

The Church of England and her Presbyterian Curates, 1662–1672

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After their ejection from the Church of England, it is said that the English Presbyterians split into two factions. The 'Dons', led by Richard Baxter, pursued comprehension and reunion with the national Church, whilst the 'Ducklings' petitioned for an indulgence of their separation. In this article, it is argued that this twofold distinction is largely false. Rather, all English Presbyterians sought unity; their divergence in terms of practical policy stemmed from subtly different conceptions of catholicity. Thus, paradoxically, indulgence came to be seen as a pathway towards comprehension. Conventicle preaching, meanwhile, became a curious form of curacy, operating in tandem with the parish ministry.

Dons and Ducklings

On 30 January 1661, twelve years after the execution of Charles I, Oliver Cromwell's corpse was disinterred by royal decree; his body was strung up at Tyburn, whilst his head was placed on a pole outside Westminster Hall. It was from this vantage point that, just three months later, the eyes of the pallid Protector would watch as the coronation procession passed by on its way to Westminster Abbey. Yet after the ale and oak apples, England was prescribed a purgative pill. Charles II's magnanimous Declaration of Breda, which had promised 'Liberty to Tender Consciences' in matters of religion, was promptly forgotten by the newly elected Cavalier Parliament. Instead, the Act of Uniformity, which received royal assent on 19 May 1662, sought to purge the puritans from the parishes of the national Church. The act demanded the 'unfeigned assent, and consent' of all ministers to the Thirty-Nine Articles and the

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Book of Common Prayer, but, more importantly, it also required the re-ordination of anyone not in episcopal orders, along with the repudiation of the Solemn League and Covenant.¹

The English Presbyterians, who had overwhelmingly supported the Restoration of the monarchy, were now forced to refuse the terms of the act, unwilling to admit the illegitimacy of their own ordination, or of the covenant that most of them had sworn before God to endeavour the ‘reformation of religion ... according to the Word of God, and the example of the best Reformed Churches’.² This refusal was not merely personal; to renege upon such a promise would bring the nation under judgement, forcing England itself into perjury against God. Over the issue of re-ordination, Presbyterians such as Zachary Crofton were offended not only for their own sake, but on behalf of their continental brethren. Crofton could not assent to an act which in principle defrocked almost every Presbyterian divine in England, as well as their Reformed brethren abroad, to the grave detriment of European Protestantism.³ So, on 24 August 1662, around 2,000 puritan ministers left their parish pulpits. For these divines, it seemed as though the Church had resumed her prewar ‘Romeward drift’.⁴

However, in the years that followed many of these divines would again take up their ministry outside the confines of the national Church, preaching at conventicles to former congregants. The setting up of separate services often proceeded slowly and with caution, and Presbyterian ministers were careful to keep their own gatherings ‘outside church time’, not least so that they could themselves attend the public worship.⁵ In the minds of such moderate nonconformists, their meetings supplemented the regular, parochial worship, rather than supplanting it. Presbyterian responses to the ejection formed a broad spectrum, but what bound them together was their very rejection of separatism, even under conditions of separation. However, several influential historians of

¹ Parliament of England and Wales, *An act for the uniformity of publick prayers and administration of sacraments and other rites and ceremonies*, London 1662, 6 (14 Car 2 c 4); BL, ms Harleian 5936.

² Parliament of England and Wales, *A solempne League and Covenant for reformation*, London: Edward Husbands, 1643 (Wing S4446C).

³ [Zachary Crofton], *A serious review of presbyters re-ordination by bishops*, London: Ralph Smith, 1661 (2nd edn 1994) (Wing C7003), 23.

⁴ Tony Claydon, ‘The Church of England and the Churches of Europe’, in Jeremy Gregory (ed.), *The Oxford history of Anglicanism: establishment and empire, 1662–1829*, Oxford 2017, 318. See also Stephen Hampton, *Anti-Arminians: the Anglican Reformed tradition from Charles II to George I*, Oxford 2008. For a brilliant recent study on the topic of Reformed orthodoxy in the later Stuart Church of England see Jake Griesel, *Retaining the old episcopal divinity: John Edwards of Cambridge and Reformed orthodoxy in the later Stuart Church*, Oxford 2022.

⁵ Mark Goldie, *Roger Morrice and the Puritan Whigs*, Woodbridge 2016, 229.

dissent, following in the footsteps of G. Lyon Turner and Roger Thomas, have argued that over this first decade after the ejection, an increasing number of English Presbyterians grew to reject this supplementary view, causing a fissure within the Presbyterian party.⁶ According to this view, from as early as 1665 the comprehensive policy of those such as Richard Baxter, who sought reconciliation with the Church of England, is supposed to have met with resistance from another group, who began to seek toleration outside of a national, parochial structure, seeing ‘their only hope of continuing a gospel ministry as lying in gathered congregations outside the Church and in separation from it like the Independents’.⁷

Using terms popularised by the historian Roger Thomas, these two groups have been labelled ‘Dons’ and ‘Ducklings’. Thomas’s terminology is taken directly from the notes of Sir Joseph Williamson, a secretary dispatched by Lord Arlington in the early 1670s to discern whether the court might be able to meet the demands of the dissenters and win their support. On 13 December 1671 Williamson reported that some of the Presbyterian ministers ‘have been estranged to one another of late, *i.e.* not liked one another’s conduct’. According to this secretarial report, the Dons conversed more ‘with the gentry’ and tended to ‘master it over’ the Ducklings, perhaps implying that they pressed a policy of conciliation and comprehension upon them, whilst the Ducklings on the other hand, were the ‘young Presbyterians’, popular preachers who were further from the court and the churchmen than their brethren, but had more of an ‘interest in the middling people’.⁸ Those explicitly named as Dons by Williamson were Thomas Manton, William Bates and Thomas Jacombe, whilst Thomas Watson, Samuel Annesley and Thomas Vincent were those listed as Ducklings.⁹

The English Presbyterians (London 1968), co-edited by Roger Thomas, transforms this short series of hastily scribbled reports by an alarmed Anglican into a testimony of enduring division within the Presbyterian party throughout the Restoration era.¹⁰ Here Williamson’s claim that ‘all

⁶ *Original records of early Nonconformity under persecution and indulgence*, ed. G. Lyon Turner, London 1914, iii. 201; Roger Thomas, ‘Comprehension and indulgence’, in Geoffrey F. Nuttall and Owen Chadwick (eds), *From uniformity to unity, 1662–1962*, London 1962, 207–10, 236–8; Roger Thomas, ‘Parties in Nonconformity’, in C. G. Bolam, J. Goring, H. L. Short and Roger Thomas (eds), *The English Presbyterians: from Elizabethan Puritanism to modern Unitarianism*, London 1968, 95–105.

⁷ Thomas, ‘Parties in Nonconformity’, 95, 99.

⁸ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic, 1671–1672* (hereinafter cited as *CSPD*), London 1860, 28–9.

⁹ It is also implied that Lazarus Seaman is a Don, whilst James Ennis [Innes] is also mentioned by Williamson in connection with the Ducklings. Ennis introduced Annesley and his Ducklings when they addressed the king in 1672, whilst Seaman and William Jenkyn accompanied the so-called Dons in a separate address: *ibid.* 28–9.

¹⁰ Bolam, Goring, Short and Thomas, *The English Presbyterians*.

the Presbyterians are growing Independents' is taken seriously by Thomas and his co-editors, particularly C. G. Bolam and Jeremy Goring, who argue that the rigours of the persecutory Clarendon Code forced these young Ducklings to swim speedily towards separatism, whilst the Dons still hoped for comprehension within the national Church.¹¹ When young ministers like Thomas Vincent leapt into vacant parish pulpits during the plague, their actions are interpreted not as an attempt to assist an ailing people, but rather as part of a separatist effort to supplant the absent pastor. So it was that these young Presbyterians emerged 'into the open as unashamed schismatics'.¹² This distinction between Dons and Ducklings Thomas believes to have lasted for thirty years, manifesting itself most notably in the struggle 'between comprehension and toleration' – between re-joining and rejecting the Church of England – which would only be resolved after the Act of Toleration, when in November 1694 the appointment of Samuel Annesley to a lectureship at Salters' Hall alongside William Bates signalled 'the end of the old division amongst the Presbyterians of Dons and Ducklings'.¹³

More recent scholarship has already begun to downplay this distinction, defending the differences between these divines as temporary and prudential, rather than a doctrinal dispute which would divide the old Dons from the new Donatists for decades.¹⁴ George Southcombe, for example, in his chapter on Presbyterians in the Restoration in *The Oxford history of the Protestant dissenting traditions*, warns against writing 'in terms of hard identities' and is aware of the tendency of Presbyterians to set up a 'structure independent of the national Church' even as they sought comprehension.¹⁵ Such steps should certainly be welcomed, yet unfortunately the effect of this dualistic view of accommodationists and separatists still

¹¹ *CSPD, 1671–1672*, 496; C. G. Bolam and Jeremy Goring, 'The cataclysm', in Bolam, Goring, Short and Thomas, *The English Presbyterians*, 85–7.

¹² Bolam and Goring, 'The cataclysm', 86; Thomas, 'Comprehension and indulgence', 208–10.

¹³ Thomas, 'Parties in Nonconformity', 95; Roger Thomas, 'Presbyterians in transition', in Bolam, Goring, Short and Thomas, *The English Presbyterians*, 119–20.

¹⁴ See Michael P. Winship, 'Defining Puritanism in Restoration England: Richard Baxter and others respond to "A friendly debate"', *HJ* liv (2011), 712–15; Ann Hughes, 'Print and pastoral identity', in Michael Davies, Anne Dunan-Page and Joel Halcomb (eds), *Church life: pastors, congregations, and the experience of dissent in seventeenth-century England*, Oxford 2019, 169; and John Spurr, *English Puritanism, 1603–1689*, New York 1998, 139.

¹⁵ Even here, however, the key question is not whether their practices were independent from the national Church post-1662, for almost by definition any structures they set up for themselves would be such, but how they conceived of such activity: George Southcombe, 'Presbyterians in the Restoration', in John Coffey (ed.), *The Oxford history of the Protestant dissenting traditions, I: The post-Reformation era, c.1559–1689*, Oxford 2020, 77–8.

lurks in modern historiography. Southcombe, for instance, softens the distinction even as he pushes it farther into the future, taking a slightly subdued version of Robert Beddard's old line which sees Vincent Alsop as a proto-separatist in the 1680s, instead of the plague preachers of the 1660s.¹⁶ Modern scholars may have done away with the clear-cut distinctions of the 1960s, but whether or not Williamson's terms live on, they have done their damage. Those such as Annesley, or later Alsop, are still seen as Ducklings – brash young Presbyterians, though closer to Congregationalists, who struck out on their own, bashing the bishops and preaching to the common people.¹⁷ The quibble is not merely with the use of these terms, but with the tale they have been used to tell: that of the so-called 'emancipation' of English Presbyterianism, or to give it another gloss, the inevitable collapse into Congregationalism which can be assumed from the ultimate victory of the Ducklings' preferred means of religious toleration over comprehension. Williamson's cursory clerical classification of parties into Dons and Ducklings persists for all of a fortnight in his notes, but in the hands of historians it has become a mark of enduring division, leading to an embrace of separatism.¹⁸

This narrative is dominant, compelling and false; it is time for it to be comprehensively overturned. In truth, the English Presbyterians, even those such as Alsop, were never merely waiting for their moment to test the waters of separatism, but rather seeking comprehension, whether more or less actively, and at the same time engineering ever-more ingenious ways of simply conceiving bare toleration as a form of comprehension. Here the words of Mark Goldie hold firm: 'they sought readmission, and meanwhile behaved as members anyway'.¹⁹ Far from signifying a

¹⁶ Southcombe relies exclusively upon Beddard's article for his treatment of Alsop, though he does take a more cautious approach: 'Presbyterians in the Restoration', 84; R. A. Beddard, 'Vincent Alsop and the emancipation of Restoration dissent', this *JOURNAL* xxiv (1973), 161–84. For the multifarious problems with Beddard's view see S. J. Tunnicliffe, 'The development of the doctrine of the Church and religious toleration among English Presbyterians, 1643–1705', unpublished PhD diss. Cambridge 2023, ch. v.

¹⁷ Mark Goldie notes that this distinction is 'unduly teleological', though he largely persists with the notion that 'a growing gap' existed between the two wings of the party throughout the Restoration era. For the use of these terms see *Original records of early Nonconformity*, iii, 201; Goldie, *Roger Morrice and the Puritan Whigs*, 237; John Coffey, 'Church and State, 1550–1750: the emergence of dissent', in Robert Pope (ed.), *T&T Clark companion to Nonconformity*, London 2013, 63; and Gary S. De Krey, *London and the Restoration, 1659–1683*, Cambridge 2005, 120–1.

¹⁸ The entry which first mentions the dispute on 13 December 1671 is the only recorded instance of Williamson's celebrated terminology, whilst the final entry touching the matter comes later that same month, on 27 December, when he reports that 'these two parties resolve prudently, whatever differences are amongst them, not to let the world see it': *CSPD, 1671–1672*, 28–9, 45.

¹⁹ Goldie, *Roger Morrice and the Puritan Whigs*, p. xxii.

new-found separatism, the prevalence of Presbyterian meeting houses beside parish churches evidenced instead a tenacious spirit of catholicity and co-operation on the part of the English Presbyterians. A thorough examination of those named by Williamson shows not only that this dichotomy is overblown, but that in at least one crucial way, it captures the exact reverse of the pattern of Restoration Presbyterianism.

Speaking of two parties rather than of a spectrum is mistaken simply because the aims of the Ducklings had far more ecclesiological overlap with those of the Dons than might be thought, as the case of John Humfrey makes clear. Humfrey developed an ecclesiology which sought to unite the somewhat disparate aims of the Presbyterian party by seeing indulgence as an ersatz form of comprehension, thereby expanding the very definition of the national Church in a way that included even the ejected.²⁰ However, the primary issue is that, insofar as these two parties can be spoken of, they have been spoken of poorly, particularly in the case of the Ducklings. Following Roger Thomas, historians have tended to see Richard Baxter as the standard-bearer for the Dons, broadly representative of a venerable puritan tradition of semi-conformism. The Ducklings, by contrast, are seen as on the slide towards separatism. Yet where members of this latter group have been identified by Williamson, it transpires that they were in fact truer heirs of a more traditional, orthodox English Presbyterianism than Baxter was – one which followed in the footsteps of covenanters such as Arthur Jackson, William Jenkyn and even the Donnish Lazarus Seaman. The small band of Ducklings which features in Williamson's report, expanded by Thomas, was not comprised of separatists, but rather of covenanted catholics, who pursued indulgence in search not of separation, but of reformation, even of the national Church.

Covenanted Catholics

The image of young Ducklings stepping out from under the shadow of their compromising older colleagues to preach to the conventicle is an alluring historical fallacy. Sadly, however, these divines were largely one another's direct contemporaries. The chief Don, Thomas Manton, was born in 1620, the same year as the supposed leader of the Ducklings,

²⁰ Here I am indebted to Brent Sirota, who termed the Societies for the Reformation of Manners, founded in the 1690s, 'an ersatz form of Protestant reconciliation'. I essentially expand this idea here to the whole of the Restoration era: Brent S. Sirota, *The Christian monitors: the Church of England and the age of benevolence, 1680–1730*, New Haven 2014, 94.

Samuel Annesley.²¹ Meanwhile, men such as Jacombe (b.1622) and Bates (b.1625) were surely respected colleagues of those such as Thomas Watson (b.1619–20?), but were hardly his elders or pastoral role-models.²² Strangely enough, the claim that Dons and Ducklings were of two different generations is one of the claims most repeated by historians who echo this distinction, as is the inclusion of Richard Baxter on the one side, and Vincent Alsop on the other, neither of whom are mentioned by Williamson.²³ The idea that an ‘old-fashioned’ generation of Presbyterians comfortable with compromise, shaped and formed within the Laudian Church, was opposed by ‘younger and more virulent’ men more at ease with the ecclesiastical chaos of the Interregnum, is perhaps too tempting to turn down.²⁴ In truth, however, most of those named by Williamson received their first pastorate in the 1640s and rose to prominence in the following decade; but for the occasional outlier, Don and Duckling were reared together.²⁵

As for their preaching practices, though the Dons have been seen as reticent whilst the Ducklings ‘did not fear the water’, this too has been overblown.²⁶ Williamson’s rather obscure terminology has been taken by some to signify that the Ducklings were those ‘willing to venture farther upon schism’s chilly waters’ upon being thrust from their nests. However it is much more likely to refer (albeit mistakenly) to the age of the Ducklings and the education of the Dons, all of whom were Doctors of Divinity.²⁷ Certainly, the Ducklings were active conventiclers; Samuel

²¹ A recent PhD dissertation on Manton calls him the foremost ‘ecclesiastical statesman among the Presbyterians’ throughout the Restoration era until his death in 1677: Adam Richardson, ‘Thomas Manton and the Presbyterians in Interregnum and Restoration England’, unpubl. PhD diss. Leicester 2014, 163.

²² Watson’s date of birth remains unknown, but his matriculation at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in 1635 suggests that he could hardly have been born later than 1620: Barry Till, ‘Watson, Thomas (1620?-1686)’, *ODNB*, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/28867>>, accessed 18 February 2020.

²³ *CSPD*, 1671–1672, 29; Thomas, ‘Comprehension and indulgence’, 208; Bolam and Goring, ‘The cataclysm’, 87; Tim Cooper, *John Owen, Richard Baxter and the formation of Nonconformity*, Farnham 2016, 269; Yannick Deschamps, ‘Daniel Defoe’s contribution to the dispute over occasional conformity: an insight into dissent and “moderation” in the early eighteenth century’, *American Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies* xlvii (2013), 354.

²⁴ Thomas, ‘Comprehension and indulgence’, 208.
²⁵ Thomas Vincent was born in 1634 and was by far the youngest of those mentioned by Williamson. Meanwhile, the Westminster divine Lazarus Seaman was likely born at some point between 1599 and 1607. Seaman is not explicitly named as a Don, but Williamson’s description of him dates from the same month and appears to place him in that company. He gave thanks to Charles II alongside Manton, Bates and Jenkyn.

²⁶ *Original records of early nonconformity*, iii. 203.

²⁷ Bates, Manton and Jacombe were all Doctors of Divinity. That such a simple solution could have been obscured for so long I would put down primarily to the perfunctory addition of Baxter, who was not university-educated, to this list of Dons. Here, as

Annesley, for instance, remained zealous to preach the word in season and out, even after his ejection, and at his funeral Daniel Williams reported that he kept at his work ‘almost every day’ from just shortly after he was deprived.²⁸ The first official reports of Thomas Watson’s preaching come in 1665, when an informant reported that he was ‘holding a conventicle at his house in the Minories’; such rumours had first circulated in May 1664, and these meetings would almost certainly have begun the previous year.²⁹

Such brazen preaching might be expected of the Ducklings, yet it seems the Dons were at it too. When Richard Baxter lists the names of those Presbyterians who were ‘preaching more openly than the rest & to greater numbers’, he notes not only the so-called Ducklings, Watson and Annesley, but also the Dons, Manton and Jacombe.³⁰ It is curious that Baxter does not here mention William Bates too, for almost immediately after his ejection from the lofty living of St Dunstan’s-in-the-West, he set up a conventicle right beside his old charge.³¹ If only his former flock could be herded half a mile down Ludgate Hill, to a room over the Temple Bar Gate, they might once again hear the voice of their old shepherd. Thomas Jacombe, for his part, preached just as regularly as Annesley, only ‘in the howse & under the protection of ... the Countesse Dowager of Exceter’, while Thomas Manton, ostensibly a man ‘of moderate principles’, held one of the most influential dissenting meetings in London.³² Indeed, as Ann Hughes points out, Manton ‘frequently preached illegally’ before a veritable *Who’s Who* of the puritan gentry. In February 1664 it was reported that ‘the Countess of Exeter, Lord Wharton, Sir William Waller, Lady Mary Armyne and [Baxter’s patron] Richard Hampden’ had been discovered attending an ‘all-day feast’ at which ‘Dr Thomas Manton and Dr William Bates had preached’.³³ It has been implied that keeping such conventicles was at odds with the pursuit of comprehension in parliament. If this were

everywhere, there are exceptions and complications: Annesley was in fact a doctor among the Ducklings, though of law rather than divinity: Katherine Clark, *Daniel Defoe: the whole frame of nature, time and providence*, London 2007, 39–40.

²⁸ Daniel Williams, *The excellency of a publick spirit... at the funeral of that late reverend divine Dr. Samuel Annesley*, 2nd edn, London: John Dunton, 1697 (Wing W2648), 138.

²⁹ Watson’s *Divine cordial* (1663) was likely first presented as a series of short sermons: Till, ‘Watson, Thomas’; Richard L. Greaves, *Enemies under his feet: radicals and nonconformists in Britain, 1664–1677*, Stanford, CA 1990, 124.

³⁰ Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae: or, Mr. Richard Baxter’s narrative of the most memorable passages of his life and times* (London 1696, iii. 95), ed. N. H. Keeble and others, ii, Oxford 2020, 449–50.

³¹ Stephen Wright, ‘Bates, William (1625–1699)’, *ODNB*, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/refodnb/1682>>, accessed 18 February 2020.

³² Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae*, ii. 449–50.

³³ Hughes, ‘Print and pastoral identity’, 169; This report of Manton’s preaching is cited in J. T. Cliffe, *The Puritan gentry besieged, 1650–1700*, London 1993, 110.

so, Thomas Manton did not appear to believe it. His own gathering at Covent Garden attracted many persons of such quality that, at a meeting in December 1669, the king personally informed Manton that ‘the ruffle raffle of the people were not of such consideration, they being apt to run after every new teacher, but people of Quality might bee intreated to forbear to meet, or at least not in such multitudes’.³⁴ The social sort of the hearer, it seems, as well as the size of the meeting house, were crucial factors which account for several apparent differences between the preaching habits of Presbyterian ministers.

All this begs the question: was the Restoration conventicle inherently separatist? Here the evidence forces a negative response. Manton and Bates clearly saw no contradiction between hosting conventicles and pursuing comprehension; in 1668, alongside Richard Baxter, they would negotiate terms of accommodation with Bishop Wilkins, hosting separate services all the while.³⁵ George Southcombe concurs: ‘ultimate hopes for comprehension did not preclude such activities’.³⁶ In the wake of the Act of Uniformity, historians cannot function with a hermeneutic which presupposes that those who had been presbyterially ordained should either choose silent subservience among the laity or else staunch separatism. Rather, Presbyterians disagreed over whether their conventicles should be considered true churches or mere chapels-of-ease; whether they were still ministers, or merely a curious sort of curate. Many large rural parishes in north London, such as the rapidly expanding St Giles’-in-the-Fields, had, according to Baxter, ‘20000 or 30000 soules at least more than can come within the Church’, which might ordinarily be served by chapels-of-ease. In the absence of such provision, Baxter recommended his assistant Joseph Reade build ‘a Chapell in his owne howse (with the help of friends)’.³⁷ Presbyterian preachers would set up their chapels-of-ease to serve those who came in from the outlying districts or villages. If the distinction between Don and Duckling still holds any water, it is because those described as Ducklings tended to assume the former, whilst the Dons largely preferred the latter. Yet for all their claims to remain ministers of Christ despite their ejection, Annesley and Watson were no schismatics. In fact, in some ways they could be seen as truer Presbyterians even than their Donnish counterparts, having more in common with an older Presbyterian tradition practised by such men as William Jenkyn and Arthur Jackson.

³⁴ Richard Baxter, *Calendar of the correspondence of Richard Baxter*, ed. N. H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, Oxford 1991, 63–4.

³⁵ Thomas, ‘Comprehension and indulgence’, 202.

³⁶ Southcombe, ‘Presbyterians in the Restoration’, 78.

³⁷ Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696, iii. 172, 176), ii. 522–3, 532.

At the Restoration, Jackson was an old man. Baptised in 1593, he was ordained in the same year that Manton and Annesley were born. Having suffered under the Laudian prelacy, he became moderator of the London Provincial Assembly and president of Sion College during the Interregnum. At the Restoration he had greeted Charles II upon his return at the head of a Presbyterian delegation, presenting him with a Bible. In 1648 Jackson was one of the signatories of a declaration of Presbyterian ministers against the actions of the parliament, drafted by Cornelius Burges, assessor of the Westminster Assembly. This document condemned not only ‘the bringing of the King to capitall punishment’, but also the *Agreement of the people* which, Burges claimed, tended towards the subversion of the government, making a way ‘for an universall toleration of all heresies and blasphemies (directly contrary to our Covenant)’.³⁸ Jackson too was a covenanting Presbyterian. He was imprisoned alongside Christopher Love in 1651 for plotting to restore the monarchy and revive the Solemn League and Covenant. Whilst his co-conspirator, Love, was executed, Jackson and several others, including the spirited Presbyterian preacher William Jenkyn and a young Thomas Watson, were granted a reprieve.³⁹

After the ejection, both Jackson and his colleague Jenkyn became active conventiclers. It was in the Whitefriars house of the Presbyterian Arthur Jackson that the ‘illegal meeting’ at which Manton and Bates preached in February 1664 had been held.⁴⁰ If this was indeed a sign of schismatic intent, then it was an act of remarkable hypocrisy on the part of Jackson. From 1662 both he and Jenkyn would preach as regularly and openly as any so-called Duckling, even though during the Interregnum they had each railed incessantly against schism. Both had signed Burges’s declaration against toleration and, to cap it all, Jenkyn’s charge of Christchurch Newgate Street had even been the site of weekly lectures by the notorious heresiographer and opponent of toleration, Thomas Edwards.⁴¹ Jackson would die in 1666, but Jenkyn, born in 1613 and so twenty years Jackson’s junior, would live much longer, taking out a licence under the Declaration of Indulgence in 1672, lecturing alongside John Owen and Thomas Manton at Pinner’s Hall and dying incarcerated for his troubles at Newgate prison in January 1685.⁴² Despite his

³⁸ [Cornelius Burges], *A vindication of the ministers of the Gospel in, and about London, from the unjust aspersions cast upon their former actings for the parliament*, London: Th. Underhill, 1648 (Wing B5690), 7. ³⁹ Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696, ii.124), ii. 99.

⁴⁰ Greaves, *Enemies under his feet*, 128.

⁴¹ As for Jackson, there are reports ‘that he was living at Whitefriars and preaching at conventicles between 1663 and 1665’: Tai Liu, ‘Jackson, Arthur (1593–1666)’, *ODNB*, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14517>>, accessed 3 February 2020; Elliot Vernon, ‘Jenkyn, William (bap. 1613, d. 1685)’, *ODNB*, <<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/14743>>, accessed 3 February 2020; [Burges], *A vindication*, 7.

⁴² Vernon, ‘William Jenkyn’.

conventicles and his cooperation with Congregationalists such as Owen and Joseph Caryl, Jenkyn remained staunchly Presbyterian, as did his close friend, Lazarus Seaman. Indeed, in Hunter Powell's brilliant monograph, *The crisis of British Protestantism*, Seaman appears as one of the most 'clerically minded Presbyterians' of all those at the Westminster Assembly, consistently contesting his congregationalist brethren's ecclesiology and even at one point opposing an argument of Samuel Rutherford on the grounds that it strengthened 'rigid Brownisme'.⁴³ Upon Seaman's death, William Jenkyn used his funeral sermon to exhort the prophets of God to 'labour while they may', encouraging his hearers to be thankful that they had 'enjoy'd the benefit of his constant Preaching'.⁴⁴

If even Seaman, the high Presbyterian stalwart of the Westminster Assembly, had joined Jenkyn and Jackson in their active conventicling, yet without any apparent change of heart on separation or toleration, then we are forced to re-examine our categories. If Presbyterians like Annesley and Watson have been called separatists simply on account of their affinity for Owen's soteriology over Baxter's, or else for their preaching practices, which differed not at all from those of their teachers, each of whom was set fast against schism, then it is a lazy label. The image of an adventurous band of young men, eager to depart from the national Church, and the ways of their fathers, should therefore be replaced by a more firmly Presbyterian picture of ministers trained at the universities between 1635 and 1649, who entered the ministry by the hands of a generation of covenanting Presbyterians who taught them to follow in their footsteps.

Here the career of Thomas Watson is instructive. Watson is one of the three Ducklings named in Williamson's notes, yet in recent times he has found himself left off the list.⁴⁵ It is understandable that he should have been shunned, for his deeds during the Interregnum do not fit the existing narrative. Early in his career, Watson was part of that set of Presbyterian

⁴³ Rutherford implied that suspension from communion required the consent of the Church. Seaman's very Presbyterian objection was simply that 'the formall consent of the church is in the call of a minister'. For Seaman's ecclesiology see Hunter Powell, *The crisis of British Protestantism: church power in the Puritan Revolution, 1638-44*, Manchester 2015, 73-4, 101-3, 191, 219, and *The minutes and papers of the Westminster Assembly, 1643-1652*, ed. Chad Van Dixhoorn, iii, Oxford 2012, 424.

⁴⁴ William Jenkyn, *Exodus: or, The decease of holy men and ministers consider'd ... by occasion of the much lamented death of that learned and reverend minister of Christ, Dr. Lazarus Seaman*, London: Edward Brewster and William Cooper, 1675 (Wing J638), 35.

⁴⁵ Seemingly Vincent Alsop has been preferred to Watson as one of this group's leaders: Thomas, 'Parties in nonconformity', 98; Mark Goldie, 'Toleration and the godly prince in Restoration England', in John Morrow and Jonathan Scott (eds), *Liberty, authority, formality: political ideas and culture, 1600-1900*, Exeter 2008, 62; De Krey, *London and the Restoration*, 120; Beddard, 'Vincent Alsop'.

divines which included Jackson, Jenkyn and Seaman. An active member of the London Presbyterian classis, he had subscribed to Burges's anti-tolerationist *Vindication* of the London ministers, and in 1651 he was imprisoned alongside many of them for his part in Love's Presbyterian plot.⁴⁶ In the early 1640s Watson had taken the Covenant, and later defended it in a sermon before parliament in 1649. Here he told the members of the Commons squarely that those who opposed 'that order and government which He [Christ] has set up in his Church' sought not just to oppose presbytery, but to oppose God himself, also reminding them that 'we covenanted not only against Prelacy, but Popery, not only against Hierarchy but Heresie, not only Sinne, but Schisme'.⁴⁷ In 1649 Watson was no schismatic. By the 1660s, he had not changed his mind on the issue. He may now have been cast out of his parish pulpit, but this had not dissolved the bond between pastor and flock.

The Presbyterian publisher, Ralph Smith, would reprint Thomas Watson's *Interregnum* pamphlets long after his ejection, and with his title pages and descriptions of Watson he created for him 'a sort of virtual pastoral identity', as Ann Hughes puts it, as pastor of St Stephen's Walbrook, despite his ejection from this charge in 1662.⁴⁸ Smith's claim was not that Watson had gathered a new congregation, but that he was still bound to his old one. This carefully cultivated self-understanding was the result of Watson's firmly parochial Presbyterian convictions. Those such as Watson continued to conceive of themselves as true ministers of the Church of England, remaining firm in the opinion that the usurpation of their pulpit had not severed the bond between pastor and parishioner in the eyes of Christ, whilst others, such as Richard Baxter, preferred to tone down such rhetoric, content to consider themselves as mere chapel curates, working with and under the intruding parish priest.

What lay behind such rhetorical differences? Where conflict between two wings of English Presbyterianism did exist, it was precisely because they now found themselves forced to choose between two alternative conceptions of catholicity, one of which drew its foundation from the Solemn League and Covenant and manifested in a desire for conformity with the continental Reformed Churches, whilst the other sprang from a desire for comprehension with the Church of England. With the Act of Uniformity, the Church of England took a step that even Laud had

⁴⁶ Alongside the names of Watson, Jackson and Jenkyn, this document also boasts Thomas Manton's subscription: [Burges], *A vindication*, 7–11.

⁴⁷ Thomas Watson, *Gods anatomy upon mans heart: or, A sermon preached by order of the honorable House of Commons*, London: Ralph Smith, 1649 (Wing W1125), 16, 12–13.

⁴⁸ Hughes, 'Print and pastoral identity', 1, 64; Zachary Crofton, *Reformation not separation: or, Mr. Crofton's plea for communion with the Church*, London: Ralph Smith, 1662 (Wing C7000); R. S., *Jerubbaal justified: or, A plain rebuke of the high (pretended humble) remonstrance and plea against Mr. Crofton*, London 1663 (Wing S130).

shrunk from: that of requiring continental Reformed presbyters to be re-ordained upon coming to pastor in England. According to those such as Zachary Crofton, this was a sure sign that the English Church had receded from the Covenant, lurching back towards Rome, which prompted him to ask the rhetorical question, whether the ‘Ordination of Presbyters is as good, valid, and regular, as that of Papists’?⁴⁹ This manoeuvre brought the Church of England closer to Roman Catholicism, but by the same token it dealt a heavy blow to Reformed catholicity. According to the Somerset puritan Richard Alleine, in a fit of ‘Anabaptistical Sectarian Phrensie’, parliament had caused the Church of England to chart its own course away from the historic practice of the Church catholic.⁵⁰ The Presbyterians, by contrast, saw themselves as simply retaining the Reformed religion of Calvin, and indeed of Cranmer. The practice of re-ordination is invalid, alleged Crofton, but the ‘validity of our Ministry is strongly and learnedly defended’ by foreign divines, ‘Arnobius, Sadeel, and Voetius’.⁵¹ Crofton informed the imposers of this doctrine in no uncertain terms: *we* are not schismatics, but *you* are. Paradoxically then, for Crofton, the true catholics were preaching privately or from meeting house pulpits, whilst the sectarians sat on the episcopal bench.

The decision which the English Presbyterians faced in the aftermath of their ejection – whether to accept indulgence or pursue comprehension; whether to accept toleration without or seek to resume one’s ministry within the national Church – was not a straightforward choice between secession and accommodation, but between two competing conceptions of what it meant to be truly catholic in one’s churchmanship. Would Christian unity be better served by an accommodation with a national Church which had begun to renege on the Reformation itself? Or by choosing to host catholic conventicles, as true ministers of Christ, under a temporary toleration, patiently awaiting further opportunities for reform? Indulgence and comprehension, then, were not intrinsically opposed to one another, but only accidentally, owing to the new direction taken by the Church of England since the Restoration. Indeed, as in the case of John Humfrey, these apparently contradictory ends could in fact be united.

True ministers, or curious curates?

A paradoxical and under-appreciated figure, John Humfrey confounds classification. His career exposes just how blurred the distinction between Don and Duckling, indulgence and comprehension, could be.

⁴⁹ [Crofton], *A serious review of presbyters re-ordination*, 22–3.

⁵⁰ Richard Alleine, *Cheirothesia tou presbyteriou*, London: J. S., 1661 (Wing A984), 2.

⁵¹ [Crofton], *A serious review of presbyters re-ordination*, 8.

Indeed, in a manner perhaps like no other, Humfrey's conscience played host to the strain placed upon the Presbyterian impulse towards catholicity at the Restoration. In late 1660, for the sake of unity, Humfrey sought to assist the newly restored bishop of Bath and Wells, William Piers, in the ordination of new clergy. Upon his arrival at the cathedral, however, he found himself pressed by the prelate into re-ordination under episcopal hands, despite his having already been ordained presbyterially in 1649. After two days of consideration, he consented, yet his conscience would not remain silent for long. By February 1661 Humfrey claimed that his concerns with the ceremony had 'driven me many times upon my knees, with thoughts in the reflexion', even spurring him to pen a discourse in defence of the practice, as much to console his own conscience as to seek his brothers' counsel.⁵² He justified his decision by claiming that, although re-ordination could not make one any more of a minister in the eyes of Christ, it still served an important purpose in the eyes of the civil magistrate, and could legitimately be used to confirm one's place in a particular parish. 'For what', asked Humfrey, 'is Re-ordination in this case, but a submission to the order of that Church-Polity, which is again set over us?'⁵³ Here Humfrey began to employ a distinction which would become highly significant for him later in his career. He distinguished between those who are truly ministers of Christ, though without a particular flock (which would encompass the bulk of those soon to be ejected) and those ministers of Christ who had also been called to a particular parish by the civil magistrate. 'In short', declares Humfrey, 'there is my Ministry, and the use of my Ministry in the *English Church*.'⁵⁴ Humfrey's second call to the parish of Frome did not make him a minister, therefore, but neither did it impinge upon his first ordination, representing only a legal and ecclesiastical investiture without which he could not carry out his parish ministry 'legally or regularly' within the Church of England. In Humfrey's own words: 'I may be ordained again by the Bishop, because I seek not to be ordained by him to make me a Minister again, which I am *in foro Dei* already, but to have Authority (as to men) to use my Ministry, and be received as such (which I cannot else) *in foro Ecclesiae Anglicanae*.'⁵⁵

Humfrey's Somerset neighbour Richard Alleine would utterly reject this argument. The two would have known one another; the Alleines were a celebrated puritan family in Somerset, and Alleine's own parish of Batcombe was a mere nine miles from Humfrey's charge of Frome-Selwood. After the passing of the Five Mile Act, Alleine would move to Frome and preach to several of Humfrey's former parishioners.⁵⁶ For

⁵² John Humfrey, *The question of re-ordination*, London: Thomas Williams, 1661 (Wing H3704), 2. ⁵³ *Ibid.* 21–2. ⁵⁴ *Ibid.* 19–20. ⁵⁵ *Ibid.* 18–20.

⁵⁶ Stephen Wright, 'Alleine, Richard (1610/11–1681)', *ODNB*, < <https://doi.org/10.1093/refodnb/367> >, accessed 12 February 2020.

now, however, he sought to persuade Humfrey to move towards him on the issue of re-ordination, which he could not see as a thing indifferent. Responding to Humfrey's pamphlet in 1661, Alleine made it clear that re-ordination entailed genuine 'moral evil', opining that if it were possible to submit to it without sin, he would be the first to the cathedral, but alas, Christ ordained only once, and so should his Church, unless they are to reject his rule.⁵⁷ Zachary Crofton also authored a reply, and Humfrey responded with *A second discourse on reordination* (1662) in which he informed his various interlocutors that he had now reneged upon his own re-ordination. Later, Humfrey would write that he had been brought to repentance over the issue with tears and had committed his deacon's orders to the flames.⁵⁸ However, despite this he persisted in his belief that submission to such a ceremony remained a matter of private conscience:

I find it is like a double garment put on for the fashion, and experiencedly proves uneasy to be worn ... it is indeed methinks to me, like a heavy Rugg upon my bed in the Summer, that to be under it makes me sweat, and I cannot well go to my rest till I have fairly justled it off again, when others perhaps, of a complexion more cool, may be glad they have it on.⁵⁹

What caused Humfrey to resolve this crisis of conscience at the expense of his conformity? The paradoxical answer is that the impulse which brought him to repent of his re-ordination flowed from the same stream as that which had brought him to be re-ordained in the first place: his commitment to the ideal of one holy, catholic and apostolic Church. 'I dare not justifie our Church-Rulers in their imposing', he now insisted, 'because it is manifestly scandalous to the Reformed Churches abroad.'⁶⁰ If re-ordination were imposed it would in principle defrock many foreign ministers and cripple English claims for catholicity, exposing her fellow Protestant nations to the ridicule of Rome. This reasoning was shared by Crofton in his reply: 'Dutch and French Divines', he reported, along with 'many Scotch men' who had been ordained abroad, had been 'inducted, and instituted, on their Presbyterial Ordination' into the English Church in the past, 'and were never required to be re-ordained' by bishops.⁶¹ To impose such a restriction now, well over a century after the English Reformation, was therefore schismatical, since it denied the unity of the one holy catholic Church, implying as it did that the reformed Churches

⁵⁷ Alleine, *Cheirothesia tou presbyteriou*, 65, 69.

⁵⁸ John Humfrey, *A defence of the proposition*, London 1668 (Wing H3676), 80–2.

⁵⁹ Idem, *A second discourse about re-ordination*, London: Tho. Williams and Tho. Johnson, 1662 (Wing H3709), 71, 38, 96.

⁶⁰ Idem, *The question of re-ordination*, 5.

⁶¹ [Crofton], *A serious review*, 23.

of Europe were no true Churches, possessing no valid means of ordaining ministers. Here, Humfrey's concept of catholicity strained his conscience in alternate directions, for though initially his desire for unity of doctrine and practice pushed him towards comprehension, in the face of such unconscionable impositions, his commitment to the catholicity of the Church forced him into nonconformity.⁶² The real schismatics, therefore, were the imposers – the 'Laudenses of our age' – whilst the Presbyterians were the true catholics, even, perhaps, the true Church of England.⁶³

In June 1667, five years after being deprived of his Somerset parish, and following hot on the heels of plague, fire and military defeat, Humfrey published another pamphlet, this time putting forth the case for comprehension with indulgence. In the wake of the disastrous Dutch destruction of English ships as they slept in the harbour at Chatham docks, Charles's relationship with his chancellor, Clarendon, had soured. This change in government allowed the dissenters to hope, in the wake of this naval defeat, that the waves of persecution against them might now be calmed. From Humfrey, the lesson which God was teaching England was clear: God's 'righteous dealings towards us', in punishing the nation for her sins by plague, fire and frigate, ought to act as a warning to the national Church to repent of her unrighteous dealings towards the dissenters. 'His severity', wrote Humfrey, '[should] teach us indulgence.'⁶⁴ In *A proposition for the safety and happiness of the king and kingdom* (1667), Humfrey appealed for a comprehensive settlement along the lines of the Worcester House agreement, in tandem with some measure of indulgence for those who would inevitably remain outside.⁶⁵ In this petition he was not alone among his fellow Presbyterians. Later that same year, the ejected Hampshire minister John Corbet, in his *Discourse of the religion of England* (1667), pleaded for 'a more comprehensive state of Religion', alongside a 'Toleration and Connivence ... regulated with respect not only to common Charity, but also to the Safety of the Established Order'.⁶⁶ Did such demands imply that the Presbyterian party had already given up on their dream of a united, Reformed national Church? No, says Corbet, for 'those of them that repair to the publick Assemblies retain their Principles of Reformation (as they speak) without seperation'.⁶⁷

Such entreaties as are found in the work of Humfrey and Corbet have lain largely forgotten, overshadowed perhaps by the constant clamouring of their contemporary Richard Baxter for comprehension without

⁶² Humfrey, *A second discourse*, 97.

⁶³ [Crofton], *A serious review*, 15.

⁶⁴ [John Humfrey], *A proposition for the safety & happiness of the king and kingdom, both in Church and State*, London 1667 (Wing H77D), 5–6.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.* 54.

⁶⁶ John Corbet, *A discourse of the religion of England asserting, that reformed Christianity detted in its due latitude, is the stability and advancement of this kingdom*, London 1667 (Wing C6252), 28.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.* 24, 43.

toleration. Yet, at the time, these two men were ministers of some notoriety within the Presbyterian party. Even before 1667, their reputation had grown among the nonconforming laity to such a point that Douglas Lacey remarked (despite the political connections of Baxter's erstwhile ecclesiological nemesis John Owen) that 'Humfrey in particular and Corbet to a lesser degree were at this juncture more influential than the veteran Congregationalist'.⁶⁸ After 1667 Humfrey earned respect from the puritan laity as well as from puritan legislators in the Commons, among whom he circulated his 'sheet of Concord' – his proposals for comprehension with indulgence – 'for which', according to Baxter, 'he was imprisoned'.⁶⁹ For the remainder of Baxter's life, he and Humfrey kept up a lively correspondence, and it was surely a sign of the Somerset man's renown that when Bates was sick and 'Dr *Manton* was gone into the Country', Baxter, urged by churchmen to communicate plans for comprehension 'to some Nonconforming Brethren', circulated them to a group of five which included Corbet and Humfrey.⁷⁰

As befits a notorious Presbyterian of that period, Humfrey gained powerful enemies. Thomas Tomkins and Samuel Parker were both chaplains to Archbishop Sheldon, and acted as censors of the press. Humfrey's proposals for tandem measures of comprehension and indulgence confused and angered Tomkins. Writing of Humfrey's *Proposition*, he expressed his bemusement, stating: 'We are not able to guess what it is which this Author really would have.' Here this High Churchman seems to share the assumptions of modern historiography surrounding indulgence and comprehension, going on to remark: 'both he cannot have, because they are Inconsistent'.⁷¹ In his reply, *A defence of the proposition* (1668), Humfrey made it clear that these goals were interrelated. At this point he seemed to conceive of indulgence as a pathway towards comprehension:

As for those which cannot come into this Order [within the Church], supposing it to be comprehensively established, it is they alone should be the Nonconformists, and I would have *Indulgence* for them as a means, which is likest (if others were so united) in my apprehension, to break them little by little, and at last reduce them to us.⁷²

⁶⁸ Douglas R. Lacey, *Dissent and parliamentary politics in England, 1661–1689: a study in the perpetuation and tempering of parliamentarianism*, Rawhay, NJ 1969, 56.

⁶⁹ Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae* (1696, iii. 143), ii. 488.

⁷⁰ Baxter's other correspondents were Francis Tallents, Matthew Poole and Thomas Jacombe: *ibid.* (1696, iii. 157), ii. 505.

⁷¹ Thomas Tomkins, *The inconveniencies of toleration: or, An answer to a late book intituled, A proposition made to the king and parliament for the safety and happiness of the king and kingdom*, London: W. Garret, 1667 (Wing T1835A), 26–7.

⁷² Humfrey, *A defence of the proposition*, 6.

Here Humfrey commended indulgence not because he was resigned to the reality of a denominational future, or because he sought separation for his own party, but because he believed that forbearance might attract such separatists to an accommodation with a suitably Reformed national Church. Humfrey's temporary toleration was at this stage aimed at peaceable, godly independents, but only in order to compel them to come in. Charity persuaded the conscience, whereas persecution did not.⁷³ At this point, comprehension and indulgence still stood apart in Humfrey's mind, the one leading towards the other, but the two were not mutually exclusive. Over the next few years, these pleas for toleration provoked a series of attacks from prominent churchmen, including Simon Patrick, whose *Friendly debate* (1668) lambasted the unreasonableness of non-conformity.⁷⁴ The late 1660s had seen the collapse of several rounds of negotiation for a comprehensive settlement; the national Church did not appear ready for reform. Against the backdrop of bitter hostility from those such as Patrick, as well as Samuel Parker, the Presbyterians were forced to confront the reality that the Clarendon Code could not be dispatched as easily as the chancellor, and thus that their ejection may not turn out to be quite so temporary as they had hoped.⁷⁵

Here is where Humfrey's two distinct ecclesiological developments would be united. So long as the bishops required Presbyterian pastors to be re-ordained before they could reclaim their rectories, comprehension remained out of reach; Humfrey and his colleagues still longed for union with the national Church, but as things stood, they could not conform to this demand without betraying their conscience or their continental brethren. Here Humfrey's catholic concern for Protestant unity, his rejection of the requirement to be re-ordained and his championing of tandem measures for comprehension with indulgence would prove the perfect cocktail when, in March 1672, Charles II issued a Declaration of Indulgence. Serious mention of such a measure had been made at court since at least 1669, which gave Humfrey the time he needed to justify his acceptance of this measure in a novel manner.⁷⁶ He found a way to channel the catholic impulse of the Presbyterians, which at present cut in two different directions, into one steady stream by defining the Declaration of Indulgence as an ersatz form of comprehension without conformity.

Playing on the distinction he had made in 1661 between 'my Ministry, and the use of my Ministry in the *English Church*', Humfrey was able to justify the licences granted by his majesty under the Indulgence not as a

⁷³ Idem, *A proposition*, 14; *A defence of the proposition*, 20.

⁷⁴ Simon Patrick, *A friendly debate betwixt two neighbours, the one a conformist, the other a non-conformist*, London 1668 (Wing P798).

⁷⁵ Samuel Parker, *A discourse of ecclesiastical politie*, London: John Martyn, 1670 (Wing P459).

⁷⁶ Baxter, *Calendar of correspondence*, 68–9.

temporary form of toleration, but instead as invitations from the very head of the national Church, since ‘to Preach *in such a place*, and in such circumstances, is, we count in the dispose of the Magistrate’.⁷⁷ This involved a substantial redefinition of the Church of England as a pragmatic assortment of parish churches and chapels, given a form of unity without uniformity by its regal head, in whose gift lay the licences by which one might apply to preach. Since the Declaration of Indulgence emanated from the very head of the national Church, it was in truth a form of admission. Hereby, Presbyterian conventicles were assigned as chapels of the Church of England: ‘This authority of the King in slating these places and Meetings for them, does incorporate them as *integral parts*, or particular fellow congregations with those of the Parochial constitution, into the *Church National* united under him as the Supreme Head.’⁷⁸

If conventicles had been transformed into chapels, could Presbyterian pastors now consider themselves curates? An author publishing under the pseudonym Philaetheseirenes – lover of truth and peace – refuted the charge that the dissenters had taken to ‘setting up Altar against Altar’ by arguing that they were merely acting as assistants, fulfilling ‘a subservient Duty’ to that of the parochial pastor ‘in such a capacity as His Majesty hath thought fit to place them’.⁷⁹ Such authors echoed Humfrey’s assertion that the meeting houses, ‘no less then the Parish assemblies’, had, by the Indulgence, now simply been recognised for what they were: particular, non-parochial congregations led by true ministers of the Church of England.⁸⁰ Here Humfrey’s feats of ecclesiological gymnastics were clearly part of an attempt to retain the national Church model and avoid accusations of separatism. Yet it must be said that this innovative vision of the Church of England involved a substantial hollowing of the old ideal. No longer could the visible, institutional Church claim a monopoly over the means of spiritual discipline. Church discipline had arguably been Richard Baxter’s chief concern under the Protectorate, so it was somewhat surprising when he took out a licence to preach, defending it in an anonymously published work, *Sacrilegious desertion of the holy ministry rebuked* (London 1672), using arguments which largely echoed Humfrey’s.⁸¹ Though for a season he dragged his heels, even neglecting to join a delegation of ‘Dons’ to give thanks to the king for his Declaration, he stated in *Sacrilegious desertion* that there was no reason a

⁷⁷ Humfrey, *The question of re-ordination*, 19–20; *The authority of magistrate about religion discussed in a rebuke to the preacher of a late book of Bishop Bramhalls*, London: J. H., 1672 (Wing H3669), 27.

⁷⁸ Idem, *The authority of magistrate*, 27.

⁷⁹ Philaetheseirenes, *Indulgence not to be refused: comprehension humbly desired: the Church’s peace earnestly endeavoured*, London 1672 (Wing I154), 11.

⁸⁰ Humfrey, *The authority of magistrate*, 24; *The question of re-ordination*, 19–20.

⁸¹ [Richard Baxter], *Sacrilegious desertion of the holy ministry rebuked*, London 1672 (Wing B1380).

parish priest could not be assisted by a Presbyterian curate. According to Baxter, if a dissenting minister found himself operating alongside an intruder to his parish pulpit who was nevertheless a fit replacement, there is 'no reason but they [the laity] may take both the Ejected and the Imposed Person conjunctly for their Pastors'.⁸² Baxter's reasoning relied heavily upon the urgent requirement for pastoral aid, particularly evident within vast north London parishes like St Martin-in-the-Fields, where the loss of buildings in the fire had exacerbated the paucity of pastoral provision.⁸³ Presbyterians like Baxter, who would later move to this parish in order to provide pastoral assistance, claimed that they were doing just that. After all, the national Church was still ailing from the ejection of 2,000 of its finest ministers.⁸⁴ 'The burning of Churches, the greatness of Parishes, and the paucity of Ministers', argued Baxter, called therefore for the ejected to 'Suppose your selves as Chappel Curats under the Parish Ministers.'⁸⁵

But what of those such as Watson, who had given thanks to the king alongside Annesley, but defended themselves not merely as curates, but as true parish ministers? In this matter, ministers such as these hardly went farther than Baxter had, when he argued that the ejection was an invalid intrusion of the parliament into the pulpit, and even questioned whether the intruders who had replaced them had truly been called by Christ:

When the Ejected Minister *in foro conscientiae & Ecclesiae verè sic dictae*, retaineth still his Ancient Relation to his Flock, and part of them Schismatically separate from him, and joyn with an intruder publicly, that never had a lawful Call, and the other half separate not from their ancient Pastor. Its possible the obtruder, though he have the Temple, may be the Schismatick.⁸⁶

If Watson and Annesley were schismatics, Ducklings who did not fear the waters of separatism, then so was Richard Baxter. The fundamental misunderstanding of Presbyterian pastors like Watson has lain so long because it emerges from a desire on the part of more sociologically-minded historians to cast this struggle in terms of a larger shift in Protestant thinking from 'Church-type' to 'sect-type'. These categories, first outlined by Ernst Troeltsch in *The social teaching of the Christian Churches* and ably employed in the context of the seventeenth century by Mark Goldie, rest upon the assertion that the Renaissance precipitated a transition in the understanding of the Church.⁸⁷ At some point during the late Reformation, the

⁸² Ibid. 11.

⁸³ Goldie, *Roger Morrice and the Puritan Whigs*, 141.

⁸⁴ Baxter, *Calendar of correspondence*, 188.

⁸⁵ [Idem], *Sacrilegious desertion*, 11–12, 35, 91.

⁸⁶ Ibid. 14.

⁸⁷ Ernst Troeltsch, *The social teaching of the Christian Churches*, ii, Woking 1931, 460–7. For the discussion of Troeltsch in this context, I am indebted to the work of Mark Goldie: *Roger Morrice and the Puritan Whigs*, 227.

Protestant understanding of ‘the idea of the Church as an objective institution’, possessed of truth and ‘civilizing sacramental powers’, shifted towards the view that the Church was a ‘voluntary society’, whose life is ‘constantly renewed by the deliberate allegiance and personal work of its individual members’.⁸⁸ Applying this framework to Restoration puritanism, Baxter and his group of churchly Dons have been pitted against Alsop, Annesley and Watson, the emancipating Ducklings who led their followers toward a ‘sect-type’ model of the Church. Yet to do so is to misapply these categories fundamentally. Troeltsch himself was in fact very careful not to catapult those such as the English Presbyterians too quickly into a sect-type mindset, defining Westminster Presbyterianism as ‘genuine Calvinism, spread throughout a great nation by a system of synods’ whilst consistently highlighting the continuity of Calvinism with the Roman Catholic understanding of the Church, even pointing out its ambiguous relationship with the idea of religious toleration. Troeltsch never saw the independency of an Owen, or the tolerationism of a Locke as native to Reformed or puritan thought, even writing that the voluntaristic, Lockean ideal of the Church belonged squarely ‘to the sect-type and not to Calvinism’.⁸⁹

Restoration Presbyterians cannot be slotted neatly into categories of Church-type and sect-type, taking pursuit of comprehension as evidence of churchly sensibilities, and any interest in indulgence to signify sectarianism. If Troeltsch’s terminology in this field is to be retained, it might perhaps be repurposed, along lines first suggested by contemporary Presbyterians. Rather than a tale of belated emancipation from the shackles of the national Church, the history of Restoration Presbyterianism should instead be conceived as a desperate struggle, on the part of moderate dissenters, to retain a Church-type ecclesiology in the face of an increasingly isolationist, sect-type Church of England.⁹⁰ As Mark Goldie has pointed out concerning the English Presbyterians, ‘the surprise is how little and how slowly their exclusion from the national Church weakened their faith in the legitimacy of the idea’.⁹¹ Put simply, the Presbyterians were all ‘Church-type’; comprehension within the national Church remained the central aim for the English Presbyterians throughout the Restoration, and even on into the 1690s, and to seek indulgence was not always to abandon accommodation. The genius of John Humfrey’s approach was that it was able to appeal to ministers such as Baxter and Manton, who were more conciliatory to the Church of England, as well as those such as Watson and Annesley, who were keener

⁸⁸ Troeltsch, *Social teaching*, ii. 460–7.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.* ii. 670–82, 637.

⁹⁰ Here the work of Tony Claydon is instructive: *Europe and the making of England, 1660–1760*, Cambridge 2007.

⁹¹ Goldie, *Roger Morrice and the Puritan Whigs*, 227.

to seek catholic unity with their continental cousins. This tandem approach provided comprehension without conformity – an ersatz form of unity according to which some could consider themselves true ministers, or else curious curates within the Church of England – and would remain the standard model for proposals of accommodation for the remainder of Charles II's reign.