

'God, the only giver of victory':  
Providentialism and Secularization in England, c.1660-1760.

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This thesis titled  
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Providentialism and Secularization in England, c.1660-1760.

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## ABSTRACT

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'God, the only giver of victory': Providentialism and Secularization in England, c.1660-1760 (97 pp.)

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From c.1660 to c1760 England is often characterized as a society undergoing an accelerating process of secularization, and by extension, modernization. This narrative of the period ignores the way many in England understood and explained the world around them; through the non-secular and providential language of divine intervention. This thesis argues that during this one hundred year period England underwent no process of secularization, and instead remained consistent in its commitment to the language of divine intervention. This thesis examines the way English clergymen used the language of divine intervention publicly, in order to illuminate the utility and substance of the language of divine intervention for a highly visible and influential segment of English society.

Approved: \_\_\_\_\_

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## INTRODUCTION:

Archbishop of York John Dolben<sup>1</sup> preached a sermon on 14 August 1666 celebrating England's recent victory over the Dutch in the St. James's Day Battle (4 August 1666). Dolben attributed England's victory to "...the Goodness of God, who ... both in judgment and mercy approves himself our strength, our deliverer, the horn of our salvation, and our high tower."<sup>2</sup> Dolben understood English success as the direct result of divine intervention on England's behalf. Dolben perceived God to have been "...as good to us as he was to David," an assertion that connects Dolben with a tradition of providential interpretation that emerged in England during the Edwardian Reformation.<sup>3</sup> This tradition assumed that England was a new Israel, a chosen people who God either defended or punished for their degree of piety.<sup>4</sup>

Nearly a century after Dolben's 1666 thanksgiving sermon, James Fortescue<sup>5</sup>, a priest at Christ Church, Oxford, preached a November, 1759 sermon on England's recent military success against the French, especially at the Battle of Quebec (1759). In it he argued "...that God may be as truly said to give us the victory, and to deliver us from our enemies..."<sup>6</sup> Fortescue was certain of that because God had aided the Israelites so

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1 John Dolben (1625-1686), a graduate of Christ's Church College, Oxford, Canon of Christ Church College Oxford and Archbishop of York. Dolben, along with Gilbert Sheldon, pushed forward an agenda in the House of Lords to defend the Church of England against both protestant dissenters, and the Catholic James II. from Andrew M. Coleby, "John Dolben," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

2 John Dolben, *A sermon preached before the King, Aug. 14, 1666 being the day of thanksgiving for the late victory at sea*. (London, 1666), p. 13.

3 Dolben, *A sermon preached before the King, Aug. 14, 1666*, p.14.

4 Patrick Collinson, *The Birthpangs of Protestant England: Religious and Cultural Change in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Oxford, 1983).

5 James Fortescue (1716-1777) graduate of Exeter College, Oxford and curate of St. Swithin's, Merton. from James William Kelly, "James Fortescue," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

6 James Fortescue, *A Sermon preach'd at Topsham on Thursday November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1759 Being the Day appointed for A General Thanksgiving for the late Success of His Majesty's Arms by Sea and by Land*

frequently in scripture when they were threatened with destruction. Fortescue realized that “...in all similar cases we must exert our own natural force and strength and being thus conquerors ascribe every piece of success we meet with to God, the only giver of victory, whose arm is stretched out for us...”<sup>7</sup> Like Dolben nearly a century earlier, Fortescue argued that England was a new Israel. This association meant that God acted on England's behalf, as he had for Israel in the Old Testament. Even though Dolben and Fortescue are divided by a century, their assumptions and vocabulary, which formed the foundations of their world-views, resemble one another.

The providentialism evident in Dolben's and Fortescue's sermons points to problems in the historiography of seventeenth and eighteenth-century English history. In particular, historians identify the “long eighteenth century” (1660-1832) as the crucible of modernity, a time when England rapidly secularized.<sup>89</sup> This intellectual sea change, many historians argue, did not constitute a decline in religion, but rather, was characterized by a transformation from a “religious culture” to a “religious faith.”<sup>10</sup> In this narrative, the “religious culture” of the middle ages provided the English with “shared practices, values, meanings, and symbolic forms of society,” all of which were replaced by secular versions within a “secular culture;” this made religious explanations of any event or activity redundant, leaving only “religious faith,” which was less of a

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*and for the late very plentiful Harvest.* (London, 1759), p. 8.

7 Fortescue, *Sermon preach'd at Topsham on Thursday November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1759*, p. 9.

8 C. John Sommerville, *The Secularization of Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1992), p. 65.

9 Owen Chadwick, *The Secularization of the European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1975), p. 5.

10 Sommerville, *The Secularization of Early Modern England*, p. 9; Blair Worden, “The Question of Secularization,” in *A Nation Transformed: England After the Restoration*, eds. Alan Houston and Steve Pincus (Cambridge, 2001), p. 21; Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London, 2000), p. 13.

world-view than a broadly held belief.<sup>11</sup> Many historians characterize the discourse on internal politics during the period as shifting away from divinely legitimated political models towards those constructed from reasonable analysis and public consent.<sup>12</sup> Some historians also assert that English foreign policy underwent a similar transformation when national interest and material goals supposedly displaced the traditional languages of anti-papery and millenarianism.<sup>13</sup>

According to mainstream scholarship, religion's ability to explain the natural world significantly declined beginning in the late seventeenth century, when Newtonianism supposedly offered a universal model that did not require divine intervention, even though Newton himself did not embrace this ramification of his cosmology.<sup>14</sup> The impetus for this replacement of "religious culture" with "secular culture" is attributed to a wide variety of structures and developments. Often cited is the intense anti-clericalism that characterized the European Enlightenment as well as the Protestant Reformation.<sup>15</sup> This transformation in England is also attributed to the nature of Protestantism, a faith built on intellectual propositions that make it a religion more

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11 Sommerville, *Secularization of Early Modern England*, p. 9.

12 Mark Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain: Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 20-22; Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), p. 334.

13 Steven Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism: Ideologies and the Making of English Foreign Policy, 1650-1668* (Cambridge, 2002), p. 447.

14 Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic, Studies in popular beliefs in sixteenth and seventeenth century England* (Hertfordshire, 1971), p. 80; Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), p. 334.

15 Mark Goldie, "Priestcraft and the Birth of Whiggism," in *Political Discourse in Early Modern Britain*, eds. Nicholas Phillipson and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge, 1993), p. 209; Peter Gay, *The Enlightenment, An Interpretation: The Rise of Modern Paganism* (New York, 1966); Justin Champion, *The Pillars of Priestcraft Shaken: The Church of England and its enemies, 1660-1730*, (Cambridge, 1992).



prone to disproof and in turn more open to secularization than Roman Catholicism.<sup>16</sup>

Others argue that despite this affinity for secularization, Protestantism was still an obstacle to modernization and the Enlightenment stripped it from England along with the vestiges of the “religious culture” of the middle ages.<sup>17</sup>

Accepting traditional explanations of English modernization and secularization makes it nearly impossible to appreciate why so many used the language of divine intervention to explain natural and human history throughout the “long eighteenth century.”<sup>18</sup> The Christianized language of divine intervention, used in late early modern England, provided both a vocabulary and a methodology through which events could be explained. This language was a composite of assumptions that bound the kinds of ideas that could be expressed by its practitioners. The primary assumption of the language of divine intervention was that an active and interested God directly influences earthly events. The language of divine intervention also assumed that no event can happen without divine agency. However, the language of divine intervention does not entirely remove responsibility for events from mankind. Instead the language of divine intervention assumed that divine intervention always imbues events with a moral directive. This moral directive, if heeded by the English, could ensure future divine favor, while ignorance or simply ignoring God's directive could bring on divine wrath. Additionally, God did not act out of spite, and human actions had divine consequences. The language of divine intervention assumes that the moral implications of any event

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16 Sommerville, *Secularization of Early Modern England*, p. 3.

17 Chadwick, *Secularization of the European Mind*, p. 8.

18 Philip Williamson, “State Prayers, Fasts and Thanksgivings: Public Worship in Britain 1830-1897,” *Past and Present* 200:1 (August 2008), pp. 121-74.

could be understood through comparison with the Bible. According to the language of divine intervention, scripture is a highly accurate historical account. Any divine motivation explained in scripture is also accurate, and divine intervention is always consistent. Given these assumptions one could understand the method and motivation of divine intervention by comparing current events with scriptural analogs.

While a narrative of inevitable and profound secularization undergirds nearly all accounts of the “long eighteenth century,” a few historians argue that the era did not necessarily witness a fundamental break with the past.<sup>19</sup> J.C.D. Clark, argues that providentialism persisted in England into the nineteenth century.<sup>20</sup> In other words, Clark contends that secularized languages of explanation did not supplant traditional religious ones during the seventeenth or eighteenth centuries.

This thesis explores the ways the English used the language of divine intervention, a religious language of explanation, from c.1660-c.1760, when this language is supposed to have been in decline and on its way towards outright extinction. Clark rightly argues that religion still played an important role in the way Englishmen understood and explained the world around them, but he does not explore exactly how this language was used, or what the religious language of eighteenth-century England actually looked like.

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19 J.G.A. Pocock, “Historiography and Enlightenment: A View of Their History”, *Modern Intellectual History* 5:1 (2008), pp. 83-96; Roy Porter, “The Enlightenment in England”, in *The Enlightenment in a National Context*, eds. R. Porter and M Teich (Cambridge, 1981), pp. 1-18; Jonathan Scott, *Algernon Sidney and the Restoration Crisis* (Cambridge, 1991), p. 27; B.W. Young, *Religion and Enlightenment in Eighteenth-Century England* (Oxford, 1998).

20 J.C.D. Clark, “Providence, Predestination and Progress: or did the Enlightenment Fail?”, *Albion* 35:4 (2003), pp. 559-89; see also J.C.D. Clark, *English Society, 1660-1832: religion, ideology and politics during the ancien regime* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 280.

Seventeenth and eighteenth century Englishmen believed that divine intervention was paramount to their nation's survival. It is therefore unsurprising that they meticulously studied contemporary events for evidence of God's providence. To explain current events, Englishmen looked to scriptural analogs in the Bible that contained similar details. This allowed practitioners to decipher God's motivation by comparing events with previous explanations in scripture. This seventeenth and eighteenth-century English methodology relied on the basic assumption that divine motivation was always consistent and that any indication of divine motivation offered in scripture was accurate and still applicable to current events. In other words, scripture functioned as a control group to which current events could be compared. The English also assumed that in any scriptural comparison England was always cast as Israel, a notion that originated in the 1530s.<sup>21</sup>

It is traditionally argued that providentialism was only ever appealing to a small minority of Englishmen. Keith Thomas argues that the language of divine intervention, while significant in the early seventeenth century, was only appealing or accessible to a small yet particularly vocal minority. Thomas asserts that use of language of divine intervention was divided in England along both confessional and economic lines. The 'Godly,' argues Thomas, found the language particularly useful given their extreme Calvinism and propensity for millenarianism.<sup>22</sup> Additionally, Thomas contends that the lower orders in English society found the language of divine intervention unappealing because of its focus on accepting earthly fortune as an indicator of piety or morality. This

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<sup>21</sup> Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 77.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 79.

conclusion leads Thomas to assert that the language of divine intervention must have been highly attractive to a population he identifies as the “well-to-do.”<sup>23</sup> Thomas limits the primacy of the language of divine intervention to the early seventeenth century and argues that developments in natural philosophy, particularly Newtonian mechanical philosophy in the 1670s and 1680s, strained the language of divine intervention to its breaking point and pushed it into obsolescence.<sup>24</sup>

Other historians have revised Thomas's notion that the language of divine intervention was exclusive to a small segment of English society. Alexandra Walsham rejects Thomas's notion of the language of divine intervention as a language limited to English minority groups. Walsham argues that all segments of English society accepted the language of divine intervention, regardless of economic status or religion. What divided these populations, argues Walsham, was not a commitment to the language of divine intervention, but how aggressively it was applied to contemporary events.<sup>25</sup> For Walsham, the language of divine intervention was not a shibboleth of the economic elite or the religiously zealous, but rather “...a set of ideological spectacles through which individuals of all social levels and from all positions on the confessional spectrum were apt to view their universe, an invisible prism which helped focus the refractory meaning of both petty and perplexing events.”<sup>26</sup> Despite Walsham's break with Thomas on the issue of widespread use of the language of divine intervention, she accepts Thomas' overall timeline for its demise. Walsham argues that both the late Stuart state, as well as

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23 Ibid., p. 112.

24 Ibid., p. 80.

25 Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, p. 2.

26 Ibid., p. 3.

many Newtonian natural philosophers, abandoned the language of divine intervention out of an aversion to enthusiasm and superstition; instead they favored the languages of secular reason and mechanical philosophy in the late seventeenth century.<sup>27</sup>

This thesis argues that the language of divine intervention experienced no such decline in the late seventeenth century. Instead it persisted and remained remarkably consistent from c.1660 to at least c.1760, if not later, and functioned as a primary language of explanation long after Thomas and Walsham argue it was clearly in decline. J.G.A. Pocock defines language as “...idioms, rhetorics, specialized vocabularies and grammars...” which limits what can and cannot be expressed within a particular context.<sup>28</sup> The limits and assumptions of the language of divine intervention necessitate an understanding of the divine that is traditional, conservative, and most significantly anti-secular. To ignore the basic assumptions that underwrote a significant portion of political discourse in this period is to force modernity and modern languages on a period where they would have been entirely alien.

This thesis explores the way England's clergy used the language of divine intervention, c.1660-c.1760. Like most of Europe's clergy during this period, the clergymen of England were highly educated. England's clergy was the primary source of information, and interpretation of that information; they interpreted information for the vast majority of England.<sup>29</sup> England's clergy operated distinctively in this capacity

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27 Ibid., p. 334.

28 J.G.A. Pocock, "The Concept of a Language and the *métier d'historien*: some considerations on practice," in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early-modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden. (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 21-25.

29 Tony Claydon, "The Sermon, the public sphere and the political culture of late seventeenth-century England", in *The English Sermons Revisited*, eds. Lori Ferrell, Peter McCulloch (Manchester, 2002), pp. 208-235.

through the eighteenth century unlike their continental counterparts in France, a development which can be attributed to the fact that England's enlightenment was not anti-clerical, as were many continental enlightenments.<sup>30</sup>

This thesis explores primary sources produced by English clergymen of all denominations from Charles II's restoration in 1660 until Great Britain's accession a century later. Most of these sources are printed transcripts of public sermons. Sermons and public lectures were the most widely available source for information on current events as well as interpretations of those events in the language of divine intervention. These public sermons were often well attended, and in the case of feast and fast days, attendance was compulsory for the whole of England. High attendance rates made the reception of the language of divine intervention at these venues a nearly universal experience in England.<sup>31</sup>

Within the period c.1660-c.1760 three periods are examined in order to compare the way the language of divine intervention was used throughout this one hundred year focus. Within each of these periodic samples this thesis examines the way the language of divine intervention was used to explain instances of warfare, threats to the royal succession, and prophecy. Chapter I of this thesis focuses on events in the reign of Charles II before the Exclusion Crisis of the late 1670s and 1680s. The succession crisis of this chapter is the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in 1660. An examination of this event reveals how seventeenth-century English clergymen understood the restoration, as

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30 Pocock, *Historiography and Enlightenment*, p. 85; J.G.A Pocock, *Barbarism and Religion. Vol. 2 : Narratives of civil government*, (Cambridge, 1999); J.G.A. Pocock, 'Authority and property: the question of liberal origins'. in *After the Reformation: essays in honor of J.H. Hexter*, ed. B.C. Malament (Manchester, 1980), pp. 331-54.

31 Tony Claydon, *William III and the Godly Revolution*. (Cambridge, 2006), p. 110.

well as how they conceived of Charles II's legitimacy and the source of his sovereignty. The event of military significance is the second and third Anglo-Dutch Wars (1665-67, 1672-74). These conflicts illuminate the ways in which English clergymen explained victory and defeat in the language of divine intervention and also how the clergy used this language to justify a war against other Protestants. The final section of this chapter explores the work of Edward Stillingfleet (1635–1699), the bishop of Worcester and a theologian noted for his work on natural religion in general and prophecy in particular.

Chapter II turns its attention to the early eighteenth century. The Hanoverian Succession speaks to similar concerns as those surrounding the Stuart Restoration, but it also reveals the way in which the language of divine intervention could be used to construct and strengthen claims of legitimacy when the existing claim was particularly weak. The military incident explored in this chapter is the war of the Spanish Succession (1701-1714). This provides a basis for comparison with the Anglo-Dutch Wars of the seventeenth century, and it also explores the way the language of divine intervention was used to explain war with Roman Catholic nations. The work of William Whiston (1667-1752), a natural philosopher, is also analyzed in this section. Whiston's commitment to Newtonianism and the language of divine intervention illuminates how the two could be reconciled. Whiston's work indicates to the fact that Newton and Newtonianism did little to transform the language of divine intervention in any significant way during the early eighteenth century.

Chapter III examines the central role the language of divine intervention in the middle of the eighteenth century. The event of political importance in this chapter is the

defense of the Hanoverian Succession in 1745 against the second Jacobite rising led by prince Charles Stuart, the young pretender. The martial portion of this chapter explores the way divine intervention was used to explain the events of the Seven Years War (1756-63) which was fought both in Europe and abroad in colonial possessions. The final portion of this chapter focuses on the work of Thomas Newton (1704-82), a clergymen and natural philosopher who, like William Whiston, operated simultaneously within the languages of Newtonian natural philosophy and the language of divine intervention.

This exploration of the way English clergymen used the language of divine intervention from c.1660-c.1760 reveals a substantial flaw in the secularization argument. This period in England cannot be characterized as one of rapid and all-encompassing secularization when political discourse rested upon undeniably religious assumptions at the time. The origins of secular modernity are most likely found sometime after the middle of the eighteenth century.



## CHAPTER I:

There was perhaps no more a providentially focused state in English history than the Cromwellian Protectorate.<sup>32</sup> Even those historians who see the 1650s as the moment of genesis for English modernity cannot deny that Cromwell's domestic and foreign policy were conceived of and carried out within the language of divine intervention.<sup>33</sup> While the English of the 1650s readily used the language of divine intervention to interpret the world around them, Cromwell's use of the language proved to be extreme, even by the standards of the day. This fanatical use of the language of divine intervention contributed in no small way to the collapse of the Protectorate after Cromwell's death in 1658.

When England restored the Stuart monarchy in 1660, the English made every attempt to reverse Cromwellian innovations to the English state. This reaction to the end of the interregnum included an effort to ensure rule of law in England as a bulwark against the arbitrary rule that some contended had come to characterize Cromwell's protectorate. At his Restoration, Charles II embraced a commitment to the rule of law as one of the two primary personal ambitions of his reign.<sup>34</sup> Charles II's second great ambition was to put to rest the religious conflicts of the first half of the seventeenth century. Charles intended to heal confessional divides in England through religious toleration, one of the most significant and controversial issues of his reign. He also suppressed the providential religious extremism that Cromwell was emblematic of,

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32 Blair Worden, "Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England," *Past and Present* 1:109 (November 1985), pp. 55-99.

33 Steven Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism: Ideologies and the Making of English Foreign Policy, 1650-1668*, (Cambridge, 2002).

34 Charles II, *The Declaration of Breda*, (Breda, 1660).

because Charles blamed this world-view for his father's martyrdom and his own years in exile.<sup>35</sup>

The English supported the return of the rule of law to England enthusiastically, and Charles came to represent that return.<sup>36</sup> Additionally, the English were as concerned about religious extremism as Charles himself.<sup>37</sup> They did not, however, desire a complete break with the Cromwellian world-view or particularly with the language of divine intervention. The English clergy of Charles II's reign continued to use the language of divine intervention to explain matters of domestic and foreign political importance as well as the natural world. English clergymen explained Charles II's restoration in 1660 to their congregations in the language of divine intervention, and it was in this language that they expressed their ambitions for Charles II's reign. Charles himself, however, was unwilling to conceive of his own ambitions in the language of divine intervention. This created a climate where the language of divine intervention was used to develop and express complaints and concerns about Charles II's policies during the disastrous and widely unpopular second and third Anglo-Dutch wars (1665-67, 1672-74). Steven Pincus is correct in identifying the 1660s as the moment when the English court began to conceive of foreign and domestic policy in secular languages, but this secularization failed to penetrate English society beyond those closest to Charles II.<sup>38</sup> In addition, the secularization of the Stuart state was not the first step towards a modern, secular England,

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35 Harris, *Restoration*, pp. 55-6.

36 Ibid., p. 6.

37 Ibid., p. 55.

38 Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism*.

but rather an aberration within a narrative deeply committed to providentialism and the use of the language of divine intervention.

### The Stuart Restoration:

Oliver Cromwell died in September 1658, leaving the future of the protectorate unclear. Cromwell's son, Richard, became lord protector, but it was clear to many that the son lacked the elements of his father's personality that allowed Oliver Cromwell to rule as effectively as he had, balancing the interests of both Parliament and the army. In 1659 Parliament demanded Richard Cromwell's resignation, after which the army dissolved Parliament itself. In order to prevent the collapse of the English state, General George Monck marched with an army from Scotland in 1660 to ensure free elections of a parliament, so it could invite back the one man Monck believed could restore order in England. On 8 May 1660, the Convention Parliament declared Charles II as king of England since January 30, 1649.

On 4 April 1660, Charles II issued the *Declaration of Breda*. In the declaration Charles expressed his desire “...to obtain the possession of that right which God and nature hath made our due ... after so long misery and sufferings, remit and put us into a quiet and peaceable possession of that our right...”<sup>39</sup> The notion that the Stuart Restoration was a quiet and peaceable end to the Interregnum was a popular one among all but the most intense of dissenters and republicans. The English, ready to move beyond the arbitrary oppression that many believed had come to characterize the Cromwellian Protectorate, welcomed Charles with great enthusiasm. Charles II, aware of

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39 Charles II, *The Declaration of Breda*, (Breda, 1660).

this concern among his subjects, made it clear in the Declaration of Breda that arbitrary rule in England was over. Charles II's rule would be characterized by adherence to the established law and tradition. Charles II's ambitions for England, however, were twofold. He ultimately wanted to break the hold of Puritanism on politics in England through liberty of conscience; his ambition was born of his deep distrust of the hotter sort of protestant dissenter.<sup>40</sup>

In the early summer of 1660 William Creed<sup>41</sup> preached a sermon on the restoration of David to the throne of Judah to his congregation at St. Mary Woolchurch in London. Creed did not intend his sermon to simply be an exercise in biblical history, instead he specifically pointed to God's desire to restore David to his throne. He said: "Our eyes have lived to behold this much ... that this scripture is fulfilled in our ears..."<sup>42</sup> Creed directly related scriptural passages, which discussed the restoration of David to the throne of Judah, to contemporary events. In this case, Creed referred to the restoration of the Stuart monarchy in England. Creed, as well as countless other Church of England clergymen in the 1660s, made similar comparisons between the Davidic restoration in the Old Testament and the Restoration of the Stuart monarchy. This comparison is unsurprising since many understood England as a new Israel with a relationship with the divine like the Israel of the Old Testament in many significant ways.<sup>43</sup> Creed and other

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40 Ibid.

41 William Creed (1614/15-1663) a graduate of St. John's College, Oxford, and archdeacon of Wiltshire. Also a client of Gilbert Sheldon and an Arminian. Edward Vallance, "William Creed," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

42 William Creed, *Judah's Return to their Allegiance and David's Return to his Crown and Kingdom: A Sermon Preacht at St .Mary Woolchurch Upon June, 28, 1660*, (London, 1660), p. 3.

43 For examples of English clergymen of the Restoration identifying England as a new Israel see Richard Allestree, *A Sermon Preached at Hampton Court on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1662 Being the Anniversary of His Sacred Majesty's most happy return*, (London, 1662), pp. 30-31; Anthony Sadler, *Mercy in a Miracle*

English Clergymen believed that God acted personally on behalf of the English in events of political significance. They also believed that God's motives and actions could be better understood through comparison with scriptural analogs, events in the Bible which contained similar actors and events to issues of contemporary importance. The language of divine intervention required more than just an understanding of a deep connection between Israel and England, and English clergymen went to great lengths to identify every significant or useful parallel between scripture and the Stuart Restoration in order to discover the most appropriate interpretations.

From 1660 to 1670 Church of England clergymen linked Charles II overwhelmingly with King David of the Old Testament.<sup>44</sup> The similarity between the two for seventeenth-century English clergymen extended beyond both being monarchs, although some did agree that analogies with David “...extendeth to all other kings duly constituted; at least such as serve and worship the true God, and submit their scepter to

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*showing the deliverance and the duty of the King and the people in a sermon* (London, 1660), p. 17.

<sup>44</sup> see, for instance, Richard Allestree, *A Sermon Preached at Hampton Court on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1662 Being the Anniversary of His Sacred Majesty's most happy return*, pp. 3, 4, 6, 8, 14, 33; Clement Barksdale, *The King's Return: A Sermon Preached At Winchomb in Gloucestershire upon the King's Day, Thursday, May 24. 1660*, (London, 1660), pp. 3, 4, 6, 11-12; Creed, *Judah's Return*, pp. 1, 19; Sheldon Gilbert, *David's Deliverance and Thanksgiving: A Sermon Preached before the King at Whitehall Upon June 28, 1660 Being the Day of Solemn Thanksgiving for the Happy Return of his Majesty*, (London, 1660), pp. 2, 25; Thomas Hodges, *Sion's Hallelujah Set forth in a Sermon preached before the right honorable house of Peers*, (London, 1660), p. 12; John Lake, *A Sermon Preached at Whitehall upon the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1670 Being the day of his Majesties Birth and Happy Restoration*, (London, 1670), p. 1-2, 42; Edward Reynolds, *Divine Efficacy without Humane Power Opened in a Sermon Preached at St. Margaret's Church in Westminster before the Right Honorable the House of Commons*, (London, 1660), p. 23; Anthony Sadler, *Mercy in a Miracle showing the deliverance and the duty of the King and the people in a sermon*, p. 3, 18; William Price, *God's Working and Britain's Wonder: A sermon Congratulating the most happy establishment of his sacred majesty Charles the II on his throne*, (London, 1660), pp. 1-3, 11; John Douch, *England's Jubilee or Her happy return from captivity in a sermon preached at St. Botolphs Aldergate, London*, (London, 1660), p. 3; Francis Gregory, *David's Return from his banishment set forth in a thanksgiving sermon for the return of his sacred majesty Charles the II*, (Oxford, 1660), pp.1, 27; Simon Ford, *The Loyal Subjects Exultation for the Royal Exiles Restoration in the Parallel of K. David and Mephibosheth on the one side; and Our Gracious sovereign K. Charles and his loving subjects on the other set for in a sermon*, (London, 1660), pp. 2-5.

that of Christ.”<sup>45</sup> There was an understanding among English clergymen, that of all other monarchs since the time of David, Charles II was the most comparable to David. As John Lake<sup>46</sup> argued at the tenth anniversary of the Restoration:

Upon this peculiar accompt cometh in our King, above most kings that have been in the World, since David's time. Set up, and set up in the same manner, by the same means, or rather by the same immediate Hand of Providence that David was. Never might God have said with greater emphasis or more apt signification, Yet have I set my King up my holy hill of Sion.<sup>47</sup>

Lake's argument that David and Charles II were near identical monarchs rests on two points. The first is that both David and Charles were denied their crowns by usurpers who drove them into extended exile. The second is dependent on the role played by the usurper's generals at the moment of restoration since they were both instrumental bringing about their respective restorations.

In October 1651, after having lead a failed Scottish uprising, Charles II fled to the continent and did not return until 1660. Charles II's exile was compared to two different instances of exile in the life of David. The first of these being David's exile under King Saul: “...our royal sovereign, was wholly stripped of all his dominions and banished into foreign lands ... hunted from place to place (as David formerly was, when Saul pursued him) like a Partridge upon the mountains.”<sup>48</sup> This particular instance of banishment was

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45 John Lake, *A Sermon Preached at Whitehall upon the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1670 Being the day of his Majesties Birth and Happy Restoration*, p. 2.

46 John Lake (bap. 1624, d. 1689) graduate of St. John's College, Cambridge and Bishop of Chichester as well as a nonjuror. In 1670 Lake was prebendary of Fridaythorpe. from H.H. Poole, “John Lake,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

47 John Lake, *A Sermon Preached at Whitehall upon the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1670*, p. 2.

48 Simon Ford, *The Loyal Subjects Exultation for the Royal Exiles Restoration in the Parallel of K. David and Mephibosheth on the one side; and Our Gracious sovereign K. Charles and his loving subjects on the other set for in a sermon*, p. 2; The phrase “partridge upon a mountain” applied here to Charles II is

significant for Simon Ford,<sup>49</sup> a Church of England clergyman, who in a sermon in 1660 argued that Charles II's restoration was a far greater act of divine mercy than David's restoration. Ford said that "...David's banishment was not as many weeks as our sovereigns was years ... and by consequence this mercy to our sovereign after twelve years banishment vastly exceeds David's."<sup>50</sup> In instances where English clergymen cited this first exile for comparison, Oliver Cromwell was identified with Ish-botheh, the son of King Saul who usurped David's divinely appointed right to kingship.<sup>51</sup> This scriptural analog possessed added utility for comparison with the Stuart Restoration because of the role played by Abner in Ish-botheh's defeat. While David's armies were successful on countless occasions against the forces of Ish-botheh, David managed to secure his throne only after Abner, one of Ish-botheh's generals, joined David's forces and arranged for his restoration to the throne of Judah. In sermons that explained Charles II's return and the fall of the protectorate in terms of David's defeat of Ish-botheh, Abner was equated with General Monck. As John Lake insisted, "That renowned [Monck], never to be mentioned without glory to God, and honor to himself, who through the conduct of a secret, but wise

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uttered by David in the Book of Samuel to describe himself in exile.

49 Simon Ford (1618/19-1699) a graduate of Magdalen Hall, Oxford and the vicar of St. Lawrence, Reading. Ford was also outspokenly hostile to Quakers and a proponent of infant baptism. from Barry Till, "Simon Ford," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

50 Ford, *The Loyal Subjects Exultation for the Royal Exiles Restoration*, p. 3; Ford cites Samuel 26:24 as evidence that David's exile was no more than a few weeks, in which the Holy Ghost states "...he had not so much as washed his clothes from the day the king departed to that day."

51 Richard Allestree, *A Sermon Preached at Hampton Court on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1662 Being the Anniversary of His Sacred Majesty's most happy return*, p. 4; Clement Barksdale, *The King's Return: A Sermon Preached At Winchomb in Gloucestershire upon the King's Day, Thursday, May 24. 1660*, p. 14; John Lake, *A Sermon Preached at Whitehall upon the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1670 Being the day of his Majesties Birth and Happy Restoration*, pp. 42-42; Simon Ford, *The Loyal Subjects Exultation for the Royal Exiles Restoration in the Parallel of K. David and Mephibosheth on the one side; and Our Gracious sovereign K. Charles and his loving subjects on the other set for in a sermon*, pp. 2-3.

providence ... is Abner-like the very man to make our David King over his English Israel.”<sup>52</sup>

Ish-botheh was not the only scriptural usurper English clergymen cited in their attempts to explain the Stuart Restoration in the language of divine intervention. More commonly Cromwell was identified with Absalom.<sup>53</sup> Absalom, David's eldest son, led a rebellion against his father at the city of Hebron, the former capital of Judah. David was driven out of Israel but regained control of his kingdom after the battle of Ephraim Wood where Absalom was swept from his horse by a tree branch and killed. “That [Charles] was David, ... and some say Absalom was the Usurper's host.”<sup>54</sup> After the end of the battle, however, David was unable to unite the tribes of Israel and restore himself to the throne until he had made peace with Amasa, Absalom's general. As was the case with Abner, Monck was cast as England's Amasa.<sup>55</sup> This particular narrative depicts Charles II within a very paternal understanding of kingship. The usurper here is neither a rival claimant nor an unruly citizenry, instead, he is a son in rebellion against his father. In this way the restoration is characterized as good and necessary for restoring a broken family, with the father clearly at its head.

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52 John Lake, *A Sermon Preached at Whitehall upon the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1670 Being the day of his Majesties Birth and Happy Restoration*, p. 43.

53 William Creed, *Judah's Return to their Allegiance and David's Return to his Crown and Kingdom: A Sermon Preacht at St .Mary Woolchurch Upon June, 28, 1660*, p. 3; Thomas Hodges, *Sion's Hallelujah Set forth in a Sermon preached before the right honorable house of Peers*, p. 18; Anthony Sadler, *Mercy in a Miracle showing the deliverance and the duty of the King and the people in a sermon*, p. 11; John Kerswell, *Speculum Gratitude or David's Thankfulness unto God for all his benefits*, (Oxford, 1660), pp. 23-24.

54 William Creed, *Judah's Return to their Allegiance and David's Return to his Crown and Kingdom: A Sermon Preacht at St .Mary Woolchurch Upon June, 28, 1660*, p. 1.

55 Ibid., pp. 3, 5.



These two narratives of the Stuart Restoration, as constructed in the language of divine intervention, are designed to shed light on the primary agents and first cause of the Stuart Restoration. Among the English clergy there are no instances when agency for the Restoration is attributed to the English people. However, some clergymen, like Richard Allestree, argued that the English made themselves worthy of a king through piety. “We applied to God's directions in the text, we did seek David our King...”<sup>56</sup> Others believed that the English were still unworthy of a king, and could only preserve the Stuart Restoration through increased piety.<sup>57</sup> It was uncommon to see Charles II given credit for his own restoration. William Price, a dissenting minister preaching in 1660, asserted that it was Charles's responsibility to maintain his own restoration.<sup>58</sup> Charles II could accomplish this, argued Price, by accepting his role as England's David more fully and remembering to attribute any royal success to God. Even General Monck, who featured prominently in both Davidic narratives of the Stuart Restoration as an integral part of its success, is consistently characterized as a tool of divine will.<sup>59</sup> All of these sermons go to great lengths to establish the fact that, like David, Charles II owed his restoration to the throne to divine influence, “...for when the King is brought home, it is the lords doing.”<sup>60</sup>

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56 Richard Allestree, *A Sermon Preached at Hampton Court on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 1662 Being the Anniversary of His Sacred Majesty's most happy return*, p. 33.

57 John Kerswell, *Speculum Gratitude or David's Thankfulness unto God for all his benefits*, pp. 26-27.

58 William Price, *God's Working and Britain's Wonder: A sermon Congratulating the most happy establishment of his sacred majesty Charles the II on his throne*, p. 11.

59 Anthony Sadler, *Mercy in a Miracle showing the deliverance and the duty of the King and the people in a sermon*, p. 3, 18; William Price, *God's Working and Britain's Wonder: A sermon Congratulating the most happy establishment of his sacred majesty Charles the II on his throne*, p. 11; William Creed, *Judah's Return to their Allegiance and David's Return to his Crown and Kingdom: A Sermon Preacht at St .Mary Woolchurch Upon June, 28, 1660*, p. 5.

60 Clement Barksdale, *The King's Return: A Sermon Preached At Winchomb in Gloucestershire upon the King's Day, Thursday, May 24. 1660*, p. 6.

English clergymen not only constructed accounts of the Stuart Restoration in terms of King David's return to the throne of Israel, but they also compared the Stuart Restoration to the resurrection of Christ in the new Testament; on occasion this comparison was made even in sermons that already contained comparisons to David.<sup>61</sup> This comparison was facilitated by the use of the language of divine intervention to interpret the death of Charles I in 1649.<sup>62</sup> The Cult of Charles the Martyr had effectively elevated the execution of Charles I to something more than a mere criminal execution. It was elevated enough for a comparison with the crucifixion of Christ. In 1660 Anthony Sadler,<sup>63</sup> a Church of England clergyman, said of Charles I's execution, "Never was murder since our savior died with such mock justice boldly justified; yet never person came more near then [Charles I] the manner of our saviors tragedy."<sup>64</sup> In addition, Sadler compared the English people during the Interregnum, not to the people of Israel, but to the disciples of Christ awaiting the resurrection of Christ.<sup>65</sup> While neither Sadler nor any other English Clergyman explicitly identified Charles II's Restoration with the resurrection of Christ, their logic speaks to the notion that, just as regicide was an unusually grave sin, the restoration of a king was a distinctively supernatural event, one which could only be carried out through divine intervention.

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61 William Creed, *Judah's Return to their Allegiance*, p. 9.

62 Andrew Lacey, *The Cult of Charles the Martyr: the rise and fall of political theology 1640-1859* (Rochester, 2003).

63 Anthony Sadler (1610/11-c.1683) graduate of St. Edmund's Hall, Oxford, rector of Berwick St. James in Wiltshire, extraordinary chaplain to the king, and a noteworthy drunk and womanizer.

64 Ibid., p. 5.

65 Ibid., p. 15.

Charles II's restoration to the English throne was greeted with widespread optimism, especially among English clergymen.<sup>66</sup> The English were glad to have a sovereign willing to restore liberties and rights denied to them by the Cromwellian state.<sup>67</sup> The English clergy did not, however, want a ruler who was unwilling to accept the providential ambitions that England had developed under Oliver Cromwell. While in power, Charles II failed to successfully advance English ambitions abroad. He also failed to conceive of his own ambitions in the language of divine intervention, preferring languages of secular discourse. As a result, the failures of Stuart policy at home and abroad were explained through the language of divine intervention as divine punishment. Sermons on war exclusively dealt with how both the people, and more often the king, should atone for transgressions against God.

#### The Second and Third Anglo-Dutch Wars:

In March 1665, Charles II declared war on the Dutch Republic. While figures at court, such as Lord Arlington and Sir Thomas Clifford, pushed for a war with the Dutch due to their hostility towards republican governments, many in England, including Charles himself, entered into war with the Dutch fully aware that it was a war motivated by economic concerns.<sup>68</sup> English trade legislation - particularly the 1660 Navigation Acts and the Staple Act - limited the degree to which the Dutch could trade in England, and after a few small conflicts off the coast of west Africa, the English fleet engaged the

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<sup>66</sup> Tim Harris, *Restoration, Charles II and his Kingdoms* (London, 2005), pp. 43-56.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>68</sup> Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, eds. Robert Latham & William Matthews (London, 1995), (March 30, 1664). in which Pepys describes the English as "...mad for War."

Dutch at Lowestoft on 13 June, 1665. The English fleet, commanded by James, duke of York, defeated the Dutch, killing the Dutch admiral, Jacob, Banner Lord of Wassenaer, in the first major battle of the second Anglo-Dutch War. The English would, however, experience few other victories during the war, and the Dutch would on countless occasions cripple and demoralize the English fleet, most notably at Medway where most of the English fleet was destroyed in a Dutch raid while still in port, save the English flagship the *Royal Charles* which the Dutch took back to the Netherlands. Dramatic defeats like Medway, the Four Days' Battle, and others forced Charles to sign the Treaty of Breda in 1667, ending the second Anglo-Dutch War.<sup>69</sup>

The English peace with the Dutch would only last until 1672 when Charles declared war again and began the third Anglo-Dutch War. This war proved to be significantly less popular than the second Anglo-Dutch War for a variety of reasons. First, the dramatic failure of the second Anglo-Dutch War had diluted the English desire for war with the Dutch. Furthermore, Charles waged this war in support of Catholic France, officially England's ally since February 1672. The climate created by these two wars, along with the emergence of a pan-protestant identity that demanded solidarity with their Dutch co-religionists, made it difficult for the English clergy to interpret the wars positively in the language of divine intervention.<sup>70</sup> Additionally, the Stuart court did little to construct a providential context for the wars; they preferred to explain them with a view to secular concerns, a discourse which did little to ensure confidence in the later Stuart kings. These issues coupled with the degree to which the English clergy used the

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<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>70</sup> Tony Claydon, *Europe and the Making of England, 1660-1760* (Cambridge, 2007).

language of divine intervention to cast doubt on Stuart policy, undermined the strength of Charles II's position after the Restoration.

While the English performed poorly in both the second and third Anglo-Dutch Wars, the English campaigns were not without some successes such as the Battle of Lowestoft or the St. James Day Battle. Despite the presence of these victories, English clergymen spent little time preaching on incidents of English success.<sup>71</sup> The Stuart state still issued at least twenty forms of common prayer, general thanksgivings, and feast and fast days during the course of the wars. This put instances of military success and failure into a vague context of divine providence with very few arguments that celebrated English victories in the language of divine intervention. Printed works chronicling the English victories still circulated in England during the Anglo-Dutch Wars, but they were overwhelmingly written by secular figures, either soldiers or members of the Stuart Court. The accounts also tended to explain the events of the Anglo-Dutch Wars without recourse to the language of divine intervention or scriptural analogs. Instead these authors interpreted the Anglo-Dutch wars through secular languages, or through the use of historical and classical analogs.<sup>72</sup>

While most clergymen did not explain the events of the second and third Anglo-Dutch wars in terms of scriptural analogs, this method of employing the language of

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71 Archbishop John Dolben is almost unique in his preaching on specific English victories.

72 Robert Wild in *his Essay upon the late victory obtained by his Royal Highness the Duke of York against the Dutch*, Wild characterizes The Duke of York as Alexander the Great, and implores Triton, a Greek sea divinity, for victory against the Dutch, not God. William Smith in *Ingratitude Revenged* compares an English victory to the classical battle of Actium, and attributes the victory to the ancient Greek weather god Zephyrus, and Prince Rupert's *The Victory of the Fleet of the States General obtained by his majesty's Navy Royal in a late engagement*, is written without of any supernatural references at all.

divine intervention did not fade from use during the wars. English clergymen employed the language of divine intervention to explain events of domestic significance, and two events in particular: the Great London Fire and instances of plague. In 1666, from September 2nd to 6th, London experienced a fire that destroyed 395 acres of central London, including St. Paul's Cathedral. The second event was a plague outbreak in London in late 1665, which killed around one quarter of the city's population. English clergymen Thomas Vincent<sup>73</sup> referred to both of these events as "God's terrible voice in our city."<sup>74</sup> He then explained the plague in London in terms of the plagues of Exodus visited on Egypt<sup>75</sup> He described the fire in terms of the great deluge as well as the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.<sup>76</sup> "God spake terribly by fire when London was burned because people did not harken to his words and messengers."<sup>77</sup> For Vincent, the disasters visited upon London during the Anglo-Dutch wars were the result of lax piety in England. Robert Elborough,<sup>78</sup> however, conceived of the fire and plague, not as a judgement against a sinful people, but as an attack by God on Babylon, a state at war with God's chosen faithful.<sup>79</sup> For clergymen like Elborough, the Great London Fire and the Plague of 1665 were the result of a failed war waged against fellow protestants. As Charles abdicated his role as England's David, he became their Nebuchadnezzar.

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73 Thomas Vincent (1634-1678) graduate of Christ Church College, Oxford, and rector of St. Mary Magdalen, London, until 1662 when he was ejected under the Act of Uniformity. Vincent refused to leave London during the plague of 1665 in order to preach to plague victims after all conforming clergymen had fled. from Beth Lynch, "Thomas Vincent," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

74 Ibid., p. 4.

75 Ibid., pp. 7-9.

76 Ibid., pp. 10-11.

77 Ibid., p. 13.

78 Robert Elborough, a graduate of Emanuel College, Cambridge, ordained in 1662.

79 Robert Elborough, *London's Calamity by fire bewailed and improved in a sermon*, (London, 1666), p. 6.

The poor course of both Anglo-Dutch wars, along with the disasters that dominated English discourse on domestic policy, account for why so many English clergymen, not to search for evidence of divine intervention, but rather, to accept its presence and focus on repairing England's relationship with the divine. For Francis Gregory,<sup>80</sup> preaching in 1673, the breach between the English and God could only be repaired through increased English piety. "Sin, debauchery and vice will infallibly make the great God... to become enemies with the unhappy nation where it reigns."<sup>81</sup> Gregory implored the English to "...spare the Dutchman's Brandy [it] is the surest course to spill his blood; but if not, if we beat them at their sin we shall scare beat them at their weapon too; if we beat them at wine, we shall find it harder to beat them on the water too."<sup>82</sup> Herbert Croft<sup>83</sup> asserted that God's will was peace in 1674. "Then by this do all men know that we are not Christ's disciples, because we over not one another, but instead of love, have malice, instead of peaceful agreement either violent oppression or cunning supplanting one another..."<sup>84</sup> John Dolben, archbishop of York, did not place the blame for England's troubles on the heads of the English people, but rather on the king himself. In a sermon preached before the king in 1666, Dolben characterized a recent English naval victory as a gift of divine mercy, much like those afforded King David in the Old

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80 Francis Gregory (1623-1707) a graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge and after 1660 an Oxfordshire schoolmaster. from Newton E. Key, "Gregory Francis," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

81 Francis Gregory, *The Right Way to victory discovered in a sermon*, (London, 1673), p. 11.

82 Ibid., p. 5.

83 Herbert Croft, (1603-1691) a former Benedictine monk, a graduate of Christ's Church College, Oxford, and bishop of Hereford. Also, an outspoken anti-Catholic. from William Marshall, "Herbert Croft," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

84 Herbert Croft, *A sermon preached before the right honorable the Lords assembled in Parliament upon the fast-day appointed February 4, 1674*, (London, 1674), p. 11.

Testament.<sup>85</sup> Additionally, he argued that key to David's continued success was his willingness to attribute victory to God alone and to act in accordance with his will, a statement he supported by citing David's authorship of the psalms to praise God for his merciful assistance.<sup>86</sup> Even those sermons that praised English efforts against the Dutch were obsessed with ways in which divine favor could be repaired and maintained. For Dolben, the key to accomplishing this was a closer relationship between Charles II and God.

Charles II's own misgivings about religious fanaticism and superstition are made clear by many aspects of his reign. Charles himself was driven from his throne by both, and later replaced and hunted by a regime dominated by both. Charles II's foundation of the Royal Society, his efforts towards religious toleration, and his willingness to work with both crypto-dissenters and crypto-Catholics, as long as they were loyal, reveals a monarch who was uninterested in England's providential destiny and unwilling to express his personal ambitions in the language of divine intervention. This element of his personality clashed with the perception of English clergymen, who characterized him as England's David for their congregations. England's David was supposed to be aware of the profound importance divine intervention played in his success. As king, he was supposed to be willing to act in accordance with divine will, and atone when deviating from it. The highly secular and pragmatic Charles II could never be this David, and given the deeply Protestant character of England's language of divine intervention, neither could his brother James II.

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85 John Dolben, *A Sermon preached before the king on Tuesday June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1665 being a Day of Solemn Thanksgiving for the late Victory at Sea*, (London, 1665), p. 5.

86 Ibid., p. 7.



Edward Stillingfleet:

Confessional violence afflicted England in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The destructive capacity of these confessional divisions became apparent in the 1640s, when England experienced a civil war motivated by these religious divides, which would become one of the most violent and bloody conflicts of its history. Given the extreme violence of the civil war, and the oppression of the Cromwellian protectorate, it is not surprising that after the Stuart Restoration some Englishmen attempted to prevent religious divisions from ever again manifesting themselves so destructively. One solution to this source of anxiety was offered by a group of English theologians called the latitudinarians. At the core of latitudinarianism was a desire to broaden the theology of the Church of England to incorporate as many in England as possible. Part of this broadening included dismissing differences in ecclesiology and practice as unimportant, but more significant was the development of a theology that could be accepted by all Englishmen. The latitudinarians believed that the only way to create a universally acceptable theology was to do away with any tenets that could not be understood and accepted through human reason, and it was this commitment to the primacy of human reason that attracted so many latitudinarians to natural philosophy. The elimination of all theological elements that could not be proven and understood through human reason would seem to indicate a hostility to miracles caused by the intervention of an active God, as they by definition violated the natural order. Many historians in turn have

understood this as a hostility to revealed religion and a clear stop towards secular modernity.<sup>87</sup>

This understanding of latitudinarianism assumes that a modern definition of human reason is constant with how human reason was understood by the latitudinarians. Edward Stillingfleet, one of the most outspoken and popular proponents of latitudinarianism, argued that revelation and reasons were completely compatible, but also believed that miracles constituted the most convincing and useful proof of God.<sup>88</sup> For Stillingfleet, the miraculous was accessible through human reason, and the laws of nature necessitated an active providential God.

Stillingfleet was a graduate of St. John's College, Cambridge, and the eventual bishop of Worcester. He spent much of his early career preaching in London, where his sermons earned him the acclaim of both the archbishop of Canterbury, and of many Londoners. Most of these early sermons were delivered to promote unity among the various protestant denominations that existed in England, and it was this desire for unity which may have attracted Stillingfleet to latitudinarianism. In 1662, however, Stillingfleet's work began to focus on natural theology, especially in his most widely read work, the *Origines Sacrae*. The *Origines Sacrae* asserted that human reason was sufficient

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87 John Gascoigne, "Politics, Patronage and Newtonianism: The Cambridge Example," in *The Historical Journal*, Vol 27, No. 11, (March, 1984) pp. 7-8 Gascoigne argues that latitudinarians were hostile to revealed religion and as a result were proponents of secularism, although John Spur has shown that the label of secularist was part of the a language of contemporary opposition towards latitudinarians and may not be a fair assessment of their world view. see John Spur, "'Latitudinarianism' and the Restoration Church," in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 31, No. 1, (March, 1988), p. 6.

88 Edward Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae* (London, 1680), p. 253.

for proving the existence of God and Stillingfleet provided evidence to support this claim.<sup>89</sup>

In the *Origines Sacra*, Stillingfleet asserted that “...of all traditional evidences which tend to confirm the truth of a Divine Testimony, there can be none greater than the power of working miracles...”<sup>90</sup> This position seems shocking from the mouth of such an outspoken latitudinarian. However, for Stillingfleet, “...the possibility of a power of miracles cannot be questioned by any who assert a deity and a providence.”<sup>91</sup> For Stillingfleet it is only reasonable that a God capable of creation would intervene in earthly affairs. “For though there be an immutable law of nature as to physical beings, that everything remains in course and order wherein it was set at the creation; yet that only holds till the same power which set it in order shall otherwise dispose of it.”<sup>92</sup> Stillingfleet argued that accepting the existence of God, a proposition he believed to be reasonable, necessitates that acceptance of divine intervention as well, although Stillingfleet did admit that the existence of the capacity for divine intervention does not indicate that it has ever, nor will it ever be exercised.<sup>93</sup>

Stillingfleet's God, while capable of widespread and absolute control of the physical world, only exercises such authority for some purpose. “God never alters the course of nature, but for some very considerable end.”<sup>94</sup> Without such a purpose, argued Stillingfleet, God simply maintains the laws of nature which he set forth at creation

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89 Barry Till, “Edward Stillingfleet” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

90 Edward Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacra*, p. 253.

91 Ibid.

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

94 Ibid. p. 256.

When God does perform a miracle, however, it is required that he alter the laws of nature, or suspend them all together.<sup>95</sup> While Stillingfleet admitted that there are many miraculous events that may have occurred in past, the only ones that concern his proof of God's existence are those which relate to Jesus, those that were either enacted by Jesus himself, or because they were set in motion in preparation for him. This is because Stillingfleet believed that only the miracles preformed during the lifetime of the apostles, or before, were truly divine in origin.<sup>96</sup> This methodology rests upon two basic assumptions. The first being that it is clear which events in the Bible indicate Jesus' identity as the messiah, and the second being that there are accurate and reliable accounts that these miracles in fact did occur.<sup>97</sup>

Stillingfleet argues that there are two agents capable for producing miraculous events. The first is God, who directs miracles in conflict with the laws of nature only when it serves some greater divine purpose.<sup>98</sup> The second is the devil, who performs miracles in order to confuse humanity as to the will of God.<sup>99</sup> In order to discern between the two Stillingfleet pointed to the Old Testament, and the trial of prophecy dictated in Mosiac law.<sup>100</sup> In this test of the miraculous, the miracles must not contradict any established law of nature or of God, unless there is ample proof that God wishes to change this law, an assertion Stillingfleet supported by referencing the alteration of the

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95 Ibid. p. 252.

96 Ibid. p. 10.

97 Alexandra Walsham, "Miracles and the Counter-Reformation Mission to England," in *The Historical Journal*, Vol. 46, No. 4 (December, 2003), p. 788; Walsham argues that miracles were wholly unattractive to protestants because, they conflicted with natural philosophy, and as a result became part of a Catholic language of opposition to Protestantism.

98 Ibid.

99 Ibid. p. 285.

100 Ibid. p. 178.

mosaic covenant by the resurrection of Christ. Without such evidence argued Stillingfleet, God's will is always consistent in maintaining divine law, or in defeating the enemies of Christianity. The second element of this test is that the prophecy must come to pass. If the foretold event does not come to pass, argues Stillingfleet, then the prophecy cannot be divine in origin. By extension, only those miracles that are prophesied can one be certain are divinely directed.

For Stillingfleet, the accounts of the apostles constitute accurate and trustworthy accounts of new testament miracles. Stillingfleet believed this to be the case for three reasons. The first is the degree to which the apostles were qualified to report miracles with the greatest degree of fidelity. Unlike other witnesses to miracles enacted by Christ, Stillingfleet argued, that many of the apostles would have witnessed more than one and so would be better able to report the events which occurred honestly.<sup>101</sup> Furthermore, the time the apostles spent with Christ, believed Stillingfleet, provided them with the proper training to explain and interpret Christ's miracles, and especially the resurrection.<sup>102</sup> Stillingfleet's second proof of the fidelity of apostolic accounts of miracles, and by far the weakest, stems from the manner in which the evidence is expressed. "The fidelity of the apostles is evident in the manner of reporting things which they deliver, for if there may be anything gathered from the manner of expression ... concerning the particular temper and disposition of the person from whom it comes, we may certainly read the greatest fidelity in the apostles..."<sup>103</sup> In short, the apostles read as if they were honest and reasonable men. Stillingfleet's third and final proof of apostolic fidelity is that the

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101 Ibid. p. 288.

102 Ibid.

103 Ibid. p. 290.

miracles of Christ so fully violate the laws of nature that they are too absurd to have been fabricated.<sup>104</sup> If the apostles were simply attempting to convince others that something false was in fact true, asserted Stillingfleet, they would not have chosen such unbelievable evidence.<sup>105</sup> Stillingfleet's faith in the accounts of the apostles also stems from a comparison of scriptural sources and translations. Through this comparison Stillingfleet asserts that there are very few points of inconsistency or lack of clarity between the various versions and authors.<sup>106</sup>

Like many other clergymen of the seventeenth century, Stillingfleet believed that certain events which did not violate the laws of nature, but which violated a certain degree of probability should also be understood as miracles. In support of this assertion Stillingfleet argued that the ease with which the doctrine of Christ was spread could only have been accomplished through miracles, for if this were not the case, “this fact alone would be a miracle.”<sup>107</sup> Stillingfleet believed this because he conceived as those threats facing the spread of early Christianity, such as hostility from Jews and Romans, and the ease with which it was overcome, clearly constitutes a violation of the laws of nature.<sup>108</sup>

It is true that Stillingfleet may not have represented all latitudinarians in his views on miracles, and the existence of a providential God. That being said, however, that fact that such an outspoken and publicly visible latitudinarian conceived of reasonable Christianity in the language of divine intervention indicates that the movement does not constitute the same significant break with the tradition that others have believed it to be. Conclusion:

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104 Ibid.

105 Ibid.

106 Ibid. p. 294.

107 Ibid. p. 310.

108 Ibid. pp.310-316.

English clergymen of the 1660s conceived of Charles II's restoration in the language of divine intervention. Charles, as England's David, would restore the rule of law and stability to England and set England on a path towards completing its godly and Protestant ambitions. Charles II was not, however, interested in embracing a domestic or foreign policy conceived of in the language of divine intervention. Instead, Charles and his closest advisors at court pursued two wars with the Protestant Dutch motivated by economic and political concerns. The secular nature of this war, as well as the fact that it was waged against fellow Protestants, made it difficult to interpret positively in the language of divine intervention, an issue which, when combined with concerns about domestic disasters, created a dialogue in the language of divine intervention. This dialog ultimately undermined later Stuart foreign policy. Chapter II will explore the way English clergymen used the language of divine intervention in the early eighteenth century. After the Glorious Revolution, English policy was more easily justified within the language of divine intervention. Instead of giving way to an increasingly secular world-view, the use of the language increased as England entered the eighteenth century.

## CHAPTER II:

What historians would come to call modernity was only just emerging in England in the 1660s, yet many historians argue that by 1700 it had developed into its secular maturity.<sup>109</sup> This claim of rapid change is supported by an analysis of political, religious, and social structures that operated on the surface of English society in the late seventeenth century. During the 1670s Parliament attempted to deprive a king of his throne, not through force of arms, but through force of law. When this failed, Parliament invited William of Orange to seize James II's crown. This crisis changed the way parliamentary politics operated in England as political rivals formed organized political parties with an unheard of unity in ideology and agenda. During this period, New members of parliament were selected via contested elections with increasing frequency during the period. Contested elections were further complicated by an increase in the size of England's eligible electorate. Mark Knights argues that secular languages that were built upon reason and public consent dominated the political discourse in this period.<sup>110</sup>

The accession of William and Mary in 1689 also changed the posture of England's foreign policy. England did not pursue war with the Dutch in the early eighteenth century because the Glorious Revolution closely aligned the interests of the Dutch and the English. Additionally, William III fought an expensive war with France on the continent. This war caused a revolution in England's economic structure. It sparked the formation

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109 Blair Worden, "The question of secularization," in *A Nation Transformed*, eds. Alan Houston and Steve Pincus (Cambridge, 2001), pp. 39-40.

110 Mark Knights, *Representation and Misrepresentation in Later Stuart Britain: Partisanship and Political Culture* (Oxford, 2005), pp. 20-22.



of a national bank, along with a national debt, as well as a closer relationship between the crown and England's financial center in the city of London. Steven Pincus argues that the English perceived this war as a conflict motivated by material goals and secular concerns such as the national interest.<sup>111</sup> While Catholicism continued to cause anxiety for the English into the early eighteenth century, the Toleration Act changed the religious landscape in England by allowing Trinitarian Protestant dissenters to worship and participate in English society openly. England's understanding of the cosmos also changed dramatically during the late seventeenth century. Sir Isaac Newton revealed the universe to be one governed by natural laws and mechanisms that could be understood through reason and observation.

While late-seventeenth-century England experienced a series of superficial transformations in terms of political, social and intellectual structures, the most basic assumptions of English society remained unchanged. English clergymen of many different religious confessions continued to use the language of divine intervention to explain and interpret events of political significance. Furthermore, the language of divine intervention did not experience any dramatic changes during the late seventeenth century. Even by 1700 the language of divine intervention managed to resist the transformations that affected so many other areas of English life.

The language of divine intervention persisted through the late seventeenth century, perhaps because issues and concerns that caused anxiety for the English in 1660 remained unresolved. In 1700 England experienced another succession crisis that lasted until 1714. England also engaged France, another continental rival, in a major war. All

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111 Steven Pincus, *Protestantism and Patriotism*, p. 447.

the while, English clergymen continued to explore scripture for fulfilled prophecies, especially the scriptures they thought directly related to England's fate as a nation. Even with changes in the way politics operated in England, the English clergy of the early eighteenth century understood and explained England's politics through the language of divine intervention and used this language to explain and interpret English politics for their congregations.

#### The War of the Spanish Succession:

In the early seventeenth century England entered into continental wars. Rather than finding a Dutch obstacle to the completion of a divine mandate for England, England found a very real threat to European Protestantism in 1700. If the War of the Spanish Succession resulted in a French victory, Louis XIV's grandson, Philip, would have secured his ascension to the Spanish throne. This scenario threatened to unify England's two great Roman Catholic rivals on the continent, as well as grant France access to the wealth and resources of the Spanish Empire. Under these circumstances it is not surprising that the English entered into the war of the Spanish Succession in support of the Austrians, who also had a claim to the Spanish throne. While England had numerous strategic and material reasons for engaging the French in this conflict, English clergymen explained and interpreted the events of the war of the Spanish Succession in non-secularized terms. To put it another way, England's clergy did not perceive the war of the Spanish Succession as a war fought by the English to maintain the balance of

power in Europe or deprive Spain of its empire abroad; instead they interpreted it as a war waged by God against the enemies of his new Israel.

When English clergymen used the language of divine intervention to explain the War of the Spanish Succession, they found the most provocative evidence of divine intervention at the Battle of Blenheim. On 7 September 1704 a priest at Magdalen College Chapel in Oxford, Samuel Bromesgrove,<sup>112</sup> preached a sermon at Spittlefield celebrating England's victory at the Battle of Blenheim. Bromesgrove referred to this victory as "...that illustrious success, which God has so lately given to her Majesty's forces..." a sentiment shared by many English clergymen.<sup>113</sup> Blenheim was the subject of numerous sermons from 1704-1720, at least fifty-seven of which were printed. There was widespread discussion on the Battle of Blenheim among English clergymen. This can be attributed to the ease with which the events and results of the battle could be explored and explained by the language of divine intervention, as well as France's status, unlike the Dutch, as a confessional rival. Both the English disadvantages at the start of the battle and the miraculous conditions of the English victory were readily used by English clergymen to justify their use of the language of divine intervention. On 13 August 1704, an English army led by the Duke of Marlborough engaged a slightly larger and

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112 Samuel Bromesgrove, a graduate of Corpus Christi College, Oxford, and ordained as a priest in 1695.

113 Samuel Bromesgrove, *A Sermon Preached At the Tabernacle in Spittle-Field on September the 7<sup>th</sup>, 1704. Being a Day of Thanksgiving for the Glorious victory obtained over the Bavarians at Blenheim*, (London, 1704), p. 1; For other sermons on Blenheim which attribute the English victory to direct divine intervention, see; John Dubourdieu, *A Sermon Preached on the 7<sup>th</sup> Day of September Being the Day of Thanksgiving for the Glorious Victory Obtained by the Forces of Her Majesty and Her Allies under the Conduct of his Grace the Duke of Marlborough*, (London, 1704); Luke Milbourne, *Great Britain's Acclamation to Her Deborah*, (London, 1704); William Elstob, *A Sermon upon the Thanksgiving for the Victory Obtained by Her Majesty's Forces* (London, 1704); Thomas Rivers, *A Sermon Preach'd at the Cathedral-Church of Winchester*, (London, 1709).

more well equipped French army on the banks of the Danube River. By the battle's end, the British wounded, killed, or captured nearly 35,000 French soldiers, including many French officers, while sustaining fewer than 5,000 English casualties.<sup>114</sup> England's clergy were eager to understand how the divine accomplished this miraculous victory and for what reason God intervened on England's behalf. Through scriptural analysis England's clergy discovered the answers to their questions in the Song of Deborah.

The Song of Deborah chronicled the exploits of Israel's only female judge, Deborah. It also described her campaign against the Canaanites.<sup>115</sup> Bromesgrove, for instance, preached about Queen Anne's reign saying that "God has raised up this English Deborah to judge and avenge the cause of his, and her Israel; to complete and perfect by her, his great and gracious designs to his sion..."<sup>116</sup> This was not the first time English clergymen invoked this particular Biblical passage to describe the actions of a queen. English clergymen in the sixteenth century, for instance, used the Song of Deborah to explain the English success against the Spanish Armada during Elizabeth I's reign.<sup>117</sup> The English clergy of the early eighteenth century understood the parallels between the Song of Deborah and the events of Blenheim as more numerous and comprehensive than the parallels the passage shared with Elizabeth's defeat of Spain's Armada. Some clergymen,

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114 For divine intervention against superior odds and probability see Michael Stanhope, *God the Author of Victory, A sermon preach'd in the Royal-Chapel at White-hall*, (London, 1708), p. 7. in which he argues "Numbers, tis true sometimes fall before the few, but then the success is owing to an invisible hand, and abundantly more sets forth God's power than the General's conduct."

115 *Judges* 4:5

116 Bromesgrove, *A Sermon Preached At the Tabernacle in Spittle-Field on September the 7<sup>th</sup>, 1704*, p. 5; Milbourne, *Great Britain's Acclamation to Her Deborah*, p. 26; Rivers, *A Sermon Preach'd at the Cathedral-Church of Winchester*, p. 12; Elstob, *A Sermon upon the Thanksgiving for the Victory Obtained by Her Majesty's Forces*, p. 4.

117 Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 162-63.

such as Luke Milbourne,<sup>118</sup> asserted that under these circumstances Queen Anne made the better Deborah, and so, the language of divine intervention more fully explained the events of her reign than that of Elizabeth.<sup>119</sup>

In the Song of Deborah the general Barack led Israel's army to victory against the Canaanites. English clergymen perceived Barack's actions as mirroring those of Queen Anne's general on the continent, John Churchill, the Duke of Marlborough. Bromesgrove asserted that, "So far the parallel holds: England was well as Israel has her Deborah, has her Barack, and God has made the successes run parallel too."<sup>120</sup> England's clergy used the language of divine intervention to explain the role played by Queen Anne and the Duke of Marlborough at the Battle of Blenheim, but they also used it to explain the events of the battle itself.

In his sermon Bromesgrove reported that at Blenheim "Count Tallard, the General of the King of France's armies was entirely routed, his ordinances seized, his cannon, his mortars, his colors and his standards all taken, and himself too, by our triumphant Duke."<sup>121</sup> Bromesgrove compared these specific events from the battle of Blenheim to those in the Song of Deborah: "...Sisera, the captain of Jabin's [the king of the Canaanites] army was discomfited, with all his chariots and all his host, with the edge of

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118 Luke Milbourne, a graduate of Pembroke Hall, Cambridge, and ordained a deacon in 1672.

119 Milbourne, *Great Britain's Acclamation to Her Deborah*, p. 26.

120 Bromesgrove, *A Sermon Preached At the Tabernacle in Spittle-Field*, p. 9; also Milbourne, *Great Britain's Acclamation to Her Deborah*, p. 26; Rivers, *A Sermon Preach'd at the Cathedral-Church of Winchester*, p. 13; Samuel Harris, *A blow to France, a sermon preach'd at the meeting in Mill-yard*, (London, 1709), p. 8.

121 Bromesgrove, *A Sermon Preached At the Tabernacle in Spittle-Field*, p. 9; Blenheim was not the only battle explained in the language of divine intervention. For accounts of other battles in the language of divine intervention from the early eighteenth century see P.H. Stubs, *A Sermon Preparatory to the General Thanksgiving*, (London, 1706) for accounts of Brabant and Catalonia; George Stanhope, *A Sermon Preach'd before the Queen at the Cathedral Church of S. Paul, London*, (London, 1706); M. Stanhope *God the Author of Victory, A sermon preach'd in the Royal-Chapel at White-hall*, for accounts of the Battle of Flanders.

the sword before Barack.”<sup>122</sup> Through this comparison of the routing of two enemy armies, as well as those spoils seized by the victors of these two battles, Bromesgrove argued that England and Israel experienced parallel victories. Bromesgrove's use of the language of divine intervention assumed that England's victory must have been the result of divine intervention since an identical Biblical victory is explicitly identified as such. England's clergy understood that God's patronage guided England's army to a victory through natural and comprehensible means at Blenheim, but they also understood that God's intervention at Blenheim was supernatural.

Bromesgrove argued that God actively used creation to defeat the French at Blenheim. Bromesgrove stated that it was within divine prerogative to make use of any part of creation as he, God, saw fit or for any purpose or cause he desired for that matter.

The Whole creation, by God's all-powerful command and direction, seems to fight our battles for us, and to bring about what the infinite creator intends as his love to his people. He, the Sovereign of the world, has all the elements of it as his indisputable disposal, and he can whenever he pleases commission any part of it to fulfill his will, to save or destroy<sup>123</sup>

Bromesgrove felt certain that such an event took place at Blenheim, and his conclusion came through scriptural comparison. In the Song of Deborah the enemies of Israel were routed, and while in retreat they are swallowed by a supernaturally swollen river Kishon. The analog of the Kishon at the battle of Blenheim, argued Bromesgrove, was the Danube. “Kishon swept them away, Kishon sunk and buried their carcasses; and has not the memorable Danube now done the same.”<sup>124</sup> Bromesgrove even went so far as to

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122 Bromesgrove, *A Sermon Preached At the Tabernacle in Spittle-Field*, p. 6.

123 Ibid., p. 6.

124 Ibid., p. 9; For a more general study of divine intervention in battle, especially divine use of bodies

recite the exact text from the Song of Deborah, replacing Kishon with Danube throughout: “And may not we then sing in our song or praise what Deborah did in hers? The river Danube swept them away, that ancient river the river Danube...”<sup>125</sup> It should be noted that Bromesgrove did not understand this event as the divine operating through a normal mechanism of nature but rather as the divine issuing an unbound and irresistible command to creation. “He made the Red Sea a highway for the Israelites; a plain and solid road to conduct them to the Land of Promise. The watery element as his appointment forgot its nature and became dry land.”<sup>126</sup> Bromesgrove argued that divine influence over nature was not limited by any natural laws or mechanism. He also argued that God could in fact transmute and suspend these as he saw fit, especially in the defense of a cause or people he supported.

English clergymen believed that the divine played a significant and active role in the English victory at Blenheim and elsewhere. Clergymen were not unified, however, in their interpretation of what this divine involvement actually meant for England. Bromesgrove argued that a direct connection existed between God's patronage of England and Queen Anne's godliness when he asserted that as long as she “...so prudently and so religiously steers this vessel, we shall have no cause to fear a deluge or shipwreck.”<sup>127</sup> Bromesgrove's selection of disasters is significant because the French, even with the aid of the Spanish, could bring about neither a flood nor a shipwreck. Instead, both of these disasters were solely actions of divine agency according to

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of water and how human action can influence divine intervention see Philip Stubbs, *God's Dominion over the Seas, and the Seaman's Duty, Consider'd*, (London, 1701).

125 Ibid., p. 9.

126 Ibid., p. 6.

127 Ibid.,

Bromesgrove. Bromesgrove's message is clear when he stated that England may only be defeated by an act of God, which can only be the result of abandoning a pious and godly government. It is not surprising that a Church of England preacher like Bromesgrove argued that the key to maintaining divine favor was maintaining the moral and religious status quo.

Many English clergymen believed that the key to maintaining divine favor was England's acceptance that God was the only agent in England's military fortune. William Elstob,<sup>128</sup> a clergyman in the Church of England who also preached a sermon on Blenheim, was concerned that some English were ignorant of God's role in the victory. Elstob feared that this ignorance might provoke divine wrath.<sup>129</sup> In August 1708, Michael Stanhope<sup>130</sup> preached a sermon on the Battle of Flanders which echoed, and expanded, Elstob's position. Stanhope argued that the key to maintaining divine favor was not just accepting a Christian God who directed the result of the battle but rather humbling oneself before the agency of his higher power. Stanhope accomplished this by appealing to evidence of martial success among the Greeks and Romans. He explained that "War, by the heathens, was thought to be an appeal unto Gods, and when any signal success was given, nature furnished them with this opinion that Heaven had determined on their side."<sup>131</sup> Stanhope believed that to conceive of warfare in any other way would be disastrous for England.

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128 William Elstob (1674-1715) a graduate of St. Catharine's College, Cambridge and rector of St. Swithin and St. Mary Bothaw, in London. from Margaret Clunies Ross, "William Elstob," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

129 Elstob, *A Sermon upon the Thanksgiving for the Victory Obtained by Her Majesty's Forces*, p. 6.

130 Michael Stanhope, a graduate of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge and a preacher in Coventry and Lichfield.

131 M. Stanhope, *God the Author of Victory, A sermon preach'd in the Royal-Chapel at White-hall*, p. 5.



The heathens conclusions (though ignorance prevented their having clear ideas of the true God) were wise and just, and should teach us Christians gratitude ... we are undeserving of his mercies if we are unmindful of the hand that bestows [victories] and impute that to be fortuitous, the chance of war.<sup>132</sup>

The French émigré and Church of England clergyman John Dubourdieu also used this argument.<sup>133</sup> Dubourdieu asserted that the sacrifices made by the Romans and Greeks to their Gods upon victory was the result of their great sensibility and reason.<sup>134</sup> This use of the language of divine intervention was almost certainly an attack leveled at deists and atheists, which were populations most inclined to deny direct divine intervention with earthly warfare. By conceiving of the moral implications of divine intervention in this way, atheists and deists ceased to be an extreme segment of English religious plurality and instead became a spiritual fifth column committed to undermining English military efforts abroad.

The two moral contexts of warfare provided by the language of divine intervention explained above rested upon the assumption that the divine was content with the general state of English morality. In the first context all that is required to maintain divine favor is a commitment to tradition and an avoidance of any new or innovative political and religious structures in England. The second moral context rested upon the assumption that only a very small and marginalized minority in England represented any sort of threat. This context was an extension of the notion that by tolerating dissent in

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132 Ibid., p. 6.

133 Jean Dubourdieu (c.1643-1720) was born in Bergerac, France and later client of the Churchill family. from Vivienne Larminie, "Jean Dubourdieu," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

134 Dubourdieu, *A Sermon Preached on the 7<sup>th</sup> Day of September Being the Day of Thanksgiving for the Glorious Victory Obtained by the Forces of Her Majesty and Her Allies under the Conduct of his Grace the Duke of Marlborough*, p. 7.

England, the Church of England would be undone. There was, however, a third moral context for warfare constructed within the language of divine intervention. Other English clergymen, especially those outside of the Church of England, argued that victory, despite being enacted by God, was not a divine endorsement of English policy and morality. Instead, English victory was understood as a reminder of God's proximity to England. This indicated that divine punishment would come, and God would not defend his new Israel if elements of English morality and theology did not change dramatically. Luke Milbourne preached to his congregation that "Israel had frequently done evil in the sight of the Lord, and God, when softer means were ineffective, had given strength and courage to several of the neighboring princes to lash them into serious reflections..."<sup>135</sup> He also reminded them that "God sometimes lets the best of princes fall for the wickedness of their subjects..."<sup>136</sup> Thomas Rivers<sup>137</sup> called for a return to piety because "piety is doubtless the best defense... as tis the only thing that can engage the assistance of him who alone is almighty and invincible."<sup>138</sup> Rivers also asserted that "the design of all gods goodness to us is to improve our virtue and encourage our duty."<sup>139</sup> Citing scripture, Rivers continued to assert that if England "...abuses his mercies and grow the worse for his favor, we may assure ourselves that as his goodness has been, such will be his vengeance"<sup>140</sup> John Harris looked to the Israelites' fall into slavery at the hands of the

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135 Milbourne, *Great Britain's Acclamation to Her Deborah*, p. 1.

136 Ibid., p. 26.

137 Thomas Rivers, a graduate of All Souls College, Oxford, he served as the rector at Easton in Winchester.

138 Ibid., p. 13.

139 Ibid., p. 17.

140 Ibid., p. 17.

Egyptians as an example of how God can forsake his chosen people.<sup>141</sup> It is clear that many early eighteenth century English clergymen understood their nation's relationship with divine favor as tenuous.

For English clergymen, the war of the Spanish Succession was a war that could only be understood through the language of divine intervention. The medium most accessible to the public did not explore the war in terms of tactics, national intention, and material goals. Instead this medium explained the war in terms of divine intervention and interpreted the results of battle in moral terms. Secularism did not inform the discourse on foreign policy that took place among English clergymen. Additionally, secularism did not inform the discourse that took place between these clergymen and their congregations.

#### The Hanoverian Succession:

The Glorious Revolution alleviated the threat of a Catholic English king temporarily, but it did not constitute a permanent bulwark against a Catholic succession in England. This potential threat to English Protestantism came to the forefront of English fears when Princess Anne's only child, Prince William, died in 1700. The death of Prince William raised the question of who would succeed to the throne after Anne's death. This was a question of singular importance given the nearest claimants to the throne. The strongest claim to the English throne after Anne's death belonged to James Francis Edward Stuart, the Catholic son of James II. Following the so-called 'Old Pretender' were over four dozen other Catholic claimants to the English throne. In an

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141 Harris, *A blow to France, a sermon preach'd at the meeting in Mill-yard*, p. 8.

effort to avoid a Catholic succession Parliament passed the Act of Settlement in 1701. This act prohibited any Catholic from ascending to the throne of England. The Act of Settlement made the claims to succession of the House of Hanover the most immediate. As a result of the act and Queen Anne's death in 1714, George, the elector of Hanover, ascended to the English throne. The Hanoverian claim is understood to have been one legitimated by parliamentary statute, but the language of divine intervention assumed that such a statute could not legitimate a monarch. Instead English clergymen used the language of divine intervention to explain that God had legitimated and directed George I's ascension to the throne.

On 20 January 1715, Joseph Acres,<sup>142</sup> the vicar of Blewberry in Berkshire, reminded his congregation of God's promise that "...there should never be wanting to David one to sit upon the throne."<sup>143</sup> It is clear that, as was common in the 1660s, Acres looked to scripture to find divine precedent for God's actions and has used God's promise to the Israel of the Old Testament to explain God's role in the Hanoverian Succession. Acres assumed this promise held true for God's new Israel. Many people in England's diverse religious climate shared this sentiment. Simon Browne,<sup>144</sup> in a sermon preached at Portsmouth on the same day as Acres, understood George I as prince who "...God in his good providence at this time set over us."<sup>145</sup> The proof of God's intervention in the

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142 Joseph Acres (d. 1747) a graduate of All Souls College, Oxford, Vicar of St. Helen in Abingdon, and the rector of Newbury.

143 Joseph Acres, *Glad tidings to Great Britain. A sermon preach'd at Blewberry in Berkshire*, (London, 1715), p. 7.

144 Simon Browne (c. 1680-1732) a dissenting minister in Portsmouth and Old Jewry. Browne murdered highwaymen near Shepton Mallet in the 1720s. While committed to the doctrine of the Trinity, defended anti-trinitarianism as a legitimate theological position. from William H. Trapnell, "Simon Browne," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

145 Simon Browne, *A noble king a blessing to a land. A sermon preach'd at Portsmouth, January 20,*

accession of George I for these two clergymen can be found through a close analyses of his accession as well as a juxtaposition with Biblical analogs.

Acres conceived of George I's arrival as the end of a Hanoverian exodus. This exodus began during the exile of his grandparents Fredrick and Elisabeth of the Palatinate and Bohemia. During the exodus, "God was pleased to cause them to wander in the wilderness in a low estate, to seek protection and nourishment in foreign lands and be met with a succession of sorrows, being fed with the bread of affliction"<sup>146</sup>...<sup>147</sup> England's clergy clearly understood George I's peaceful accession to the throne as a sign that he was, like his biblical analog David, anointed by God and therefore legitimated by divine will. "God hath again wonderfully defeated all contrivances for our destruction and hath by the wise and glorious methods of his providence conducted to the throne and place upon it a wise and experienced, a just and gracious prince."<sup>148</sup>

The key to Acres' understanding of the Hanoverian Succession is the weather.<sup>149</sup> Thankfully for Acres, George I traveled to England by ship, and as Acres reminded his congregation, scripture does address divine control over bodies of water: "It was with

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1714/15. *Being the day of publick thanksgiving*, (London, 1715), p. 8.

146 Bread of Affliction is the language used in the Jewish Haggadah of Pesach to describe matzah. Given the Haggadah's function as the primary text of the Passover Seder, it is logical that Acres is using it here to characterize the House of Hanover as one enslaved by pharonic tyranny at the hands of the Catholic Holy Roman Emperor, but destined for eventual liberation and prosperity, in the form of a Davidic accession to the English throne.

147 Acres, *Glad tidings to Great Britain. A sermon preach'd at Blewberry in Berkshire*, p. 16.

148 Samuel Bradford, *The sin and the danger of murmuring against God, and our governors*, (London, 1715), p. 18; Jeremiah Aldred, *The history of Saul and David and the XIIIth of Roman considered: in a thanksgiving sermon*, (London, 1716), p. 8; For George I as King Solomon see Thomas Bradbury, *The establishment of the kingdom in the hand of Solomon applied to the revolution and the reign of king George*, (London, 1716), p. 3; George Farrol, *The late rebellion against King George, worse than Absolom's against King David*, (London, 1716), pp. 9, 13.

149 For more on how the language of divine intervention explained and interpreted English weather, see Vladimir Jankovic, *Reading the Skies: A Cultural History of English Weather, 1650-1820* (Manchester, 2001).

just admiration the Disciples said of our Blessed Savior: 'Behold how the Winds and Seas obey him.'"<sup>150</sup> Given this dominion over weather and sea, Acres asserted that his congregation should "...consider how [the winds and seas] were on our side both at the Revolution, and at his present Majesty's glorious Accession."<sup>151</sup> What makes this weather all the more interesting for Acres, and indeed all the more useful to support his argument for divine intervention, was how such calm conditions were unexpected. This unexpected fair weather, argued Acres, was an ever-present event in the earliest days of George I's reign. It reveals the consistent presence of God's hand in the Hanoverian Succession.

When his present Majesty made his passage at a season when the seas are rough, the winds high, and sailing begins to be dangerous; how did God guide both one, and the other so that he came so safely in the midst of us: When he entered the Capital to go to his palace, the Heavens smiled upon him; a clear and serene sky, when the season was for clouds and rain; Above all, the day of his triumphant coronation, the night before storms and tempests with much rain; but when the joyful morning approached, all clouds being scattered, the sun came as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and all of the day attended on that great solemnity, decked with such radiant light...<sup>152</sup>

Just as the English clergy of the 1660s saw active divine intervention in the restoration of Charles II, clergymen of the early eighteenth century conceived of the Hanoverian Succession as the result of direct divine intervention.

Loyalty to this divine appointment, argued Daniel Lombard,<sup>153</sup> was the key to the

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150 Acres, *Glad tidings to Great Britain. A sermon preach'd at Blewberry in Berkshire*, p. 18.

151 Ibid., p. 18.

152 Bradford, *The sin and the danger of murmuring against God, and our governors*, p. 18.

153 Daniel Lombard (1678-1746) was born in Angers, France to Huguenot parents who immigrated to London after the revocation of the edict of Nantes in 1685. Lombard graduated from St. John's College, Oxford and served as the chaplain to Princess Sophia of Hanover as well as rector of Lanteglos with Advent in Cornwall. from W.P. Courtney, "Daniel Lombard," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

happiness and prosperity of England as it superseded any law, tradition, or progressive political theory.<sup>154</sup> These same clergy were also aware that scripture was inundated with nations that had lost divine favor through moral depravity. Would England, the new Israel, fall to Rome as its Old Testament counterpart had? Would God remain in England to defend his new Davidic line as long as his people were pious? The first years of George I's reign provided England's clergy with a wealth of instances to explore more evidence of such divine defense.

On 6 September, 1715, the Earl of Mar led a group of Scottish Highland clans in support James Stuart, the Old Pretender, in what became known as the First Jacobite Rebellion. While the Jacobite forces managed to capture Perth, Mar proved to be an ineffective military leader. Mar's forces failed to defeat a significantly smaller English army on November 13 at the Battle of Sheriffmuir. This failure, combined with the suppression of Jacobite risings in England and the flight of the Old Pretender to the continent in February 1716, put an end to the first Jacobite rising of George I's reign. Many elements contributed to the defeat of the first Jacobite Rebellion: the disorganized and poorly outfitted Scottish army, which could not have sustained combat with the much more organized and properly equipped English forces; there was James Stuart's late arrival; there was an early distaste for battle and eventual flight from Scotland; and finally there was Parliament's effective use of informants to put down other risings in

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154 Daniel Lombard, *A sermon preach'd at Hanover before Her Royal Highness the late Princess Sophia and the rest of the royal family*, (Oxford, 1714), p. 27; Samuel Adams, *Obedience due to higher-powers by the laws of God and this nation*, (London, 1716); Thomas Andrewes, *The duty of fearing God and honoring the king a sermon preached before the Right Honorable Lord Mayor*, (London, 1717), pp. 17-18; Charles Bean, *The Obligations of the clergy to promote legal subjugation to his majesty*, (London, 1716).

England before they became violent. These were of little significance to contemporary Englishmen who attributed the rebellion's failure to one agent, God. Even when clergymen mentioned these causes for English success, they always explained them in terms of divine intervention.

On the 14 November, 1715, a group of Jacobites surrendered to Hanoverian forces at the Battle of Preston. In a sermon preached in Liverpool, Thomas Baldwin<sup>155</sup> reminded his congregation and intended audience, who were judges of the assizes that held the Jacobite prisoners to trial, that in England, “We have a deliverer, that has rescued us from popish, much worse than Egyptian Slavery for the present.” Baldwin also asserted that the mechanism of this divine deliverance was a Protestant prince.<sup>156</sup> Baldwin argued that “it always has, and ever will be esteemed a singular mark of divine favor to any people when they have the happiness to be governed by an experience, wise and just prince.”<sup>157</sup> Given Baldwin's understanding that George I was the divine mechanism that saved the new Israel from Popish tyranny, he warned that these Jacobite rebels “joined issue with the children of Israel before us and say let us alone that we may serve the Egyptians, let us alone that we may against be subject to the papal chair.”<sup>158</sup> Baldwin connected the Jacobite Rebellion with the aversion some Israelites in the Old

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155 Thomas Baldwin (1684-1753) a graduate of Jesus College, Cambridge and rector of St. Peter and St. Nicholas in Liverpool.

156 Thomas Baldwin, *The folly of preferring a Popish pretender to a Protestant king. A sermon preach'd in the parochial church of St. Peter, in Liverpoole*, (Liverpool, 1716), p. 25; Charles Bean, *The folly and wickedness of the late rebellion a thanksgiving-sermon preach'd at Barham*, (London, 1716), pp. 12, 19; Benjamin Carter, *The fear of God and the king: explained and inforced, particularly with regard to the present rebellion*, (London, 1716), p. 13; William Wake, *A sermon preached before the king at St. James' Chapel, upon the first of August 1715*, (London, 1715), p. 6.

157 Baldwin, *The folly of preferring a Popish pretender to a Protestant king*, p. 6.

158 Baldwin, *The folly of preferring a Popish pretender to a Protestant king*, p. 6; Aldred, *The history of Saul and David and the XIIIth of Roman considered: in a thanksgiving sermon*, pp. 10, 15.



Testament felt towards divine rule. This connection implied that by ignoring the evidence of divine favor for George I, as evidenced through his active support of the House of Hanover, these rebels could lead God to punish, if not abandon, England.

Above all English clergymen conceived of the Hanoverian Succession as an act of divine mercy. In 1715 Samuel Bold<sup>159</sup> used the language of divine intervention to characterize the accession of George I not as a divine bulwark against the old pretender but rather as the end of an age of uncertainty and instability. Bold continued to operate under the assumption that England was the new Israel, furthering God's promise to the house of Judah held true in the case of England. "How very pertinently may the words of the Lord concerning Judah be applied to our case, I will have mercy upon the house of Judah and will save them by the lord their god, and will not favor them by bow, nor sword, nor by battle..."<sup>160</sup> To Bold, the fact that George I was able to ascend to the throne of England without recourse to violence was more significant than whether or not George I was a godly king. This assertion that non-violent political change was by its very nature miraculous remained present during both the Glorious Revolution and the Stuart Restoration.

England's clergy did not understand the Hanoverian Succession as a dynastic crisis alleviated by parliamentary action. In fact, parliament never featured prominently in any of the sermons produced on the succession. Additionally, England's clergy did not believe that sovereignty rested in the hands of the English people or in their representatives in

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159 Samuel Bold (1648x52-1737) a graduate of Jesus College, Oxford, and the vicar of Shapwick in Dorset. Noteworthy as an advocate for toleration of dissenters. from Bryan W. Ball, "Samuel Bold," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

160 Samuel Bold, *Great Britain's low estate before King George began his happy reign. Being a sermon preach'd August the 1st, 1715*, (London, 1715), p. 24.

parliament. To the clergy, divine patronage made King George I the legitimate king of England for these clergymen. The notion that English kings were not the executors of the peoples' sovereignty but rather are God's anointed agents on earth is not an expression of secular or modern politics; it was instead a highly conservative notion of kingship that depended on traditionally revealed religion for legitimacy. Such a notion could only be expressed in the language of divine intervention; the argument could not exist in a secular language of politics.

#### William Whiston:

Many of the arguments for secular modernity in eighteenth-century England rely on the assumed secularizing effects of Newtonian natural philosophy. Both Keith Thomas and Alexandra Walsham argue that the natural philosophy of Isaac Newton provided a world-view which did not necessitate the presence of an active providential God, and in turn made the language of divine intervention obsolete.<sup>161</sup> Thomas skirts Newton's own commitment to providentialism by arguing that Newton simply failed to understand the dramatic and transformative nature of his scientific work.<sup>162</sup> Thomas argues that it would take later students of Newton to fully understand exactly what it was that Newton had accomplished. This revelation that Newtonian natural philosophy contained within it the seeds of providentialism's end could not have happened during the early eighteenth-century, as the most faithful practitioner of Newtonianism, William

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161 Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 80; Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, p. 334.

162 Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 80.

Whiston, continued to understand the presence of an active, providential God as essential to Newtonian natural philosophy.<sup>163</sup>

William Whiston was born 9 December, 1667, at Norton-juxta-Twycross, Leicestershire to Josiah Whiston, rector at Norton, and his wife. In 1686, he entered Clare College, Cambridge, where he studied theology, but excelled at mathematics. While at Cambridge Whiston was certainly aware of Newton, then the Lucasian Professor of Mathematics, but did not meet him until 1694. From 1694 onward Whiston was a committed student of Newtonian natural philosophy. Whiston was so enthusiastic for Newtonianism and so skilled at its application that in 1702 when Newton retired from his Lucasian Professorship he made a concerted effort to ensure that Whiston would become his replacement. Whiston would remain the Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge until 1710 when he was expelled for heresy, having espoused the Arian theological views openly which Newton had gone to great lengths to keep private.<sup>164</sup>

In 1707 Whiston was chosen, in no small part due to Newton's influence, to give the Boyle Lectures. Robert Boyle founded the lectures for the purpose of proving the existence of God through reason and natural philosophy, a goal that characterized the work of both Newton and Whiston. For these lectures Whiston chose the topic of fulfilled prophecy, which he, and many other English theologians and natural philosophers believed it to be the most useful proof of the existence of God, even more useful, in fact, than the argument from miracles.<sup>165</sup>

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163 James E. Force, *William Whiston: Honest Newtonian*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

164 Stephen D. Snobelen, "William Whiston," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

165 Peter Harrison, "Prophecy, Early Modern Apologetics, and Hume's Argument against Miracles," in

Early modern natural philosophers were attracted to fulfilled prophecy as means of proving the existence of God because it provided a proof that did not conflict with the laws of nature as miracles did.<sup>166</sup> This did not discount the possibility of miracles for many of these natural philosophers and in fact many of them, including Newton, believed that extra-natural divine intervention was a necessity.<sup>167</sup> Whiston and others used the argument from fulfilled prophecies because it could be understood through human reason, and at no point denied observable natural laws.

Whiston argued that prophecy could exist within the confines of natural law because a prophesied event could be the most mundane and natural of occurrences, as long as the event was predicted.<sup>168</sup> For Whiston, unlike other contemporaries, the foreknowledge of a particular event did not necessarily violate the laws of nature either. Whiston assumed that Biblical prophets had not been given direct accounts of the future by God, but rather, were provided with methods through which accurate predictions could be made.<sup>169</sup> This conclusion led Whiston to assert that the spirit of prophecy was essentially the same as his use of natural philosophy to predict astrological occurrences, and in fact includes many of his own predictions in tables of completed prophecies, designed to overwhelm opponents of his argument with meticulously organized

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*Journal of the History of Ideas*, 60:2 (April, 1999), pp. 241-256; While Hume's *An Inquiry Into Human Understanding* is often cited as the death-knell of the argument from miracles, Harrison shows that English natural philosophers had abandoned it in favor of the argument from prophecy by 1674.

166 Peter Harrison, "Prophecy, Early Modern Apologetics, and Hume's Argument against Miracles," in *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 60:2 (April, 1999), pp. 241-256.

167 William Whiston, *An Account of Surprising Meteors*, (London, 1719), p. 35.

168 Peter Harrison, "Prophecy, Early Modern Apologetics, and Hume's Argument against Miracles."

169 William Whiston, *Six Dissertations* (London, 1734), 184.

evidence.<sup>170</sup> Furthermore, Whiston was certain that God played an active and significant role in natural philosophy by inspiring discovery through the “light of nature,” especially when this discovery led to a better understanding of the divine.<sup>171</sup>

For Whiston, proving that a prophecy had in fact been fulfilled rested upon the very scientific problems of data collection and interpretation. The data that Whiston was interested in exploring was prophecies presented in scripture, and the accounts of their completion, although in order to provide more evidence Whiston was also willing to explore classical prophecies as well.<sup>172</sup> This type of evidence proves problematic in that the fidelity of the accounts provided, both of the prophecy and its completion was suspect. Whiston was concerned that errors in translation, and innovation by various groups of Christians, including Roman Catholics, had in some way misrepresented the text’s original meaning, a fact he often cited when Biblical prophecies were not completed.<sup>173</sup> Whiston's anxiety over the fidelity of the text motivated him to seek out the oldest versions of scripture and to compare them to each other and to secular histories in order to confirm their authenticity.<sup>174</sup>

Once Whiston had assembled an account of the scriptural past that he believed was reasonably accurate he began searching for occurrences that fulfilled these prophecies. Whiston believed that prophecies were presented in a particular style, which

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170 William Whiston, *Mr. Whiston's Chronological lists*, (London, 1711), p. 35.

171 William Whiston, *The Astronomical Principles of Religion and Nature Reveled*, (London, 1715), p. 8.

172 William Whiston, *A vindication of the Sibylline Oracles*, (London, 1715).

173 William Whiston, *The Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecies*, (London, 1708) p. 28

174 William Whiston, *A collection of Original Texts of Scripture and Testimonies of Antiquity*, (London, 1719).

he identified as the “prophetical style.”<sup>175</sup> The “prophetical style,” argued Whiston, was too opaque to be understood without a proper methodology for its interpretation. Whiston's methodology for the interpretation of prophecies was concerned with what is meant by the words of the prophet, as inspired prose can have opaque meaning. Whiston asserts that any numbers offered in prophecy, including dates, can be interpreted within a standard deviation of one half of the number given. For example, an event predicted to occur in a particular month should be interpreted to happen within fifteen days of both the beginning and the end of that month.<sup>176</sup> For words that are too general to interpret accurately, the best example is always the only interpretation that is too be used.<sup>177</sup> In addition, Whiston argued that old testament prophecies are always clear, whereas new testament prophecies require interpretation.<sup>178</sup> Finally, Whiston asserted that the particular nation and generation of the prophet should be taken into account, as words and lengths of time are understood differently among different peoples and at different times.<sup>179</sup> Finally, prophecies may only have a single meaning, which must always be the most clear and obvious meaning.<sup>180</sup>

William Whiston was the most faithful practitioner of Newtonian natural philosophy and exegetical methods of the early eighteenth-century. He was acknowledged by such as his peers. His use of Newtonianism was expressed publicly through his Boyle lectures. Whiston was eventually ejected from his living, but not for

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175 William Whiston, *The Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecies*, p. 8

176 William Whiston, *The Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecies*, p.8.

177 Ibid.,

178 Ibid., p.6.

179 Ibid., p.8.

180 Ibid., pp.14-15, 27.

his use of Newtonianism, or his natural philosophy, but for his Arianism. Even if Newtonianism provides a method of explaining the world that made the language of divine intervention obsolete, and it is certainly not a forgone conclusion that it does contain such a transformative nature, then Whiston stands as proof that such potential was not unlocked in the early eighteenth century.

#### Conclusion:

The early eighteenth century was a period of dramatic change in England's political climate. Despite these changes, specters of the seventeenth century continued to haunt England in the form of dynastic crisis and foreign wars. The English used various methods and means to meet and address these problems, these means were very different from those used in 1660. However, the ways in which these events were understood, explained, and interpreted were not. England's clergy still preached in the language of divine intervention, and this preaching was the most widespread medium of public information. The clergy still conceived of an active, providential God directing England's political fate. Secular languages of politics did exist, but the most prevalent language used to describe these events publicly, especially by the clergy, was the language of divine intervention. The next chapter explores the way English clergymen used the language of divine intervention in the late eighteenth century. Even then, as secularism was supposed to have been priming continental Europe for revolutionary change, England still understood its political fate in terms of the language of divine intervention.

### CHAPTER III:

Eighteenth-century England was a kingdom ascending to previously unimagined heights of global power. Advances in English supremacy abroad were often unexpected, and in many cases they were the unintentional result of England's obligation to pursue not just its own ambitions but also those of the German kingdom of Hanover. The Hanoverian ambitions of the English monarchy from 1714 to 1745 were entirely focused on continental Europe. This pursuit of Hanoverian interests dramatically changed the structure of alliances in Europe, and in turn English foreign policy. Additionally, the exigencies of this new foreign policy prompted both political and economic changes locally in Westminster and the City of London.

William III's continental wars significantly strengthened the role of Parliament in English political life, and while the necessity of Parliamentary cooperation was clear during his reign, the monarch continued to exercise a significant degree of political control in England. This changed with the Hanoverian succession in 1714 when Parliament, and especially the House of Commons, became the primary actor in English politics. The first two Hanoverian monarchs, George I and George II, have often been described as kings incapable of ruling England as either the result of a lack of political or linguistic aptitude. It is far more likely that these two monarchs identified more strongly with their subjects in Hanover and were largely uninterested in English affairs unless it directly affected the fate of their ancestral principality. This continued a trend, beginning with William III, of absentee English kings who focused entirely on continental ambitions. Unlike William, however, the Hanoverians had no recourse to rely on others



to manage domestic policy. The first two Hanoverian kings did not have co-regent queens the way that William had Mary II. Furthermore, the Hanoverian monarchs were loath to rely too heavily on their heirs due to personal and political differences. The Hanoverians looked to professional politicians to manage English affairs for them. They initially trusted close personal friends and advisors to manage royal patronage. This proved increasingly problematic, however, as the Hanoverians' problems became more financial in nature. This meant that the Hanoverians needed more than a skilled statesmen or close advisor. Instead, they needed a minister capable of controlling the House of Commons and delivering the votes necessary to carry out the king's business. The first of these ministers was Robert Walpole, an often unscrupulous MP who was capable of carrying out the King's business in the commons. As monarchs relied more and more on these particularly effective political actors, eventually a Prime Minister position was created in the English state. This also prompted a shift in hostility away from the monarch to his most significant ministers, so English clergy explaining events in the language of divine intervention often attributed divine displeasure to the hubris of royal ministers.

The alliance structure in Europe changed dramatically in 1756. The end of the War of Austrian Succession allowed the Empress Maria Theresa to maintain her hold on the Austrian throne but at the cost of the territory of Silesia to the Prussians. In an effort to regain the losses suffered in the War of Austrian Succession, Austria entered into an alliance with the French and later the Spanish. In order to check the power of this alliance of the great continental European powers, England entered into the Seven Years

War in support of Prussia. The Seven Years War was unusual in this period because confessional divisions more nearly mirrored the opposing sides than they had in any previous English war. While Prussia was not as overwhelmingly Protestant as England, which was the result of extreme religious tolerance, Popery held little appeal to the Prussians. Furthermore, England's adversaries in the Seven Years War were the great Catholic powers in Europe, and as a result the war became a confessional conflict as much as it was a clash of national interests. This led English clergymen to characterize England not as a nation favored by the divine but rather as a tool of divine retribution against the abuses of Roman Catholicism.

The middle of the eighteenth century provided a context in which English clergy used the language of divine intervention that was, at the time, unprecedented. Occasional conformity had broadened the theological world views which could be encompassed by the Church of England. Furthermore, Acts of Toleration allowed for a more diverse sampling of English protestants to meet for religious instruction, give public sermons, and publish these sermons openly.

Despite the broadening of who could publicly employ the language of divine action, its use in 1745 had changed very little since the 1660s. English clergy of all denominations still understood themselves to be at the mercy of an active, providential God. They thought that it was through God's actions alone that English victory or defeat could be secured. The dramatic changes in England's political structure and the nature of its foreign policy did little to modify the language of divine intervention in either content or popularity.

### The Forty-Five:

By 1745, England's protestant succession had proven itself both secure and capable of weathering both internal and external threats to its continued existence. George II had already defeated one Jacobite rising, which secured the Hanoverian Succession from internal violence. The Hanoverian Succession, while threatened twice by both the Cornbury Plot and an aborted French-Jacobite invasion in 1744, remained remarkably secure from 1715 to 1745. However, in 1745, Charles Edward Stuart landed in Scotland, launching the second Jacobite Rising. The rising, popularly referred to as the "Forty-Five," was an effort by Charles Stuart, the "young pretender," to regain the English throne in the name of his father. The rising had little chance of overall success since Charles Stuart's Roman Catholicism made him unpopular with both the vast majority of Englishmen as well as many in Scotland. The population was most likely to rally to his cause. In fact, so few Englishmen joined the young pretender that the "Forty-Five" went to great lengths in order to rehabilitate Tory fortunes with the Hanoverians, as the Tories were expected by many to join the Jacobite cause. Despite the unpopularity of the rising and the relatively small size of Charles Stuart's army, he had swelled his ranks dramatically from an initial seven to around three-thousand men, and Charles Stuart managed to win a series of early and dramatic victories in Scotland. These victories were largely the result of an English army on the continent distracted by the War of Austrian Succession. They were, however, perceived by many in England to pose a real and dramatic threat to English Protestantism. By December 4, Charles Stuart's army was within 125 miles of London, and threatened to march on the city. Due to Charles's lack

of supplies and French support, he elected to march north, where he was eventually defeated at the Battle of Culloden by the Duke of Cumberland. After this defeat, Charles Stuart fled to France, where he was unable to gain sufficient support for an additional invasion with any probable chance of success. The failure of the “Forty-Five,” coupled with the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, was the deathknell of the Jacobite cause as a legitimate political ideology in England. Despite the fact that its preliminary prospects for success were extremely poor, the initial dramatic success of the rising prompted English clergymen to explain England's misfortune in terms of the language of divine intervention. However, Jacobite success did not seem to concern the vast majority of English clergymen, for whom England's eventual triumph over the Jacobite rebels was a forgone conclusion.

English clergymen characterized the threat of popery as a return to Pharonic slavery in the same manner as in the early eighteenth century.<sup>181</sup> D. Booker<sup>182</sup> warned that Popery would bring “the evils of Egypt.”<sup>183</sup> Henry Stebbing<sup>184</sup> went so far as to directly conflate Egypt with Catholicism: “We too have our Egypt, from whence we have been delivered; the slavery and tyranny of Popery.”<sup>185</sup> These clergymen point to the

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181 Colin Haydon, *Anti-Catholicism in eighteenth-century England*, (Manchester, 1993).

182 D. Booker, vicar of St. Peters, in Worcester.

183 D. Booker, *A Sermon Preached in the Parish Church of St. Peter's Worcester, On Sunday the 25<sup>th</sup> of May The appointed day of Solemn Thanksgiving for the late Glorious Victory*, (Worcester, 1746), p. 11.

184 Henry Stebbing (1687-1763) a graduate of St. Catharine's College, Cambridge and chaplain to his majesty and preacher to at Grey's Inn Chapel. Stebbing is noteworthy of prolifically defending in writing the Church of England against dissenters and latitudinarians. from B.W. Young, “Henry Stebbing,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

185 Henry Stebbing, *A Fast Sermon On Occasion of the Rebellion in Scotland in the Year 1745 Preached at Grays Inn Chapel*, (London, 1745), p. 6; see also John Barr, *A Sermon Preach'd on the Ninth of October; Being the Day appointed to be observ'd as the day of a General Thanksgiving, for the suppression of the late Unnatural Rebellion*, (Lincoln, 1746), p. 3; Zachariah Sugar, *A Sermon Preach'd at York on Sunday, 29<sup>th</sup> Day of Sept. 1745 on Occasion of the Present Rebellion in*

model of the Jewish exodus, a distancing from false religion and servitude, as a means to escape the threat of Popery, an analog used by English clergymen in 1714 to explain the Hanoverian Succession.<sup>186</sup>

Despite widespread certainty among English clergymen that divine intervention would assuredly save England from the Jacobites, many in England worried that the second Jacobite rising was motivated by divine displeasure with the English. Henry Stebbing asserted that the Jacobites would destroy London because the English had indulged in moral depravity. Stebbing claimed that it was only a matter of time before the divine punished them severely: “God called the Israelites out of Slavery to be his people: When they had corrupted their ways before him he sent them into slavery again. And would it not be just as right, when we have made so bad a use of our reformation from Popery, to send us back to Popery again.”<sup>187</sup> For Stebbing, the method through which divine favor could be repaired was a return to piety, but for others it was more was required.<sup>188</sup> John Barker argued that God brought about the Jacobite rising as punishment for English greed. He cited bankruptcies and thefts as the chief crimes of the English, not a surprising notion given English concern over the collapse of the South Sea Bubble in 1720.<sup>189</sup> Concern about greed and poverty was echoed by Manison Warner,<sup>190</sup> who argued that divine favor could only be repaired through the sacrifice of material goods,

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*Scotland*, (York, 1745), p. 18; Thomas Bradbury, *The Sin and Punishment of Edom; Considered and Applied in a Sermon on the Fast-Day*, (London, 1745), p. 10.

186 Henry Stebbing, *A Fast Sermon On Occasion of the Rebellion*, p. 10.

187 Henry Stebbing, *A Fast Sermon On Occasion of the Rebellion*, p. 11; see also Richard Watkins, *A Sermon Preached October 9, being the day appointed for a General Thanksgiving to Almighty God; For the Suppression of the late Unnatural Rebellion*, (London, 1746), p. 26.

188 Henry Stebbing, *A Fast Sermon On Occasion of the Rebellion*, p. 12.

189 John Barker, *A Sermon Occasioned by the Victory Obtained over the Rebels in Scotland on the 16<sup>th</sup> of April, 1746*, (London, 1746), pp. 30-31.

190 Manison Warner, a graduate of Jesus College Cambridge and vicar at Saint Ives.

through the establishment of orphanages and gifts to charity, “...by giving a suitable education to children destitute of friends and wealth”.<sup>191</sup>

For many English clergymen, however, England's eventual triumph over the Jacobite rebels was a forgone conclusion, a belief held for two reasons. The first was that no matter how much moral depravity and sin existed in England, it was always outweighed by the corruption of Popery. Thomas Herring<sup>192</sup> argued that the Catholic powers had broken oaths by supporting the Young Pretender and so were guilty of perjury.<sup>193</sup> The second reason for English confidence was derived from a close study of scriptural analogs to the case of England. English clergy in 1745 understood England to be the successor to Israel, and so were under special divine protection.<sup>194</sup> English clergy understood that as long as England acted like the Jews of the old Testament, when the divine favored them, they could not be defeated by Popery.

While some English clergymen looked to the rebellions against David that were so widely employed by English clergy in 1714, the early success of the second Jacobite rising prompted many English clergymen to look instead to the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem to explain the rebellion.<sup>195</sup> John Du Pont referred to Popery as “...another

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191 Manison Warner, *A Sermon Preached in the Parish Church of Saint Ives, On Thursday, October 9, 1746 Appointed a Day of Public Thanksgiving to Almighty God, for surprising the late Rebellion*, (Cambridge, 1746), p. 18.

192 Thomas Herring (1718-1774) a graduate of Clare College, Cambridge, the rector of Alburgh and Edgefield, and the dead of St. Asaph. Herring was also the nephew of Thomas Herring, archbishop of Canterbury. from Robert T. Holtby, “Thomas Herring,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

193 Thomas Herring, *A Sermon Preach'd at the Cathedral Church of York, September the 22<sup>nd</sup>, 1745*, (York, 1745), p. 22.

194 William Howdell, *A Sermon Preached in the Parish Church of Pontefract, October 6, 1745*, (York, 1745), p. 21.

195 John Du Pont, *A Sermon on Occasion of His Royal Highness the Duke's Complete Victory, Over the Rebels at Culloden*, (York, 1746), p. 3; Thomas Wingfield, *A Sermon Preach'd in the Parish-Church of St. George, in Southwark, On Thursday, October 9, 1746*, (London, 1746), pp. 3, 13.

Sennacherib,” who was King of Assyria during the siege of Jerusalem.<sup>196</sup> John Thomas urged the English to repent as the Jews did during the Assyria siege as they then “...would be equally happy in divine protection.”<sup>197</sup> Zachariah Suger identified the English as “...actors in this same sad tragedy...” of a besieged capital.<sup>198</sup> These English clergy understood that God would eventually lift the siege as he had in scripture. In II Kings, God struck down the entirety of the Assyrian army, forcing Sennacherib to abandon the siege and return to Nineveh, where his two sons murdered him. These English clergy believed that a similar fate awaited the Young Pretender and his rebels.

English clergymen explained the Jacobite Rising of 1745 in almost exactly the same manner as they explained the first Jacobite Rising in 1714: through the language of divine intervention and scriptural analog, often the same scriptural analog in Exodus. Despite these similarities the interpretation presented by English clergymen for the rising of 1745 differed from that of the rising of 1714 in one significant way. English clergy in 1745 were overwhelmingly confident that the Jacobite threat would be defeated. This faith in the security of the Hanoverian Succession and English Protestantism was not the result of the numerical or technological superiority of English arms, nor was it the result of the disorganization of the Jacobite army, or the overwhelming popularity of the Hanoverian Succession. Instead, English clergymen felt safe from the threat of Popery because, as was the case in scripture, God would defend his chosen people from external threats, especially when those threats were understood to be the machinations of the anti-

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196 John Du Pont, *A Sermon Preached at Aysgarth, On Sunday the 10<sup>th</sup> of November 1745*, (York, 1745), p. 4.

197 John Thomas, *A Sermon Preached at the Parish-Church of Blechingley in Surrey, October the 6<sup>th</sup>, 1745*, (London, 1745), p. 7.

198 Zachariah Suger, *A Sermon Preached at York*, p. 9.

Christ. Less than a decade later English clergymen would seek out this promised defense in response to French global ambition.

#### Seven Years War:

On June 28, 1756, a French fleet captured the island of Minorca in the Mediterranean. Minorca was vital to British naval operations in the Mediterranean, and losing the island to the French was no mere inconvenience. This marked the beginning of the Seven Years War, the culmination of hostilities over the results of the War of Austrian Succession in Europe, and an undeclared war between France and Britain in the Ohio River Valley that had already been going on for two years before war was officially declared. From an English perspective the Seven Years War was a dramatically different type of conflict for two reasons, the first being the geographic scale of the war. While much of the significant fighting took place in continental Europe, the English also engaged the French in colonial theaters. The second factor that made the Seven Years War so different for the English was the structure of alliances in Europe. The aftermath of the War of Austrian Succession shifted traditional European alliances on the continent, a shift that was primarily the result of Austria's desire to recapture Silesia from the Prussians. England's interest in this diplomatic development centered on the protection of George II's ancestral kingdom of Hanover and in order to provide for the security of Hanover, the English entered into an alliance with the Prussians in the hopes that this alliance would maintain a balance of power in Europe against a Franco-Austrian coalition. The new structure of European alliances after 1756 placed the Seven Years



War in a unique confessional context for the English. Unlike the Anglo-Dutch War, the English were not fighting against a fellow Protestant power in aid to a Catholic one. Furthermore, the English were not allied with any significant Catholic power in Europe, as was the case during the Wars of Spanish and Austrian Succession. Instead, the English faced the union of the three most powerful Catholic kingdoms in Europe, France, Spain and Austria. The confessional divide that characterized this war created a unique context in which to employ the language of divine intervention. While early English efforts at war proved unsuccessful, especially in North America, or at Minorca, the English clergy continued to identify and repair sources of divine displeasure. After English fortunes shifted and England began to decisively defeat its Catholic adversaries, English clergymen began to employ the language of divine intervention in a novel way. Instead of praising the divine for defending his new Israel, English clergymen revealed to their congregations that they were now a weapon of the divine, punishing much of continental Europe for Popish zealotry.

Preaching in 1759, Thomas Smith<sup>199</sup> informed his congregation that “...it may be justly said of England that as the hills stand around Jerusalem, so the lord standeth about his people...”<sup>200</sup> Smith is expressing a notion of English identity that can be traced to the previous century. This was the notion that England was the New Israel, an assumption

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199 Thomas Smith, Deacon at Oxford in 1756.

200 Thomas Smith, *A Sermon Preached at the Sunday Morning Lecture in the Parish Church of St. Giles, Cripplegate, and afterwards at Stratford-Bow, November the 29<sup>th</sup>, 1759*, (London, 1759), p. 26; This is a reference to Psalm 124, “They that trust in the Lord shall be as mount Sion: he shall not be moved for ever that dwelleth In Jerusalem. Mountains are round about it: so the Lord is round about his people from henceforth now and forever. For the Lord will not leave the rod of sinners upon the lot of the just: that the just may not stretch forth their hands to iniquity. Do good, O Lord, to those that are good, and to the upright of heart. But such as turn aside into bonds, the Lord shall lead out with the workers of iniquity: peace upon Israel.”

key to many Englishmen's understanding of foreign policy from 1660 onward. Israel of the Old Testament and England were connected, argued Charles Moss<sup>201</sup>, through what he identified as "... a similar conduct in the Jewish nation..."<sup>202</sup> Many English clergymen, both Anglican and Protestant Dissenters with few exceptions,<sup>203</sup> believed that England was a new Israel.

Providentialism was of particular importance to English clergyman during times of war because it was understood that England's special relationship with the divine entitled it to special protection through divine intervention.<sup>204</sup> English clergymen did not understand this special protection as a simple advantage but rather thought it was the only avenue through which English victory could be pursued. "We are to ascribe the victory and the praise supremely to God, to whom alone it most justly and rightfully belongs."<sup>205</sup>

However, English clergymen understood the special interest of the divine in English

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201 Charles Moss (1711-1802) a graduate of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, Rector of St. James Westminster, and eventual Bishop of Wells. He was also a client of Thomas Secker. from William Gibson, "Charles Moss," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

202 Charles Moss, *A Sermon Preached at the Parish Church of St. James, Westminster on Friday, February 6, 1756. Being the Day appointed by his Majesty for a General Fast, On Occasion of the late Earthquakes and the Present Situation in Public Affairs*, (London, 1756), p. 6.

203 Anglican Clergymen: Thomas Hunter, *A Sermon Preach'd at the Parish Church of Weverham in Cheshire on Friday, the Sixth of February*, (Liverpool, 1756), p. 7; Richard Winter, *A Sermon Preached at New-Court, Carey-Street; on Thursday, November 29, 1759 being the Day appointed by His Majesty for a General Thanksgiving to Almighty God for the signal successes obtained over the French particularly the taking of Quebec*, (London, 1759), p. 29; Griffith Williams, *A Sermon Preached at Great Totham in Essex on May 5, 1763 Being the Day of Publick Thanksgiving for the Peace*, (London, 1763), pp. 5, 19, 27; William Dodd, *A Sermon On Deuteronomy xxiii. 9. preached on Sunday, June 11, 1758*, (London, 1758), p. 5; Presbyterian: Michaijah Towgood, *A Sermon Preach'd at Exeter August the 27<sup>th</sup>, 1758 The Lord's-day after receiving the account of the taking of the islands of Cape-Breton and St. John*, (Exeter, 1758), p. 17; Independent: Isaac Smithson, *A Sermon, Occasioned by the Declaration of War Against France. Preached at Harleston, May the 23d, 1756*, (London, 1756), p. 8; John Mason, *A Sermon Preached at Cheshunt in the County of Hertford, February 6, 1756*, (London, 1756), p. 25; It should be noted that Edward Hitchin, a dissenting clergymen argued that England was in fact, not Israel, although this was almost certainly a minority opinion among English clergy. Edward Hitchin, *A Sermon preached at the New Meeting in White-Row Spital-Fields, On Thursday November 1759*, (London, 1759), p. 14.

204 William Dodd, *A Sermon On Deuteronomy xxiii. 9.*, p. 5.

205 Michaijah Towgood, *A Sermon Preach'd at Exeter August the 27<sup>th</sup>, 1758*, p. 17; see also Thomas Smith, *A Sermon Preached at the Sunday Morning*, p. 23.

affairs to come at a heavy price. As the chosen people of God, the English were held to a higher standard of piety and morality, and any violation of this could have disastrous consequences for the English. “Whenever vice and irreligion abound, the greatest armaments will be useless, or of very little signification. No fortified towns, or numerous garrisons, no naval force or mighty armies, no degree of wealth or commerce will support a nation under the heavy weight of sin and iniquity.”<sup>206</sup> Not only could divine displeasure make martial success difficult, or impossible, it could also lead to direct divine punishment. This concern dominated many sermons in England during the early years of the war.

The earliest conflicts of the Seven Years War provided evidence to English clergymen that England had somehow displeased God and that this displeasure would manifest a disaster for the English. This fear extended beyond military defeat abroad. Charles Moss saw a submission to slavery under Catholic conquerors in England's future that mirrored the Egyptian captivity of the Jews in Exodus.<sup>207</sup> Others believed that England would suffer cataclysmic destruction. Peter Pinnell<sup>208</sup> included in his sermon a list of civilizations acknowledged to have been destroyed by God.<sup>209</sup> He implied that England's name would be added to this list in short order if divine favor was not repaired. “That our name therefore may never be mentioned as an instance of divine vengeance, let us turn from the evil of our ways and walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are

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206 Thomas Smith, *A Sermon Preached at the Sunday Morning*, p. 25; John Mason, *A Sermon Preached at Cheshunt in the County of Hertford*, p. 6.

207 Charles Moss, *A Sermon Preached at the Parish Church of St. James*, p. 5; John Mason, *A Sermon Preached at Cheshunt in the County of Hertford*, p. 6.

208 Peter Pinnell, a graduate of Trinity College, Cambridge, Vicar of Eltham in Kent and Rector of Bermondsey in Surrey.

209 Peter Pinnell, *A Sermon Preach'd in the Parish-Church of Eltham in Kent on Friday, February 6, 1756 being the day appointed by Authority for a General Fast*. (London, 1756), p. 9.

called doing our duty towards God...”<sup>210</sup> While some looked to famous sieges for the eventual fate of England, others looked to Sodom and Gomorrah, or Nineveh as an example of how England would be punished.<sup>211</sup> The many of English clergymen believed that England would be destroyed through divine intervention in the form of some natural disaster, especially an earthquake, a fear prompted by the destruction of Lisbon by earthquake in 1755.<sup>212</sup> While English clergymen were in agreement that divinely directed catastrophe was a realistic and pressing concern for England, the causes of divine displeasure were highly diverse.

As was the case in the 1660s, and again in the early eighteenth century, many English clergymen attributed martial defeat to sin, impiety and “moral degeneration.”<sup>213</sup> William Dodd<sup>214</sup> asserted that even the simplest of sins, committed by a single person, could damn a whole civilization. “...the sins of individuals have often proved the downfall of nations; it was the sin of a single Achan that troubled Israel, and made them fly before their enemies.”<sup>215</sup> For Dodd, the key to repairing divine displeasure was prayer and penance. He argued that prayer should be an important part, if not the cornerstone of England's war effort: “There is indeed another duty immediately incumbent upon all at such as time...the duty I mean is earnest and importunate prayer to

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210 Ibid.,

211 Thomas Smith, *A Sermon Preached at the Sunday Morning* p. 15; John Fountayne, *A Sermon Preached in the Cathedral Church of York on Friday the 6<sup>th</sup> of February, 1756; being the day appointed for a General Fast*, (York, 1756), p. 14; Peter Pinnell, *A Sermon Preach'd in the Parish Church of Eltham*, p. 9;

212 Charles Moss, *A Sermon Preached at the Parish Church of St. James*, p. 8; John Fountayne, *A Sermon Preached in the Cathedral Church of York* p. 14.

213 Thomas Smith, *A Sermon Preached at the Sunday Morning*, p. 4; Thomas Hunter, *A Sermon Preach'd at the Parish Church of Weverham* p. 5.

214 William Dodd, lecturer at West Ham, Essex, and St. Olaves, vicar of Bourne.

215 William Dodd, *A Sermon On Deuteronomy xxiii.* 9, p. 21; Achan is a thief mentioned in the Book of Joshua whose theft of precious metals and cloth resulted in God foiling an Israeli siege at Ai. Joshua 7:25.

God for success upon the army when it is gone forth against an enemy.”<sup>216</sup> In doing so, Dodd asserted that the English would “...secure almighty favor to their country's arms, ... as well as success to their countrymen...”<sup>217</sup>

Unique to sermons on the Seven Years War was a condemnation of politics that rested upon secular principles. Many English clergymen after 1660 cautioned against relying too heavily on earthly forces in warfare but were seldom critical of the earthly policy makers. When they were critical of policy makers, it was often simply a reminder that the king was merely an executor of divine policy, and that divine action, not royal action, was responsible in the end for any English success. During the Seven Years War, changes in the English political structure prompted many English clergymen to attack royal ministers, and politics carried out with secular motives. Isaac Smithson<sup>218</sup> warned his congregation to ignore secular politics when celebrating good English fortune in war: “If the, it be so, it will easily appear on what, on whom we ought to ultimately rely, not on the counsels of the cabinet, not on the deliberations of a senate not on the power of a monarch...”<sup>219</sup> Indeed, Smithson asserted that it was secular politics, and the ministers who carried them out, that misguided the English war effort and prompted divine displeasure in the first place.<sup>220</sup> The answer for these English clergymen was a reassertion of providentialism and piety on the model of King David.<sup>221</sup>

Despite England's early defeats at places like Minorca, by 1658 the war had

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216 William Dodd, *A Sermon On Deuteronomy xxiii. 9*, p. 15.

217 Ibid.,

218 Isaac Smithson, a dissenting minister.

219 Isaac Smithson, *A Sermon, Occasioned by the Declaration of War*, p. 12.

220 Ibid.,

221 Richard Winter, *A Sermon Preached at New-Court, Carey-Street*, p. 33; Isaac Smithson, *A Sermon, Occasioned by the Declaration of War*, p. 10; Griffith Williams, *A Sermon Preached at Great Totham*, p. 15.

dramatically turned in favor of the English, especially in the colonial theaters of India and North America, as well as at sea. Victories at Quiberon Bay, Quebec, and Plassy renewed the faith of English clergymen that England had regained divine favor. Unlike previous conflicts, where English military success was understood as an act of the divine in defense of England, English clergymen overwhelmingly characterized England at the end of the Seven Years War as a tool of divine punishment directed at Popery and especially the French.<sup>222</sup> In the minds of the English, the French had angered God by corrupting Christianity with superstition and breaking oaths and treaties.<sup>223</sup> These crimes against the divine warranted divine punishment, something English clergy were certain of based on analogs in scripture. Two scriptural analogs in particular appear most frequently, the Israelite's war with the Moabites.

Griffith Williams<sup>224</sup> informed his congregation that after exploring the actual events of the Seven Years War, and those presented in scripture, he was "...easily led to form a comparison between the Moabites and our enemies the French."<sup>225</sup> Williams was certain of this relationship because "as the Moabites had alienated themselves from the true God by their idolatry, and deviating from the religion which their ancestor Lot Professed; so the Papists and others who use idolatrous worship in any degree are said in scripture to be estranged from God."<sup>225</sup> The choice of the Moabites is also significant because they engaged the Israelites in multiple wars. This allowed Williams to cite

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222 Griffith Williams, *A Sermon Preached at Great Totham in Essex*, (London, 1763), pp. 21-22.

223 Henry Piers, *A Sermon Preached in the Parish Church of Bexley in Kent on Thursday the 29<sup>th</sup> of November, 1759*, (London, 1759), p. 14; Griffith Williams *A Sermon Preached at Great Totham*, p. 14.

224 Griffith Williams, vicar of Totham in Essex.

225 Griffith Williams, *A Sermon Preached at Great Totham*, p. 21.

previous examples of English successes, such as the Spanish Armada, against Catholics as evidence of a relationship between Papists and the Moabites.<sup>226</sup> Richard Winter interpreted the victory of the English at the battle of Quebec by comparing Moabites and Catholics. Winter pointed to the victory of the Jewish king Jehosaphat, who in battle against the Moabites at Kir-haresheth, routed the Moabites with divine aid: “When [God] undertakes to deliver his people,... in a most amazing manner, that there was not one of his enemies escaped. The defeat was total, the victory complete. ... It was by the Artillery of Heaven alone...”<sup>227</sup> Winter and Williams were certain that the divine would intervene to destroy Popery because of a promise in scripture: “For on this mountain shall the hand of the Lord rest and Moab shall be trodden down under him, even as straw is trodden down for the dunghill.”<sup>228</sup> English clergy assumed that this divine promise to the Israelites was afforded to them as well.

The first half of the eighteenth century prompted many changes in the way the English conceived of warfare. Foreign policy was no longer the sole prerogative of the king, but it was understood to be under the purview of his ministers. England's obligation to provide security for both Hanover and its growing colonial empire complicated English foreign policy. These changes resulted in no dramatic transformation of the way many Englishmen understood war. English clergymen continued to use the language of divine intervention to explain events of military significance, and identify and correct misguided foreign policy. For many in England,

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226 Ibid., p. 4.

227 Richard Winter, *A Sermon preached at New-Court, Carey-Street on Thursday, November 29, 1759*, (London, 1759), p. 20.

228 Griffith Williams, *A Sermon Preached at Great Totham*, p. 15 ; see *Isaiah* 25:10.

foreign policy should be pursued with a view to the imperative of divine will, especially when directed against the forces of popery and the anti-Christ. For these Englishmen war was fought not by soldiers and ships, but by divine providence, both general and special. Both the piety and prayer of God's chosen people, his new Israel, the English prompted divine intervention in war. It is important to note that these English clergymen in the middle of the eighteenth century were, for the first time, criticizing a rival language of foreign policy, that of secular, national interest. Its presence, however, should not be taken teleologically to indicate dominance, nor should its eventual ascendancy be understood as inevitable. The vast majority of Englishmen in 1763 were still exposed regularly to the language of divine intervention, regardless of their denominational preference and it was through this language that they experienced and understood England's military fortune.

Thomas Newton:

In the early seventeenth century William Whiston utilized completed prophecy to great effect in proving the existence of God. Despite the fact that Whiston developed and espoused these views while he was still a respected member of the Church of England, Whiston's eventual ejection for his outspoken support of Arianism would seem to indicate that his views on matters of religion were far from widely accepted. However, Whiston was not alone and other English clergymen understood the utility of the argument from fulfilled prophecy. In the 1760s and 1770s, when England was supposed to be recognizably secular, another English clergyman preached on completed prophecies,



much in the same way Whiston did nearly half a century earlier.<sup>229</sup> This clergyman was not a dissenter, as Whiston had been. He was also not an atypical figure in the Church of England, and in many ways embodied orthodox theology. Thomas Newton preached a Boyle Lecture in 1755 designed to reincorporate the argument from fulfilled prophecy into the Church of England vernacular. Furthermore, despite his differences with Whiston on the nature of the trinity, Thomas Newton understood completed prophecy in a remarkably similar way.

Thomas Newton was born at Lichfield on 1 January, 1704. After attending the Westminster School, Newton matriculated into Trinity College, Cambridge, in 1722. Upon receiving his MA from Trinity College in 1730, Newton became a fellow of the college. In 1754, following the death of his first wife and his father, Newton began producing a tract on completed prophecies which would form the core of his Boyle Lectures, for which he was commissioned in 1755. In addition to giving his Boyle Lectures, Newton was also bishop of Bristol. As bishop, Newton focused most of his efforts of strengthening England's bulwark against Catholicism until his death in 14 February, 1782.<sup>230</sup>

Like William Whiston and Edward Stillingfleet, Thomas Newton believed that the existence of the divine was accessible through reason, especially when applied to the natural world in the absence of scripture.<sup>231</sup> Newton asserted, however, that this particular proof of the divine required a certain degree of knowledge about the natural

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229 Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p. 80; Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, p. 334.

230 Nigel Aston, "Thomas Newton," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

231 Thomas Newton, *On the imperfect Reception of the Gospel: A Sermon Preached before the Incorporated Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts*, (London, 1769), p. 7.

world, and so while it was the most readily available, it was not always the most clear.<sup>232</sup>

For Newton, "...the strongest evidences for the truth of revealed religion is the series of prophecies which are preserved in the old and new Testament..."<sup>233</sup> In fact, Newton argued that this proof of God was even more clear and effective than witnessing an actual miracle, as certainty that prophecy will be fulfilled is not accepted simply on faith, but could be observed.<sup>234</sup> This made Christianity, argued Newton, a religion proved by "...ocular completion ... not walking in faith alone, but also by sight."<sup>235</sup> In order to make the best use of this proof of revealed religion, Newton accepted what he believed to be Francis Bacon's charge in his *The History of Prophecy* (1605); to assemble every prophecy in scripture alongside its completion.<sup>236</sup> This project also required that the authenticity of these prophecies be proven. For this, Whiston argued that prophetic writings should be held up to the scrutiny of historical texts, both Christian and non-Christian, in order to prove that the prophecy was delivered before the events that fulfill it.<sup>237</sup> The second problem with this proof, argued Newton, is understanding exactly what events fulfill a given prophecy, a task further complicated by the often opaque language of prophecy.<sup>238</sup> "Obscurities there are in prophetic writing for which many good reason may be assigned, ... prophecies are the only species of writing which is designed more for

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232 Thomas Newton, *Dissertations on the Prophecies Which have Remarkably been fulfilled and at this time are fulfilling in this world: Volume 2*, (London, 1758), p. 396.

233 Thomas Newton, *Dissertations on the Prophecies Which have Remarkably been fulfilled and at this time are fulfilling in this world: Volume 1*, (London, 1758), p. 1.

234 Thomas Newton, *Dissertations on the Prophecies Which have Remarkably been fulfilled Vol. 1*, p. 3.

235 Thomas Newton, *Dissertations on the Prophecies Which have Remarkably been fulfilled, Vol. 2* p. 384.

236 Thomas Newton, *Dissertations on the Prophecies Which have Remarkably been fulfilled Vol. 1*, p. 1.

237 Ibid., p. 3.

238 Ibid., p. 8.

the instruction of future ages than of the time wherein they are written.”<sup>239</sup> In order to overcome this obstacle, and accurately interpret of prophecy, Newton, much as Whiston had, devised a methodology through which prophecy could be best understood.

Key to Newton's method of prophetic interpretation is the notion that prophecies made about specific events and people contemporary to the prophet should always be interpreted to have larger implications.

...the ancient prophets would be really what the Deists think them, little better than common fortune tellers...we must affix a larger meaning to them, and understand them not as single persons, but of whole nations; and thereby a nobler sense of things, and a more extensive prospect will be opened to us of the divine dispensation.<sup>240</sup>

Furthermore, argued Newton, the linguistic and temporal setting of the prophecy must be taken into account, as this can affect the meaning of a particular prophecy, a problem Newton believed to be particularly appropriate for Hebrew scriptures, where words often have much broader secondary meanings.<sup>241</sup> Furthermore, Newton argued that scripture should be explored in all the languages in which it exists, including Arabic, so that the most likely or common interpretation could be understood.<sup>242</sup>

Despite the many similarities between the arguments from prophecy made by both Whiston and Newton, they diverge from each other on a few matters. Newton, unlike Whiston, believed that prophecy was entirely the result of divinely caused revelation.<sup>243</sup> Where for Whiston, scientific knowledge applied to events could be considered prophecy,

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239 Thomas Newton, *Dissertations on the Prophecies Which have Remarkably been fulfilled* Vol. 2, p. 396.

240 Thomas Newton, *Dissertations on the Prophecies Which have Remarkably been fulfilled* Vol. 1, p. 8.

241 Ibid., p. 9.

242 Ibid., p. 11.

243 Ibid., p. 1.

for Newton, prophecy was always directly received from God.<sup>244</sup> In this way, Newton's God intervenes more directly, and is far more active in the process of prophecy than Whiston's. Furthermore, Newton argued that all prophecies had already been made, even if many prophecies were not yet fulfilled.<sup>245</sup> It is for this reason, that unlike Whiston, Newton did not attempt to prophesy himself, or interpret those prophecies given by pagans.

Like William Whiston, Newton was particularly anxious about the accuracy of scriptural translation for the purposes of interpreting prophecy. Unlike Whiston, however, Newton was also concerned that improperly translated versions of the Bible were preventing successful evangelization abroad. Newton asserted, that while at its revelation scripture was completely accurate, men, especially the negligence and ignorance of Christians, have since corrupted it.<sup>246</sup> Newton was also doubtful of the fidelity of the Old Testament and he argued that the Jews were naturally inclined to report it falsely.<sup>247</sup> The Roman Catholic Church at the behest of the Anti-Christ to prevent evangelization had altered the New Testament, argued Newton.<sup>248</sup> Newton was certain that the lack of fidelity in scripture accounted for the degree to which Christianity had failed to take root in non-European nations, especially, Newton argued, where Christianity is respected, even if it is not believed.<sup>249</sup> For Newton, this was not simply a matter of accuracy, but was in fact a divine imperative. Newton argued that it had been

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244 Thomas Newton, *Dissertations on the Prophecies Which have Remarkably been fulfilled* Vol. 2, p. 384.

245 Thomas Newton, *Dissertations on the Prophecies Which have Remarkably been fulfilled* Vol. 1, p. 2.

246 Thomas Newton, *On the imperfect Reception of the Gospel*, (London, 1769), p. 14.

247 Thomas Newton, *On the imperfect Reception of the Gospel*, p. 15.

248 Thomas Newton, *Dissertations on the Prophecies Which have Remarkably been fulfilled* Vol. 2, p. 383.

249 Thomas Newton, *On the imperfect Reception of the Gospel*, p. 8.

prophesied that right before the end of days, Christianity would become universal.<sup>250</sup> Additionally, Newton asserted that God “intends all his predictions to be accomplished by the agency of men...”<sup>251</sup> Newton charged the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel with providing more perfect translations of scripture, and more learned clergymen to promote their understanding abroad.<sup>252</sup>

Newton was the Boyle Lecturer, charged to prove the existence of God through reason and natural philosophy. For this purpose he utilized the argument from fulfilled prophecy. Not only did Thomas Newton assert that this argument was part of the reasonable Christianity, but his argument proved to be popular with the English reading public, being issued in twenty edition, which were still in print in 1835.<sup>253</sup> Thomas Newton's use of this argument indicates that even in the late-eighteenth century, even in a setting dedicated to the primacy of reason and natural philosophy, Thomas Newton felt it appropriate, and even useful to discuss fulfilled prophecy, as they were facilitated by active divine intervention. This was not a notion contrary to reason for Newton, but in fact, was the most reasonable method of proving God's existence.

#### Conclusion:

At the end of the Seven Years War England found itself at the center of a global empire, responsible for ruling subjects of many different nationalities, and more significantly religious confessions. This new found religious diversity included many

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250 Ibid., p. 6.

251 Ibid., p. 18.

252 Thomas Newton, *On the imperfect Reception of the Gospel*, In this tract Newton also argued for the placement of a bishop in North America, a controversial position at the time.

253 Nigel Aston, “Thomas Newton,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*.

Roman Catholics in North America. The English political system changed dramatically from the beginning of the century as kings relied more and more heavily on Prime Ministers, primarily for economic reasons. These Prime Ministers shifted the focus of government away from the court and into the House of Commons. Religious tolerance and occasional conformity broadened the ways in which the word, and will of God, could be interpreted in England. All of these factors would point to an ascendancy of secularism in England, but even on the eve of the French Revolution, when Enlightenment secularism dramatically changed the nature of an entire nation in Europe, English clergymen continued to understand and explain the world around them in terms of the language of divine intervention, much in the same way as they had for the previous century. The changes in the context only changed the focus, while language remained remarkably consistent. Even religious tolerance did not dramatically change the use of the language of divine intervention, but broadened its usage. A Briton in 1745 and an Englishman in 1660 lived in two very different worlds, but they explained and understood these worlds in the same language. Both had a common commitment to protestant providentialism through the language divine intervention.

### CONCLUSION:

Eighteenth-century England cannot be characterized as a secular society. The period from c.1660-c.1760 witnessed countless, and often significant changes to England's political structures and the posture of its foreign policy. Despite these developments, the language of divine intervention continued to serve as the most basic, and most important language of interpretation and explanation available to the vast majority of Englishmen. Even rapid development in the field of natural philosophy, often cited as the most effective adversary to revealed religion and providentialism, did little to dislodge the language of divine intervention from the core of English society.

In this period, England fought three major foreign wars, many of which had consequences that touched the political and economic sectors of English society in important ways. These economic and political consequences were not, however, the most important aspects of these wars for English clergymen. For the whole of this century, English clergymen conceived of these wars in the language of divine action. Causes for wars were framed in terms of divine imperatives, and the results of the battles were always attributed to acts of the divine. Most significantly, maintenance of England's martial fortune was not attributed to the armed forces or military technology. Instead, to the English, divine favor controlled martial fortune, and this favor had to be maintained.

This century also saw three succession crises that had dramatic consequences for the political position of both Parliament and the King in England. To the English clergymen, these crises were the result of divine intervention and could only be corrected through the maintenance of divine favor. Clergymen also conceived of the location of

sovereignty in England as directly handed down from God to the ruler to employ or divide as the monarch saw fit. This meant that, according to the clergymen, English sovereignty was not the result of consent from either the people or Parliament.

Even in the realm of natural philosophy, where providentialism was supposed to have died out during this century, English clergymen continued to conceive of the world around them in terms of the language of divine intervention. An active, providential God was required to maintain the laws of nature. Furthermore, the most reasonable, and rational proofs of God for these English clergymen were completed prophecies and miracles, and these two aspects of Christianity required divine intervention.

How then, with the most publicly visible and highly educated segment of English society continuing to conceive of the world in a non-secular language until at least c.1760, can early modern England be called secular? The answer, in short, is that it cannot be. Furthermore, the relative consistency with which the language of divine intervention was applied from c.1660-c.1760 indicates that there was no acceleration of secularization after 1660, but rather, a deceleration, as England's clergy attempted to secure England against it. If England became a modern, secular state, then the origins of this state almost certainly existed outside of the "long eighteenth century."



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