practice half of God's glory was revealed as yet ... concerning his laying down the Ordinance of Dipping, and teaching for Baptizing of Infants ... he layed it down *for a Truth, and not an Error, only Erroneously practised: And in exchange thereof, have not, nor cannot practise the Sprinkling or Dipping of Infants of what Parents soever.*" <sup>178)</sup> In reality, Edwards unknowingly described a change of position which had been the outcome of a genuine crisis of faith, or "a great contest in my minde, as touching the succession of Baptism." <sup>179)</sup> Clarkson had taken a step forward on his spiritual journey.

### 1.5 IN SEARCH OF THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

Seekerism emerged in an atmosphere of disillusionment with the proliferation and fragmentation of radical religion in the mid-17th century, of which the Baptists, with their internecine conflicts over the right way of administering adult baptism, were symbolic. Seekers distanced themselves from this quest for ceremonial purity and perfection by declaring it futile, as divine inspiration had ceased with the Apostles, and the sacraments themselves formed part of the apostacy, so that there was no right way of administering them. From this belief ensued a rejection of all church ordinances. The Seekers internalised religion, waiting for a time when God would reveal himself to man again. They espoused the doctrine of the three ages, which originated with the Calabrian abbot Joachim of Fiore (1145-1202).<sup>180)</sup> The Age of the Father was the time of the law, followed by the Age of the Son, or the time of the Gospel. The third Age, which Joachim had believed to be dawning, would be the Age of the Spirit, when the "everlasting gospel" or *evangelium aeternum* would finally be revealed to man through direct divine inspiration of each individual. Man would be living in a state of perfection. The three ages corresponded to an age of fear and servitude under the Old Testament, which ended with the birth of Christ, followed by an age of faith and filial obedience under the New Testament, and culminating in an age of all-permeating love and freedom in the kingdom of saints. Jacob Boehme, the mystic from Goerlitz in Germany, couched the everlasting gospel in the language of flowers, speaking of the Age of the Nettle, the Rose and the Lily.<sup>181)</sup> His entire *oeuvre* was translated into English between 1644 and 1662. Some of Boehme's writings were published by Giles Calvert - the very man who would introduce Clarkson to Ranter circles. Joachite theology flourished in mid-17th-century England, when unprecedented political and, to a lesser extent economic, upheavals encouraged theological speculation and brought about an atmosphere highly charged with millenarian expectations.

The key to Clarkson's conversion to Seekerism lies in his encounter with William Erbery (1604-1654) and William Sedgwick (c.1610-c.1663). Erbery<sup>182)</sup> was the son of a Welsh gentleman and a graduate of Brasenose College, Oxford. He had lost the living of St. Mary's in Cardiff for refusing to read the Declaration of Sports, and gone to London in 1640, where he had held the chaplaincy of Major-General Skippon's regiment in 1643-1644. Afterwards, he became an itinerant minister with a base in Ely from early 1645 onwards. Edwards mentions Erbery's visit to Bury in July 1645:

"he declared himself for generall Redemption, that no man was punished for *Adam's* sin, that Christ died for all; that the guilt of *Adam's* sin should be imputed to no man ... that within a while God would raise up Apostolicall men, who should be extraordinary to preach the Gospel, and after that shall be the fall of Rome: he spake against gathering Churches, the Anabaptists Re-baptizing, and said men ought to wait for the coming of the Spirit, as the Apostles did; look as in the Wilderness they had honey and Manna, but not circumcision & the Passeover till they came into Canaan; So now we may have many sweet things, conference and Prayer, but not a Ministry and sacraments: And then, after the fall of Rome, there shall be new Heavens, and a new earth; there shall be new *Ierusalem*, and then the Church shall be one ..."183)

"Men father divisions upon the light, when as the present distractions and mistakes are, because it is but halfe day, the mist is not quite dispelled. Darknesse causes divisions ... Let light scatter, and it will pull downe the Kingdome of darknesse" echoed William Sedgwick in *Zions Deliverance* (1642).<sup>184)</sup> Sedgwick<sup>185)</sup> would rise to unwanted fame in March 1647 when he appropriated the millenarian predictions of a prophetess from Swaffham Prior in Cambridgeshire and travelled to London to prophesy the imminent Second Coming of Christ. When a thunderstorm of seemingly apocalyptic dimensions ravaged the country on Sedgwick's date for the beginning of the millennium, he was dubbed "Doomsday Sedgwick" by contemporaries. Sedgwick's background and career bear much resemblance to Erbery's. His father was a gentleman from Bedfordshire. Sedgwick attended Pembroke College, Oxford and in 1635 became rector of Farnham in Essex, a post which he technically held until 1644. In 1642, however, he departed for London, leaving his congregation in the care of a newly-installed curate. He was chaplain to the regiment of the future regicide Sir William Constable in the spring of 1642/3. From 1645-1649 he lived in Ely, serving as both preacher at the cathedral and chaplain to the local garrison. While Erbery acquired some notoriety as the "champion of the Seekers",

Sedgwick was called the "apostle to the Isle of Ely."<sup>186</sup>) In July 1645, these two men visited Clarkson at Poe's house in Bury, and convinced him of the erroneousness of his doctrine concerning the validity of baptism: "I could not see but in the death of the Apostles, there was never since no true Administrator; for I could not read there was ever any that had power by imposition of hands, to give the Holy Ghost, and work miracles as they did; so that in the death of them I concluded Baptism to either young or old, was ceased ... so seeing the vanity of the Baptists, I renounced them and had my freedom."<sup>187</sup>)

In 1646 Edwards complained that "the sect of Seekers growes very much, and all sorts of sectaries turn Seekers; many leave the Congregations of Independents, Anabaptists, and fall to be Seekers, and not onely people, but Ministers also; and whosoever lives but a few yeers (if the Sects shall be suffered to go on) will see that all the other Sects of Independents, Brownists, Antinomians, Anabaptists will be swallowed up in the Seekers."<sup>188</sup>)

Clarkson's own experiences lend some substance to this impression. After his release, he immediately went to Ely in search of Sedgwick and Erbery. Unable to find them, he visited his old Baptist friends in London, only to discover that the religious situation in the capital had changed dramatically since his last stay, and the Baptist churches had suffered considerable defection of their members to the Seekers, "who worshipped God only by prayer and preaching."<sup>189</sup>) A.L. Morton has stressed the deep and lasting impact the doctrine of the three dispensations and the everlasting gospel had on Clarkson. Significantly, it was as a Seeker that he wrote his first tract. *The Pilgrimage of Saints, by Church cast out, in Christ found, seeking Truth* appeared in print in January 1646, possibly published and certainly recommended and sold by Giles Randall.<sup>190</sup>) No copies survive, yet extracts from the tract in Edwards's *Gangraena* and in *A Testimony to the Truth of Jesus Christ*, a pamphlet endorsed by the London Presbyterian ministers in December 1647, afford us a glimpse of its contents.

In accordance with the everlasting gospel, Clarkson disputed "that in Doctrine or Practise half of God's glory is revealed as yet."<sup>191</sup>) Hence, "there ought to be in these

times no making or building of churches, nor use of Church-ordinances, as ministring of the Word, Sacraments, but waiting for a Church, being in readinesse ... the Saints as Pilgrims do wander as in a Temple of smoak, not able to finde Religion, and therefore should not plant it by gathering or building a pretended supposed House, but should wait for the coming of the Spirit, as the Apostles did."<sup>192</sup>) This directly echoes William Erbery, who described himself as "a wayfaring man, seeing no way of man on earth, no beaten path to lead him. Let him look upward and within at once."<sup>193</sup>)

"As the condition of *Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, &c.* was, that they did walke with God by the teaching of God, so is ours: that is not to limit Christ to *Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, John* and the Disciples. As they were not to ty God to any things before them recorded, but each of them had a new record, so are we not to limit God in the generall records of those paths, but wait upon him in the enlargement of the Gospel what he will record you ... [not] half of his glory is revealed as yet: As that I should enclose Christ in such a small compasse as we have recorded ... pressing toward the marke for the price of the high calling of God, waiting what he will record in my heart, and in that measure worship him in spirit and truth from the teaching of the Spirit."<sup>194</sup>)

The internalisation or spiritualisation of religion entailed the rejection of all scriptural authority, especially in a period in which the questionable provenance of the biblical books and the tortuous history of their transcription, as well as the contradictory nature of some of the Bible's contents were being exposed through close textual criticism. According to Clarkson, "the Scripture, whether a true manuscript or no, whether Hebrew, Greek or English is but humane, and so not able to discover a divine God. Then where is your command to make that your Rule of Discipline, that cannot reveal you God, nor give you power to walke with God?"<sup>195</sup>)

The *Pilgrimage of Saints* established Clarkson's fame as a religious radical. Interestingly, Edwards begins his long catalogue of errors, heresies and blasphemies with Clarkson's rejection of scriptural authority. This passage also ushers in a paragraph dedicated to "Errours against the Divine Authority of the Holy Scriptures" in *A Testimony to the Truth of Jesus Christ*. Most significantly if we want to assess the tract's impact in 1646, however, is Edwards's mention of it alongside such classics as Roger Williams's *The Bloody Tenent of Persecution* (1644) and Richard Overton's *Man's Mortallitie*

(1643).<sup>196)</sup> Whilst *The Pilgrimage of Saints* gained Clarkson admission to Seeker circles in Kent (see above), it alienated his erstwhile Baptist brethren, since Clarkson expressly condemned the sect's striving for purity as invalid and futile. His hostile encounter with Thomas Gunne on London Bridge shortly after its publication substantially corroborates his disillusion with the Particular Baptists, and invalidates Edwards's dismissal of his recantation as an opportunist ploy.<sup>197)</sup>

Clarkson soon resumed his itinerant ministry in East Anglia. Prior to his journey into Kent, he preached in Colchester, where he was welcomed by some friends, including one John Aplewhit and one Purkis. A hostile report comes from a local minister, printed by Edwards: "The last Sabbath day we had one Clarkson a Seeker that preached at Butolph Church ... His sermon tended to the vilifying of the Scriptures, all Ordinances, Duties, Ministers, Churchstate: He vilified the Scriptures, and would not have the people live upon white and black, and that they of themselves were not able to reveal God."<sup>198)</sup> Clarkson's visit to Colchester and his ill-starred tour of Kent seem to have taken place in the spring of 1646. Afterwards, Clarkson went to the capital, where he repeatedly preached at Bow-Church in Cheapside. It may be one of these sermons that Edwards called "a Rapsody of nonsense" and dated March 8th, 1646.<sup>199)</sup> Bizarrely, Clarkson seems to have prayed for the royalist forces. Edwards's subsequent remark that he hoped God would "blesse the Saints in both the Parliaments Army and the Kings" suggests that Clarkson espoused the reconciliatory notion of sainthood overriding political boundaries, which the Ranters would endorse. Edwards's account is valuable as it shows the extent of Clarkson's popularity in early 1646, and hints at the goodwill with which some persons in authority seem to have favoured him at the time: "This was not done in a corner, but in a great and full Audience; there was present at this Sermon one Member of the House of Commons, if not more, besides divers other persons of quality; and though this *Clarkson* was in London some time after this ... yet was he never questioned, nor called to any account for this, or for his *Pilgrimage of Saints*, as ever I could learn."

Clarkson commuted between London or East Anglia and his home. At one point, he planned to visit his parents in Lancashire - a rare reference to them - but nothing seems to

have come of this, as he obtained a temporary preaching post at St. Albans in Hertfordshire. Thereafter, he was chosen minister of Sandridge in the same county. The Clarksons were living at the vicarage and regularly entertained guests of quality - Sir John Garret, Colonel Cox and Justice Robotom are the names he mentions. According to his own account, he enjoyed the favour of the leading families in the parish. Yet Clarkson's second "heaven upon earth"<sup>200</sup>) was disrupted by his lack of a formal qualification: "there was few of the Clergy able to reach me in Doctrine or Prayer; yet notwithstanding, not being a University man, I was very often turned out of employment." The end came when the town's incumbent brought Clarkson's doctrinal heterodoxy - he had returned to his focus on free grace - to the attention of the Assembly of Divines, and Clarkson lost his post "to a drunken fellow." He left, disillusioned, for London, concluding that "all was a cheat, yea, preaching itself." Nevertheless, he continued an itinerant minister in Hertfordshire, Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire, primarily to earn some money to support his growing family.

"Not being a University man" - on March 5th, 1645/6, Thomason had acquired a copy of Clarkson's second tract, *Truth Released from Prison to its Former Libertie or A True Discovery, who are the troublers of Israel; the disturbers of England's peace*. Jerome Friedman wrongly sees this tract as an attempt on Clarkson's part "to justify the concept of social disruption in general."<sup>201</sup>) *Pace* his admiration for Clarkson, Friedman seems over-concerned to emphasize his potential for social, political and sexual anarchy. *Truth released from Prison* in fact constitutes a defence of mechanic preaching, based on experience and an exposition of I Kings 18.17. Curiously, Clarkson dedicated it to the mayor, aldermen and inhabitants of his native Preston. His main endeavour was to demonstrate that truth should be listened to and embraced independently of its messenger, as it was the message, not the identity of the messenger, which mattered. Truth was to be "understood in its Center ... apprehended in its Element" as otherwise "you receive the message in love to the messenger, and not in love to the message it selfe ... ye rejoice in man and not in truth."<sup>202</sup>) In the 1640s, "God hath been pleased to call out the poorest, and weakest of his saints, adorning them with gifts equivalent thereto, authorizing them

by his Princely Majesty to divulge his message."<sup>203</sup>) He disclosed his mysteries to "*poore Tradesmen, as Taylors, Weavers &c.*" despite the displeasure this engendered in persons of quality and learning. "*I am imboldned [sic]. I am engaged to present my Light before you, to traffick with my Tallent amongst you, to the end you may see and acknowledge, God is not partiall, with him is no respecting of persons; yea, with God it matters not of what occupation he be, provided he be lawfully called and sent out by God; approbated and authorized by his Majesty.*"<sup>204</sup>) Once God had imbued an individual with his truth, "it matters not, whether *learned or unlearned.*"<sup>205</sup>) Anyone who had, like Clarkson, received a commission from God, had a duty to preach: "it is the expresse command of Christ, that such so gifted must not be silent ... But say you these *Elijahs* kinsmen ought to follow their vocation, their trades and callings ... & not take upon them the work of the *Ministry*, wanting parts enabling them therto [sic]; by which all *scandals, reproaches, and tumults* would be taken away, and *People, Cities, Towns and villages* would be at peace & unity." Clarkson drew a direct and powerful parallel between himself and Christ, whose message had been scorned once his audience had identified him as a carpenter. Likewise, despite the disciples "having no experience of any *Vniversitie or Colledg* [sic] whatsoever", they "wanted no ability to divide [sic] the Word of God aright, or to cary [sic] forth the holy & *heavenly message* of the *King of Kings*", for they were "in a high measure approved of by God, & therby [sic] authorized by the divine inspiratiō [sic] to the astonishment of their adversaries, by being not only able *Ministers* of the *Letter*, but able *Ministers* of the *Spirit*." In marked contrast to Friedman's focus on his appropriation of the identity of a radical "troublemaker"<sup>206</sup>), Clarkson's own voice is one of moderation. Although he rejects traditional forms and sources of authority, accepting only a divine commission in its place, he does not call for a revolution, but for a completion of the reformation in accordance with God's will. God's revealing himself to laymen of the poorer sort may indeed offend, and endanger the privileged positions of, noblemen and university-educated clergymen, and "a truth prophesied or preached by a *poore Elijah, a poore Saint*, is esteemed a *Trouble to the Nobility of Israel.*"<sup>207</sup>) Likewise, "for preaching the Truth, you shall be the men that turn the Kingdom upside down, and in conclusion

esteemed movers of sedition."<sup>208</sup>) Yet Clarkson's emphasis in both instances is on "esteemed", as the truth cannot in itself be bad. Far from assuming a disruptive position, Clarkson pleads for forbearance and understanding. Nothing should be done "that may offend the adverse party" or that may be a "bondage" to others. People should not fall out over "such things as are indifferent" like the observance of holy days, times and seasons, "concerning which hath been a great offence in *cities, towns and villages*, in that some esteems [*sic*] one day above another, and another man counteth every day alike", or the fierce debate over the sprinkling of infants or the dipping of believers. Clarkson's account - probably first-hand - of the tumultuous overthrow of a peaceful conventicle in London by offended, violent neighbours does not only expose the latter as the real troublemakers, but expresses disapproval of strife and persecution in general. He called for a "real" as opposed to a merely "verbal" or pretended reformation, and "if your Reformation be *real*, it must be in Truth; so that *Truth* prophesied or preached, can in no kind be said to hinder but further a *Reformation*; in that Truth must be the *Foundation*, Truth must be the *instrumental* case; yea, Truth must be all in all in a *true Reformation*."<sup>209</sup>)

*Truth Released from Prison* constituted Clarkson's contribution to the debate on mechanic preaching and liberty of conscience which marked the 1640s and 1650s, drawing on his own experiences as an itinerant lay minister. Curiously, he does not even mention it in *The Lost Sheep Found*, and is dismissive about his next pamphlet, *A Generall Charge or, Impeachment of High Treason, in the Name of Justice Equity, against the Communality of England*, of which Thomason obtained a copy on October 7th, 1647. Clarkson implies that he wrote it only to make money, and - retrospectively - valued it merely for the twelve pounds it gained him.<sup>210</sup>)

After a brief and apparently boring spell as a minister to a small congregation in Lincolnshire, Clarkson spent some time with friends at Oford in Cambridgeshire, returned to his wife in Suffolk, and in 1648/49 resumed his itinerant ministry in Lincolnshire. His sermons attracted the attention of Captain Cambridge, who asked him to become chaplain to Colonel Philip Twistleton's regiment, in which he served. Clarkson accepted and was

provided with a horse, a servant, and full pay. He followed the regiment through the county, preaching, among other places, in Lincoln, Horncastle and Spilsby, but took temporary leave in order to visit his wife when the regiment approached London, where he rejoined it two months later. On 9 December 1649, he - for reasons never explained - approached the Presbyterians and unsuccessfully applied for ordination in the fourth London classis.<sup>211</sup>) The idea of Clarkson as an ordained Presbyterian minister in 1649/50 seems bizarre, and the signposts on his spiritual journey pointed in a very different direction. When Twistleton's regiment was quartered in Smithfield, Clarkson took lodgings in the house of a female acquaintance. This proved fateful, for it was through her that he first heard of *My One Flesh*, the group of Ranters surrounding Abiezer Coppe.

### 1.6 THE CAPTAIN OF THE RANT

*My One Flesh* took its name from Genesis 2.23,24, depicting the creation of Eve: *And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.* The group formed a Ranter nucleus in the capital. It met clandestinely at the house of one "Mr. Melis in Trinity Lane", whom Ariel Hessayon has identified as the brown baker John Millis or Millist.<sup>212</sup>) He had been living in the vintry ward in the parish of Trinity the Less at least since 1638<sup>213</sup>), and was the "Mr. Millis, a brown baker" whom John Reeve mentioned as living next door to him and Lodowick Muggleton in Great Trinity Lane near the lower end of Bow Lane on the title pages of his *A General Epistle from the Holy Spirit* (1653) and *A Transcendent Spiritual Treatise upon severall Heavenly Doctrines* (c1653). Other members of the conventicle included a Mr. Brush, a Mr. Goldsmith, one Sarah Kullin, the blind preacher Mary Lake, and William Rawlinson. Clarkson was introduced to the group by Mr. Brush via a letter of recommendation from none less than the radical publisher Giles Calvert (1612-1663) who would, a year later, publish his *A Single Eye*. It turned out that Clarkson had just missed Abiezer Coppe, who had "lately appeared in a most dreadful

manner". This seems to refer to Coppe's prophetic behaviour in Southwark prior to the publication of *A Fiery Flying Roll*<sup>214)</sup>, rather than to his feigning madness in court after his arrest.<sup>215)</sup> Accordingly, Morton estimates that Clarkson's introduction to *My One Flesh* took place in mid-1649.<sup>216)</sup> The timing is significant, for it was during this visit to John Millis's house that Clarkson first preached on Titus 1.15, *Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled*, having previously been reluctant to voice his antinomian notions in public lest they provoke hostility:

"Now observe at this time my judgment was this, that there was no man could be free'd from sin, till he had acted that so called sin, as no sin, this a certain time had been burning within me, yet I durst not reveal it to any, in that I thought none was able to receive it, and a great desire I had to make trial .... *Mary Lake* being blind, asked who that was that spake? *Brush* said the man *Giles Calvert* sent to us, so with many more words I affirmed that there was no sin, but as man esteemed it sin, and therefore none can be free from sin, till in purity it be acted as no sin, for I judged that pure to me, which to a dark understanding was impure, for to the pure all things, yea all acts were pure ... I pleaded the words of *Paul*, *That I know and am perswaded by the Lord Jesus, that there was nothing unclean but as man esteemed it ...* now against next sunday [sic] it was noised abroad what a rare man of knowledge was to speak at Mr. *Brushes*; at which day there was a great company of men and women, both young and old; and so from day to day increased."<sup>217)</sup>

The interest and attention Clarkson incurred on these occasions lends credence to the theory that his ideas were probably novel to *My One Flesh* at that time. If so, Clarkson's espousal of Titus 1.15, the biblical passage which formed the theological basis of the Ranter movement, predates Coppe's in *A Fiery Flying Roll*, as the latter only appeared in print at the end of 1649. From Titus 1.15, Clarkson inferred that "till you can lie with all women as one woman, and not judge it sin, you can do nothing but sin."<sup>218)</sup> Sarah Kullin was the first female listener to ask him to put his theology into practice, and afterwards made haste to introduce him to "one or two more" like-minded women at the house of a Mr. Wats in Rood Lane, where he soon took up his lodgings, severing his ties with the army. There, "I had Clients many, that I was not able to answer all desires."<sup>219)</sup> An attempt on the part of the Lord mayor to raid his quarters and have him arrested was frustrated when Clarkson found out about the plan in advance, and he also seems to have escaped during a raid on a Ranter conventicle in Whitechapel.<sup>220)</sup> In Rood Lane Clarkson, prompted by Coppe's publication of *A Fiery Flying Roll*, wrote the tract which

was to establish his lasting fame, and gain him the title of "*Captain of the Rant*"<sup>221</sup>): *A Single Eye all Light, no Darkness; Or Light and Darkness One* appeared in the first half of 1650.

Clarkson soon tired of the wave of - especially female - attention that was showered upon him in the wake of its publication and took refuge in Ilford in Essex, where he and some fellow Ranters, including Major William Rainsborough (died 1673), brother of the Leveller leader Colonel Thomas Rainsborough and future brother-in-law of John Winthrop, gathered at the house of one "Mr. Walis." John Saltmarsh (c.1612-1647) had stayed at this house shortly before his death, and Nigel Smith suggests that Walis's wife may have been the Mrs. Wallis who was arrested with Andrew Wyke, Joseph Salmon and Abiezer Coppe in Coventry in 1650. If so, the Walis household formed an important link between Ranter circles.<sup>222</sup>)

Upon his return to the capital, Clarkson teamed up with a fellow Ranter, Mrs. Star, who was "deeply in love" with him. The couple "went up and down the countries as man and wife, spending our time in feasting and drinking, so that Tavernes I called the house of God; and the Drawers, Messengers; and Sack, Divinity."<sup>223</sup>) In accordance with such doctrine, it was at an inn, The Four Swans within Bishopsgate in London, that a city trooper called Jones eventually had Clarkson arrested, following a parliamentary warrant which offered a reward of £100 to anyone who managed to apprehend him. The tumult which arose on the occasion testifies to Clarkson's widespread popularity. Clarkson was taken to Whitehall and interrogated by the "Committee for suppressing licentious and impious practices, under pretence of Religion, Liberty, &c.", chaired by a Mr. Weaver. Like at Bury, the examination revolved around questions of sexual promiscuity. He was accused of some unspecified sexual activity with a Mrs. Croe in Redriff, as well as of having entertained both married and unmarried women in his lodgings in Rood Lane and elsewhere. Whilst his informant had based his allegations on mere hearsay, Clarkson himself resorted to ironic equivocation, refusing, as he had done at Bury and in accordance with a well-known Leveller practice, to incriminate himself. He claimed that he "never lay with any but my own wife ... though in the unity of the spirit, I lye with all

the creation."<sup>224</sup>) A second strand of investigation focused on Clarkson's involvement in the Ranter movement and the details surrounding the publication of *A Single Eye*, which was believed to have been financed by Major Rainsborough. Clarkson point-blank disowned his authorship of the tract, and declined to incriminate his acquaintances.

This examination took place before 21 June, when Weaver informed the House of "several abominable Practices of a Sect called Ranters. He also reports some Heads of a Book called 'A Single Eye'."<sup>225</sup>) On 27 September 1650, the Commons ordered Clarkson's commitment to New Bridewell for a month. After this, he was "to be Banished out of this Commonwealth and the Territories thereof, and not to return upon pain of Death." All printed copies of *A Single Eye* were to be seized and to be burnt by "the common Hangman in the New-Pallace at *Westminster*, and upon the Exchange", whilst anyone owning a copy of the tract was ordered to hand it over to the next Justice of the Peace for destruction. Rainsborough was banned for life from serving as Justice of the Peace.<sup>226</sup>)

The sentence of banishment against Clarkson was never enforced, nor were all copies of *A Single Eye* destroyed, since Thomason only obtained his on October 4th. After his release from prison, Clarkson went to Stainfield, where he seems to have owned - or at least rented - a house. Soon afterwards, he resumed his customary itineracy and travelled about Cambridgeshire and Essex. Foxton ("Foxen"), Orwell, Saffron Walden and Linton are the places he mentions. Teaming up with a woman from Sudbury, he found a new source of income by dabbling in astrology and medicine. Engaging in practices long connected with cunning men, he claimed to be able to recover stolen goods, find treasures hidden in the earth and evoke spirits. Mysticism, particularly as embraced by Jacob Boehme, who believed in an outward and inward astrology, favoured an interest in astrology and science, which erupted on a grand scale during the Interregnum. Keith Thomas has compared the emergence of the lay astrologer and physician to the rise of the mechanic preacher, an impression that is corroborated by the words of a contemporary: "The late years of the tyranny admitted stocking-weavers, shoemakers, millers, masons, carpenters, bricklayers, gunsmiths, porters, butlers, etc. to write and teach astrology and

physic."<sup>227</sup>) The Ranter milieu was particularly susceptible to this. William Rainsborough consulted astrologers. John Pordage, the leading Behmenist in England, who welcomed Abiezer Coppe at his rectory in Bradfield, practised astrology and investigated into the occult. Coppe himself changed his name to Dr. Higham and became a physician in Surrey after the Restoration. Clarkson retrospectively dismissed his magic as fraudulent, manipulative and financially motivated. Ironically, however, his reputation among superstitious and simple villagefolk as "a dangerous man" and his simultaneous successes as a physician, particularly the apparently life-saving cure he administered to a girl near Langham on the Essex/Suffolk border, combined to convince him of his powers. In the end, it was his own curiosity which provoked a spiritual crisis: When several attempts to raise the devil "that so I might see what he was" failed, Clarkson came to believe "that all was a lie, and that there was no devil at all, not indeed no God but onely nature."<sup>228</sup>) Even so, he accepted successive calls from congregations at Terrington St. John and Snettisham in Norfolk, where his benefice was worth more than £100 a year.<sup>229</sup>)

In late 1650, the Ranters were also known as "Coppanits" or "Claxtonians", with Coppe and Clarkson being their recognized ringleaders in the popular imagination.<sup>230</sup>) This impression is borne out implicitly by Clarkson's own retrospective account of his Ranter period. Coppe is the only leading Ranter Clarkson mentions - repeatedly - in the *Lost Sheep Found*, although he certainly knew Joseph Salmon.<sup>231</sup>) Despite his careful distancing of himself from Coppe's proclivity for swearing, Clarkson's dismissive reply to his interrogators that he had met him only two or three times<sup>232</sup>) cannot necessarily be taken at face value. In an undated letter to William Rawlinson, Clarkson couches his affection for the members of *My One Flesh* in terms of a deeply mystical union, clearly expressing a strong sense of coherence and integration, and explicitly and warmly admitting Coppe's leading role: "gather them uppe in one Bond of Love & lay them together with mee in Copp's bosome where is our true & perfect Center."<sup>233</sup>)

### 1. 7 "MY JOURNEY'S END": THE REEVONIAN

In February 1658, Clarkson was in London. Through two old acquaintances, a Mrs. Chetwood and "the wife of *Middleton*" - probably the Mary Middleton whom he had flirted with in 1650<sup>234</sup>), he met the cousins John Reeve (1608-1658) and Lodowick Muggleton (1609-1698), whose career in some respects bore a striking resemblance to Clarkson's.<sup>235</sup>) Like Clarkson, they had both been apprenticed to a tailor. In the late 1640s, they and John's brother William, also a tailor by trade, had moved in Ranter circles, although their contact seems to have been less with *My One Flesh* than with the messianic figures on the sectarian fringe like the goldsmith Thomas "Thearaujohn" Tany and John Robins, who believed himself to be God and his pregnant wife the Virgin Mary. Reeve and Muggleton fell under the spell of Robins, whose revelations they later described in detail. In February 1652, however, God spoke to Reeve himself, revealing him and Muggleton to be the two last Witnesses of the Spirit of Revelation 11.3. Reeve and Muggleton created their own idiosyncratic version of the everlasting gospel or the Three Commissions, according to which the third age or commission had been ushered in by God's announcement to Reeve. He and Muggleton were the only authorized and true "spiritual teachers of the everlasting gospel."<sup>236</sup>) This millenarianism was combined with a strict emphasis on predestination. With Reeve and Muggleton originated the doctrine of the Two Seeds - the Seed of Faith or Adam and the Seed of Reason or Cain. The former was to be saved whilst the latter, through direct descent from Eve and the devil himself, was damned. Reeve and Muggleton claimed for themselves the ability to recognize which seed an individual belonged to, and from this inferred their power to pronounce sentences of damnation and election.

Reeve's teachings had a deep effect on Clarkson, who was plunged into a spiritual crisis which eventually persuaded him to renounce his rich Norfolk benefice.<sup>237</sup>) After Reeve's death in July 1658, Clarkson challenged Muggleton for the leadership of the sect. The publication of *The Lost Sheep Found* in 1660 sparked off a bitter conflict between the

two men, as Clarkson had not even mentioned Muggleton's name in the tract. The situation was further exacerbated by the deep hostility between Muggleton and Frances Clarkson, "our beloved Frances"<sup>238</sup>), whom Muggleton suspected to be at the root of the conflict. On December 25th, 1660, he accused Clarkson of having made "that venomous serpent your wife ... your council in all spiritual matters"<sup>239</sup>), and damned her. Eventually, Clarkson succumbed to Muggleton. Forgiveness, however, came at a high price, as Muggleton's condition was that Clarkson never set pen to paper again.

In the aftermath of the Great Fire of London in 1666, Clarkson became involved in financial speculations, procuring money for "persons of quality" in order to help them rebuild their houses. Whatever his motivation for this, his creditors disappeared, leaving behind a debt of £100. As a consequence, Clarkson was imprisoned at Ludgate Gaol, where he died after a year, in 1667. On his deathbed, he seems to have captivated those surrounding him once more, giving according to Muggleton "a very good Testimony of his Faith in the true God, and in this Commission of the Spirit, and of that full assurance of eternal Happiness he should enjoy, to eternity after his Death. Insomuch that all the Prisoners marvelled, and were sorry they had opposed him so when he was alive."<sup>240</sup>)

Chapter Two:

THE CAPTAIN OF THE RANT  
AND  
THE LEARNED DR. CRISP-  
'A SINGLE EYE' AND TOBIAS CRISP'S SERMONS

2.1 TOBIAS CRISP (1600-1643)

Tobias Crisp (1600-1643) was born in 1600 in Bread Street in London.<sup>1)</sup> His father Ellis Crisp was not only a prominent merchant, but also served as high sheriff and alderman of the city. Tobias, the third of four children, received his education at Eton College and Christ's College, Cambridge, before graduating M.A. from Balliol College, Oxford, in 1626, one year after his father's death. He married Mary, the daughter of the London merchant and politician Rowland Wilson. After a short and contested spell as incumbent of Newington Butts in 1627, Crisp became rector of Brinkworth in Wiltshire, a post he technically held until his death. He gained considerable fame, both for his preaching and his almost boundless hospitality. Threatened by royalist soldiers at Brinkworth, he moved to London in August 1642, where he preached twice on Sundays and kept open house. His insistence on free grace attracted the suspicions of his more orthodox colleagues, fifty-two of whom formally accused him of Antinomianism and confronted him in a public debate of which, unfortunately, no documentation seems to survive.<sup>2)</sup> Crisp died of small pox on February 27th, 1642/3, and was laid to rest in the family vault in St. Mildred's Church in Bread Street. Let us now turn to his influence on Clarkson, which he was unaware of.

## 2.2 SIN

One of Clarkson's most notorious notions was that "sin hath its conception only in the imagination."<sup>3)</sup> He based this on the assumption that all acts were ultimately derived from God and therefore willed by God. As God was good, the "Father of lights" (James 1.17), - a scriptural term also used by Crisp<sup>4)</sup> - and would only create what was equally good, this precluded anything that could in God's eyes be called sinful: "All that is light, is nothing but God ... all Powers are of God, so all Acts, of what nature soever are produced by this Power, yea this Power of God: so that all those acts arising from the Power, are as Pure as the Power, and the Power as Pure as God. So that hence it comes, there is no act whatsoever, that is impure in God, sinful with or before God."<sup>5)</sup> Basing his ideas upon Romans 14.14, *I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean of it self, but to him that esteemth any thing to be unclean, to him it is unclean* and Titus 1.15, *To the pure all things are pure, but to the defiled all things are defiled*, Clarkson introduces the criterion of human evaluation in order to expose contemporary notions of "sin". He distinguishes between an act in itself, to which he ascribes a morally neutral quality, and the act as it is perceived by people influenced by a set of certain cultural moral and religious values allegedly grounded in the Bible, at which point an artificial "sinfulness" creeps in that has no counterpart at the level of God's own idea of mankind.<sup>6)</sup> Hence, "the very tittle sin, ... is only a name without substance" and "hath no being in God, nor in the Creature, but only by imagination."<sup>7)</sup> This triggers off a plea for practical antinomianism: "Consider what act soever, yea though it be the act of Swearing, Drunkenesse [sic], Adultery and Theft; yet these acts simply, yea nakedly by, as acts nothing distinct from the act of Prayer and Prayses. Why doest thou wonder?" Clarkson asks, "why art thou angry? they are all one in themselves; no more holynesse, no more puritie in one then the other. ... So that whatsoever I act, though it be that act you call swearing, adultery, and theft, yet to me there is no such title, but a pure act, for there is nothing that is unclean to me, no more than it is unclean to it self."<sup>8)</sup>

Thus speaks Clarkson in the heyday of the short-lived Ranter movement. Direct parallels to his startling conceptions can, however, be found in the sermons Crisp had delivered in and about London some eight years previously. Elaborating upon Romans 8.2-4, Crisp held the archetypal antinomian position that Christ's atonement and election by the Divine freed people from the moral law: the law of the spirit or grace liberated from the law of form and death.<sup>9)</sup> Like Clarkson's "name without a substance", sin was "but a made thing", "scare-crows and bugbears" set up by Satan to "affright" men.<sup>10)</sup> Likewise, sin "is no creature of God."<sup>11)</sup> In Clarkson's eyes, the "sinfulness" of an act depended on the individual's approach to it. Somebody embracing "traditional" notions of sin would always be haunted by his or her own conscience after having committed a "sinful" act, whereas the elect were characterized by the purity and insouciance of their consciences. In inventing sin, man was in fact giving shape to it.<sup>12)</sup>

The origins of Clarkson's ideas are deeply rooted in the Protestant tradition, and can in fact be traced back to Luther himself. He believed that man must act according to faith. An act made in faith could never be sinful.<sup>13)</sup> This leads to an interesting and astounding observation: "Whatsoever thou shalt observe of liberty and of love is godly; but if thou observe anything of necessity, it is ungodly ... if an adultery could be committed in the faith, it would no longer be a sin."<sup>14)</sup> Hill carefully proposes that Luther "no doubt intended this as a *reductio ad absurdum* for normal persons."<sup>15)</sup> Whether this is true or not, Clarkson certainly took it literally, and the following words are indeed strongly redolent of Luther: "Love is God and God is Love, so all pure, all, light, no spot in thee ... what act so ever is done by thee, in light and love, is light, and lovely; though it be that act called Adultery, in darkness, it is so; but in light, honesty, in that light loveth itself, so cannot defile it selfe ... whosoever doth attempt to act from flesh, in flesh, to flesh, hath, is and will commit Adultery ... till you can lie with all women as one woman, and not judge it sin, you could do nothing but sin ... I understood no man could attain perfection but in this way."<sup>16)</sup> Luther's tenet can be found in a number of other 17th-century radicals, although their conclusions did not take the drastic and candid form of Clarkson's. Thus, Robert Towne, who held posts as a curate in Yorkshire and Clarkson's Lancashire, evoked

this Lutheran heritage when he declared that "To faith there is no sin, nor any unclean heart."<sup>17)</sup> Bauthumley, also drawing on Luther, approached this question from a different angle, and asserted the absolute priority of the spirit and faith over the Bible to the extent that an act performed in accordance with scriptural injunctions, but at variance with faith, degenerated into a sin: "if I do a thing lawfull from the Letter, yet if I be perswaded in my own spirit I should not do it, I sinne."<sup>18)</sup>

Crisp shares Clarkson's emphasis on the individual conscience with regard to the elect. He draws a similar distinction between an act in itself and the compunction it may generate, but with obverse conclusions: for Crisp, sin seems to retain an objective identity, so that the act itself remains "dreadful", but the elect need not trouble themselves with their consciences for through Christ's atonement, "Sin itself is dead."<sup>19)</sup> One of Crisp's main objectives is to liberate his presupposedly elect audience from the notion of sin, as he perceives how those sins that they "conceive [rather than commit] stand as a separation between God and man."<sup>20)</sup> Conceptions of sin based on the harsh Mosaic Law constitute the real - and only - "yoke of bondage", as the elect can never attain a perfect peace of mind until they abandon the fantasy that God sees and remembers sin.<sup>21)</sup>

Clarkson draws a picture of a man/woman persecuted by his/her own conscience: "thy imagination will pursue thee, arraign thee, and condemne thee ... thou condemnest thy self, though art tormented in that condemnation."<sup>22)</sup> Interestingly, Crisp uses a similar image in one of his sermons to highlight the difference between salvation and damnation. The reprobate, he argues, bears his own sin like a poacher who, for his bloody clothes, is easily found out by bloodhounds, whereas the elect escapes detection by casting off the incriminating garments.<sup>23)</sup> Although this passage explicitly refers to the atonement, it can also be seen in terms of conscience, for what else are the garments than Clarkson's self-arraigning conscience? It is interesting at this point that Crisp not only repeatedly quotes Daniel 9.24 on the end of sin and transgression, which was so popular with the Ranters,<sup>24)</sup> but also resorts to a less well-known passage from Hebrews 10.22, where purgation effects the conscience: "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience ..."<sup>25)</sup>

### 2.3 PRACTICAL ANTINOMIANISM

For all his emphasis on free grace and the elects' freedom from the moral law, Crisp was careful to disown indignantly his opponents' allegations that his views necessarily led to practical antinomianism. This conviction is intimately entangled with his conception of the relationship between justification and sanctification. According to Crisp, "legal blamelessness"<sup>26)</sup> must not be taken as a sign of election. Nevertheless, though election itself is affected in the womb<sup>27)</sup>, irreversible and bears no relation to works, conversion inevitably entails sanctification. For this reason, a vile person would mend his/her manners and become "changed in conversation"<sup>28)</sup>, though this change need not be immediate.<sup>29)</sup> Far from encouraging believers to indulge in licentious practices, free grace actually restrains them. Crisp here introduces a famous image of the believer as a cow in a pleasant meadow:

"But hee will never break loose, he will never run away, though the gate stand open on every side. The grasse and pasture is so sweet, that Christ hath put a believer into: that though there be no bounds to keep in such a soule, yet it will never go out of this fat pasture to feed in a barren common: Therefore, in answer of the objections who naturally think there is a way opened to such licentiousnesse, by taking away all wrath from a believer, and that therefore he will break forth into all manner of excesse, I tell you the power of Christ restraines him."<sup>30)</sup>

In this context, Crisp places great emphasis on Romans 6.2, according to which the elect are by definition dead to sin. This death to sin precludes the practice of sin: *How shall we that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*<sup>31)</sup> On these grounds, it becomes clear that those who adduce Christ's atonement as an excuse for practical antinomianism are not the true elect, but "corrupt natures"<sup>32)</sup>: "Is there so much Grace, that where sin hath abounded, Grace aboundeth much more? then it seems, that the more sin man doth commit the more will the glory of the Grace of God appear in the pardoning of these sins, and so shall I glorifie God best, when I commit sin most, will some say. So that the preaching of abundance of grace when sin hath abounded, seems to let the men loose to the commission of sin as much as possibly. The Apostle answers this with *God forbid.*"<sup>33)</sup>

Advocacy of *practical* antinomianism was indeed rare in the 17th century. "For my owne part", preached Crisp, "whatever others may think, I abhorre nothing in the world so much as this, namely a licentious undertaking to continue in any sin because that such fulness of grace hath abounded."<sup>34)</sup> A direct parallel to the scriptural basis of Crisp's repudiation of practical antinomianism can be found in Bauthumley. He echoes Crisp almost verbatim when he observes that "And whereas some may say, then men may live as they list, because God is the same, and all tends to his glory; if we sin, or if we do well. I answer them in the words of the Apostle: Men should not sin because grace abounds; but yet if they do sin, that shall turn to the prayse of God, as well as when they do wel."<sup>35)</sup> The biblical reference here is to Romans 6.1,2, *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?*, which Crisp also adduces.<sup>36)</sup> Bauthumley takes the parallel even further: "These things I write not to countenance any unseemly act or evill in any man; And I know, God being purity it self, cannot behold uncleannesse" - an allusion to Habbakuk 1.13, *Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity* - "and his Spirit in me doth condemn it wherever I see it, and I cannot but reprove it where ever it is found; Neither can I so close in society or fellowship with those that are in darkness, or walk unbeseeingly not becoming the Gospel; and yet I know, that if the grace of God appeared in them, it would as well teach them, to deny ungodlinesse and worldly lusts: as to live righteously and soberly in the World."<sup>37)</sup>

Crisp pronounces a scathing judgement on those who, in a manner later rendered infamous by the Ranters, "dare presume to make it their practice to be drunke: and to breake the Sabbath, and to curse, and to swear, and to live in uncleannesse, and all manner of vilenesse and abomination, because all their sins are laid upon Christ, that say, they are Beleevers, and they shall die well enough ... I must account them the greatest monsters upon the face of the earth, the greatest enemies of the Church that ever were ... the greatest enemies to the free grace of God ... their faith is no better than the faith of devils."<sup>38)</sup> This warning could be directly addressed to Coppe, whom the authorities in Coventry found "a great Swearer and Curser, and [who] held that God could not damn him, yet persuaded

many to be of his Religion"<sup>39)</sup> - or to Salmon and Wyke, who believed "That it was God swearing in them, and that it was their liberty to keep company with Women for their Lust."<sup>40)</sup> As has been mentioned, Clarkson would later gain some notoriety for putting his newly-found conviction "till acted that so called Sin, thou art not delivered from the power of sin"<sup>41)</sup> into practice with women who, in his own words, "did invite me to make trial what I had expressed"<sup>42)</sup>, and in whose company he disappeared into various bedchambers.

In marked contrast to Clarkson, who may have been responsible for the introduction to Ranter circles of Titus 1.15, *To the pure all things are pure*<sup>43)</sup> which could be interpreted as a powerful scriptural justification of practical antinomianism, Crisp focused on Titus 2.11,12 - also alluded to by Bauthumley - which serves totally obverse ends: *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly, in this present world.*<sup>44)</sup>

It need not be doubted that Crisp observed this injunction. His London sermons were obviously delivered under pressure from repeated hostile attacks on his teaching, culminating in the formal meeting with fifty-two divines in November 1642. It would be interesting to find out to what degree his quasi-expulsion from Brinkworth was owing to the royalist soldiers' objections to free grace, just as Clarkson would later be chased away from his transitory "Heaven upon earth" at Pulham Market.

It seems that, in the course of Crisp's insistence on the transformative power of sanctification, sin in the elect dwindles away into a merely theoretical component, its practical reality being eventually confined to the reprobate, about whom Crisp is largely silent, addressing his sermons to a presupposedly elect audience. According to Hill, "Crisp was so concerned with the freedom of the elect that he virtually ignored the existence of the unregenerate."<sup>45)</sup> Indeed, his few references to the latter occur in respect of their vain attempts to exploit God's promise of mercy for their own licentious ends. At one point, he draws a brutal line separating the reprobate from God's "own people", of which

his audience implicitly forms part: "God is never spoken in way of relation to propriety unto [the wicked], but only as he is spoken of in reference to his own people. You shall not find in all the Scripture, God said to be the God of any person that is said to be a wicked man."<sup>46)</sup> These remarks reveal Crisp's adherence to a harsh Calvinist notion of predestination, which in his sermons is glossed over by his emphasis on God's covenant with, and mercy to, the elect. His almost total silence on the fate of the reprobate apparently led to his being charged with espousing the doctrine of universal salvation.<sup>47)</sup> It is true that Crisp's elaborations upon John 6.37, *And him that commeth unto mee, I will in no wise cast out*<sup>48)</sup> points in this direction: "whatever thou art in this Congregation: suppose a drunkard, a whoremaster, suppose a swearer, a blasphemer, and a persecuter, a mad-man in iniquity, couldest thou but come to Jesus Christ, I say, come, only come it is no matter though there bee no alteration in the world in thee, in that instant, though thou be thus vile, as can be imagined, come to Christ, he is untrue, if hee put thee out. And in him that commeth unto mee, I will in no wise cast out."<sup>49)</sup> The implication, however, is that only those who have previously received saving grace are truly capable of coming. Crisp indeed expressly rejects universal salvation in one of his sermons, where he offers an exclusive interpretation of I John 2.1,2, *My little children, these things I write unto you, that you sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the father, Jesus Christ, the righteous, and he is the propitiation for our sins, and not for our sins only, but for the sins of the whole world.* "If one died for all", he holds, "and not for our sinnes onely, but for the sinnes of the whole world", then this does not refer to mankind in general, but to nations: "in every corner of the world there is a portion of Christ."<sup>50)</sup> The irony here lies in the fact that Crisp preached a cycle of no less than six sermons on I John 2.1,2, all published in the 1648 volume, in which he elaborates upon the unconditionality of God's covenant of grace, stressing *for the sins of the whole world* in such detail that his one qualifying statement, "it is not everyone that hath Christ for an advocate, but those that are believers"<sup>51)</sup> - i.e. elect, as Crisp explicitly includes the unconverted elect person<sup>52)</sup> - is easily missed.

There are pitfalls in Crisp's theology, which bring his sermons dangerously close to later Ranterism. These arise from his need to illustrate practically, and throw into sharp relief, his central doctrine of free grace. One of Crisp's favourite and often-repeated scriptural texts is Matthew 21.31, in which Christ speaks to the Pharisees: *Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.*<sup>53)</sup> The attempt to expose the inefficacy of works and the prevenient and cleansing nature of Christ's gift results in an exaltation of society's outcasts. Thus, he elaborates repeatedly and at length upon Ezekiel 16: *Thy father was an Amorite, and thy mother an Hittite ... None eye pitied thee, to do any of these unto you, to have compassion upon thee; but thou wast cast out in the open field, to the lothing of thy person, in the day that thou wast born. And when I passed by thee, and saw thee polluted in thine own blood, I said unto thee, when thou wast in thy blood, Live: yea I said unto thee when thou wast in thy blood, Live. ... Now when I passed by thee, and looked upon thee, behold, thy time was the time of love; and I spread my skirt over thee, and covered thy nakedness: yea, I sware unto thee, and entered into a covenant with thee, saith the Lord GOD, and thou becamest mine (Ezekiel 16.3,5,6,8).*<sup>54)</sup> "The very time of the vilest of our spiritual filthinesse, is the time of Christ's love, when he enters into covenant"<sup>55)</sup>, concludes Crisp. The same approach becomes clear in a similar, more Ranter-like passage that has to be quoted at length:

"Hast thou been an idolater? hast thou been a blasphemmer? Hast thou been a despiser of God's word, a trampler upon him? Hast thou been a prophaner of his Name and Ordinances? Hast thou been a dispiser [sic] of government? Hast thou been a dispiser of thy parents? Hast thou been a murtherer, an adulterer, a thiefe, a liar, a drunkard? reckon what thou canst against thy selfe: if thou hast part in the Lord, Jesus Christ, al [sic] these transgressions become actually the transgressions of Christ, and so cease to be thine ... so that now thou art not an idolator, thou art not a persecutor, thou art not a thief, thou art not a murtherer, thou art not an adulterer, thou art not a sinfull person, reckon what sin soever you commit, you are all that Christ was, and Christ is all that you were: If Corinthians 5.21: *Hee was made sinne for us that knew no sinne, that we might be made the righteousnesse of God in him.*"<sup>56)</sup>

In short, Crisp's Christ offers a "free way for a drunkard, for a whoremaster, for a harlot, an enemy to Christ."<sup>57)</sup> In a sermon on John 6.37, *All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out*, Crisp states that God can single out "the vilest person in the world, the notablest drunkard that ever

breathed, the greatest whoremaster, and the lewdest person that can be imagined" for salvation.<sup>58)</sup> In an allusion to Habbakuk 1.13, Crisp's God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.<sup>59)</sup> Thomas Bedford aptly pointed out that Antinomianism is a matter of nuances. Some Antinomian expressions were "right, if rightly understood."<sup>60)</sup> At the same time, it is easy to see how effortlessly Crisp's passages bearing witness to the freedom of the elect from the moral law, could be used, by disciples less respectable than the learned divine, to justify not only theoretical, but also practical antinomianism. Clarkson proved an attentive listener and reader, for we find Habbakuk 1.13 in his *A Single Eye* as well as in another tract connected with the Ranter milieu, the anonymous *A Justification of the Mad Crew* (1650), in which he may have had a hand.<sup>61)</sup>

In his endeavour to underline the absolute unconditionality of the covenant of Grace, Crisp eventually comes to emphasize the salvation of the ungodly, centered around a set of biblical passages like Matthew 9.13, *I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance*<sup>62)</sup>, Luke 19.10, *For the son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost*<sup>63)</sup> and John 12.47, *I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.*<sup>64)</sup> Revealingly, John 12.47 is also used by Clarkson in *A Single Eye* in his attempt to deny sin, while Matthew 9.13 makes its appearance *A Justification of the Mad Crew.*<sup>65)</sup>

Crisp's elaborations on free grace and the atonement become dangerously lopsided, as if he wished to turn preparationist criteria of salvation upside down. "Righteousnesse", he states, "is that which puts a man away from Christ ... upon the doing of duty and service, to expect acceptance with Christ, or participation in Christ, this kind of righteousnes [sic] is the only separation between Christ and a people: and whereas no sinfulness in the world can debar a people, their Righteousnesse may debar them."<sup>66)</sup> It degenerates into the often-quoted "menstruous cloth" and "filthy rags" mentioned in Isaiah 30.22 and 64.6, respectively.<sup>67)</sup>

As the Ranters would later do through their cultivation of the holy fool topic and prophetic behaviour,<sup>68)</sup> Crisp stresses the dissociation of God from received, conventional human reason.<sup>69)</sup> With regard to salvation, He is "pleased to express himself in a direct contrary way to the opinion of men."<sup>70)</sup> Equally, Crisp juxtaposes the "tenor of

the Gospel" and the "tenor of the Law."<sup>71</sup>) In a sermon on Philippians 3.8,9, *I count all things but losse, and for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the losse of all things, and count them but dung, that I may win Christ. And be found in him, not having my own righteousness which is of the Law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith,* Crisp proffers to his audience the view that "losse" and "dung" refer "even to all civility, morality, yea, and the exactest obedience to any or all the precepts of the Law."<sup>72</sup>)

We can sense here the potential for moral and social subversion, foreshadowed already in Crisp's predilection for and interpretation of such texts as Ezekiel 16, which filled the opponents of Antinomianism with great apprehension. Crisp's interpretation of Jacob's bestowal of his blessing on his younger grandson Ephraim instead of the elder brother Manasses, to whom, along the lines of primogeniture, it would have been due (Genesis 48), points in the same direction: "Not so, father, say men, this is a wicked man, a notorious sinner, this is an honest man, a just, righteous, godly man, this is the elder, lay thy right hand of grace upon him. I know very well (saith God) what they are, it is my pleasure the youngest shall carry my blessing, and the eldest shall go without it."<sup>73</sup>) This indeed echoes the antinomian carpenter John Rogers in the sensational tract *The Ranters Monster* (Thomason date 30 March 1652). When his pious wife tried to dissuade him from working on a Sabbath, he allegedly chided her: "That if he were ordained to be saved, he should be saved, how wickedly soever he led his life; and if he was ordained to be damned, he should be damned, though he lived ever so godly a life."<sup>74</sup>) Unreliable and lurid as most of the yellow-press tracts on Ranterism which proliferated in the early 1650s may be with regard to facts and anecdotes, the sentiment here adduced is a genuinely Antinomian one, embedded in a propagandist story (Rogers subsequently commits suicide) - although Rogers significantly does not possess the assurance of election typical of the Ranters and Crisp's elect.

Crisp develops this tenet further in his conviction that "the greatest sorts of sinners usually are the persons that partake of the greatest mercies"<sup>75</sup>) - an idea that stands in a rather suggestive contrast to his carefully balanced interpretation of Romans 6. This,

however, is not the end of the line of thought. We encounter the same ambiguity in his definition of the term "transgression" and interpretation of Romans 4.15. In Crisp's eyes, any transgression or breach of the law is ultimately only against God.<sup>76)</sup> Drawing upon Romans 4.15, *For where there is no law, there is no transgression*, he ponders that the breach of the Ten Commandments, e.g. *thou shalt not commit adultery*, "were not properly a transgression, if it were not a transgression of the law of God made it."<sup>77)</sup> The sting here is contextual. I have noted above Crisp's preference for Daniel 9.24, which Antinomians cited to show how election liberated the saints from the law. Significantly, Crisp quoted the text in the very same sermon.<sup>78)</sup> He himself shared, as we have seen, the notion that the elect are not under the law, but under grace. Hence, they cannot transgress against God. Sin, in the words of Jacob Bauthumley, becomes "a nullity" to them.<sup>79)</sup> Sermons like this must have paved the way for Clarkson's later espousal of the idea that "none can be free from sin, till in purity it be acted as no sin"<sup>80)</sup> - and it may be of significance that Crisp's sermons show a certain preoccupation with adultery, adduced as an example in the abovementioned and other instances. It would figure prominently in both Clarkson's writings and his life. In his vindication of the marginalized, Crisp takes even one more dangerous step forward. Totally dismissing the redemption of those conventionally accounted righteous, he propounds that "salvation will be given to every ungodly man under heaven to whom God will give to believe and receive this truth."<sup>81)</sup>

Crisp is faced with a conflict. First of all, he endeavours to elucidate his doctrine of free grace and the unilateral testament Christ entered into with believers. At the same time, he tries to silence his opponents' vociferous allegations that his doctrine would inevitably result in licentious practices on the part of his audience. As a result, it seems that Crisp is losing control of his own line of argument. In his eagerness to demonstrate the absolute unconditionality of the new covenant of grace, he concentrates on the salvation of the unrighteous and marginalized. Thus, he unwittingly allows a new sort of conditionality to creep in, which in turn represents a total - or mere, depending on the individual's point of view - inversion of preparationist standards inasmuch as it favours the ungodly to the at times total exclusion of the morally righteous. Hence, while it can be deduced from the

above mentioned passages in Crisp's sermons that his doctrine of free grace does not inevitably *lead to* licentiousness, it seems simultaneously to favour *antecedent* iniquity.

Crisp point-blank denied a charge "more strange then all", namely the doctrine "that an elect person should live and die a whoremonger, and an adulterer; and in all kinde of prophanesne."<sup>82</sup>) His indignation is justified, for he certainly did not teach that a saved individual should live *and die* in sin, although his position on the "unconverted elect person"<sup>83</sup>), who in life "is as sure from danger or finall miscarriage as the estate of a Saint in glory"<sup>84</sup>) is ambiguous since he does not pay attention to the possibility, if it exists, of the latter dying in active unbelief before he or she could come to Christ. It is open to speculation to what extent Crisp's strident repudiation of allegedly "licentious" tendencies in his teachings, rather than these teachings or subsequent allegations themselves, may have drawn the attention of individual congregants or readers to precisely this potential for practical antinomianism where, unmentioned, it might not have been recognized. As regards Clarkson, this unsought-for boomerang effect would work very well.

While Crisp himself found it possible to reconcile his doctrinal antinomianism and a respectable family life,<sup>85</sup>) his teachings on the relationship between justification and sanctification often seem contradictory, and it is easy to see how his expressions and quotations from scripture, especially if separated from their immediate context, could be picked up loosely by his audience and appropriated to quite different ends. This is most true of what became, subsequently, Crisp's most famous and notorious phrase: "To be called a libertine is the most glorious title under heaven."<sup>86</sup>) Out of context, this can be seen as the culmination of Crisp's near-advocacy or crypto-advocacy of practical antinomianism. In fact, the statement occurs in a sermon entitled "No licentious doctrine" and forms part of a passage in which Crisp distinguishes the elects' sanctified liberty in Christ from the corrupt and licentious pseudo-liberty of those trying to abuse and pervert the promise of free grace in a Ranterish way:

"To be called a libertine is the most glorious title under heaven. Take it for one that is truly free by Christ. To be made free by Christ, in proper construction, is no other but this, to be made a

libertine by Christ; I do not say, to be made a libertine in the corrupt sense of it, but to be one in the true and proper sense of it ... Christ doth not give liberty unto licentiousness of life and conversation, but a real and true liberty ... A licentious liberty is nothing else but this, namely, when men turn the grace of God into wantonness, and abusing the Gospel of Christ, continue in sin, that grace might abound ... there is not one man made free by Christ, that makes it his rule, namely, to be bold to commit sin with greediness, because of the redemption that is in the blood of Christ: but that Christ who hath redeemed from sin and wrath, hath also redeemed from a vain conversation, and there shall not be a making use of the Grace of God, as emboldening and encouraging to break out into licentiousness. All that have this freedom purchased by Christ for them, have also the power of God in them, which keeps them that they break not out licentiously, the seed of God abides in them, that they cannot sin."<sup>87)</sup>

It is the phrase, not the context, that has come down to us. Christopher Hill, for example, cites it in *The World Turned Upside Down* and in his article on Crisp.<sup>88)</sup> What would men like Clarkson make of it? Once it is stripped of its unwelcome context, it is not, after all, such a long and tortuous way from Crisp's sophisticated categories and nuances to Clarkson's joy in the act of overcoming sin: "Till I acted that, so called sin, I could not predominate over sin ... without act, no life, without life, no perfection; and without perfection, no eternal peace and freedom indeed."<sup>89)</sup> According to this concept, "libertine" must needs become once more "the most glorious title under heaven."

## 2.4 THE ELECT

The free-grace movement and Antinomianism of the 17th century can be seen as a reaction not only against the harsh Mosaic law of the Old Testament. In a more immediate context, both represented a rebellion against Arminianism and the preparationist strand within Puritanism, which Clarkson had encountered on his arrival in London. Crisp explicitly understands his theology of free grace as a counter-force against Laudian tendencies to over-emphasize a righteousness of works. It is aimed at the reinforcement of an appropriate balance between works and faith. Righteousness ought to be consigned to its due place inferior to Christ.<sup>90)</sup> In a sermon only printed in 1690, Crisp launched a direct attack on the advocates of preparationist theology, which has to be quoted at length:

"It is a common Doctrine among the rigid Troublers of the *Israel of God*, that men must have many legal preparations, and they must sensibly find them wrought in themselves, before they may dare to apply Christ by Faith by Justification, otherwise their faith is meer presumption. As for instance: Suppose a sinner hath lived in all manner of licentiousness (as Mary Magdalen) before he

may believe that Christ hath Justified him, he must forsake and find, by reflexion on himself, that he hath forsaken all his former evil Ways, and must be stricken with inward terrour, and feel the *pangs of the new Birth*, as they call it, and be I know not how much, or how long (for their expressions intimate a strange depth,) under the Bondage of a kind of hellish Conscience, tormenting and racking them; nay more, they must be changed, too, and find a delight in the Law of the Lord, a ready cheerfulness in Obedience thereunto; and that not by a fit; but constantly, till they find all this ... Their time of believing in Christ is not come, and that before this their Faith is but a Dream, and Skinning over the Sore, all which occasions so much fear, as keeps many poor Souls in bondage all their lives long, suspecting still, that the Humiliation is not deep enough. Is not this to put the Cart before the Horse, or rather to send the Cart a going, and the Horse must come after? to have men sanctified before they can be justified. If Men must be thus qualified, before they believe to Justification, How can Christ be said *To justify the Ungodly*? By this Rule he rather justifies the Godly. The time of Man's being in his Blood, is not the time of God's Love, when he enters into Covenant with him (by this Rule) but rather the time of his Comeliness, when he is adorned; which is carnal Doctrine, and a measuring God's way of Love by Man's ...?"<sup>91)</sup>

Free grace and Antinomianism liberated believers from this anxiety. Crisp warned his audience about the dangers of the belief that faith had to be antecedent to the union with Christ.<sup>92)</sup> He expressly delivered his message to ease the consciences of his audience of "this most unsupportable burthen of their own sinnes",<sup>93)</sup> which, let us remember, had induced the young Clarkson to pray "with rough hard Sindes under my bare knees, that so God might hear me; and when I could not end my prayers with tears running down my cheeks, I was afraid some sin shut the attention of God from me."<sup>94)</sup> For Cotton, Sibbes and Crisp, salvation is as a free gift.<sup>95)</sup> They turn the covenant of grace into a testament of love and the elect man or woman into its "meerly passive"<sup>96)</sup> recipients, thus dismissing any notion of reciprocity or contractuality: "A testament bequeatheth good things merely of love. It giveth gifts freely. A covenant requireth something to be done. In a testament, there is nothing, but receiving the legacies given. God's covenant now is such a testament, sealed with the death of Christ, made out of love merely for our good; for what can God receive of us?"<sup>97)</sup> Crisp echoes this definition: "I say the New Covenant is without any Condition whatsoever on mans part. Man is tied to no condition, that he must performe, that if he doe not performe the Covenant is made void by him."<sup>98)</sup> Likewise, "Works must not come in under any consideration at all, in the matter of Justification" - not even as "Preparatives."<sup>99)</sup>

In Crisp's eyes, the elect who have arrived at a full understanding of the true meaning of the atonement are characterised by a "full assurance of faith" and their own redemption.<sup>100)</sup> This view, derived from Colossians 2.1 and Hebrews 10.22,<sup>101)</sup> stands

in marked contrast to the preparationist position of divines like Perkins, according to which full assurance constituted a sign of damnation, whereas the true elect would never attain perfect confidence in the state of their souls. In contradistinction to preparationist soul-searching, Crisp comes to emphasize aspects of joy in the lives of the elect. According to the promises of Isaiah 35.10, *the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads, they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flie away.*<sup>102)</sup> The parallels with Ranter thought at this point are startling, and it is perhaps not entirely coincidental that Abiezer Coppe called his *Some Sweet Sips of Some Spiritual Wine* (1649) "one of the songs of Zion."<sup>103)</sup> Crisp partly anticipates Coppe and Clarkson, who envisaged the millennium as a period that would usher in "universall love"<sup>104)</sup> and a kind of promiscuous community of goods and lovers.<sup>105)</sup> Here, "in the unity of the spirit" one could "lye with all the creation" as one woman, and even the boundaries of gender merged and disappeared when "all women are but one woman, and this woman, a man, and that man, I man eternity."<sup>106)</sup> Preaching on Colossians 1.21,22, Crisp held that "when men are reconciled [to God] they lay down the bucklers, they quarrel no more, they fight no more, but walk as friends together ... in reconciliation, the very heart itself is made friends with persons reconciled" and men will abandon "all quarrells and controversies for ever."<sup>107)</sup> This echoes a passage in *A Justification of the Mad Crew*, where reconciliation takes place also between animals: "the lyon is eating straw with the Oxe, the Wolf is lying down with the Lamb, the clean hugs the unclean and the unclean the clean."<sup>108)</sup> This passage itself originates in Isaiah 11.6,7, *The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid: and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together: and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; and their young ones shall lie down together: and the lion shall eat straw like the ox,* which in turn may have inspired Mrs T. P.'s dream of a wonderful unity with all creatures in *Some Sweet Sips*.<sup>109)</sup> Surprisingly, a passage in Crisp where God decrees the atonement in order to be able to assume the rôle of a father playing with his children, "that God might kisse them, and dandle them upon his knee ... this was the way to make all people faire and lovely, without any spot or wrinkle" recurs

almost verbatim in *A Justification of the Mad Crew* "there thou kissest us and there thou dandlest us upon thy knees" - although, revealingly, in a context propounding practical antinomianism.<sup>110)</sup>

Assurance of the irreversibility of salvation and the consequent conviction that the elect who indulge "in all excesse of riot, and committing all the abominations that can be committed" do not differ in God's eyes from "a Saint triumphant in glory"<sup>111)</sup> engender in the elect a spirit of venturesomeness and temerity redolent of the *joie de vivre* displayed by some later Ranters, whom one opponent called rather enviously "the merriest of all devils": "Those that are cock-sure, in respect of God and their own soules, they adventure upon any thing: God calls them out unto, miscarry, or not miscarry, it is al [sic] one with them, for all stands right between God and them ... *The righteous are as bold as a lion.*"<sup>112)</sup>

There is much to exploit in this concept. It may have formed the starting-point for Clarkson's own later notions about the victory over sin by acting out it and the motto "without act, no life; and without life, no perfection",<sup>113)</sup> which he turned into a theological justification of promiscuity.

## 2.5 MYSTICISM

### *2.5.1 Preliminaries*

One of the questions which induced me to embark upon this project of examining Crisp's sermons with an eye to possible parallels in Clarkson's tracts focused on the origins of Clarkson's mystical imagery in *A Single Eye* and *The Lost Sheep Found*. Most of it can be traced back to Jacob Boehme's writings, yet Clarkson had, as far as we know, no knowledge of Boehme, which would have been hard to come by in the lower-class, autodidactic circles he moved in. Crisp might be a possible source, and might form a link between Clarkson and mystical writings. He owned an extensive library and patronised Henry Pinnell, another Oxford-educated, erudite inhabitant of Brinkworth who, apart from writing a famous introduction to the 1648 volume of Crisp's sermons, translated Paracelsus and Oswald Crollius into English in 1657.

Whilst Crisp's sermons do not, upon examination, seem to provide an explanation for the provenance of Clarkson's entire mysticism, some images which occur in Clarkson's tracts can be found in Crisp.

### *2.5.2 The Single Eye*

It has been assumed by Davis that the title of Clarkson's *A Single Eye* (1650) derived directly from Nicholas of Cusa's *De visione dei* which had been published in England under the title of *The Single Eye* in 1646.<sup>114</sup>) It may be of interest, though, that Clarkson already employs the scriptural image of the single eye in *Truth Released from Prison*, which Thomason dates March 1645/6. In the preface, he expresses the wish that his tract "may be perused with a single eye and impartiall spirit."<sup>115</sup>) This chimes in with his later statement "that for want of this light, of this single pure eye there appeareth Devil and God, Hell and Heaven, Sin and Holynesse, Damnation and Salvation; only, yea only from the estimation and dark apprehension of the creature."<sup>116</sup>) The single eye is a prelapsarian

eye, able to perceive things and acts neutrally and undefiled by artificial cultural and moral codes. Hence, it is associated closely with Clarkson's distinction between an act in itself and an act in the light of contemporary norms. Scripturally, the single eye is a New Testament image appearing in Matthew 6.22 and Luke 11.34: *The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!* The single-eye-trope enjoyed a certain popularity in the Ranter milieu, which was preoccupied with overcoming traditional distinctions between good and evil and hoped for the recovery of a prelapsarian unity either of mankind or, in a pantheist sense, of the whole creation. Thus, we find the single eye in *A Justification of the Mad Crew*, where conversion is experienced as a ritual of purification by burning, ending in the loss of the evil, moralistic, divisive second eye: "I did then see purity and glory in all those things formerly called impurity and prophaneness ... I had then but one eye and pure sight given to me."<sup>117</sup>) The same image, with the emphasis on postlapsarian, unregenerate sight, occurs in Coppe's *Fierly Flying Roll*: "But all you that eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evill, and have not your Evill eye Pickt out, you call Good Evill, and Evill Good: Light Darknesse, and Darknesse Light: Truth Blasphemy, and Blasphemy Truth."<sup>118</sup>) This in turn finds an echo in *Divinity and Philosophy Dissected* (1644), whose anonymous author ascribes all religious controversy and fragmentation to the fact "that we do not see things with a righteous eye", but sometimes fall victim to the "spirit or eye of darknesse."<sup>119</sup>) "Thou art that one spirit that is or may be acted in all, and thy spirit or eye is the great Abyss of eternity, and thy eye doth or may looke in or through all eyes or worlds, whether good or evill", yet "if thou be joyned or looke through the evill eye ... thou callest evil good, and good evil ... we made those eyes to us to bee the eyes of the wicked nature, through which we looked not as they were in deed (righteous and holy eyes) but as they seemed to us, in so much that we have taken the holy God to be that to us which he is not in himselfe."<sup>120</sup>) Benet of Canfield likewise embraces the notion that perfection is attained when man abandons the worldly "double looke" and regains the "single" or "unmoveable" eye, also called the "simple

sight", which enables the creature to behold the otherwise incomprehensible union of the godhead and the manhood.<sup>121)</sup> Interestingly, Benet evokes the single eye with reference not only to Matthew 6.22, but also to the doves' eyes of the fair beloved in Canticles, thus embedding it in a highly erotic context.<sup>122)</sup>

In Crisp, the single eye makes its appearance in a quotation from Matthew 6.22.<sup>123)</sup> While this seems at first very conventional, it derives some poignancy from the fact that it forms part of an objection against the interpretation of the scriptural "singleness and sincerity of heart" (Ephesians 5.6) and love of the brethren (Job 3.14) as a sign of true godliness.<sup>124)</sup> Crisp uses this opportunity to comment upon the mutually exclusive nature of contemporary sects, and introduces an interesting inversion: "Oh, there are many", he exclaims, "that goe by signes and markes, that cannot indure the brethren, they go with them under the names of Libertines and licentious persons, and not under the names of brethren."<sup>125)</sup> He subsequently modifies this statement by an insistence on the inevitability of sanctification in the elect,<sup>126)</sup> yet its implications must have been welcome to the Ranters. It echoes their conviction that the world often fails to recognize true saints, and subjects them to persecution. This is reflected in the reference in some pamphlets to Hebrews 13.2, *Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.*<sup>127)</sup> Coppe alludes to it in a passage that, like Clarkson's *Single Eye*, draws heavily on a linguistic play with inversions and antitheses:

"There are Angels (now) come down from Heaven, in the shapes and forms of men, who are full of the vengeance of the Lord ... And I have looked upon them as Devils, accounting them Devils incarnate, and have run from place to place, to hide my self from them, shunning their company; and have been utterly ashamed when I have been seen with them ... It's no new thing for thee to call Christ a Beel-zebub, and Beel-zebub Christ; to call a holy Angell a Devill, and a Devill an Angell ... Thou knowest not the strange appearances of the Lord now a daies."<sup>128)</sup>

The morally subversive topos of the saint as a seeming libertine finds its most direct scriptural justification in Matthew 11.19 and Luke 7.34, where Christ himself is called, by the Pharisees, *a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners.* Crisp refers to these passages in conjunction with Isaiah 53.12, *and he was numbered with the transgressors, and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the*

*transgressors*, to accentuate the literal nature of Christ's mediatorship.<sup>129)</sup> In *A Justification of the Mad Crew*, the accusations levelled at Christ and his disciples accrue to the justification of the holy libertine: "Let the will of those we persecute, hate, and falsely call Drunkards, Swearers, Whore-masters, be done, and nothing else but their will ... you know not what you say; but he whom ye ignorantly worship shew I to you ... These men whom ye call mad, are Christ the anointed of God; they have the fulness of the Godhead bodily, in them is hid the treasures of all wisdom and knowledge, and these shall judge the world, yea Angels."<sup>130)</sup> The passage is also, not surprisingly, a favourite of Coppe's, who refers to it in *An Additional and Preambular Hint, the Fiery Flying Roll*, and on the title page of his first recantation, *A Remonstrance of the Sincere and Zealous Protestation of Abiezer Coppe* (1651). In the latter, he quotes a slightly modified version of Luke 7.34,35 with a view to dissociating himself, indignantly but rather equivocally, from the blasphemous doctrines attributed to him, and clearly identifying with the wronged Christ: "Some said, He is a good man; Others said, Nay, but he is mad, and hath a devil. He is a wine-bibber, a glutton and a drunkard; a friend of publicans and Harlots. But wisdom is justified of her children."<sup>131)</sup>

### **2.5.3 Illumination Imagery and the Use of Canticles**

The scriptural reference to the single eye introduces the imagery of light and darkness in Crisp's sermons. Clarkson's *A Single Eye*, which constitutes a mystical exposition of Isaiah 42.16, *I will make darkness light before them, and crooked things straight*, is penetrated by this imagery and its consequent play with inversions. While Crisp does not mention this specific passage in any of his sermons published in the 1640s, he does occasionally refer to the light-darkness trope. As has been mentioned earlier, both Crisp and Clarkson call God the *Father of Lights* - an image also evoked by Randall in his preface to the *Theologia Germanica*.<sup>132)</sup> Clarkson uses this passage to demonstrate the inherent purity of man's actions: since they are ultimately rooted in God's will, darkness exists only in the imagination.<sup>133)</sup> Crisp, on the other hand, for whom sin and darkness retain a separate identity, combines it with an insistence on the central importance of

Christ's atonement and with various images of purgation. Natural man for Crisp is "a mint of sin" and an "unclean thing" (Isaiah 64.4)<sup>134</sup>) who can only be saved through Christ's sacrifice and the concomitant cleansing of the elect, since God is "of that infinite purity" which "cannot endure that the least spot of sinne is found."<sup>135</sup>) Drawing upon II Corinthians 6.14, Crisp holds that there can be "no communion between light and darkness,"<sup>136</sup>) thus occupying a position directly opposite to Clarkson's, in whose teachings light permeates the whole creation. Richard Coppin, however, propounds a similar doctrine in his *Divine Teachings* (1649): "Whatsoever is of man is unclean, but that which is of God is clean; and therefore God, who is so pure and perfect, will joyn himself with nothing that is impure and imperfect, neither shall any thing joyn him in his work; for he; who is all, and contains all, will of himself do all; and this all, ... which is the Spirit and Life of God, which Life shall forever live in, and be taught by, who thus beholds God to do all for him, and in him, as one with him, without the help of any created thing."<sup>137</sup>) In the writings of both Crisp and Coppin, these passages form part of a rejection of a righteousness relying on works and outward ordinances.

At this point, then, Clarkson and Crisp use the same biblical passages and images to accentuate widely divergent beliefs. The same superficial resemblance masking different, even contrasting, attitudes, can be observed with regard to the use of Solomon's Song or Canticles in Crisp's sermons and *A Single Eye*. Clarkson mentions the passages depicting the spotless beauty of the beloved, *Thou art all fair, my love, there is no spot in thee* (Canticles 4.7) to corroborate his statements about God as the *Father of Lights* and the fictitious nature of sin: "Love is God and God is Love, so all pure, all, light, no spot in thee ... what act so ever is done by thee, in light and love, is light, and lovely; though it be that act called Adultery, in darkness, it is so, but in light, honesty, in that light loveth itself, so cannot defile it selfe."<sup>138</sup>)

Crisp preached an entire sermon on Canticles 4.7. Yet its title, *The Loveliness of Christ's Beloved*, at first sight belies its underlying objective, which is to stress the inherent ugliness of man. The marriage of Christ and the Church is represented in terms of an unequal match,<sup>139</sup>) which assumes almost grotesque proportions through Crisp's

mingling of the sensual imagery of Canticles with passages from Isaiah: *From the crown of the head, to the sole of the feet, there is nothing else but wounds and bruises, swelling and sours [sic], and loathsomenesse in blood* (Isaiah 1.6). "That Christ should take such a nasty beggar ... as stinks above ground ... in regard of its filthinesse, that hath no sound part, but being full of botches and soares, and putrifications" bears testimony to "the astonishing greatnesse of the love of Christ."<sup>140</sup>) In an attempt to render his meaning more plastic, Crisp even resorts to a local monstrous birth - Siamese twins - to describe the relationship between Christ and mankind. "When Christ first took us, we were such monsters, we were such filthy, loathsome, nasty, ugly things ... we were thus by nature."<sup>141</sup>) Only the elects' union with Christ through his atonement turns this monstrous bride into the fair spouse of Canticles. Crisp believes in the natural hideousness of man, whereas Clarkson refers to Canticles to expose man's natural beauty and innocence, which is only obscured by the invention of artificial categories like sin and sinfulness.

#### ***2.5.4 Light and Water: God, the Believer and the Soul***

If, as in Clarkson's eyes, the whole creation is permeated by light which flows from God, the *Father of Lights*, and all shadows are the product of a fallen imagination, then it must logically follow "that one is as much divine as the other: no more precious (simply in it self) then the other: for as you have heard, though Lights, yet but one Light with God: so that all that is light, is nothing but God; for Light is Light, and God is light."<sup>142</sup>) Hence, there is the same degree of divinity in all. Many lights are "but one light in God", and God's occasional use of the plural "lights" takes place "in reference to their distinct appearance in those several bodies (to wit) the body of the Sun, the body of the moon."<sup>143</sup>) Clarkson at this point introduces the image of beams that emanate from the sun, yet "when reduced to their Being, they are no longer called a Beam, but a Sun."<sup>144</sup>) He echoes Benet of Canfield, who resorts to the same image to describe the relationship between God and man. As the beam in itself is nothing but sun and fire, "so there is nothing in the Creature which is not the Creator himselfe."<sup>145</sup>) Likewise, "as the Sun drawes back to himselfe all his Beames as certaine raies sent out from him, recalls them to

their font (his spacious light) sucks them up and nothings them ... so are the Creatures to be fully reduc'd to the Creator."<sup>146)</sup>

Interestingly, Crisp, in an attempt to couch in words the nature of God, uses a similar image: "The quintessence of vertues are in him, all the vertues of the world are but beams that proceed from him, they are but fruit that drops from him, he is the root, from which all vertue is derived."<sup>147)</sup> Clarkson's and Crisp's language also bears a striking resemblance to the imagery used in the *Theologica Germanica*, where the return to perfection in a precreated oneness or all-pervasive divine essence and the shedding of multiplicity or "the imperfect" is couched in terms suggestive of beams emanating from the sun: the "perfect ... is the being of all things, and is unchangeable and unmoveable in it self, and yet doth change and move all other things. But that which is imperfect and in part, which hath its being and existence from that which is perfect, even as darkness and brightness proceeds from the Sun, or from the light."<sup>148)</sup> In Nicholas of Cusa's *Vision of God*, death brings about the return from "alterity"<sup>149)</sup> to unity, "as if a Candle that enlighteneth a Chamber were alive and should draw up those beames by which it enlightens the Chamber into the Center of its light."<sup>150)</sup>

In some passages of his sermons, Crisp sees God in profoundly mystical terms. Illumination imagery is accompanied by images of water, river and ocean which look back upon a long mystical tradition. Thus, God can only be perceived as "an infinite vastnesse, far beyond your capacity, be you as empty as the creature may be ... you are but a Nut-shell, to be filled with the waters of the whole ocean. God is an ocean of treasure and goodnesse, to fill you up with this treasure; it is to fill a Nut-shell with the sea."<sup>151)</sup> Clarkson uses the non-biblical image of the ocean with regard to his rejection of conventional notions of the afterlife, in what has become one of the most famous and often-quoted passages of *The Lost Sheep Found*. Drawing upon Ecclesiastes 3.19, *For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other, yea, they have all one breath; so that man hath no preeminence above a beast: for all is vanity*, which also formed the scriptural base of Anne Hutchinson's and Bauthumley's mortalism, he at one time believed

"that in the grave there was no more remembrance of either joy or sorrow after. For this I conceived, as I knew not what was before I came in being, so for ever after I should know nothing after this my being was dissolved; but even as a stream from the ocean was distinct while it was a stream, but when returned to the ocean, was therein swallowed and become one with the Ocean; so the spirit of man while in the body, was distinct from God, but when death came it returned to God, and so became one with God, yea God it self" (LSF, p. 182).<sup>152)</sup>

This is consistent with his conception of a beam emanating from, and ultimately returning to, its mother, the sun. Clarkson also "really believed no *Moses*, Prophets, Christ, or Apostles, nor no resurrection at all: for I understood that which was life in man, went into that infinite Bulk and Bigness, so called *God*, as a drop into the ocean, and the body rotted in the grave, and for ever so to remain."<sup>153)</sup> In *A Bright Starre*, the ocean as a mystical image occurs in connection with the achievement of complete illumination and union with the godhead after an annihilation of the self, which also forms the central image of Salmon's *Heights in Depths*. Interestingly, the original "Center", i. e. the divine, to which the sun withdraws its beams is nothing else but the "boundlesse Ocean", in which the creature is "nothinged" and "lost." Perfection is achieved when the fair spouse "rests drown'd in the bottomlesse Ocean of this Infinite Being", which at the same time is the "Abyssse of Light and Life."<sup>154)</sup> This finds an echo in Salmon: "I appeared to my selfe as one confounded into the abyst [sic] of eternitie, nonentitized into the being of beings; my soule split, and emptied into the fountaine and ocean of divine fulness: expired into the aspires of pure life."<sup>155)</sup> The most striking parallel, however, occurs in *A Justification of the Mad Crew*: "They [the elect] are passed from death to life, they can dy no more, they are he that was dead but is now alive for evermore, all mortal dying, perishing, things are swallowed up in them, into a living immortal being, their earthliness dark and carnal apprehensions are not, but are drowned and lost in God, and in God are found anew."<sup>156)</sup>

Crisp similarly holds that "the natural life of man is from the soule: The soule once separated from the body, it [the body] is dead; so long as the soule is united to the body the man is alive."<sup>157)</sup> In the same sermon, he equates this soul with Christ: "Christ is the soule of every believer, that animates, and acts the believer in all things whatsoever", while the believer's life springs "as a streame ... from that life" imputed by Christ.<sup>158)</sup>

This water-imagery penetrates Crisp's sermons. Thus, he describes the love of God as "the first fountaine of all the gifts of God to us."<sup>159</sup>) Along these metaphorical lines, the process of sanctification assumes the form of God's imbuing the elect with "unchangeable principles", prior to which "you be like waves of the Sea, tossed to and fro with every wind of temptation."<sup>160</sup>)

These images call for a closer examination. In conceiving of Christ as the soul of the believer who "animates, and acts the believer in all things whatsoever", Crisp embraces the Antinomian tenet that the elect are filled with the divine will while having none of their own. With the Ranters, this accounts for the inherent holiness of their deeds: since all acts of the elect are inspired by the divine, who is pure and perfect, "light, and in him no darknesse,"<sup>161</sup>) they in turn must be so: *To the pure, all things are pure* (Titus 1.15).<sup>162</sup>) This concept also forms the basis for Clarkson's *A Single Eye*: "What Act soever I do, is acted by that Majesty in me ... the censures of Scripture, Churches, Saints and Devils, are no more to me than the cutting off of a Dog's neck."<sup>163</sup>) Furthermore, the pamphlet reveals traces of Crisp's fountain and beam imagery. Bringing to its logical conclusions Isaiah 45.7, *I form light, I create darkness, I form peace, I create evil: I the LORD do all these things*, Clarkson emphasizes the joint source or "womb" of the "twin"<sup>164</sup>) powers of light and darkness: "although these be distinct, in reference to their several operations, as two streams runneth contrary ways, yet they are but of one Nature, and that from one Fountain: Herein appeareth but a seeming opposition; instance the Tide, what striving for victory, yet but one Water, yea, and that from one Ocean. So is the case with these powers, one opposite to the other, contending for Victory, till at last, one overcomes another, as the Tide the stream."<sup>165</sup>) The most striking similarities, however, can be found in the poem that precedes *A Single Eye*, where Clarkson's use of the image of the fountain almost directly echoes Crisp's while it also, through the verb "spring", contains an allusion to the stream:

"Yea, all are sav'd by's Cross, his wounds, and blood.

...

Through him are all things, onely One, not Twain:  
 Sure he's the fountain from which everything  
 Both good and ill (so term'd) appears to spring.  
 Unto his Single Eye, though Adam's two  
 Cannot perceive ..."166)

Clarkson's assertion of the centrality of the atonement in terms redolent of Crisp's is interesting also from a doctrinal point of view, for it places the "Captain of the Rant" in a peculiar position within the Ranter movement. The view that it was Christ's sacrifice which rendered salvation possible and liberated the elect from the bondage of the law constituted the mainstay of early modern antinomianism. The Ranters, however, differed from the mainstream movement inasmuch as they paid little attention to the atonement, but grounded their beliefs in direct inspiration from the divine, thus doing away with the mediatorship of Christ which formed, explicitly, the core of Crisp's theology.<sup>167)</sup> Christ suffered a theological dethronement and became, at best, equal with the elect since God "cannot admit of degrees."<sup>168)</sup> Clarkson is thus the only Ranter to maintain explicitly the Son's central role, although he does so only in passing. This may reflect his indebtedness to Crisp.<sup>169)</sup>

### ***2.5.5 The Alpha and Omega***

Clarkson gives us another glimpse of his mortalism:

"The body consisting of flesh and bone, is made of the dust of the earth, therefore when the body is reduced to its center, then (and not till then) is thy body alive, perfected in its happiness ... as it is destructive for the Fowl to live in the water, or the Fish in the Firmament, so to raise thy body to a local place called Heaven, would to thy body become a Hell ... for after it is laid in the grave, it is buried in its heaven, glory and happiness, where it shall rot and consume into its own nature for ever and ever."<sup>170)</sup>

Bauthumley espouses the same idea, expressed in a very similar image, in *The Light and Dark Sides of God*:

"God is pleased to live in flesh ... and he appears in severall formes of flesh, in the forme of Man and Beast, and other Creatures, and when these have performed the will of God, that then as the

flesh of man and other creatures, came from the earth, and are not capable of knowing God, or partaking of the divine nature, and God ceasing to live in them, that then they shall return to their first principle of dust, and God shall as he did from all eternity, live in himself, before there was a World or creatures: so he shall to all eternity live and enjoy himself in himself, in such a way as no man can utter: and so I see him yesterday, and to day, and the same for ever: The Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end of all things."<sup>171)</sup>

The notion of the return to an original centre, the process of "contract[ing] our scattered spirits into their originall center, and to find our selves where we were ... before we were,"<sup>172)</sup> dates back to late medieval and Renaissance German mysticism. As I have shown, it occurs in both the *Theologica Germanica* and in *A Bright Starre*. However, it found its most prominent exponent in Paracelsus (1493-1541), according to whom "all things proceeded out of one Matter ... the Great Mystery. So that the Great Myserie is the onely mother of all perishing things, out of which they all sprung ... they all came forth together and at once, in one creation, substance, matter, form, essence, nature and inclination."<sup>173)</sup> Clarkson's [motherly!] "womb" from which the "twin" powers of light and darkness both sprang represents indeed an echo of this idea. Creation was generated through separation from the "Great" or "uncreated myserie" and repeated subsequent separations from smaller mysteries like the elements. All created things, however, manifest a longing to revert to their own essence. The inevitable dissolution into the first element something originated in takes place at death, when "whatsoever is of the water, turneth againe into water", but mixes not with any of the elements as this would be against its nature.<sup>174)</sup> The reduction of Clarkson's body to its "center" and its essential incompatibility with a local heaven, illustrated from animal life, captures the same thought. According to Paracelsus, creation reaches full circle, when, after the fourth separation, "all things shall be reduced into their first principle, and that onely remaine which was before the great myserie, and is eternall."<sup>175)</sup> They will, inevitably and inescapably,<sup>176)</sup> "be reduced into their pristin nature and condition, yet doe they not returne againe unto the Myserie ... but ... into that which was before the Mystery."<sup>177)</sup> "Thus all creatures shall be reduced to their first state, to wit, nothing. That we may know wherefore all bodies must return into nothing, it is because of that which is eternall in the bodies rationally." After this dissolution of the creature, only the "eternal essence"

remains.<sup>178)</sup> This is Clarkson's immortal spirit that is swallowed up again into the divine ocean.

Significantly, the author of *Divinity and Philosophy Dissected* embraces a very Paracelsan view of the creation. At the beginning, "in one infancie or nonage" all things are united in "chaos" and "a deep silence."<sup>179)</sup> This is followed by the separation of the waters, which "is the first day for distinctions sake that we may know God from our selves." Only then is light separated from darkness.<sup>180)</sup> Yet man cannot achieve happiness until "thou art dead, buried, damned and lost in Christ and God." When "thou art turned to thy dust, and into thy old silence with God againe ... then doth he create us anew" in the mystical marriage.<sup>181)</sup>

Among the Ranters, it is Bauthumley (see above!) and Salmon<sup>182)</sup> who most conspicuously and immediately resort to Paracelsan imagery and language. Crisp (cf. above) seems to believe in the immortality of the soul and the mortality of the body, yet I have not come across the image of the centre in any of his sermons published in the 1640s. Where, then, is the connection with Clarkson? It is in the context. It emerges that, whilst at first sight Crisp does not seem to share the Ranters' interest in Paracelsan thought, there is an implicit reference to it in his use of the famous image from the Book of Revelation of Christ as the Alpha and Omega: *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.* He quotes this passage almost immediately after having disclosed his mortalism,<sup>183)</sup> embedded in an imagery of natural organisms more typical of a scientist than a clergyman: "The head is first the fountain and hath all animal spirits planted in it: then doth it from it selfe derive all those animal spirits to every part; from which all have their severall motions", followed by elaborations on the union of the "godhead" and the "manhood."<sup>184)</sup> In this respect, Crisp maintains his equation of the fountain with Christ, whom he calls "the fountaine of living waters."<sup>185)</sup> The Son represents "the sole and only fountaine of supply" of grace, and Crisp consequently urges his audience "let Christ bee the Alpha and Omega in all things, begin in Christ, end in Christ, doe all in Christ, get all by Christ."<sup>186)</sup> In conclusion, he primarily employs the image of the Alpha and Omega to

throw into relief Christ's central role in the history of salvation, but does so in sermons interspersed with natural images redolent of the mystics. What is even more interesting at this point is that the Alpha and Omega occurs, in the writings of both Coppe and Bauthumley, in a Paracelsan context. This combination is particularly noticeable in the passage from Bauthumley at the beginning of this section. Coppe likewise interprets it as meaning that "All things are returning to their Original, where all parables, dark sayings, all languages, and all hidden things, are known, unfolded and interpreted." Christ, "That God of Peace and Love that eternal and everlasting Being, that eternal Unity, who is all, and in all, is reconciling all things unto himself."<sup>187</sup>) The topic of the Son reconciling all things unto himself was also much favoured by Crisp, who preached an entire sermon on II Corinthians 5.19. Significantly, *A Single Eye* ends with an evocation of the Alpha and Omega, although this does not occur in an expressly mortalist context, but rather to celebrate the all-permeating godhead, and end divisions and bring about unity and harmony in this life.<sup>188</sup>)

In conclusion, Paracelsan imagery does not explicitly make its appearance in Crisp's sermons, and Clarkson mentions the Alpha and Omega only briefly in *A Single Eye*. Yet an implicit and indirect connection can be established through the context in which both are merged in other radical religious writings of the period to the extent of their forming two halves of a whole. This entity is lost in Crisp and Clarkson, as if their associations were half-formulated, yet contextual comparisons may also remind us that silence on the surface might conceal something in the deeps beneath. Moreover, a very direct link exists between Crisp and Paracelsus in the person of Henry Pinnell, Crisp's protégé at Brinkworth, who translated part of Paracelsus' *oeuvre* into English. It formed part of a volume called *Philosophy Reformed & Improved in Four Profound Tractates*, a compilation of translations from Oswald Crollius and Paracelsus, and bore the simple title *The Other Discovering the Wonderfull Mysteries of the Creation by Paracelsus*. Published in 1657, the collection appeared too late for either Crisp or Clarkson the Ranter to draw upon it - although Clarkson could have been introduced to Paracelsan concepts via *Divinity and Philosophy Dissected* (1644). Pinnell does not mention his late mentor in

his introduction to the volume. Yet, given the close association between the two men and Crisp's erudition, it may well be that the latter owned a Latin copy of Paracelsus, which he might even have shown to Pinnell, though these thoughts must needs due to the lack of any corroborative evidence, be confined to the realms of speculation.<sup>189)</sup>

## **2.6 EPILOGUE: THE BRINKWORTH SERMONS, 1690**

### ***2.6.1 A New Edition?***

In 1689, Crisp's son Samuel, who had been born at the Brinkworth rectory in 1631 and was then living in Clapham, received a letter from one William Marshall of Newgate Street, London, informing him of a forthcoming new edition of his late father's sermons. Overcoming his initial surprise, Samuel not only agreed to collaborate with Marshall, but became heavily involved in the project. On his insistence, ten sermons were added to the 1643 and 1648 volumes. Samuel himself transcribed them from his father's notes, making them available to the public for the very first time. *Christ Alone Exalted: Being the Substance of Ten Sermons Preached By that Faithful and Blessed Dispenser of the Gospel, Tobias Crisp, D.D.. As they were Found Written in his own Hand, and are now Added to the Rest of his Works, Being The Fourth Volume Never Before Printed* is a curious collection in the light of Crisp's influence on Clarkson. It contains no less than four sermons on Titus 2.11,12, which form the bulk of the volume. Their presence results in an interesting and very deliberate shift of emphasis. Samuel expressly included the new material - and went into painstaking detail to prove its authenticity - with a view to vindicating his father, and disproving the connection between the preaching of free grace and the advocacy of licentiousness.<sup>190)</sup> In accordance with the hint on the title page, the sermons on Titus 2.11,12 in particular give the impression of being heavily edited, as they appear in the shape of one long sermon instead of four individual ones. Hence, we must suspect that Samuel Crisp presented the public with a very concentrated version of his father's theological views. The focus in the "new" sermons on the denial of ungodliness

and the importance of sanctification is striking and, to do justice to Crisp, they have to be included in this study. However, as they were preached at Brinkworth,<sup>191)</sup> it is important to bear in mind that Clarkson would not have known them, for which reason they have to be treated as a separate entity.

### *2.6.2 The Corner Stone of the Whole Gospel*

"The doctrine of free Grace" Crisp observes in one of his sermons on Titus 2.11,12, "hath been marvellously abused divers ways, in all Ages, some ... overthrowing it with licentious inferences."<sup>192)</sup> Against this "licentious Soul-destroying Misconceit",<sup>193)</sup> springing from an out-of-context interpretation of Romans 5.20 and 6.1, Crisp holds the central significance of Titus 2.11,12. For him, and in marked opposition to Clarkson, this passage constitutes "the corner stone of the whole Gospel."<sup>194)</sup> Crisp maintains his insistence on the unconditionality of election in terms that echo Thomas Gataker's criticism of the Antinomians' advocacy of a blindfolded God: "he that comes to God and his Promises with a blind-foldeth Faith (I mean a Faith that takes no notice of nothing in himself, whether good or evil) is God's welcomest Guest."<sup>194)</sup> Yet justification, in taking away the blindfold, restores sight not in accordance with Clarkson's prelapsarian single eye, but infuses the eyes of the elect with the spirit of grace. Far from eschewing the differences between good and evil, the new light reinforces them, exposing the newly-awakened eyes to the glaring sight of ungodliness, "and that not with some obscure glimmerings, but with a full delineation and anatomizing of its hidden ugliness."<sup>195)</sup> The justified individual does not experience an instantaneous and utter transformation, as "a remainder of ungodliness may consist with the Grace of God."<sup>196)</sup> Yet its restored sight "sets the Soul a running upon Ungodliness, with a Holy Violence."<sup>197)</sup> The influx of grace "inclines the Heart to a new Obedience."<sup>198)</sup> It "will teach, though not utterly to vanquish, but to deny ... inordinate unclean Motions, or lascivious Inclinations to Adultery, Fornication" and other "ungodly" acts.<sup>199)</sup> In marked contradistinction to Thomas Bedford and Thomas Bakewell, who assert the central significance of purification before the elects' union with Christ to the degree that Christ initially comes "as a Physician

to cure them, not as an Husband, to receive them into union ... Or, if you will, as a Husband to take them into the Bed of Love; but not till he hath purged them, and fitted them for his Bed,"<sup>200</sup>) Crisp's Christ does justify the unhumiliated sinner of Ezekiel 16 and the prodigal son before, and not after, washing: "Christ comes and justifies the ungodly; he doth not find them godly, or stay 'till they be godly, before he will [sic] justifie them; but takes them as they are, ungodly, and justifies them then ... Christ is not so squearnish as Men are, ... who look for comeliness or loveliness to stir their affections."<sup>201</sup>) The Brinkworth sermons, however, manifest a preoccupation with sanctification. Thus, Christ "finds them [the elect] Ungodly when he imputes his Righteousness unto them, but he doth not leave them Ungodly,"<sup>202</sup>) as the elect desire to "adorn ... the[ir] Life with a Conversation beseeming a Companion of Christ."<sup>203</sup>) "The Lord", maintains Crisp, "hath coupled" justification and the denial of ungodliness "together."<sup>204</sup>) Like an apple-tree and its fruit, "God hath inseparably joined Salvation, and a holy Life."<sup>205</sup>) Hence, grace establishes, rather than "make[s] void Obedience", for the denial of ungodliness itself constitutes one of the holy mysteries, which is made possible only through divine inspiration.<sup>206</sup>) The motion towards it must come solely from "the internal teaching of the spirit", as neither the Bible nor the sermons of a parish minister are of any avail in this respect.<sup>207</sup>) Implicitly, Crisp espouses the notion that only the elect are capable of true obedience and of a genuine denial of ungodliness, whereas the reprobate, through lack of divine inspiration, must needs either be fickle or under a delusion in their aspirations to it. In this respect, his doctrine overlaps with Thomas Bedford's: "it is grace alone, and the spirit of Adoption that new-mouldeth the heart, and casteth it into an Holy temper of universal obedience. Grace is it that maketh the Heart constant in holiness; wicked men may have good moods and present purposes, but these are like Land-floods soon gone again."<sup>208</sup>) Crisp splits the self up into the "natural self", the "corrupt self" of the as yet unjustified individual and the "spiritual renewed self", which is "reduced to a Submission or Resignation of its self to the Will of Christ."<sup>209</sup>) Christ's will, on the other hand, requires self-denial as set forth in Matthew 16.24, *If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself*, which Crisp chose for the text of a sermon preached in 1639. Self-denial,

however, does not signify "mere abstinence"<sup>210)</sup> without desire, but involves genuine endeavour insomuch as it must be preceded by temptation, and ensue from a resistance to this "assault upon the soul."<sup>211)</sup> Whilst the notion is redolent of Clarkson's idea that sin must be acted out in order to be overcome, Crisp's deductions differ markedly from Clarkson's. Where the latter preached and lived liberation from all unwelcome restraints, Crisp warned that a faith "that humoreth thy self, is a mere dream and delusion ... but vain and dead."<sup>212)</sup> With man being naturally prone to sin, Christ had to crucify the flesh in justification,<sup>213)</sup> so that the incentive to sin would eventually be stifled in a process which involved hard labour. In the end, obedience to God's will had to be absolute. It is in this almost masochistically self-abnegatory context that Crisp introduced one of Clarkson's favourite passages to his parishioners at Brinkworth. As Christ had sacrificed his body for the salvation of the elect, so the elect themselves had to crucify desire in them and to present their bodies *a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.*<sup>214)</sup>

PART IIICONCLUSION

In conclusion, it emerges that much of Clarkson's mysticism can be traced back to Crisp's sermons. There are also a number of oblique references, such as I have shown with regard to the centre and the Alpha and Omega, which reinforce the intellectual and theological links between the two men. Yet the connection between Crisp and Clarkson's subscription to the image of a Paracelsan centre, though very interesting, is admittedly tenuous, and inevitably some doubts and questions remain in this and other respects. It is almost certain that some of Clarkson's mystical ideas originated with the translations of Giles Randall, who, in his role as Nicholas of Cusa's and Benet of Canfield's publisher, emerges as a particularly scintillating figure when it comes to the dissemination of mystical, and more specifically Neoplatonic, thought. If Randall's authorship of the uncannily Paracelsan *Divinity and Philosophy Dissected* (1644) could be proved, this link, and its influence on Clarkson, would be strengthened. Randall certainly embraced a more explicitly mystical doctrine than Crisp, and while there is as yet no clear evidence that Clarkson actually read *De Visione Dei*, *A Bright Starre* or the *Theologia Germanica* in the 1640s, Randall's sermons in the Spittle Yard would have introduced him to the mysticism held forth in these works.

But let us return to Clarkson and Crisp. To a certain extent our surmises about possible influences must remain a matter of conjecture. This applies especially to the use of passages from Scripture. Seventeenth-century Puritans knew their Bible well, and Clarkson's absorption of some texts and imagery into his writings need not necessarily spring from their presence in Crisp's sermons, but to a certain degree at least reflects his indebtedness to Puritan biblical culture in general. Nevertheless, I hope to have demonstrated the existence of some striking similarities in Crisp and Clarkson which

strongly suggests a direct influence of the former on the latter. Moreover, the likelihood of a one-way influence does not altogether disappear even in cases where a highly selective reference to the Bible seems to rule it out. As a dedicated Puritan, Clarkson would, upon hearing or reading Crisp's sermons, look up the relevant passages and chapters in the Bible. This was a common practice in seventeenth-century conventicles. Anne Hutchinson confessed to it during her trial: in the long run, her examination of John Cotton's sermons triggered off the Antinomian Controversy.<sup>215</sup>) If we apply the same manner of proceeding to Clarkson, it becomes clear how easily the close geographical proximity of the two passages could turn his tracing of Crisp's focus on Titus 2.11,12 into his alighting upon, and subsequent adoption of, Titus 1.15. The most startling parallels and contrasts, however, are revealed when Clarkson and Crisp refer to the same passages. As I have attempted to show, both men draw on a shared set of antinomian tenets and biblical texts. Crisp's antinomianism remains theological, and he eventually relies on the moral responsibility and conscientiousness of the sanctified person. In Clarkson's hands, Crisp's theology, with its ambiguous sidelights on the salvation of the initially ungodly, undergoes a metamorphosis into a candid advocacy of *practical* antinomianism. This process in Crisp and Clarkson of a shared legacy being examined, transformed and finally adapted to contrasting practical conclusions is neatly encapsulated in their interpretation of Romans 12.1: *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.*<sup>216</sup>) It forms the basis for the ultimate respectability of Crisp's elect. At an early stage of his spiritual journey, Clarkson obviously embraced the idea that the sacrificial character of religion entailed physically painful self-mortification.<sup>217</sup>) By 1650, however, he had moved on: "Wonder not at me, for without Act, without Birth, no powerful deliverance, not only the Talkers, but the Doers; not only your Spirit but your Body must be a living and acceptable Sacrifice; therefore till acted that so called sin, thou art not delivered from the power of sin, but ready upon all the Alarms to tremble and fear the reproach of thy body."<sup>218</sup>) Freedom from sin can only be achieved and maintained through an almost ritual celebration of sin. Along these lines, Clarkson's joyful Ranter

promiscuity, as much as Crisp's respectability, represents a conscientious observance of the injunction in Romans 12.1. For Clarkson literally turned his body into a living sacrifice on behalf of Ranter *joie de vivre*, placing it at the disposal of those members of his female following who were keen on exploring and savouring their newly found freedom from the moral law not only in theory, but also in practice. He thereby provided his contemporaries with a vivid and flamboyant illustration of the implications and effects of his teachings.

I hope to have shown in this study that Clarkson was a more complex and theologically significant figure than is normally acknowledged. His journey through the sectarian underworld of the mid-17th century placed him at the centre of public attention more than once: he was a prominent Baptist, to become, first, a notorious Seeker and then, infamous Ranter, and if his challenge to Muggleton's position had been successful, the nascent sect subsequently known as the Muggletonians might have turned out a very different shape. Perhaps significantly, he is the only major Ranter-to-be apart from Thomas Webbe to have made it into the pages of Thomas Edwards's *Gangraena*. All available evidence strongly suggests that it was Clarkson, not Coppe, who introduced Titus 1.15 to *My One Flesh*, thus providing Ranter circles with a scriptural basis for their celebration of perfection in this life. I would argue, however, that Clarkson's theological importance extends to the Antinomian movement as a whole. In this respect, we have to take another look at his relationship with Crisp.

Crisp was the scion of one of the richest and most well-connected mercantile families in London. He was related to Thomas Gataker, one of the most outspoken opponents of the Antinomians in the 1640s.<sup>219</sup> His brother, the royalist Sir Nicholas Crisp (1598-1666) made a fortune in the West African gold trade and was elevated to a baronetcy in 1665. Even more interestingly, Nicholas's son Thomas married as his second wife one of the daughters of Sir Henry Vane, who had been governor of Massachusetts during the Antinomian Controversy and Anne Hutchinson's socially most prominent follower.<sup>220</sup> In May 1646, Tobias's brother-in-law, Rowland Wilson the younger (died 1650), entertained

at his house the future regicide Hugh Peter (1599-1660), who, as minister of Salem from 1636 until 1641, had been one of Hutchinson's most relentless opponents, yet upon his return to England embraced the sectarian cause and advocated religious toleration.<sup>221)</sup>

Although nothing came of the Westminster Assembly's plans to have Crisp's works burnt, the books did catapult both Crisp and the otherwise reclusive Robert Lancaster into the centre of attention. The mid-1640s saw a spate of anti-Antinomian publications. Thomas Bakewell's *The Antinomians Christ Confounded* and Stephen Gere's *The Doctrine of the Antinomians by Evidence of Gods Truth Plainly Confuted. In an Answer to Divers Dangerous Doctrines, in the Seven First Sermons of Dr. Crisps Fourteen*, both of which appeared in 1644, constitute minute confutations of Crisp's sermons. Other works are less explicit in their agenda, yet Crisp emerges as the most famous and doctrinally dangerous Antinomian in England, with the possible exception of Eaton, while most additional material refers to Anne Hutchinson's followers in Massachusetts.<sup>222)</sup> Publication dates and the position accorded to Crisp strongly suggest that *Christ Alone Exalted* provoked this sudden inundation of anti-Antinomian tracts, in a phenomenon which foreshadows the Ranter scare half a decade later, although the Antinomians' critics of the mid-17th-century were, for the most part, more concerned with theological discussion than bizarre anecdotes. Crisp, then, was posthumously at the centre of a controversy. It would calm down, to be superseded by hysteria and wonderment at the proliferation of sects at the turn of the decade, to flare up again nearly half a century later, on the occasion of Samuel Crisp's edition of his father's complete works, which contained an official recommendation by twelve clergymen, including such leading divines with Massachusetts connections as Isaac Chauncy, Nathaniel Mather (1630-1697), one of the earliest graduates of Harvard College, and his brother Increase (1639-1723), Rector of Harvard and colonial agent to England in the early nineties. The controversy which followed reached a climax in 1694 and effectively split the nonconformist party. "Dr. Crisp's book was that which awakened this whole Controversy, by its being Published in such a manner ... thus recommended and authorized, the Poison of Antinomianism was soon spread, not only in the Country, but infected this great City to that degree, that the

more sober of the Presbyterian ministers were scarce able to preach a Sermon, wherein either Hope was asserted by Conditional Promises, or the Fear of Sin was pressed by the Divine Threatnings, but they were immediately censured and condemned, as Enemies of Christ, and of Free Grace."<sup>223</sup>)

As I have demonstrated, Clarkson's appropriation of Crisp's teachings technically happened along the same lines as Anne Hutchinson's interpretation of John Cotton's sermons. The theological relationship between Clarkson and Crisp bears some striking similarities to the one between Cotton and Hutchinson. As Janice Knight has pointed out, the Antinomian Controversy in Massachusetts in the 1630s sprang from a conflict between two coexistent strands within Puritanism imported from Old England - the preparationists or alleged quasi-Arminians, and the advocates of free grace or Antinomians, with John Cotton being the most prominent exponent of the latter in early Massachusetts. The very same conflict erupted around the publication of Crisp's works in both the 1640s and, more virulently, the 1690s. Thus, Crisp's position equals Cotton's. And in the 1640s, Clarkson was his most diligent pupil. Hutchinson, female<sup>224</sup>) and highly respectable, desperately denied any imputations of Antinomianism. Clarkson, from a modest background, itinerant and flamboyant, joyously celebrated the freedom of the elect from the moral law, and owned up to it even after his conversion to sober Reevonianism. Clarkson took Crisp's doctrine to its logical conclusions in a practical sense Hutchinson would never have dreamed of, and would have abhorred. Yet, in marked contradistinction to the spates of literature on Cotton and Hutchinson, scholarship is largely silent on the relationship between Clarkson and Crisp. Mysteriously, Crisp, despite his eminent position in the 17th century, rarely seems to have captured the fancy of modern historians, with an article Christopher Hill's *Collected Essays* (1986) being the only piece of work an extensive bibliographic search resulted in. Why is this?

Although Clarkson's and Hutchinson's appropriation of a famous divine's doctrines formed part of the same process, their influence on contemporary society was markedly

different. The Antinomian Controversy shook the foundations of early Massachusetts and resulted in the banishment *en gros* of Anne Hutchinson's followers. It rang the death knell on religious toleration in New England and continues to be regarded as one of the most important chapters in early American history. The Ranters provoked the Blasphemy Act of 9 August 1650 and made the imagination of contemporaries run riot.<sup>225)</sup> This difference in impact is due to the dissimilar contexts in which Clarkson and Hutchinson operated. Massachusetts in the 1630s was a young and geographically small, virtually parochial society in the process of its own formation. Anne Hutchinson's activities highlighted the lack of a religious equilibrium. She and her followers could be pinpointed as a clearcut group of individuals endangering religious and social peace in the colony, whilst at the same time helping a young society to perceive its own limits, where religious toleration had to stop.<sup>226)</sup> On the other hand, England in the 1640s and 1650s was politically, religiously and socially in a state of unprecedented turmoil. Control had effectively disappeared. Moreover, in contrast to Hutchinson's being thrown in sharp relief, Clarkson's voice, even though it possessed an uncommonly scintillating quality and did capture the attention and imagination of the authorities, was partially drowned in the rich flood of sectarian proliferation in mid-17th-century England. Finally, Hutchinson widely publicised her theological dependence on Cotton, whom she had followed from Lincolnshire.<sup>227)</sup> Clarkson, on the other hand, only acknowledged Crisp's influence in 1660, and did so as part of a narrative, in a non-courtroom context where it was unlikely, and not intended, to gain it publicity. By the time of the republication of Crisp's works, Clarkson had been dead for more than thirty years. Thus, no documentation regarding the theological relationship between the two men survives apart from the passing reference in *The Lost Sheep Found*. Only when we follow this path does it come to life. Then, however, it unearths a constellation which reveals Clarkson not only as a charismatic prophet on the flamboyant fringe of Interregnum radical religion, but places him at the centre of 17th-century Antinomianism. We can surmise that in a different decade, in another country, his overall impact would have been very different indeed.

PART IVAPPENDIXA Note on the Authorship of'A Justification of the Mad Crew' (1650)

*A Justification of the Mad Crew*, an anonymous tract which circulated in the wake of the publication of *A Fiery Flying Roll* and *A Single Eye*, has been puzzling historians and literary historians for decades. Frank McGregor ascribes it to Andrew Wyke.<sup>1)</sup> There is, however, no evidence for Wyke's authorship.<sup>2)</sup>

*A Justification of the Mad Crew* is a curious tract, as it combines Coppe's insistence on the holiness of swearing (JMC, pp. 139, 140, 143, 146; FFR, pp. 27, 28), his call for communism and outright rejection of the nuclear family based on marriage (JMC, p. 147-149; FFR, pp. 47, 51, 52, 53, 54, 45) as well as his appropriation of the little-child- and holy-fool-trope (JMC, pp. 140, 141; SSS, pp. 61ff; FFR, pp. 32, 42ff, 45) with Clarkson's emphasis on sexual immorality and Neoplatonic mysticism ("they twain shall be one flesh, one body, one life, one spirit", JMC, p. 148, cf. also *ibid.*, p. 139, 151; SE, p. 162, "Through him are all things, only One, not Twain"). Even more interestingly, a contemplation on self-obliteration and of being "drowned and lost in God" (JMC, p. 146) that is characteristic of Joseph Salmon fuses with Bauthumley's pantheism (JMC, pp. 140, 142, 144). As a result, the text emerges as a curious blend of different strands and emphases in Ranter thought, as if the major Ranter prophets had indeed composed it jointly. A scriptural 'dissection' of the tract reveals the same combination in respect of its underlying biblical references and allusions.

On the other hand, the author's signing himself "Jesus the Son of God" (JMC, p. 139), and referring to himself as "me your Lord" (JMC, p. 154) casts some doubt on the Ranter

origin of *A Justification of the Mad Crew*. For the Ranters, in contrast to individual messianic figures like John Robins, William Franklin and Thomas Tany with whom they were sometimes confused, propounded the spiritual equality of the elect, i.e. the divinely inspired, and rejected the exaltation of a single individual, e.g. Christ. The divine spoke, acted and dwelled in, and was "shining through" (FFR, p. 15), the Ranter prophet, yet the latter never lost his human, individual identity and never became "Jesus."

Furthermore, *A Justification of the Mad Crew* manifests traces of a crude practical antinomianism, such as in the use of the term "to whore" in "swearing, drinking, whoring" (JMC, p. 139, see also pp. 143, 146) and in "they whore in God, that God is the Whore and the Whoremaster" (JMC, p. 140). This view of God is an exceptionally crude rendering, unparalleled in any other Ranter writing, of the all-pervasive nature of the indwelling divine and constitutes a perversion of Matthew 11.19 and Luke 7.34, where the Pharisees denounce Christ as *a man gluttonous, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners*. The latter was quoted by both Crisp and Coppe. I have not come across the usage of "to whore" in any major Ranter text, although Clarkson retrospectively uses it in *Look about you*, where he claims that Ranters never find "themselves more happy then when they are a whoring and drinking" (LAY, p. 98). Usually, sexual immorality is couched in terms of adultery, lying with a woman, "the creation" (LSF, p. 183) or - the nearest equivalent - a whore (FFR, p. 45), and, more intriguingly, of clipping, hugging, kissing and loving female gypsies and of "putting my hand in their bosomes" (FFR, p. 44). It should be noted, however, that "hugging" appears suspiciously often in *A Justification of the Mad Crew* (JMC, pp. 139, 140, 145), most suggestively in the conception that every creature "contains, hugs" and "embraces" God (JMC, p. 139).

The dissonant flagrancy of "to whore" finds a parallel in the author's contextually peculiar use of the word "drinking." The only Ranters to employ images of drinking or drunkenness elaborately are Coppe in *Some Sweet Sips of Some Spiritual Wine* and Salmon in his recantation *Heights in Depths* (Behold the Lord maketh the earth empty and void ... it reels to and fro like a drunkard", HD, p. 208; "Thus tumbling in my own vomit, I became a derision to all, and even loathed by those by whom I had been beloved: being

made drunk with a Cup of vengeance ... O the deep drunken bewitching, besotting draughts of the wine of astonishment that hath been forced upon me", HD, p. 213; "I was indeed full sick of wrath, a vial of wrath was given me to drink ... Well - drink I must, but mark the riddle. Twas given me, that I might drink, I drank, that I might stumble ...", HD, p. 215). Here, however, drinking is confined to *imagery* expressing a *spiritual* state. As a result, *A Justification of the Mad Crew* sometimes comes close to the yellow-press image of Ranterism.

These dissonances suggest that the tract might have been conceived as "a brilliant exercise in black propaganda."<sup>3)</sup> Yet, given its overall manifestation of scripturally backed, sophisticated and coherent Ranter thought, I doubt that it was written by a hostile outsider in an imitation of Ranter style, although the date Thomason acquired it for his collection - 21 August 1650 - would have enabled its author to draw on most of the other Ranter texts it resembles for imitation. Initially, I dismissed this possibility. My mistake sprang from an only too ready reliance on the Thomason dates, which in some cases belie a much earlier date of publication. Thus, *A Single Eye* (Thomason date 4 October 1650) circulated in June of that year already. Likewise, the entry for 14 March 1649/50 in Bulstrode Whitelocke's *Memorials of the English Affairs* reveals that "one Boutholmey was tried by a Council of War for Blasphemy, and sentenced to have his Tongue bored through with a hot Iron, his Sword broke over his Head, and to be cashiered from the Army."<sup>4)</sup> There is a strong suggestion that the evidence was taken from *The Light and Dark Sides of God*.<sup>5)</sup> Thomason, on the other hand, only obtained a copy of the tract, proscribed by then, on 20 November.

While Friedman implicitly ascribes *A Justification of the Mad Crew* to Abiezer Coppe, Thomas Corns carefully proposes that it might more generally have originated with *My One Flesh*, basing his speculation on two allusions to Genesis 2.23-25, "they shall be no more twain, but one flesh" (JMC, p. 148) and "they are naked as Adam and his wife was in Paradise, and are not ashamed" (JMC, p. 146).<sup>6)</sup> This would make sense, for members of this obscure Ranter group would have been able to draw, not only on Coppe's predilection for hugging and swearing, his furious rejection of private property and

sophisticated cultivation of the rôle of the holy fool, but also on Clarkson's focus on the unity of all creation and free love couched in terms suggestive of the mystical marriage (see the erotic wedding imagery in *JMC*, pp. 147-148), which, as has been shown, had a considerable impact on *My One Flesh*. Interestingly, the tract's condemnation of moral hypocrisy and people "who pretend to be holy and not to touch a Woman, and yet can sometimes have layen with Women in the dark" (*JMC*, p. 154) is strongly redolent of Clarkson's meeting with the "hypocritical" Thomas Gunne in London in early 1646.

*A Justification of the Mad Crew* reveals a strong debt to Clarkson. While the identity of its author cannot as yet be ascertained, the possibility remains that it might form the hitherto unrecognized - and unacknowledged - second half of Clarkson's Ranter canon. More work definitely needs to be done on *A Justification of the Mad Crew*.

PART VNOTES5.1 NOTES TO INTRODUCTION AND CHAPTER ONE

1) LSF, p. 26

2) Many of these can be found in the Thomason Tracts. An interesting selection was recently reprinted in J.C. Davis's *Fear, Myth and History* (Cambridge, 1986), appendix.

3) LSF, p. 26

4) For Coppe see Nicholas McDowell, 'A Ranter Reconsidered: Abiezer Coppe and Civil War Stereotypes', *The Seventeenth Century*, Volume 12, No. 2 (Autumn 1997), pp. 173-205, which elucidates Coppe's learned background, classical education and literary sophistication, Robert Kenny, 'In These Last Dayes: The Strange Work of Abiezer Coppe', *The Seventeenth Century*, Volume 13, No. 2 (Autumn 1998), pp. 156-184, and Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style: The Rhetoric of Enthusiasm from the Ranters to Christopher Smart* (Cambridge, 1996) - for "Ranters" read "Abiezer Coppe." For Tany see Ariel Hessayon, 'Gold Tried in the Fire: The Prophet ThearauJohn Tany and the Puritan Revolution' (unpublished Ph.D thesis, University of Cambridge, 1996).

5) Davis, p. 63; for Morton and Reay see A. L. Morton, *The World of the Ranters* (London, 1970, paperback edition 1979), pp. 115-142, and Barry Reay, 'Laurence Clarkson: An Artisan and the English Revolution', in *The World of the Muggletonians*, edited by Christopher Hill, Barry Reay and William Lamont (London, 1983), pp. 162- 86.

6) The other tracts were *The Quakers Downfal* (1659), *Look about you: For the Devil you fear is in you* (1659), *A Paradisical Dialogue Betwixt Faith and Reason* (1660) and the no longer extant *Wonder of Wonders* (1659/60; cf. LSF, p. 54). Another edition of *Look about you* was published under the title *The Right Devil Discovered*, in 1659, differing only in the title page. In his "Muggletonian" writings, Clarkson gives his surname as "Claxton". For reasons of lucidity, I have decided to adhere to the earlier version, "Clarkson", throughout this study.

7) cf. Davis, pp. 64-74.

8) cf. LSF, p. 3.

9) Davis, p. 67.

10) LSF, title page.

11) loc.cit.

12) loc.cit.

13) cf. Kenny's article, quoted above, n. 4.

14) Jerome Friedman, *Blasphemy, Immorality and Anarchy: The Ranters and the English Revolution* (Athens, Ohio, 1987), pp. 105ff; for *A Generall Charge* cf. *ibid.*, pp. 108ff; Reay, 173ff.

15) As Clarkson explicitly saw himself as Reeve's follower and successor, and in the light of his rivalry with Muggleton, I prefer to call him a "Reevonian", rather than the more common but in his case anachronistic and ironic "Muggletonian."

16) cf. 1643a, p. 399; 1648, pp. 73, 314/315.

17) Salmon's *A Rout, A Rout* (1649) constitutes an application of the everlasting gospel to both biblical history and the revolutionary upheavals of mid-17th-century England, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 192ff. Cf. also *Heights in Depths* (1651), p. 209; Bauthumley: pp. 226ff, 251, 254, 256/257 and Coppin, *Divine Teachings* (1653 edition), Preface, pp. 2-5, 9, 13, 15, 19, 23, 24.

18) The assumption of the prophetic rôle of the holy fool and the justification of lay preaching or, more comprehensively, the divine inspiration of the common man or woman, derived from biblical passages like Matthew 11.25, *At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes* (Bauthumley, p. 227; Coppin, p. 5), II Corinthians 5.13, *For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause* (cf. Bauthumley, p. 228, Salmon, R, p. 200), Luke 24.45, *Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures* (Coppin, p. 7), and John 6.45, *It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God ...* (Coppin, title page, p. 11), references or allusions to which are frequent in Ranter writings. With regard to the holy fool, cf. also HD, pp 209, 212, 213 and SSS, pp. 61ff. For mechanic preaching see SSS, pp. 56, 58, 60ff, 66 (an assertion of the spiritual equality of men and women) and Bauthumley, p. 260. Coppin emphasizes the exposure of human learning as mere folly and extolls the teaching of the spirit, cf. Coppin, p. 2, Chapter 2, pp. 5, 14, 19, 21ff. Preaching is rendered superfluous.

19) Crisp's focus is Matthew 11.25, which he quotes frequently (1643a, pp. 105, 107, 361; 1643b, p. 76). Sermon XII of volume 1643a, 'The great giver and his free gifts' (pp. 351-358), constitutes an elaborate exposition and simultaneously places great emphasis on John 6.45. Implicitly, this sermon represents a vindication of inspired lay preaching.

20) LSF, p. 4.

21) in: Christopher Hill, *Change and Continuity in Seventeenth-Century England* (London, 1974, paperback edition New Haven, 1991), p. 14; for the following cf. *ibid.*, pp. 10ff.

22) *ibid.*, p. 21.

23) *loc. cit.*

24) LSF, p. 7.

25) Travelling through Lancashire in May 1618, however, James I. blamed the strict Sabbatarianism of the Protestant ministers in the county for its eye-catching Catholicism. This provoked him to issue the *Declaration of Sports*, which thwarted the English Puritans' long-standing campaign for laws enforcing a stricter observance of the Lord's Day, as it stipulated that after attendance of the Sunday service, "our good people be not disturbed, letted or discouraged from any lawful recreation, such as dancing, either men or women, archery for men, leaping, vaulting or any such harmless recreation, nor from having May games, Whitsun ales and Morris dances, and the setting of maypoles and other sports therewith used." Some clergymen in other counties declined to read the declaration in their churches as ordered on the specious grounds that its enforcement was limited to Lancashire. cf. J.P. Kenyon (Ed.), *The Stuart Constitution, 1603-1688. Documents and Commentary*, second edition (Cambridge, 1986), p. 116.

26) *Gangraena*, 3:167.

27) *ibid.*, 3:165.

28) *ibid.*, 3:167.

29) Robert Halley, *Lancashire: Its Puritanism and Nonconformity*, second edition (Manchester, 1872), p. 318. For Eaton, Taylor and the Dukinfield church see also Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Visible Saints: The Congregational Way, 1640-1660* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 29ff.

30) LSF, p. 4.

31) LSF, p. 4. Standish seems to have boasted a tradition of Puritan incumbents. For Protestant and Catholic areas within Lancashire at the turn of the century cf. Christopher Haigh, *Reformation and Resistance in Tudor Lancashire* (Cambridge, 1975), pp. 316-32, for Preston see *ibid.*, p. 318. For the distribution of the Catholic clergy in Lancashire in 1639 see Geoffrey Anstruther, 'Lancashire Clergy in 1639', *Recusant History*, 4 (1957-58), pp. 38-46, for Preston see *ibid.*, p. 45.

32) cf. Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (London, 1964, paperback edition Harmondsworth, 1986), pp. 65ff. In a fast sermon preached before the House of Commons in 1644, the Presbyterian Herbert Palmer spoke sharply against the erosion of the parish system caused by "runners away from their own Parishes" (Palmer, *The Glasse of Gods Providence*, p. 35-36).

33) LSF, p. 5.

34) *loc. cit.*

35) for Bauthumley cf. Nigel Smith's article in *D.N.B.*, Vol. Missing Persons; *BDBR*; McGregor, 1968, pp. 62ff.

36) LSF, p. 6.

37) *BDBR*, 'Calamy'; for Case cf. *D.N.B.*

38) LSF, p. 8.

39) the following after Janice Knight, *Orthodoxies in Massachusetts: Rereading American Puritanism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 1994).

40) *ibid.*, p. 38.

41) Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (New York, 1963), p. 68; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 68ff.

42) cf. Hill, 1972, pp. 170ff.

43) cf. LSF, p. 6; Abiezer Coppe, *Copp's Return to the Wayes of Truth* (1651), pp. 134-135.

44) Abiezer Coppe, *A Fiery Flying Roll* (1650), pp. 16-18; CR, p. 142.

45) cf. Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion, 1640-1660* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 34/35.

46) cf. Hill, 1972, p. 171.

47) Bauthumley, pp. 248/249.

48) LSF, p. 8.

49) *ibid.*, p. 9.

50) David Bogue, *The History of Dissenters from the Revolution in 1688 to 1808*, 4 vols, vol. 1: section II: *The Controversy Respecting Dr Crisp's Works* (1808), p. 401.

51) The little that can be established about Lancaster's biography rests on his *Vindiciae Evangelii: Or, A Vindication of the Gospel, with the Establishment of the Law. Being a Reply to Mr. Steven Gere's Treatise, Entituled, The Doctrine of the Antinomians Confuted. Wherein he pretends to Charge divers Dangerous Doctrines on Dr. Crisp's Sermons*, which was published from his manuscripts in 1694. Benjamin Brook, *The Lives of the Puritans*, 3 vols (London, 1813), vol 2, p. 202, contains an entry for "Mr. Lancaster", an eminent Latin scholar who had been ejected from a living near Banbury as early as 1610, and who had been a fellow of King's College, Cambridge "where he most probably received his education." This might refer to a sizar at King's from 1557 to 1558. More probably, Crisp's Lancaster was the Robert Lancaster who matriculated at St. John's College at Easter 1586 (*Alumni Cantabrigienses*, vol. 3, p. 40). The *Alumni Oxonienses* (p. 874) lists a Robert Lancaster of Westmorland who matriculated at Queen's College on "10 Nov., 1621, aged 17", and graduated M.A. in January 1628/9. However, the date of birth, c.1604, clashes with Thomas Bakewell's remark that Lancaster was "old" in 1644 (*The Antinomians Christ Confounded* [1644], p. 11). Edmund Calamy (*Nonconformists' Memorial*, vol. 2, p. 258) mentions a "Mr. Lancaster" as having been ejected from his living at Baddesley in Hampshire after the Restoration. He attributes to him "a great skill in the Oriental Languages" and gives him as the author of the *Vindiciae Evangelii*. A.G. Matthews (Ed.), *Walker Revised. Being a Revision of John Walker's Sufferings of the Clergy During the Grand Rebellion, 1642-1660* (Oxford, 1948), contains no matching entry.

52) Thomas Bakewell: *A Faithful Messenger sent after the Antinomians* (London, 1644), p. 28.

53) LSF, p. 9.

54) William A. Shaw, *A History of the English Church During the Civil Wars and Under the Commonwealth, 1640-1660*, 2 vols (London, 1900), vol 2, p. 300; for Simpson cf. *D.N.B.*; *BDBR*; Richard L. Greaves, *Saints and Rebels: Seven Nonconformists in Stuart England* (Mercer University Press, n.pl., 1985), Chapter Four.

55) cf. T.C. Dale (Ed.), *The Inhabitants of London in 1638: Edited from MS. 272 in the Lambeth Palace Library*, vol. 1 (London, 1931), p. 50.

56) *ibid.*, p. 224.

57) CJ, ii, p. 549.

58) CJ, iii, p. 268.

59) LJ, vi, p. 409; CJ, iii, p. 389.

60) CJ, iii, p. 584.

61) LSF, p. 9; Morton, p. 116; Davis, p. 69; Reay, p. 167.

62) Gataker, *God's Eye*, Preface, no sig., and *Mysterious Cloudes and Mistes* (1648); for Simpson's vindication from the charges imputed to him in *God's Eye* see his lengthy *Truth breaking forth through a Mist and Cloud of Slanders* (in which he compares himself to biblical martyrs, p. 62) in his collection *The Perfection of Justification Maintained against the Pharise* (London, 1648). Gataker's *Mysterious Cloudes and Mistes* constitutes a lengthy reply to this tract, giving a detailed account of Simpson's examination and behaviour.

63) CJ, iii, pp. 584/585.

64) John Etherington, *A Brief Discovery of the Blasphemous Doctrine of Familisme* (London, 1645), p. 1; sig. A2; for Randall cf. *BDBR*; Smith, 1989, Chapter 3; Rufus M. Jones, *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (London, 1928), pp. 253-263; *Alumni Oxonienses*, p. 1232; Hessayon, pp. 75ff; for the date of his death cf. *ibid.*, p. 75n; for his doctrines see also Robert Baillie, *Anabaptism, the True Fountaine of Independency, Brownisme, Antinomy, Familisme* (London, 1647), pp. 102ff, 112.

65) *Gangraena*, 3:25. The biblical passages quoted are Psalms 19.1 and I Corinthians 11.24,25.

66) LSF, p. 28.

67) *Faithful Messenger*, pp. 29, 35.

68) *Gangraena*, 3:25. For Simpson's character see his anonymous funeral sermon *The Failing and Perishing of Good Men a Matter of Great & Sore Lamentation: Held Forth in a Sermon Preach'd the 26 of June 1662* (London, 1663), especially pp. 27, 31-33, 35. Here, Simpson's "spiritual, heavenly Ministry" and genuine goodness as minister, father and husband are contrasted with the - implicitly antinomian - leanings of his troublesome hearers (p. 22).

69) Etherington, p. 1, sig. A2.

70) *Gangraena*, 1:80; cf. *ibid.*, pp. 97, 173; 2:19.

71) LSF, p. 10.

72) cf. *Gangraena*, 1:89; for Hobson cf. *BDBR*; Greaves, Chapter 5; Anne Laurence, *Parliamentary Army Chaplains, 1642-1651*, Royal Historical Society Studies in History, 59 (London, 1990).

73) *Gangraena*, 1:90.

74) Laurence, p. 135.

75) *Gangraena*, 1:89/90.

76) Greaves, p. 136.

77) cf. Laurence, p. 136.

78) Hill, 1972, p. 94.

79) 1690, p. 72; David D. Hall (Ed.), *The Antinomian Controversy, 1636-1638: A Documentary History*, second edition (Durham, North Carolina, and London, 1990), p. 268; cf. Hutchinson's defence that "wee do no more but read the notes of our teachers Sermons, and then reason of them by searching the Scriptures" (*ibid.*). John Cotton was then teacher of the Boston church. Both Ephraim Pagitt in his *Heresiography* (1645, p. 98) and Robert Baillie in *A Dissuasive from the Errors of the Time* (1645, pp. 149-150) were acutely aware of the impact of Mrs. Hutchinson's meetings. For Bauthumley cf. McGregor, 1968, p. 63.

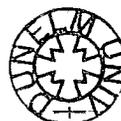
80) *Gangraena*, 3:50.

81) TRFP, no sig.; Hanserd Knollys in *Gangraena*, 3:49.

82) *Gangraena*, 3:62.

83) Shaw, vol 2, p. 79 *passim.*; *Gangraena*, 3:42.

84) *Gangraena*, 3:42.



- 85) loc. cit.
- 86) *Gangraena*, 3:43.
- 87) *ibid.*, 3:266.
- 88) *ibid.*, 3:45,46.
- 89) *ibid.*, 3:172.
- 90) *ibid.*, 3:62.
- 91) *ibid.*, 2:173.
- 92) *ibid.*, 3:30.
- 93) *ibid.*, 3:[no sig.; between pp. 240 and 241].
- 94) *ibid.*, 3:251.
- 95) *ibid.*, 3:252.
- 96) *ibid.*, 3:49/250 [misprint for 249].
- 97) *ibid.*, 3:253.
- 98) loc. cit.
- 99) loc. cit.
- 100) *Gangraena*, 3:254.
- 101) LSF, p. 10; for Wardel cf. Morton, p. 116n.
- 102) LSF, p. 11.
- 103) see David Cressy, *Coming Over* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 115ff.
- 104) LSF, p. 11.
- 105) loc. cit.
- 106) for Patient, also spelt Patience, cf. *D.N.B.*; *BDBR*, William L. Sachse, 'The Migration of New Englanders to England, 1640-1660', *American Historical Review*, 53 (1948), pp. 251-278 (p. 276), *Gangraena*, 1:95,104; 2:101.
- 107) Hill, 1972, p. 306.
- 108) Margaret Spufford (Ed.), *The World of Rural Dissenters, 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 31; for Lollard views on marriage cf. Anne Hudson, *The Premature Reformation: Wycliffite Texts and Lollard History* (Oxford, 1988), p. 292, and pp. 141, 385.; for spousals and the legal situation cf. Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England, 1500-1800* (New York, 1979), pp. 30-35.
- 109) LSF, p. 12.
- 110) FFR, p. 45.

- 111) LSF, p. 16; for the following cf. loc.cit.
- 112) LSF, p. 17.
- 113) for Attaway and Jenney cf. *Gangraena*, 1:120ff (appendix); 2:11; 3:26-27,188; for other instances cf. *ibid.*, 3:36, 112-113, 236.; cf. Baillie, *Anabaptism*, pp. 100, 122.
- 114) cf. LSF, pp. 22 (twice), 24.
- 115) J.F. McGregor, 'The Baptists: Fount of all Heresy', in *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, edited by J.F. McGregor and B.Reay (Oxford, 1984), pp. 23-63 (p. 33).
- 116) *ibid.*, p. 28.
- 117) Baillie, *Anabaptism*, p. 29.
- 118) Pagitt, *Heresiography* (London, 1645), pp. 32-36. Daniel Featley in *The Dippers Dipt*, fourth edition (London, 1646), mentions Muncerians, Silents, Hemerobaptists (who underwent daily baptism), Separatists, Libertines, Hutites, Augustinians, Melchiorits, Georgians, Menonists, Bucheldians, Dippers, Apostolians, Catharists, Adamites and Enthusiasts (*ibid.*, p. 17). He admits, however, that the last four were "Hereticks, more ancient than the Anabaptists properly so called" (*ibid.*, p. 19). His engraving "The Discription of the severall sorts of Anabaptists with their manner of Rebaptizing" (*ibid.*, p. 17) probably constitutes the most famous and intriguing memorial to the proliferation of Baptist beliefs and practices. Featley's book, originally published in 1645, went into seven editions between 1645 and 1660.
- 119) Baillie, p. 30.
- 120) loc.cit.
- 121) Baillie, *Anabaptism*, p. 105; cf. *Gangraena*, 1:16: "among all these sorts of sects and sectaries, there are hardly now to be found in *England* ... any sect thats simple and pure, and not mixt and compounded, that is ... which holds only the opinions and principles of its own way, without enterfering and mingling with the errorrs of other sects; as for example, where can a man finde a Church of simple Anabaptists, or simple Antinomians ... "
- 122) Smith, 1989, p. 147.
- 123) Baillie, *Anabaptism*, p. 123.
- 124) for the Munster Anabaptists cf. Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, second edition (London, 1962), pp. 283-306; for 17th-century English accounts of the tragedy see Baillie, *Anabaptism*, pp. 33ff, Featley, p. 126-127, 131, 133.
- 125) cf. Winthrop, *Short Story*, in Hall, 1990, p. 275.
- 126) *Gangraena*, 3:138f.
- 127) *ibid.*, 3:262.
- 128) Baillie, *Anabaptism*, pp. 29, 66.
- 129) McGregor, 1984, p. 28.
- 130) *Gangraena*, 1:75.
- 131) *ibid.*, 1:181.
- 132) *ibid.*, 2:147.

- 133) LSF, p. 16.
- 134) *Gangraena*, 3:106.
- 135) *ibid.*, 1:181.
- 136) cf. Clarkson's reply to the committee at Bury, LSF, p. 15.
- 137) *Gangraena*, 3:31.
- 138) *loc.cit.*
- 139) *Gangraena*, 3:139. The riotous and grossly blasphemous baptism of a horse took place at Yakesley in Huntingdonshire in the summer of 1644; see *ibid.*, 3:17f.
- 140) for exact dates see Laurence, p. 115.
- 141) quoted in Kenny, p. 161.
- 142) cf. Kenny, p. 161.
- 143) *Gangraena*, 3:169.
- 144) Baillie, *Anabaptism*, p. 94.
- 145) *Gangraena*, 1:76; 3:86; 1:77; cf. also Baillie, *Anabaptism*, p. 94.
- 146) for Oates see *BDBR*.
- 147) the following after B. R. White, *Hanserd Knollys and Radical Dissent in the 17th Century*, Friends of Dr. Williams's Library, thirty-first lecture, 1977 (London, 1977), see also *BDBR* and - fascinatingly - David S. Lovejoy, *Religious Enthusiasm in the New World* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London, 1985), pp. 72, 96-97, 99-100. For Wheelwright see *ibid.*, pp. 72-73, 80-86.
- 148) White, pp. 5/6.
- 149) Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1989), pp. 200ff.
- 150) William G. McLoughlin, *New England Dissent 1630-1883: The Baptists and the Separation of Church and State*, 2 vols (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1971), II, p. 834; Sachse, pp. 256-57; Lovejoy, pp. 96-97. Sachse assumes that Knollys's attitude towards baptism was partly responsible for his troubles in New England, however, according to McLoughlin, Knollys only turned Baptist immediately after his return. Wheelwright's, Patient's and Knollys's ill-starred emigration to Massachusetts can be seen as a consequence of the failure of the Massachusetts Bay Company to exert effective control over the recruitment of ministers in the 1630s. See David D. Hall, *The Faithful Shepherd* (New York, 1974), p. 89.
- 151) *Gangraena*, 1:97.
- 152) *ibid.*, 1:98.
- 153) White, p. 8.
- 154) *Gangraena*, 1:98.
- 155) cf. White, pp. 8ff; *Gangraena*, 1:98.

156) *Gangraena*, 1:97-98.

157) *ibid.*, 1:97.

158) 1690, sig. A2.

159) *Gangraena*, 3:188.

160) LSF, p. 20.

161) *Gangraena*, 3:189; cf. Baillie, who called Anabaptism "the Doctrine of licentiousnesse gilded over with the pretences of the most eminent purity" (*Anabaptism*, p. 95). Illustratively, in Featley's elaborate engraving depicting the Anabaptist "sects", the Dippers, placed right at the centre, are shown as naked men standing in rivers and fondling comely, bare-breasted young women wearing only a shawl draped round their shoulders (Featley, p. 17).

162) *Gangraena*, 3:189. The biblical passage quoted is II Peter 2.14.

163) *loc. cit.*

164) cf. *Gangraena*, pp. 189/190.

165) Baillie, *Anabaptism*, p. 95.

166) for the publication date of *The Pilgrimage of Saints* cf. *Gangraena*, 1:73; Reay, pp. 168, p. 183n.

167) LSF, p. 21.

168) *ibid.*, p. 22; for a very similar story see *Gangraena* 2:11,12.

169) LSF, p. 13. Friedman (p. 105) surmises that Clarkson was ejected from both the Marchant household and the Baptist community on the grounds of immorality, but fails to disclose the sources for this unsubstantiated conjecture. There is no evidence that Clarkson was ejected from either community, or that his conversion to Seekerism sprang from anything but a genuine crisis of faith.

170) *ibid.*, p. 15.

171) *ibid.*, p. 16.

172) *ibid.*, p. 17.

173) LSF, p. 18; for Coppe, Salmon and Wyke cf. Sir Bulstrode Whitelocke, *Memorials of the English Affairs* (London, 1682), vol 3, p. 170; Letter from Andrew Wyke to the Mayor and Aldermen of Coventry, 1 April 1650, MS Clarke 18 fol. 25; cf. Davis, p. 33.

174) LSF, p. 18.

175) *Gangraena*, 1:72; italics in original.

176) *ibid.*, 1:73.

177) *Gangraena*, 1:74; cf. *ibid.*, 2:144; Brook, vol 2, pp. 505f, reprints both Clarkson's petition and the entry in the committee book, directly drawing on *Gangraena* and quoting and endorsing Edwards's pejorative remarks, e.g. that "there never were monsters more to be abhorred than they", referring to Clarkson and other sectaries. In marked contrast, Daniel Neal in *The History of the Puritans or Protestant Non-Conformists* (London, 1736) also reproduces Clarkson's recantation, but is sympathetic towards the sectaries (cf. Neal, vol 2, pp. 163-164).

- 178) *Gangraena*, 1:73; italics in original.
- 179) LSF, p. 19.
- 180) see Cohn, pp. 99ff.
- 181) see Morton, p. 127.
- 182) see entries in *D.N.B.*, *BDBR*, Laurence; Hill, 1972, pp. 192-197, and *The Experience of Defeat* (London 1984, reprint 1994), pp. 80-93.
- 183) *Gangraena*, 1:78.
- 184) W. Sedgwick, p. 50-51, i.e. [228]-[229].
- 185) see entries in *D.N.B.*, *BDBR*, Laurence; Hill, 1984, pp. 93-113.
- 186) see Hill, 1994, pp. 88, 95.
- 187) LSF, p. 19; John Simpson, likewise declared baptising, dipping and all striving for ceremonial purity - whether Presbyterian or Baptist - unnecessary, as it was only faith which counted, see *The Great Joy of Saints* (1654), section B, pp. 31, 111. Pagination starts anew after a sermon cycle on Isaiah 26.19. All subsequent page references refer to section B in this volume.
- 188) *Gangraena*, 2:13-14.
- 189) LSF, p. 19; see also W. Sedgwick, especially pp. 2-4, 23, 28ff (prayer), pp. 49-51 (preaching).
- 190) LSF, p. 20.
- 191) *Gangraena*, 2:7.
- 192) *Gangraena*, 1:29; The allusion is to Revelation 15.8, *And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled*, which also gave the title to John Saltmarsh's *The Smoke in the Temple* (1646).
- 193) quoted in Hill, 1972, p. 193.
- 194) *Gangraena*, 1:18-19.
- 195) *ibid.*, 1:8, see Hill, 1972, pp. 261-268. As a Ranter, Clarkson believed that the Bible was the source of all controversy and division among men. See SE, p. 175.
- 196) *Testimony*, p. 5; *Gangraena*, 1:11.
- 197) LSF, pp. 20, 21.
- 198) *Gangraena*, 2:165-166.
- 199) LSF, p. 23, *Gangraena*, 2:7, for the following see *ibid.*, 2:7-8.
- 200) LSF, p. 23, for the following quotations see *ibid.*; Friedman (p. 99) wrongly locates Sandridge in Herefordshire.
- 201) Friedman, p. 105.
- 202) TRFP, sig. A2b-A3a; all italics in TRFP in original.

- 203) *ibid.*, sig. A3b.
- 204) *ibid.*, sig. A4a-A4b.
- 205) *ibid.*, sig. B4b; the following [no sig.].
- 206) Friedman, p. 105.
- 207) TRFP, [no sig.].
- 208) *ibid.*, sig. B3b-B4a; the following [no sig.].
- 209) *ibid.*, sig. B3a.
- 210) see LSF, p. 24.
- 211) see Charles E. Surman (ed.), *The Register-Booke of the Fourth London Classis, 1646-1659* (London, 1953), pp. 71, 139.
- 212) LSF, p. 25; Hessayon, p. 210n.
- 213) see Dale, MS p. 314; p. 185.
- 214) LSF, p. 25; cf. FFR, pp. 33, 42-43.
- 215) see Morton, pp. 103-104; *The Routing of the Ranters* (1650), pp. 162-163.
- 216) Morton, p. 132n.
- 217) LSF, pp. 25-26.
- 218) *ibid.*, p. 25.
- 219) *ibid.*, p. 26.
- 220) see RR, p. 163.
- 221) LSF, p. 26.
- 222) LSF, p. 27; Morton, p. 98; Smith, 1983, p. 270.
- 223) LSF, p. 28; cf. his claim that Ranters never find "themselves more happy when they are a whoring or drinking" (*Look about you*, p. 98).
- 224) LSF, p. 30; cf. his exposition of Ranter beliefs and practices in LAY, p. 92: "there is nothing that I can think, speak, or do, but God is the Author of it; so what if I lye with another mans wife, what harm can be in that? I know no evil in so doing, for to me all women are but one woman, and this woman, a man, and that man, I man eternity; and therefore I lye with twenty, they are but all one to me, and there being a free consent, what sin can be in this?"
- 225) *CJ*, 21 June 1650, vi, p. 427.
- 226) *Die Veneris*, 27 September 1650; see also Whitelocke, vol 3, p. 473; *Mercurius Politicus*, 17 (26 September - 3 October 1650), in Joad Raymond (Ed.): *Making the News: An Anthology of the Newsbooks of Revolutionary England, 1641-1660* (Moreton-in-Marsh, Gloucestershire, 1993), p. 400; LSF, p. 31; for the following see LSF, p. 32.

227) quoted in Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic* (Harmondsworth, 1991), pp. 445-46; for the following cf. *ibid.*, pp. 443ff, and Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1994), pp. 24-26.

228) LSF, p. 32.

229) LSF, p. 33; LAY, sig. B2.

230) RR, p. 162.

231) see LSF, pp. 25, 26, 31; for Salmon cf. MS Clarke, 18, fol. 23.

232) LSF, p. 31.

233) MS Clarke, 18, fol. 23.

234) see LSF, p. 28; see also RR, pp. 164-165; "My journey's end" is from LSF, p. 34.

235) for Reeve and Muggleton see respective entries in *D.N.B.*, *BDBR*; *The World of the Muggletonians*; for John Robins see Andrew Hopton (Ed.), *The Declaration of John Robins and other Writings* (London, 1992), which also contains long passages from Reeve's and Muggleton's writings concerning Robins (pp. 5-16).

236) quoted in *BDBR*, "Muggleton".

237) see LAY, Introduction.

238) LSF, *Epistle* [no sig.].

239) quoted in Morton, p. 141. In his historical novel *Woodstock* (centenary edition 1871, p. 483), Sir Walter Scott was involuntarily ironic when, giving *The Lost Sheep Found* as an illustrative and "very curious" example of mid-17th-century Familist writing, he wrongly reproduced the name of its author as "Ludovic Claxton"!

240) quoted in Morton, p. 240.

## **5.2 NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO AND CONCLUSION**

1) see entries in *D.N.B.*; *BDBR*; Christopher Hill, 'Dr. Tobias Crisp, 1600-1643', in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill, Volume 2: Religion and Politics in Seventeenth-Century England* (Amherst, Massachusetts, 1986), pp. 141-161; for Crisp's family tree and will see F. A. Crisp, *Collections Relating to the Family of Crispe* (London, privately printed, 1882-1897), for the latter see also anon, 'Tobias Crispe, D.D., Rector of Brinkworth, 1629-1642', *Wiltshire Notes and Queries*, 7 (1913), pp. 384-387.

2) Contrary to the information given in the *D.N.B.* article, Robert Nelson's *The Life of Dr. George Bull, late Lord Bishop of St. David's* (London, 1714), pp. 260-271, does not contain an account of this disputation, but deals with the debates sparked off by the publication of Crisp's *Complete Sermons* in 1690.

3) SE, p. 169.

4) 1643b, p. 376.

5) SE, pp. 167, 168-169.

6) SE, p. 169. Jacob Bauthumley in *The Light and Dark Sides of God* (1650) draws a similar distinction. Like Clarkson, he subscribes to the intrinsic moral neutrality of an act: "The same power that inables man to do good, the same power prevents a man from evill. For neither the evil act nor the good act are evill or good, as they are acts" (Bauthumley, p. 244). Both are inspired by God and "a man as a man hath no more power or freedom of will to do evill then he hath to do good" (ibid., pp. 244/245). Simpson, on the other hand, rejects the idea of the moral neutrality of an act (cf. *Great Joy of Saints*, p. 259).

7) SE, pp. 169-170.

8) SE, pp. 170-171.

9) Romans 8.2; 1648, p. 22.

10) 1648, p. 26; ibid., p. 25.

11) 1643b, p. 362.

12) SE, p. 191. A direct parallel to both Crisp and Clarkson can be found in Bauthumley, who echoes the language of both men. Holding that "God is light and in him no darkness" (Bauthumley, p. 241), Bauthumley writes that sin "is nothing ... it is no substance or creature ... we call it and give it a Being, though indeed in it self it hath none" (ibid., p. 242). The Antinomians' critics, on the other hand, held that only the guilt of sin, but not the being of sin itself, had been taken away in justification (Bakewell, *A Short View of the Antinomian Errours*, 1643, p. 32). Forgiveness of sin does not obliterate its sinful nature, but refers only to "the punishment it self, and obligation to punishment" (Thomas Hotchkis, *An Exercitation Concerning the Nature of Forgiveness of Sin*, London, 1655 [i.e. 1654], p. 109 cf. ibid., pp. 133, 231). Man is not made innocent again, and the attainment of perfection in this life is impossible (ibid., pp. 109-110, 116, 228-233).

13) McGregor, 1968, p. 7. The Antinomians' opponents accused them of deliberately perverting Luther's teachings, cf. Gataker, *God's Eye* [no sig.]; see also Theodore Dwight Bozeman, 'The Glory of the Third Time: John Eaton as Contra-Puritan', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 74, no. 4 (October 1996), pp. 638-654 (p. 644ff).

14) quoted in Hill, 1986, p. 163.

15) ibid., p. 163.

16) SE, pp. 170, 171, 173; LSF, p. 181; LAY, pp. 92-93. For a repudiation of this notion see Simpson, *Great Joy of Saints*, p. 258.

17) Hill, 1972, p. 216.

18) Bauthumley, p. 258. Coppe draws a similar distinction with regard to regenerate and unregenerate behaviour in the *Fiery Flying Roll* (1649): "While Angels (in the forme of men) shall swear, Heart, Blood, Wounds, and by the Eternal God,&c. in profound purity, and in high Honour, and Majesty. ... there's swearing ignorantly, i'th darke, vainely, and there's swearing i'th light, gloriously" (FFR, p. 28).

19) 1648, p. 26.

20) 1643a, p. 317. Cf. Bauthumley's view of sin as "the Cloud that interposes betwixt God and us, though God be the same and all one to us when we sin, yet we do not see it" (Bauthumley, p. 243).

21) 1643b, p. 130. Important biblical references adduced by Crisp are Hebrews 8.12, *For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their transgressions will I remember no more*

(1643a, p. 336; 1643b, p. 416) and Isaiah 43.25, *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins* (1643a, p. 319; 1648, p. 24). With regard to the latter, Crisp, drawing on Zwingli and Calvin, introduces the language of debt and court trials into theology. Thus, he observes that "blotting out" is borrowed from the language of debt books (1643a, p. 325) and demonstrates in technical terms how Christ's atonement resulted in the cancellation of the debt man owed God (ibid., pp. 325ff). He then equates the elect sinner with a murderer acquitted in the court of God in order to render his meaning even more plastic: "We have committed murther, fellony, treason, rebellion and enmity, all that can be said against the Lord ... he knowes it is done; but when we come to tryall, God himself brings in an ignoramus, God himself saith, here is not one bill of indictment against him, there is nothing but what is blotted out" (1643a, p. 333).

22) SE, p. 171.

23) 1643b, pp. 96-97. This image testifies to the widespread occurrence of poaching in 17th-century England and, by implication, in Crisp's parish. Cf. Clarkson's experience at Pulham Market, where he met with accusations of being a (spiritual) "sheep-stealer ... robbing" the local clergy "of their flock" (LSF, p. 11). It is also an example of Crisp deliberately resorting to homely imagery and couching his theological expositions in terms of everyday life with which the humbler members of his audience would be familiar. Other instances of this illustrative tendency in Crisp are the famous rich meadow - barren common contrast in his attempt to deny practical antinomianism (cf. below), the reference to a local monstrous birth (see below) and his introduction of legal language and the language of debt into theology in his interpretation of the above-cited *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins* (Isaiah 43.25, cf. note 21).

24) cf. 1643a, p. 313; 1643b, pp. 226, 298; 1648, pp. 102, 301. The biblical text is *Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy*, see also FFR, p. 27.

25) 1643b, p. 150.

26) 1643b, p. 4.

27) "Every elect person receives his [perfection] now in the womb" (1643b, p. 275; cf. 1643a, p. 62). Crisp bases this doctrine on the story of Jacob and Esau. Calvin himself had grounded a cycle of sermons on grace and redemption in this myth (Hill, 1994, p. 204). It was often adduced by 17th-century radicals, particularly the Diggers, in their rejection of worldly and spiritual primogeniture, and to highlight the contrast between the worldly, proud reprobate and the spiritual man endowed with divine grace (cf. Hill, 1994, pp. 204-215, 244-245). Crisp more specifically understands it as an example of justification from eternity. He emphasizes that God's judgement of Romans 9.13, *Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated*, was spoken before the children's birth, which becomes clear from the preceding passages: *(For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth:;) It was said unto her, The elder shall serve the younger* (Romans 9.11,12). Jacob, though "borne and conceived in sinne" (1643b, p. 183), was "beloved in the wombe" (1643b, p. 271) before he could be called (ibid.) and prior to any faith on his part (1648, p. 277). Thus, if a child dies in the womb, "the case of such a child is the same, and as good as is the estate of such a person that hath attained the most evident calling that ever man was called by: for Jacob was beloved when Rebecca conceived him, while yet he was in the womb" (1643b, p. 277).

The extension of salvation to the stillborn, despite its biblical justification, was a revolutionary idea and as such concussed the foundations of the state church. In orthodox medieval Christian thought, it was the sacrament of baptism that turned a child into a full human being, and as such constituted a prerequisite to salvation. Babies who died unbaptized were consigned to limbo (Thomas, p. 40). Hence, midwives were allowed to administer baptism to children likely to die soon if no clergyman could be found in time. The doctrine of election in the womb can be found in Lollardy, though there it was, in the words of the heretic John Dawnsy, restricted to a child "begotten between a cristen man and a cristen woman" (Hudson, p. 291), in which case the parents'

faith was infused into the child in the mother's womb already, and needed no further confirmation. Rather than embracing free grace as Crisp did, these Lollards in fact advocated a kind of religious tribalism, based upon the genealogy of election, which oddly links them with New England's *visible saints*, although the latter *restricted* the baptismal sacrament to the children of "godly parents" (see Morgan, pp. 125ff) where the Lollards dispensed with it. In both ways, this destroyed the orthodox notion of a state church, to which baptism was the gate.

Among 17th-century English Antinomians, justification prior to faith was a widespread notion. John Eaton, John Saltmarsh, John Simpson, Joseph Caryl and John Crandon all subscribed to it, see Dewey D. Wallace jun., *Puritans and Predestination: Grace in English Protestant Theology, 1525-1695* (Chapel Hill, c.1982), pp. 118ff). Crisp and William Pemble, however, seem to have been two of the few who actually taught justification from eternity, and Dewey Wallace calls Crisp "the most notorious advocate" of this doctrine (Wallace, p. 119).

Note, however, that Bauthumley rejects Crisp's interpretation of Romans 9.13, and espouses the doctrine of universal salvation: "there are no distinctions in God, he is but one individed [sic] essence ... the Scripture saith, *Jacob* have I loved and *Esau* have I hated; it is but after the manner of men for I cannot see there is love or hatred in God, or any such passions: that which admits of degrees is not perfect" (Bauthumley, p. 234). In his *Faithfull Messenger* (pp. 4-15), Thomas Bakewell elaborately refutes that Romans 9.13 could in any way be interpreted to hold forth salvation from eternity. Simpson, for whom see *Great Joy of Saints*, pp. 55, 57, 78-79, based his doctrine on II Timothy 1.9, *Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began* (cf. *ibid.*, p. 55).

28) 1648, p. 326.

29) see 1643a, p. 411.

30) 1643a, p. 39.

31) 1648, pp. 111-112.

32) 1643b, p. 161; cf. 1648, p. 122.

33) 1648, p. 112.

34) 1643b, p. 513.

35) Bauthumley, p. 244.

36) 1648, pp. 111-112.

37) Bauthumley, p. 245. Hill (1986, p. 178) recently distanced himself from his earlier emphasis on the morally subversive consequences of an Antinomian stance as they were practised most notoriously by Coppe and Clarkson. Instead, he directs our attention to the respectable - as far as we know - monogamy of prominent Antinomians like Crisp, William Walwyn, Henry Denne and John Saltmarsh. According to Hill, modern historians who concentrate on the sexual aspects of Antinomianism might be too inclined to take up the emphases of contemporary heresiographers and thus exaggerate the impact of practical antinomianism.

38) 1648, p. 126.

39) Whitelocke, p. 438 (14 January 1650).

40) *ibid.*, p. 446 (16 March 1650).

41) SE, p. 173.

42) LSF, p. 181.

43) SE, p. 164. Note the interesting case of Henry Mudford, Henry Ferman and Francis Bridges, three "plaine men" brought to trial in the Court of High Commission on 21 June 1632. They subscribed to Titus 1.15 and, in a surprising adumbration of both Ranter tenets and Crisp's sermons, believed that "to the believer all things are pure, and that David when he committed adultery pleased God as well as when he danced before the arke. 2. That Justified persons cannot displease God. 3. That the moral Law did not bind the conscience nor accuse the believer. 4. That those that lived before Christ, and looked for his comming and did believe it were actually justified. 5. That believers are justified before they have faith actualle. ... They say that God's love was not the lesse for David for his sinnes of adultery and murther; for God's love is unchangeable", see S. R. Gardiner (Ed.), *Reports of Cases in the Court of Star Chamber and High Commission*, Camden Society New Series, 39 (Westminster, 1886) pp. 270-271, 313-314; cf. also McGregor, 1968, p. 12.

44) 1643b, pp. 161, 509; 1648, pp. 116, 361.

45) Hill, 1986; p. 148.

46) 1648, p. 64.

47) Hill, 1986, p. 147.

48) see 1643a, sermon xiv.

49) *ibid.*, p. 411.

50) *ibid.*, p. 388. It is surprising that Hill does not refer to this passage.

51) 1648, p. 174.

52) see *ibid.*, pp. 175-176.

53) see 1643a, p. 84; 1643b, p. 229.

54) Crisp's reference to the Book of Ezekiel is interesting, Ezekiel being Coppe's favourite Old Testament prophet on which he modelled his behaviour in *A Fiery Flying Roll*. The narration of the making of the Roll constitutes a direct appropriation of the language of Ezekiel, especially Ezekiel 3.1-3, with the significant difference that prophecy does not come to Coppe, as it does to Ezekiel, *as honey for sweetness* (Ezekiel 3.3), but tastes as "bitter as wormwood" and "lies broiling, and burning in my stomach" (FFR, p. 18). Coppe professes to be the spiritual brother of Ezekiel, the "son of contempt" (FFR, p. 41). With him he shares "strange visions" as well as divinely inspired "strange postures" (*ibid.*, p. 41). These "pranks" (*ibid.*, p. 41) lead to Coppe's being labelled a madman and a reprobate (*ibid.*, p. 42) in society, whereas he points out to a much-noticed association between alleged lunacy and divine inspiration which found expression in the early modern notion of the "holy fool": those held in scorn by society are, like Ezekiel, "great courtier[s] in the high court of heaven" (FFR, p. 41). Interestingly, Coppe alludes to Crisp's favourite passages from Ezekiel 16 in his equivocal recantation *Copp's Return to the Wayes of Truth* (1651): "But at length, everlasting loving kindness cast his skirts of love over me, (even ... when I was cast out to the loathing of my person) when none eyes pitied me, none had compassion on me" (CR, p. 142). Crisp's reference to King David in connection with his rejection of the notion that murder and adultery forfeit salvation (1643a, pp. 432-433) establishes a further link between him and Coppe, since David is another Old Testament character adduced by the latter (FFR, pp. 43, 44) to back scripturally his own Ranter behaviour, particularly flirting and sexual intercourse with gypsy women (FFR, p. 44). We may presume that Crisp would have been shocked by such deductions.

55) 1643a, p. 191, cf. *ibid.*, p. 426.

56) 1643b, p. 89.

57) 1643a, p. 62.

58) *ibid.*, p. 418.

59) 1643b, p. 183; 1648, p. 273.

60) Bedford, p. 22.

61) SE, p. 173; JMC, p. 144. For the authorship of *A Justification of the Mad Crew* see Appendix.

62) 1643a, p. 85.

63) *loc. cit.*

64) 1648, p. 162.

65) SE, p. 171; JMC, p. 145.

66) 1643a, pp. 192-193.

67) "But wee are all of us an unclean thing, all our righteousneses are as filthy rags, or a menstruous cloth" (1643b, p. 8). This quote seems to be a conflation of Isaiah 30.22, *Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and the ornament of thy molten images of gold: thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence*, and Isaiah 64.6, *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousneses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away*. The Geneva Bible merges the two images of the menstruous cloth and the filthy rags, giving it as *filthy cloates*. The marginal gloss on Isaiah 64.6 notes a contemporary tendency to conflate the images: "We are iustly punished because we have prouoked thee to angr, and thogh we wolde excuse our selues, yet our righteousnes, & best vertues before thee as vile as cloutes, or (as some read) like the menstruous clothes of a woman." See also 1648, p. 91. On the image of the menstruous cloth see also below, note 139.

68) cf. above, 'Notes on Introduction and Chapter One', note 18. Coppe's prophetic "pranks" in London constituted a particularly plastic and, to his contemporaries and 'audience', sensational illustration of this defiance of conventionally reasonable behaviour. Cf. FFR, pp. 33, 42ff; RR, p. 162.

69) 1643b, p. 229; cf. his interpretation of the tale of Ephraim and Manasses, quoted below: "Let no man therefore look upon humane prudence, nor discourse according to reason, but let us look upon the act of God in dispensing of his Grace, as he, who is wisdome it selfe, cannot erre, he disposeth of iniquity, and layeth it upon Christ, and he whom he blesseth, is and shall be blessed" (1643b, pp. 229-230).

70) 1643a, p. 129.

71) *ibid.*, p. 375.

72) 1643b, p. 9.

73) *ibid.*, p. 229.

74) RM, p. 192.

75) 1643b, p. 399.

76) *ibid.*, p. 205.

77) *loc. cit.*

78) 1643b, p. 226.

79) Bauthumley, p. 244. An interesting parallel is provided by Anne Hutchinson, who pushed Crisp's idea to its logical conclusion and in the mid-1630s was accused of holding that "That not beinge [sic] bound to the Law, no Transgression of the Law is sinfull" (in Hall, 1990, p. 352).

80) LSF, p. 25, see also LAY, pp. 92-93.

81) 1643b, p. 164.

82) 1648, p. 326.

83) *ibid.*, p. 176.

84) *ibid.*, p. 182.

85) cf. Pinnell's vindication of Crisp in his introduction to the 1648 volume and Bogue's description of Crisp at Brinkworth as "greatly respected for the humility and sanctity of his life" (Bogue, p. 399). Cf. also 'Tobias Crispe, D.D., Rector of Brinkworth, 1629-1642', pp. 384-387.

86) 1832, vol 1, p. 122.

87) *ibid.*, pp. 122-123.

88) Hill, 1972, p. 186; 1986, p. 148.

89) SE, p. 173.

90) see 1643a, p. 441; 1648, p. 254; 1643b, p. 25.

91) 1690, p. 99; italics in original.

92) 1648, p. 273.

93) 1643b, p. 130.

94) LSF, p. 6.

95) see 1643a, pp. 358-359.

96) 1648, p. 266.

97) Richard Sibbes, 'The Faithful Covenanter', in *The Works of Richard Sibbes*, vol 6, reprint (Edinburgh, 1983), pp. 1-25 (p. 4).

98) 1643a, p. 159.

99) 1690, p. 99.

100) 1643b, pp. 509-510.

101) Colossians 2.2: *That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the father, and of Christ.*

Hebrews 10.22: *Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.*

102) 1643a, p. 317.

103) SSS, pp. 42, 49.

104) FFR, pp. 22, 45, 47.

105) see *ibid.*, pp. 25, 44, 46.

106) LSF, p. 30; LAY, p. 92.

107) 1648, pp. 297-298.

108) JMC, p. 145.

109) SSS, p. 65.

110) 1643b, p. 307; JMC, p. 140.

111) 1643b, p. 272.

112) Proverbs 38; 1643b, p. 160. In marked contradistinction to this, John Sedgwick recommended that clergymen should preach "hell ... daily unto men" in order to "keep many out of hell", as "the threats of the Law ... do awaken and rouse them out of their securitie" (John Sedgwick, *Antinomianisme Anatomized Or, A Glasse for the Lawlesse* (London, 1643), p. 11.

113) SE, p. 173.

114) Davis, p. 61.

115) TRFP, [no sig.].

116) SE, p. 170.

117) JMC, p. 152.

118) FFR, p. 47; see also APH, p. 74.

119) DPD, pp. 17, 22.

120) *ibid.*, pp. 27, 54.

121) BS, pp. 14, 58, 189.

122) *ibid.*, p. 187. Cf. Canticles 1.15, 4.1, 5.12.

123) 1643b, p. 445.

124) *ibid.*, p. 449.

125) *ibid.*, p. 455.

126) *ibid.*, p. 456.

127) see JMC, p. 141; FFR, pp. 27,28.

128) Cf. JMC, p. 141; Joseph Salmon's observation, in *A Rout A Rout* (Thomason date 10 February 1649), that unrecognized saints suffer from persecution, parallels Crisp's earlier remarks: "The reason why we are hated, despised and trampled upon, is, because the world knoweth us not, they know not the Father in us" (R, p. 188). Salmon engaged in prophetic behaviour and practical antinomianism - "wicked swearing and uncleanness" in the words of Bulstrode Whitelocke (Whitelocke, p. 446) - with Coppe and Andrew Wyke at Coventry in March 1650 and thus fitted

the contemporary description of a libertine as used by Crisp, embracing the notion "That it was God which did swear in them, and that it was their liberty to keep company with Women for their Lust" (ibid., p. 446). He later characterized his behaviour as "posting most furiously in a burning zeal towards an unattainable end" (HD, p. 204).

129) 1643b, pp. 83-84. For the literal nature of Christ's taking on the sins of men cf. also 1643b, pp. 111, 113.

130) JMC, p. 151. The biblical reference is to Colossians 2.9, *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.*

131) APH, pp. 75, 76; FFR, pp. 54-55; RSZP, p. 119.

132) 1643b, p. 376; SE, p. 166; TG, sig. A4. For the *Theologia Germanica* see also Steven Ozment, *Mysticism and Dissent* (New Haven and London, 1973), chapter two.

133) This chimes in with Jacob Bauthumley's view of sin. "But in respect of God, light and darkness are all one to him; for there is nothing contrary to God, but only to our apprehension" (Bauthumley, p. 234). Sin in Bauthumley's eyes is privative, "properly the dark side of God, which is a meere privation of light" (Bauthumley, p. 243). It exists only in the conscience, where it is "the Cloud that interposes betwixt God and us, though God", who is conceived of as immutable, "be the same and all one to us when we sin, yet we do not see it" (Bauthumley, p. 243).

134) 1643a, p. 14; 1643b, p. 8. Cf. Salmon's view in *Heights and Depths* (Thomason Date 13 August 1651): "Man, as man growing from the root of the first *Adam* (the Earthly fallen principle) is nothing else but a massie heap of sin, a cursed lump of foul impiety, and must certainly expect to receive the wages of iniquitie" (HD, p. 221).

135) 1643b, p. 374.

136) ibid., p. 276. The biblical text is *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*

137) Coppin, p. 17.

138) SE, pp. 170, 171.

139) 1648, p. 329. The relationship between man and Christ was often couched in terms of marriage. An interesting parallel to Crisp's imagery occurs in John Eaton's *The Honey-Combe of Free Justification by Christ Alone*. In an obvious allusion to Isaiah 64.6, one of Crisp's favourite passages to throw into relief the inefficacy of works in the attainment of salvation (cf. above), Eaton urges his audience to discard the "menstruous cloathes of their own righteousness" in favour of "the precious wedding-garment" of the righteousness of Christ (Wallace, p. 115).

140) 1648, p. 332.

141) loc.cit.

142) SE, pp. 166-167.

143) SE, p. 166. Cf. Bauthumley, who holds that all creatures in the world are "not so many distinct beings, but ... one intire Being, though ... distinguished in respect of their formes: their being is but one and the Same Being, made out in so many forms of flesh" (Bauthumley, p. 233).

144) SE, p. 144.

145) BS, p. 77.

146) *ibid.*, pp. 79, 77.

147) 1648, p. 76.

148) TG, p. 2.

149) VG, pp. 153.

150) *ibid.*, p. 158.

151) 1648, p. 78. Bauthumley, in a strikingly similar image, calls God "that endlesse and infinite Ocean" (Bauthumley, p. 258). Crisp's nutshell is a non-biblical image. It chimes in with the Sibbesian description, famously embraced by Cotton, of the believer as an "empty vessel" to be filled with the "oyle" of God's outpouring grace (Cotton in Knight, p. 113). This in turn was echoed by another famous Puritan of the Sibbesian strand, John Preston: "I bring my heart to thee as an empty caske, beseeching thee to fill it with grace" (in: Knight, p. 259). Crisp's language manifests another startling resemblance to Cotton's when he speaks of the saints as "elect vessels" (1643b, p. 477). Unlike Cotton's "empty vessel", which is taken from Jeremiah 51.34, *he hath made me an empty vessel, he hath swallowed me up like a dragon*, I find it impossible to trace "elect vessels" back to the Bible, although Crisp seems to allude to a biblical passage. These linguistic parallels clearly place Crisp in the context of the Preston - Sibbes - Cotton circle and the wider free grace movement.

152) LSF, p. 182; cf. Bauthumley, p. 252. For Anne Hutchinson see Hall, 1990, p. 351ff.

153) LSF, p. 185, see also LAY, p. 98: "when we die, we shall be swallowed up into the infinite Spirit, as a drop into the Ocean."

154) BS, pp. 79, 86, 88.

155) HD, p. 212.

156) JMC, p. 146.

157) 1643a, p. 45. Bauthumley embraces a similar belief in the immortality of the soul and the mortality of the body. After death, the soul would be "rapt up in God" (Bauthumley, p. 250) again, cf. Bauthumley, pp. 249-251.

158) 1643a, p. 66.

159) *ibid.*, p. 374.

160) *ibid.*, p. 372. This image is derived from James 1.6, *But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed*. Bauthumley uses it with regard to his state prior to his conversion to the inward religion of the Holy Spirit: "if I may speak my own experience ... so long as I lived upon the outward scripture, outward commands and duties, set times of humiliation, prayer, & I know not what, I was always tost to and fro like the waves of the sea ..." (Bauthumley, p. 261).

161) SE, p. 167.

162) see FFR, p. 27; SE, p. 164; LSF, p. 25; LAY, p. 93.

163) SE, p. 164. "The cutting off of a Dog's neck" is a reference to Isaiah 66.3, *He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol. Yea, they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations*. I owe this reference to Smith, 1989, p. 322.

164) SE, p. 167.

165) *ibid.*, p. 168.

166) *ibid.*, p. 162. Cf. "they twain are made one in spirit" in DPD, p. 47.

167) cf. 1648, p. 325.

168) Bauthumley, p. 235.

169) Another interesting parallel manifests itself in Clarkson's and Crisp's interpretation of the crucifixion as an act that had actually been willed by God. Clarkson adduces this example to demonstrate that all power derives from God and that, consequently, light and darkness are one: "from whom came this Power? the Scripture saith, from above, (to wit) from God: yet this was the power of darknesse, of sin: was it not a sinfull act to crucifie Christ? that I know you will conclude it was a wicked act; and yet this act was according to the will of God, as saith the History, By the Power of God the Kings of the earth stood up, and the Rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Christ &c. [I Cor. 2.5; II Cor. 6.7; 13.14] ... consider this Power in Pilat was a dark sinful Power, yet it came from God, yea, it was the Power of God, as is recorded: *I form light, I create darkness, I form peace, I create evil* [Isa. 45.7]" (SE, p. 167). Crisp evokes an even more violent image, and dwells on the pleasure God must have derived from the crucifixion. He draws this conclusion from Isaiah 53.10, *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him* (cf. 1643a, p. 58; 1643b, p. 214): "He must not onely behold, or allow the suffering of his Sonne, but he must be an actor of it himselfe; nay he must be pleased in it" (Crisp, 1643a, p. 59).

170) SE, p. 173.

171) Bauthumley, pp. 233-234.

172) Salmon in HD, p. 207.

173) Pinnell, pp. 1-2. Salmon embraces this notion and couches it in very similar terms of parental pregnancy: "Unity is the Father, the Author and begetter of all things; or (if you will) the Grandmother in whose intrinsecal womb, variety lies occult, till time orderly brings it forth" (Salmon, p. 222).

174) Pinnell, p. 17.

175) *ibid.*, p. 20.

176) see *ibid.*, p. 56.

177) *ibid.*, p. 3.

178) *ibid.*, pp. 21-23.

179) DPD, pp. 1, 4.

180) *ibid.*, p. 1.

181) *ibid.*, pp. 3-4, 8-9.

182) see HD, pp. 207, 216, 233.

183) 1643a, p. 45.

184) *ibid.*, pp. 46, 48.

185) 1643a, p. 22. This is from Jeremiah 2.13, *For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water* and Jeremiah 17.13, *O LORD, the hope of Israel, all that forsake thee shall be ashamed, and they that depart from me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living waters.* In both cases, the image refers to God himself and not, as in Crisp, to Christ.

186) 1643a, pp. 129, 144.

187) APH, p. 73. Coppe mentions the Alpha and Omega in his letter to Andrew Wyke in MS Clarke, 18, fol. 24.

188) see 1643a, pp. 379-405; 1643b, p. 100. The biblical text is *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.* Coppe refers to Colossians 1.20, *And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven,* in the margin, yet the message is basically the same. For Clarkson and the Alpha and Omega see SE, p. 175.

189) note Pinnell's use of inversions and illumination imagery reminiscent of Isaiah 42.16 in 'The Translators Apology, Caution and Retraction' to *Philosophy Reformed*: "This [sic] not incredulous or ridiculous that a true Chymist (so much now in derision) should find light in darknesse, darknesse in light, bitter in sweet, sweet in bitter; good in evil, evill in good, body in spirits, and spirits in bodies" (no pagination).

190) see his foreword 'To the Christian Reader' [no sig.].

191) 1690, [no sig.], p. 62.

192) 1690, p. 34.

193) *ibid.*, p. 33.

194) *ibid.*, p. 11; compare *God's Eye*, [no sig.].

195) 1690, p. 42-43.

196) *ibid.*, p. 39.

197) *ibid.*, p. 43.

198) *ibid.*, p. 33.

199) *ibid.*, pp. 52, 54.

200) Bedford, p. 54; see also Bakewell, *Faithfull Messenger*, pp. 16-17.

201) 1690, p. 23.

202) *ibid.*, p. 46.

203) *ibid.*, p. 92.

204) *ibid.*, p. 43.

205) *ibid.*, pp. 35, 46.

206) *ibid.*, pp. 35, 41, 45.

207) *ibid.*, p. 42, cf. p. 49.

208) Bedford, p. 44.

209) 1690, p. 81.

210) *ibid.*, p. 82.

211) *ibid.*, p. 39.

212) *ibid.*, p. 85.

213) *ibid.*, p. 94.

214) 1690, p. 94.

215) see above, 'Notes to Introduction and Chapter One', note 79.

216) 1643a, p. 371; 1648, p. 114; SE, p. 173.

217) LSF, p. 6.

218) SE, p. 173.

219) see the wills of Ellis Crisp (Crispe, vol 1, p. 14) and Isabell Pynner, née Crisp (Crispe, vol 4, p. 23), both of which mention Gataker.

220) see family trees in Crispe, vol 2, pp. 29, 31; *D.N.B.* entry for Sir Henry Vane the Younger.

221) *Gangraena*, 3:124; for some wonderfully caustic comments on Peter's change of direction cf. *ibid.*, pp. 126, 139-140.

222) see, for example, Samuel Rutherford's *The Trial and Triumph of Faith* (London, 1645), pp. 56-59, 111-112, 169ff, 190, and his *A Sermon Preached to the Honourable House of Commons at their Late Solemn Fast, Wednesday, Janu. 31, 1643* (London, 1644), facsimile reprint in: R.M. Jeffs et. al (Ed.): *The English Revolution I: Fast Sermons to Parliament*, vol 9 (London, 1971), pp. [267]-[334] (p. 32 [i.e.302]); Bakewell's *Faithfull Messenger*, pp. 28ff. Crisp is the only Antinomian mentioned by name in the introduction to Thomas Bedford's *Examination*. The Wiltshire minister Thomas Hotchkis wrote a confutation of the third volume of Crisp's sermons in 1648-49, which, although initially intended for publication, never seems to have made it into print (see Hotchkis, p. 152).

For references to New England and the Hutchinsonians see for example Rutherford, *Trial*, p. 260, and his *Sermon Preached Before the Right Honourable House of Lords in the Abbey Church at Westminster, Wednesday the 25. Day of June, 1645* (London, 1645), facsimile reprint in: R.M. Jeffs et. al (Ed.): *The English Revolution I: Fast Sermons to Parliament*, vol. 17 (London, 1971), pp. [199]-[270] (p. 33 [i.e.237]). See also Baillie, *Dissuasive*, pp. 93, 149-150.

223) Nelson, pp. 271, 260; see also Bogue, pp. 399ff.

224) for aspects of the Antinomian Controversy explicitly dealing with Hutchinson's female identity see Hall, 1990, pp. 313-317, 382-383. Hutchinson was accused of breaking the fifth commandment (*ibid.*, p. 313), and - in Hugh Peter's famous words - of having "stept out of your place, *you have rather bine a Husband than a Wife and a preacher than a Hearer ...*" (p. 383; italics in original). See also Mary Beth Norton's fascinating chapter on Hutchinson, 'Husband, Preacher, Magistrate' in *Founding Mothers and Fathers* (New York, 1996), pp. 359-399, and Kai T. Eriksen, *Wayward Puritans. A Study in the Sociology of Deviance* (New York, London and Sydney, 1966) p. 82. For Hutchinson's denial of "Familism" and Antinomianism and her utter confusion that such doctrines should be imputed to her see Hall, 1990, pp. 362, 372.

225) for mid-17th-century legislation against heresy and immorality see McGregor, 1968, pp. 75-79. Cohn and Hopton reproduce the sections of the Blasphemy Act dealing with Ranterism in *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, pp. 331-333, and the Introduction to *Abiezer Coppe: Selected Writings*, pp. 6-7, respectively. The act was directed against men and women who, among other tenets, held themselves "to be very God", or equal with God, who, in Claxtonian terms, subscribed to the intrinsic neutrality of all acts and consequently denied the objective existence of sin and "Unholiness", and who made God the author of all acts. First offenders were to be committed to prison for six months, a subsequent offence was to entail the banishment of the offender. Refusal to leave the country, or return without permission, was to be punishable by death.

226) for this interpretation see Eriksen's *Wayward Puritans*, especially pp. vi-vii, 10-11, 106-107, 170.

227) Hutchinson based her emigration to Massachusetts on Isaiah 30.20, *And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers*: "after this the Lord carrying Mr Cotton to New England (at which I was much troubled) it was revealed to me, that I must go thither also" (Winthrop, in Hall, 1990, p. 272). For her championship of, and dependence on, Cotton, see also Hall, 1990, pp. 274, 318.

### **5.3 NOTES TO THE APPENDIX**

Note: In the interests of lucidity, all textual references to *A Justification of the Mad Crew* and the Ranter writings are given in the text. Endnotes have been limited to references to secondary sources.

- 1) McGregor, 1968, p. 73.
- 2) cf. Davis, pp. 14, 43.
- 3) Thomas N. Corns, *Uncloistered Virtue* (Oxford, 1992), p. 177.
- 4) Whitelocke, p. 445.
- 5) cf. Davis, p. 44.
- 6) Friedman, p. 126; Corns, p. 179.

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2. PRIMARY TEXTS

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