

OLIVER CROMWELL AND THE PRINT CULTURE OF THE
INTERREGNUM

by

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Abstract

When the second Protectoral Parliament offered the crown to Oliver Cromwell, he, despite his conservative impulses, rejected it. Why would a man who believed in the ancient constitution and hoped to stabilize the British Isles turn down a traditional title that had the potential to unify the nation? The answer partly lies within the numerous political tracts that were printed in the 1650s. The kingship crisis sparked the creation of many pamphlets and petitions that sought to sway Cromwell one way or the other. Three prominent groups that wrote regarding the possibility of King Oliver I were monarchists, sects, and republicans. Monarchists sought to illustrate the advantages of kingship, the sects wrote of the consequences of kingly rule, and the republicans were divided on the question. An analysis of the language and arguments in both the pamphlets addressed to Cromwell and Cromwell's own speeches reveals that the sects were the most influential group that wrote to Cromwell. At times, sectarian criticisms of the Protectorate were able to elicit responses in Cromwell's speeches, a feat accomplished by neither monarchists nor republicans. Employing providential language, the sects were able to convince Cromwell that God had judged against the office of king and that any attempt to reestablish such a government would result in eternal damnation. Cromwell's own religious convictions rendered him susceptible to reasoning of this sort. Once he was aware of the sects' arguments, Cromwell believed that he had no choice but to refuse the crown.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Oliver Cromwell's forced dissolution of the Rump Parliament on April 20, 1653 ushered in a unique era in England's political history. Charles I had been dead for over four years and his son's attempted invasion through Scotland had failed. With a return to the Stuart monarchy appearing highly unlikely in the near future, a period of experimentation in government began. The republican government, which had ruled from 1649 to 1653, may have been unprecedented in England, but its architects could look to the Netherlands or certain Italian city states as models. When the English republic sank to the bottom of the sea next to the monarchy, England would have to sail unexplored waters as it chartered its political course. The rapid changes in government reflected the uncertainty of the times. After the Rump, England changed from being governed by an assembly of men hand-picked for their godliness, to rule of a single person and parliament, to a military dictatorship, and back to the rule of a single person and parliament. All of these changes in government occurred between 1653 and 1658. Never before had England witnessed so many political alterations in so short a period of time.

Why did all these events occur so quickly? The leaders of the various regimes, especially Oliver Cromwell, sought to bring stability to England and were willing to experiment with forms of government to achieve this end. Yet when he was presented with the opportunity to reestablish the monarchy with himself as king, he first hesitated and then declined the offer. Why would a conservative man whose goal was to heal and settle the nation refuse a symbol of order and stability? Cromwell's own political ideology tended towards kingly government; therefore, some outside influence dissuaded

him from accepting the crown. The challenge is to discover what the influence was. This essay asserts that the motivation for Cromwell's rejection of the crown lies within the pamphlet culture of the 1650s. The ideas present in the printed tracts were able to deter Cromwell from his mission of settling the nation. Writings on the topic of Cromwell assuming the royal title were present throughout his reign as Lord Protector. Some pamphlets preached the benefits of monarchy while others warned Cromwell of the consequences of self-aggrandizement. The question now becomes: How does one determine which writings influenced Cromwell the most?

For the purpose of this study, the writings of the 1650s will be divided into three groups. The first group will be broadly referred to as monarchists. This group varies greatly, from those who believed that Cromwell should assume the royal title, to advocates for the return of Charles Stuart. What all members of this group had in common was a preference for monarchical government; they differed on the question of who England's king should be and the grounds of monarchical legitimacy.

The second group will be labeled sectarian writings. The authors of these works belong to various dissenting sects, such as Quakers, Anabaptists and Fifth Monarchists. They appealed to Cromwell on religious grounds, often citing the Bible and invoking the wrath of God.

The final group is comprised of the most prominent republican theorist of the 1650s. This study will focus on three men who were staunch republicans and had a connection to Cromwell: John Milton, Marchamont Nedham and James Harrington. Each of these three wrote preeminent republican tracts, but at the same time were able to swallow their pride and support the Protectorate in part—Nedham and Milton even wrote

defenses of Cromwell and the Protectorate. Each of these groups conveyed a different message to Cromwell, and each one had a different effect on him.

The writings of monarchists, sectarians, and republicans provide the context for Cromwell's speeches. Quentin Skinner believes the "wider *linguistic* context [can be used] as a means of decoding the actual intention of the given writer."¹ "The context itself can be used as a sort of court of appeal for assessing the relative plausibility of incompatible ascriptions of intentionality."² No author—or in the case of Cromwell, speaker—ever made their utterances in isolation. They were surrounded by an intellectual climate that offers clues to the intention of the authors themselves. In the case of Cromwell's speeches, sometimes he was responding to criticisms of his regime, sometimes he was speaking within the same ideological framework as other authors, and sometimes he was presenting the rationality behind a decision which originated within the broader intellectual context. By including the diverse pamphlet culture in the analysis of Cromwell's speeches, historians can gain new insights into why he said what he said, and even understand why he undertook the actions that he did.

After reviewing Cromwell's actions leading up to and including the kingship crisis and the literature on the subject, this study will establish what Cromwell's own political opinions were prior to 1653. The chief aim of this section is to demonstrate that in the years before he dissolved the Rump, Cromwell was generally in favor of government with some monarchial dimension. Cromwell's own inclination towards monarchy will be compared with the broader sentiment of the era. Next, the essay will in turn examine the texts of sectarian and republican writers. Within each cohort of

¹ Quentin Skinner, "Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas," *History and Theory* 8:1 (1969), 49.

² *Ibid.*

writings, common themes emerge. Monarchists appealed to tradition, stability, and scripture; the sects wrote of providence, warned of God's judgment, charged Cromwell with offending the godly, and claimed that God was withdrawing from Cromwell's designs. Republicans, although not a coherent group, focused on liberty and argued that the people were the source of all political power. The challenge now becomes to determine which group could most effectively influence Cromwell. In order to accomplish this objective, the texts of each group will be compared to Cromwell's own words. Cromwell never admitted to having read any particular pamphlet written during his reign, yet his speeches do reflect knowledge of the pamphlet culture and broader political discourse in that culture. Cromwell might never have cited a monarchical, sectarian or republican author in his speeches, but he did invoke similar language and reasoning. If Cromwell's speeches and a text share common elements, it suggests that the text and its intellectual milieu influenced Cromwell. This method permits one to trace which elements of the public debate had the most sway over him, and hence, provides a deeper understanding as to why Cromwell made the decisions he did. Cromwell's own comments on the kingship question are placed within the broader context of the printed public debate. This analysis, arguably, renders the question of Cromwellian kingship a more broadly relevant topic.

This essay contends that on the issue of kingship, Cromwell heeded the advice of sectarian writers over that of monarchists and republicans. Not only do sectarian texts contain more similarities with Cromwell's speeches than the other groups, but at times, Cromwell used his speeches to enter the public discourse in order to answer sectarian charges. Sectarian accusations prompted Cromwell to engage his critics, to become part

of the public discourse by responding to the sects with his speeches; the same cannot be said for monarchical or republican works. The effect of religious writings also offers an explanation as to why Cromwell refused the crown in 1657 when earlier he had spoken in favor of the royal office. Many religious authors took a strong stance against the prospect of kingship; Cromwell took their writings seriously and declined parliament's offer. Ultimately, Cromwell would rather offend and ignore republicans and monarchists than those whom he called the saints.

Cromwell's quest for stability began in December 1653, when he was installed as Lord Protector, the new head of state; this development represented an attempt to provide the British Isles with a strong, long-lasting government. With the exception of declining the crown, every alteration in government which Cromwell engineered was done in the hope of bringing stability and/or security to his country. The title Lord Protector had existed in the English government before Cromwell's time, but it had a different meaning, essentially denoting a regency. When the ruling sovereign was too young to fulfill his duties, a member of the nobility was appointed "Lord Protector" to rule the country until the monarch was of age. This situation occurred in the 1400s when Protector Gloucester ruled for the infant Henry VI, and in the 1500s when Protector Somerset governed for Edward VI. Protector Cromwell had a very different basis for his power. In legal terms, Cromwell's power lay in the Instrument of Government, England's first written constitution. Peter Gaunt describes the Instrument as replacing a decade of *ad hoc* government whereby the Long Parliament and then the Rump had exercised both executive and legislative power.³ The Instrument was primarily drafted

³ Peter Gaunt, "'The Single Person's Confidants and Dependents?' Oliver Cromwell and his Protectoral Councillors," *The Historical Journal* 32:3 (Sept. 1989), 544.

by Major-General Lambert and was presented to Cromwell shortly after the Barebones Parliament dissolved itself. G. D. Heath emphasizes Lambert's role in creating the Instrument. According to Heath, Lambert wrote the Instrument in a "cunning" manner in order to conceal the extent of the Lord Protector's powers.⁴ Gaunt believes that the Instrument, as historians know it, is a revised version of the one drafted by army officers in mid-December.⁵ The original edition, in Gaunt's opinion, granted more power to parliament. Their experience with the Rump had made Cromwell and the grandees weary of over-bearing and ineffective parliaments; therefore, the final version of the Instrument provided the Protector with the authority to dissolve parliament.⁶

The authors of the Instrument aimed to establish a government that would provide the British Isles with much needed stability. The new constitution placed the executive in the hands of the Lord Protector, who was to be assisted by a council. In theory, the council was supposed to act as a check on the Protector, but as Gaunt points out, it is difficult for historians to gauge how effective the council was in practice due to the lack of surviving records.⁷ After analyzing what sources are available, Gaunt concludes that although Cromwell was the central figure in the Protectorate, "he worked with his Council and respected counciliar independence, even when he disapproved of its actions."⁸ Legislative power was vested jointly in the Protector and parliament. In terms of control of the armed forces, the Protector had to act with the consent of the majority of

⁴ G. D. Heath, "Making the Instrument of Government," *Journal of British Studies* 6 (1967), 31.

⁵ Peter Gaunt, "Drafting the Instrument of Government 1653-1654: A Reappraisal," *Parliamentary History* 8:1 (1989), 28.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷ Gaunt, "The Single Person's Confidants and Dependents?," 547.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 560.

the council when parliament was not sitting, and with parliamentary approval when it was in session.⁹ Thus, it is misleading to present the Protectorate as a “dictatorship.”

Also contained within the Instrument were the rules for parliament. Parliaments were to be elected every three years and new voting qualifications forbade Catholics, Irish rebels, and royalists who had not “given signal testimony of their good affection” from voting.¹⁰ In addition to these new restrictions, the council was empowered to exclude elected members. The liberality with which the council employed this power varied from parliament to parliament. During the first Protectoral Parliament, the council excluded MPs sparingly. Gaunt suggests that the council excluded few MPs because it and Cromwell were optimistic about the first Protectoral Parliament.¹¹ This situation changed when Cromwell summoned the second Protectoral Parliament as the council was much more willing to exclude elected MPs.

On the issue of religion, the Instrument permitted all who professed faith in God by Jesus Christ to practice their religion, provided they did no harm to others and did not create civil unrest.¹² Cromwell himself was pleased with the provisions of the Instrument and hoped that it would end the political turmoil by entrenching a durable government. He even praised its merits to the first Protectoral Parliament; unfortunately for him, few in the House of Commons shared his high estimation.

Though the Instrument outlined a clear and in some way rather Laudian structure of government, arguments over it began almost immediately after its creation. The members of the first Protectoral Parliament viewed the Instrument as an attempt by the

⁹ Austin Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution: 1625-1660* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 564.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 565.

¹¹ Peter Gaunt, “Cromwell’s Purge? Exclusions and the first Protectoral Parliament,” *Parliamentary History* 6 (1987), 16.

¹² Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, 566.

army to force its will upon the nation. As a result, the MPs focused on redrafting the constitution rather than pursuing any new business.¹³ The parliament did not present a single piece of legislation to Cromwell during its term. Despite this paucity of statutes, Gaunt does not think historians should classify the MPs as lazy or ineffective. Although parliament passed no legislation, thirteen bills had at least one reading and fifteen more were considered.¹⁴ The MPs attempted to meet the demands of the nation by discussing the numerous petitions presented to parliament.¹⁵ Despite these efforts, Cromwell was not satisfied. The first Protectoral Parliament sat for less than six months before Cromwell's frustration at the parliament's lack of accomplishments moved him to dissolve it. Hugh Trevor-Roeper attributes the failure of the parliament to Cromwell's poor managerial skills. Unfamiliar with how to use patronage and procedural devices, Cromwell could not coordinate a successful parliament.¹⁶ David Smith believes that religious differences between Cromwell and the MPs created animosity between them and motivated Cromwell to dissolve the first Protectoral Parliament. He was committed to promoting an unpopular notion of liberty of conscience; this determination doomed the first Protectoral Parliament.¹⁷ Barry Coward acknowledges the importance of religious issues in the early dissolution of the first Protectoral Parliament, but he also believes that the parliament's hostility towards the army was a crucial factor.¹⁸ Whatever Cromwell's

¹³ Barry Coward, *The Cromwellian Protectorate* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2002), 44.

¹⁴ Peter Gaunt, "Law-Making in the First Protectoral Parliament," in *Politics and People in Revolutionary England*, eds. Colin Jones, Malyn Newitt and Stephen Roberts (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 172-173.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 177.

¹⁶ Hugh Trevor-Roeper, "Oliver Cromwell and his Parliaments," in *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change and other essays by Hugh. Trevor-Roper* (London: Macmillan, 1967), 355.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 47.

¹⁸ Coward, *The Cromwellian Protectorate*, 47.

reasons for ending the first Protectoral Parliament, its early dissolution demonstrated that the Instrument had not brought political stability.

What followed the first Protectoral Parliament was a form of military rule under officers known as the Major-Generals, through which Cromwell hoped to enforce godly reformation upon the nation and secure it from royalist threat. If he could not establish a permanent government, then Cromwell would focus on restoring order. The Major-Generals system involved dividing England into twelve associations, each administered by one or two Major-Generals. Their primary purpose was security; specifically, they monitored royalists and attempted to prevent unrest. Ivan Roots notes that the Major-Generals efforts to monitor royalists suggest “some understanding of the uses of statistics in an age which was beginning to create a science of political arithmetic.”¹⁹ In Roots’ opinion, the Major-Generals regime sought to fulfill the aspiration of all rulers, “to govern, to get some effective central control, uniformity, commonly regarded as the antechamber to unity.”²⁰ In addition to monitoring enemies of the state, the Major-Generals collected the Decimation Tax—a tax imposed on royalists who had not demonstrated their loyalty to the new regime—in order to support the army. The Major-Generals’ final task was to enforce godly reformation upon the nation.²¹ The Major-General experiment is universally seen by historians as a failure. Its goals were too ambitious, there was not enough time to complete the objectives, and there was little support from London.²² Commenting on the aim of godly reformation, Derek Hirst

¹⁹ Ivan Roots, “Swordsmen and Decimators—Cromwell’s Major-Generals,” in *The English Civil War and After*, ed. R. H. Parry (Berkeley and Los Angeles: 1970), 81.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 79.

²¹ Christopher Durston, *Cromwell’s major-generals: Godly government during the English Revolution* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2001), 23-25.

²² *Ibid.*, 229-230.

asserts that the lack of zealous JPs who would prosecute moral offenders hindered the spread of godly governance.²³ The Major-Generals regime was not popular at any level of society. Its militaristic nature, the perception that it was illegal, and its centralizing tendencies all contributed to the animosity the people of England felt towards it.²⁴ Such dislike of the system caused the calling of the second Protectoral Parliament to be inevitable.

When Cromwell returned to parliamentary governance, he again hoped to stabilize the government, and again problems in the constitution emerged. The fact that divisions occurred in the second Protectoral Parliament is somewhat surprising as Cromwell and the council did not hesitate to exclude elected MPs. Approximately one hundred MPs whom Cromwell and the council deemed dangerous to the regime were not permitted to take their seats in the House of Commons. Additionally, another sixty MPs withdrew in protest.²⁵ The question of how much religious liberty should be allowed also raised its head during the second Protectoral Parliament, and reached a climax when James Naylor—a Quaker who had imitated Christ by riding a donkey into Bristol—faced charges of blasphemy.²⁶ Naylor was spared the death penalty but had to endure being pilloried and whipped twice, having his tongue bored, and being imprisoned. This incident drew men like Cromwell, who were uncomfortable with prosecuting a man for his religious beliefs, into conflict with the religiously conservative members of the second Protectoral Parliament. Cromwell condemned Naylor's behavior, but was troubled by the incident. He feared that Naylor's case might set a dangerous precedent;

²³ Derek Hirst, "The failure of godly rule in the English republic," *Past and Present* 132 (1991), 57.

²⁴ Durston, *Cromwell's major-generals*, 230-231.

²⁵ Coward, *The Cromwellian Protectorate*, 76.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 83.

conservative MPs might be just as willing to administer punishment to Baptists and Independents.²⁷ Coward believes the significance of the debate regarding Naylor is that it increased the number of those who were willing to consider amending or abandoning the Instrument in favor of a more precise religious policy.²⁸

During the same parliament, and developing out of the generally conservative mood of the body, Cromwell's title became a topic of debate. In what became known as the kingship crisis, Cromwell could have assumed the royal title, solidified his government, and established a clear line of succession; however, he elected to remain Lord Protector. The crisis began in 1656, when a conservative group of MPs headed by Lord Broghill and including Sir Charles Wolseley, Philip Jones, William Pierrpoint, Edward Montague and Oliver St John, believed that crowning Cromwell would best serve the nation's interest. Prior to his time, there had been much speculation concerning Cromwell and his title. Rumors of Cromwell assuming kingship were prominent immediately after the inauguration of the Protectorate. Both the Venetian and Swedish diplomats in London speculated on Cromwell's inevitable rise to kingship. The Venetian Secretary in England, Lorenzo Paulcci, referred to these possibilities at the time of Cromwell's forced dissolution of the Rump. On April 29, 1653, he wrote to the Venetian ambassador in France: "Since this incident [a dispute between Cromwell and Major-General Harrison] I hear he [Cromwell] has ceased to attend the House as usual, and that he is continually devising plans of personal aggrandizement out of doors with his own

²⁷ Ibid., 84.

²⁸ Ibid., 85.

adherents.”²⁹ Writing in the mid 1650s, Giovanni Sagredo commented on the pressures Cromwell faced regarding the crown. On January 6, 1655, Sagredo stated: “It is certain that the Protector, with the support of his partisans, recently had it suggested that the convenience and dignity of the nation required that his title should be changed and that of king or emperor assumed in the Protector’s person.”³⁰ In the same year, Swedish diplomat Peter Julius Coyet made similar observations. On June 1, 1655, Coyet wrote: “All circumstances lead me to believe that he [Cromwell] will either try to get the law altered by consent, or (which seems more probable) that he will very shortly assume the title of king.”³¹ These diplomatic letters demonstrate that there was much anticipation at court concerning Cromwell’s title.

In order to resurrect the office of king, Broghill and his allies created a new constitution, known as The Humble Petition and Advice. The offer of the crown is the most famous provision of the Humble Petition, but other significant changes were proposed. Under the new constitution, parliament was to consist of two houses, the second house consisting of forty to seventy members, who would be nominated by the Protector and approved by the House of Commons (Cromwell later had this section revised so that only he selected the members).³² The Humble Petition also set a regular annual revenue of one million pounds for the army and three hundred thousand pounds for civil government.³³ The religious provisions of the Humble Petition permitted a

²⁹ *Calendar of State Papers and manuscripts relating to English affairs, existing in the Archives and collections of Venice, and in other libraries of Northern Italy, Volume 29*, (London, Longman, H.M.S.O., 1864-1947), 60.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. 30, 4.

³¹ Michael Robert, trans, and ed., *Swedish Diplomats at Cromwell’s Court, 1655-1656: the missions of Peter Julius Coyet and Christer Bonde*, (London: Offices of the Royal Historical Society, University College London, 1988), 75.

³² Woolrych, *Revolution in Britain*, 652.

³³ *Ibid.*

narrower definition of liberty of conscience than the Instrument. Only those who accepted the basic doctrine of the Trinity and acknowledged both the Old and New Testaments to be the revealed word of God would be tolerated.³⁴ Officers in the army did not approve of this new constitution, particularly the religious clauses. In their opinion, it was the offspring of conservative gentry that would endanger liberty of conscience and the position of the officers.³⁵

Cromwell did not share the officers' hostility. With the exception of the royal title, Cromwell welcomed the Humble Petition, as it was in agreement with his four fundamentals of government.³⁶ Cromwell's four fundamentals of government were: rule by a single person and parliament; that parliaments should not make themselves perpetual; liberty of conscience; and that the militia must not be in the hands of a single entity. Cromwell outlined these fundamentals to the first Protectoral Parliament when the MPs were debating the legitimacy of the Instrument. Woolrych interprets Cromwell's enthusiasm towards the Humble Petition as marking a decline in the army's influence in politics.³⁷ Cromwell was, at this point in his career, willing to endorse a constitution even though the army, the faction that enabled him to rise to power, was against it. Providing England with a lasting political settlement was more important than maintaining positive relations with officers who, as Woolrych and Hirst point out, could easily be dismissed if they became troublesome.

Considering his own political beliefs, Cromwell's rejection of the crown appears out of character, and the environment surrounding Cromwell at the time of the kingship

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Hirst, *England in Conflict*, 307.

³⁶ Coward, *The Cromwellian Protectorate*, 88.

³⁷ Woolrych, *Revolution in Britain*, 653.

crisis requires close scrutiny. Cromwell's own ideology and actions offer an insufficient explanation for his decision to refuse the crown; therefore, an answer must be sought in broader print culture of the 1650s. Prior to 1653, Cromwell had shown himself through both his words and his actions to be in favor of monarchical government. Additionally, the title king would only aid Cromwell in his task of unifying and stabilizing the nation. Yet, when the moment arrived, he turned down the office that he had earlier supported and that could strengthen his government. The offer of the crown was not a sudden move by parliament; many observers had been speculating for years that Cromwell might assume the royal title. Earlier in the parliament, Colonel Jephson had already suggested that the Protector's title should be hereditary, and former Rumper John Ashe stated that for security reasons, Cromwell should "take upon him the government according to the ancient constitution."³⁸ Cromwell was, therefore, certainly not caught off guard by the offer. If parliament's offer of the crown was not sudden, neither was Cromwell's decision regarding it. He delayed responding as long as possible, agonizing over his decision. Cromwell recognized the significance of the Humble Petition and a potential return to kingship. When parliament first presented him with the Humble Petition he said, "The thing is of weight, the greatest weight of anything that was ever laid upon a man."³⁹ At the close of his speech on this occasion, he requested that he "may have some short time to ask counsel of God and my own heart" before providing a definitive answer.⁴⁰ Between March 31, when Cromwell made these comments, and April 13, when he officially rejected the crown, Cromwell spoke before parliament three times; in

³⁸ Woolrych, *Revolution in Britain*, 651.

³⁹ Wilbur Cortez Abbott, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, IV, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1988), 443.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 444.

each case, he continued to stall and ask for more time to consult God. Determining whether or not to accept the crown was not easy for Cromwell.

As these struggles to bring order to the British Isles transpired at the highest levels of government, diverse political opinions existed within the country. With so many changes in government occurring so quickly, political writers were constantly writing defenses of and attacks on the new regimes. Perez Zagorin asserts that the revolution prompted men who would have otherwise remained mute to publish influential political tracts.⁴¹ The collapse in the 1640s resulted in a massive number of pamphlets being published and the emergence of a print culture. These years witnessed work of some of the most impressive minds in English history, including John Milton, James Harrington and Thomas Hobbes. The expansion of print culture relates to Cromwell and his political actions. The power of print provided political and religious theorists with an avenue with which to communicate their ideas to the nation, including its leaders. Printed material could defend, criticize, and advise infant governments as they struggled to stabilize the country. Consequently, if they presented their arguments in an effective manner, pamphlet authors could affect the decisions of a leader such as Cromwell.

Not only was the number of printed tracts increasing, but the concepts they espoused were often innovative. Novel ideas of obedience to *de facto* authority entered an environment that still contained many proponents of divinely ordained monarchy. Zagorin believes that the 1600s were crucial in the shift from medieval to modern thought; both the “new philosophy” of Bacon, Decartes and Hobbes, and the “new science” of Galileo and Newton emerged at this time. Over the course of the century,

⁴¹ Perez Zagorin, *A History of Political Thought in the English Revolution* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1954), 1.

religion was forced to “accommodate itself” to the new mechanistic philosophy.⁴² B. Reay disagrees with Zagorin. He asserts that the development of political thought in the mid-1600s was not a simplistic movement towards or away from secularism. Rejecting Zagorin’s belief that the Fifth Monarchists replaced the Levellers as the key group which rallied against social injustices, Reay suggests that millenarianism and Levellerism were parallel ideologies, one outlived the other.⁴³ The English Revolution provided political theorists with the motive—the desire to restructure English society and government—and opportunity—the breakdown of censorship—to develop new understandings of the world.

The trial and execution of Charles I inspired many innovative ideas regarding political order. J. G. A. Pocock and Gordon J. Schochet describe the discourse on the regicide as being two-faced; it presented a thesis of accountability and explored the consequence of the dissolution of government.⁴⁴ The collapse of traditional sovereignty created a vacuum that the political thought of the Interregnum attempted to fill.⁴⁵ The governments of the Interregnum had neither the tradition nor the divine sanction of monarchy; they required an original basis for authority. Focusing on the aftermath of the regicide, Quentin Skinner examines the emerging ideas of obedience to government. Skinner views Anthony Ascham and Marchamont Nedham as two essential figures in the development of *de facto* notions of authority. Ascham argued that a true subject could take an oath to an usurping power provided that it offered protection; a subject’s obligation to obey ended when the government was no longer able to safeguard

⁴² Ibid., 4.

⁴³ B. Reay, “Radicalism and Religion in the English Revolution: an Introduction,” in *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, eds. J. F. McGregor and B. Reay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 20.

⁴⁴ J. G. A. Pocock and Gordon J. Schochet, “Interregnum and Restoration,” in *The Varieties of British Political Thought*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 148.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

him/her.⁴⁶ According to Nedham, all government stemmed from people's need to guard themselves from each other by yielding our rights to some common power. Since government was necessary to avoid anarchy, political obligation must be owed to any regime capable of sustaining political order.⁴⁷ *De facto* theories provided the infant English Republic, and later the Protectorate, with the justification it lacked.

During this same period, the studies of politics and of history changed as Hobbes and Harrington sought to solve political questions by scientific means. Christopher Hill views the Hobbesian revolution in political thought as threefold: Hobbes argued that the state was the creation of man, not God, and existed for the convenience of man; he objected to the idea that government should not be obeyed when it conflicted with divine law, as natural law and morality were derived from the state; and he opposed the practice of citing precedents in ancient texts, making reason not authority the arbitrator in political disputes.⁴⁸ By means of the scientific method, Hobbes concluded, along with the *de facto* theorists, that people owed obedience to any government that could protect them. Pocock and Schochet consider Hobbes and Harrington as the two great innovators of the Interregnum, but where Hobbes was a philosopher, Harrington was a humanist and historian.⁴⁹ Harrington sought to place the English Revolution in historical perspective, explaining why the monarchy had failed and why the form of republic he advocated should replace it.⁵⁰ "Harrington both remodeled the writings of history in England and pioneered the historical explanation of the causes of the Civil War," which emphasized

⁴⁶ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics, Vol. 3*, (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press), 277.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 280.

⁴⁸ Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1958), 277-278.

⁴⁹ Pocock and Schochet, "Interregnum and Restoration," 165.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 166.

the changes in land distribution over time.⁵¹ The political chaos of the 1640s and 1650s led men like Hobbes and Harrington to consider new avenues for understanding politics. From *de facto* theories of obedience to Harringtonian republicanism, England's political landscape in the 1650s was decorated with revolutionary ideas as every writer in the country, just like the politicians, offered their own solution to England's problems.

The plethora of political tracts and ideas did not go unnoticed by the Lord Protector. Cromwell was not surrounded by an impermeable bubble; he was susceptible to external influences which could affect his decisions. After he became Lord Protector, Cromwell received letters from all over the country. Some praised him, some advised him, and some criticized him. In addition to the letters directed to Cromwell, countless political tracts—reflecting the diverse political climate of the 1650s—were published. In these writings lies part of the motivation and rationale for many of Cromwell's actions, as they played a major role in shaping his political understanding. They are also the key to understanding his refusal of the crown as the kingship crisis triggered copious letters and pamphlets on the subject. Without them, any explanation of Cromwell's rejection of the crown will be incomplete.

⁵¹ Ibid., 167.

Chapter 2: Historiographic review

Cromwell's passing over the opportunity to become king was one of the defining moments in the Lord Protector's political career and has not been ignored by historians. The event itself was unprecedented and the result surprising. No study of the Protectorate can be complete without a thorough analysis of the kingship crisis. The traditional understanding of the event focused on the army's hatred of the royal office and its role in persuading Cromwell to reject the title. Some more recent studies minimize the part played by the army, and instead see the decision to turn down the crown as being a personal one. For these historians, Cromwell made up his own mind about the crown after days of solitary prayer. What both these approaches lack is an acknowledgment of the influence the print culture had on Cromwell, and how it swayed him against the prospect of kingship. The question cannot be reduced to one of mere biography.

Written over a century ago, C. H. Firth's articles regarding Cromwell and kingship continue to influence the historical community. Firth detects two phases in the offer of the crown to Cromwell. The first began in the fall of 1656. At this time, the question of whether or not the Lord Protectorate should be a hereditary position was debated in the second Protectoral Parliament. During these debates, the MPs did not discuss the possibility of bestowing the crown upon Cromwell; the only issue was how Cromwell's successor would be determined.⁵² The second phase occurred when Christopher Pack introduced the Humble Petition and Advice to parliament in February, 1657.⁵³ Firth portrays the parliament as being polarized between MPs who were in favor of both the Humble Petition and Advice and the offer of the crown, and the army officers

⁵² C. H. Firth, "Cromwell and the Crown," *The English Historical Review*, 17:67 (1902), 442.

⁵³ C. H. Firth, "Cromwell and the Crown," *The English Historical Review*, 18:69 (1903), 52.

who were opposed to the new constitution and the new title. After much arguing and political maneuvering, the Humble Petition passed through parliament. Once parliament had presented Cromwell with the Humble Petition and Advice, all parties assumed that Cromwell would accept the new constitution along with the crown.⁵⁴ The primary reason, according to Firth, that Cromwell refused the crown was opposition in the army.⁵⁵ Firth's analysis rests heavily on the observations of foreign diplomats living in England. These men stressed the tension that the army created and the influence that it extended over Cromwell. Consequently, Firth views the army officers as playing the decisive role in the kingship crisis.

Firth's study, with its focus on the army, continues to affect historians, whether they agree with him or not. In his study of the Protectorate, Barry Coward depicts its later years as factious. Cromwell's government was divided between conservative Cromwellians, such as Lord Broghill, who hoped to return England to a traditional style of government, and radical Cromwellians, including many officers in the army, who sought to promote godly reform.⁵⁶ The Humble Petition and Advice was a creation of the conservative group and offended the radical group as it placed further limitation on liberty of conscience. Cromwell's decision to refuse the crown was, in Coward's opinion, a well-thought out political maneuver that permitted him to remain above both factions. By turning down the crown, Cromwell did not align himself too closely with the increasingly assertive conservative faction and did not lose the respect of the army.⁵⁷ Coward's point about the army's respect for Cromwell is an interesting one, as it allies

⁵⁴ Ibid., 66.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 75.

⁵⁶ Coward, *The Cromwellian Protectorate*, 82.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 89-90.

him with Firth, but separates him from other modern historians. Responding to the prominence Firth grants to the army officers, Austin Woolrych and Derek Hirst both downplay the role of the army in the kingship affair. Woolrych attacks the theory that Cromwell was on the verge of accepting the crown, but refused it at the last minute only because of heavy pressure from the army. The belief that Cromwell was prepared to take the crown, as Woolrych notes, relies heavily on supposed comments of his recorded in the Thurloe state papers. During the negotiations over the crown, Cromwell made many vague utterances which Woolrych believes should not be taken too seriously.⁵⁸ On the issue of the army's influence, Woolrych doubts that the army's opinions were a contributing factor to Cromwell's rejection of the crown, as he could have dismissed any officer who stood in his way.⁵⁹ His dominance within the army, in other words, limited its capacity to constrain him. Woolrych portrays Cromwell as a man who never had any intention of becoming king and delayed in answering parliament's request only to provide himself with room for negotiation.

Hirst agrees with Woolrych that the animosity of the officers towards the crown held little sway over Cromwell. Like Woolrych, Hirst notes the ease with which Cromwell could dismiss troublesome officers.⁶⁰ But Hirst does not view Cromwell as being committed to refusing the crown. Instead, Hirst describes Cromwell, a devout Puritan, as spending weeks attempting to determine God's will.⁶¹ In the end, Cromwell rejected the crown because providence was not clearly in favor of it; there were no addresses from the people advising him to assume the royal title, and the continuous

⁵⁸ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, 658-659.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 660.

⁶⁰ Derek Hirst, *England in Conflict, 1603-1660: Kingdom, Community, Commonwealth* (London: Arnold, 1999), 308.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 309.

divisions of the godly in the 1650s demonstrated that England was not yet on God's path.⁶² The importance of providence is also discussed in Johann Sommerville's work. Sommerville detects two major intellectual influences on Cromwell: natural law contractualism (a theory that stressed the importance of popular consent in validating political arrangements), and providence. Cromwell could justify most of his actions, including going to war against the king, on the grounds of natural law contractualism. However, in exceptional circumstances, such as those requiring the abolition of monarchy and the establishment of Barebones Parliament, God could grant special powers to certain agents.⁶³ When necessity demanded it, Cromwell would bow to providence even if it involved breaking the established law. In the case of the kingship crisis, providence had destroyed Charles I and removed the royal office from the British Isles. Both Hirst and Sommerville interpret Cromwell's refusal of the crown as being providentially based.

Blair Worden also emphasizes the role of providence in Cromwell's life. The language of providence, according to Worden, was a natural way of speaking for Puritans. When addressing Parliament, Cromwell invoked providence to sanction his rule and lectured parliament on providence's impact on his soul.⁶⁴ For one who believed in the power of God's providence, the greatest danger was failing to recognize divine dispensations; this failure could provoke God's wrath.⁶⁵ Given that Worden attaches such importance to providence, his analysis of the kingship crisis should come as no

⁶² Ibid., 309.

⁶³ Johann Sommerville, "Oliver Cromwell and English Political Thought," in *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution*, ed. John Morrill, (London and New York: Longman, 1990), 245.

⁶⁴ Blair Worden, "Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England," *Past and Present* 109 (Nov. 1985), 57.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 67.

surprise. The military disaster of the Western Design shocked Cromwell and forced him into a period of self-examination in order to determine why God had undermined a crucial military expedition.⁶⁶ Such meditation led him to the conclusion that assuming the crown would anger God. If Cromwell defied God by accepting the crown, then God would discipline all of the British Isles for Cromwell's actions.⁶⁷ Providence had convinced him that God was against the prospect of kingship, and that the fate of the nation rested on his decision.

Although historians have not ignored the kingship crisis when analyzing the Protectorate, they have paid little attention to the role that the public discourse played in Cromwell's decision regarding the crown. Instead, the historiography of the kingship crisis is biographical, as it attempts to determine precisely what Cromwell's personal religious and political convictions were and how they led to his rejection of the royal title. Woolrych, Hirst and Worden all stress that the question of kingship was answered by Cromwell and Cromwell alone. Hirst rejects the image of Cromwell as a "passive plaything" capable of being influenced by the army.⁶⁸ The officers in the New Model army may not have convinced Cromwell to turn down the crown, but the many writings on the topic—both letters directed to Cromwell and pamphlets distributed throughout the country—did have an impact on him. Cromwell did not decide to reject the crown while praying alone in his room. He was familiar with, and was influenced by, the print culture; perhaps this willingness to be involved with public discourse grew from his desire to heal and settle the nation. If Cromwell sought to satisfy the needs of the people,

⁶⁶ Blair Worden, "Oliver Cromwell and the Sin of Achan," in *History, Society and the Churches*, eds. Derek Beales and Geoffrey Best (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 136-137.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁶⁸ Derek Hirst, "The Lord Protector, 1653-1658," in *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution*, ed. John Morrill (London and New York: Longman, 1990), 139.

he had to know what they desired, and the public sphere provided him with this information. As a result of his interaction with the public discourse, his own providential ideas regarding the crown were strengthened at the expense of his conservative impulses. The point Hirst, Sommerville and Worden make regarding providence's part in swaying Cromwell against kingship is partly correct. What their analyses miss, however, is the fact that Cromwell did not reach this conclusion in isolation. Prior to 1653, Cromwell's comments and actions reveal him to be a supporter of monarchy. In order for him to believe that providence had declared against kingship, he required some convincing. During his rule as Lord Protector, the pamphlet culture contained many tracts on the topic of monarchy, some in favor of it, others against it. Religious sects spoke out most passionately against the possibility of a return to kingly government. Through his participation with this element of the public discourse, Cromwell came to believe that accepting the royal title was tantamount to defying God's providences. Religious writings and the influence of the print culture of the English Revolution on Cromwell over the question of kingship is an issue that historians have thus far overlooked.

A separate historiographic tradition analyses the development of print culture on its own terms. Within this second historiography, much good work has been done, but it must be combined with the high political analysis of Woolrych, Worden, and Hirst in order to fully understand the kingship crisis. Printing was present in England for decades before the Civil War, but the events of the 1640s and 1650s expanded and altered this medium. David Zaret notes: "A public sphere first appeared in the English Revolution."⁶⁹ What is meant by the term public sphere? Jurgen Habermas referred to

⁶⁹ David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 174.

the public sphere as “a sphere of criticism on public authority.”⁷⁰ In Habermas’ account, the public sphere first appeared in the enlightenment when coffee houses and journals provided it with an institutional basis.⁷¹ In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, civil society—a key component of Habermas’ theory—developed as “the genuine domain of private autonomy [that] stood opposed to the state.”⁷² Since it is opposed to the state, the public sphere must be free from state interference. Within the public sphere, people employ their reason to criticize the state.⁷³ In this situation, “public opinion comes to refer more positively to the views held by those who join in rational-critical debate on an issue,” as opposed to the opinion of isolated individuals.⁷⁴

Zaret asserts that in order to understand the development of the public sphere, it is essential to analyze the changes in communicative practice.⁷⁵ The invention of the public sphere in the English Revolution, according to Zaret, “occurred at the level of communicative practice” as its inventors did not acknowledge the invention and new terminology was not coined.⁷⁶ The public sphere was not a deliberate creation, but an accidental development due to the proper conditions. Jason Peacy believes that the “marketplace of print,” which developed in the 1640s, was a key factor in the creation of an “arena” in which public opinion emerged as a force for the first time.⁷⁷ Based on Habermas’ theory, certain conditions must be met in order for a public sphere to exist: access to the public sphere must be granted to all; a growing popular interest in political

⁷⁰ Ibid., 28.

⁷¹ Craig Calhoun, “Introduction: Habermas and the Public Sphere,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: The MIT Press, 1992), 12.

⁷² Ibid., 7.

⁷³ Ibid., 9.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 17.

⁷⁵ Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture*, 20.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁷⁷ Jason Peacy, *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda During the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2004), 314.

and public affairs; increase in literacy rates and purchasing of printed material; more public involvement in the production of print; issues of debate are assessed on the soundness of their argument rather than authority of the author; and public discourse must be free from state interference.⁷⁸ After assessing the political climate of England in the 1640s, Peacey concludes that something approaching a public sphere did emerge during the Civil War.

The breakdown of censorship increased the number of political texts being published, but Zaret believes that it is a mistake to understand print culture of the English Revolution merely in terms of quantity. In Zaret's words, "the use of printing in politics left its mark on communicative practices that reoriented political discourse so that its production increasingly involved simultaneous constitution and invocation of public opinion."⁷⁹ In this era, printed texts responded to earlier texts, invited readers to compare texts, and encouraged readers to make a judgment on the conflict between king and parliament, and later between different factions in parliament.⁸⁰ Joad Raymond also notes the dialogue between pamphlets. A prime example of this dialogue is the discourse between Parliament's Nineteen Propositions, the king's Answer, and Henry Parker's *Observations*. Each was published as a cheap pamphlet and invited the reader to choose sides.⁸¹ Never before had printed material interacted with the public in this manner. The emerging pamphlet culture imposed what Zaret labels "a dialogic order on the conflict."⁸² Each text supported a particular position, providing arguments for it and discrediting

⁷⁸ Ibid., 314-315.

⁷⁹ Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture*, 177.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering in Early Modern Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 208.

⁸² Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture*, 178.

writings that espoused a contrary opinion. Raymond discusses the importance of the pamphlet for emerging radical groups. The pamphlet culture enabled radicals to reach a broad audience with their message. For radicals, the pamphlet was “a voice, an incorporeal performance, an imaginative gesture never reducible to a simple statement, and able to extend the efficacy of communication beyond the boundaries of the parish or congregation.”⁸³ This explosion of printed literature did not impact only the educated elite; texts were circulated and read aloud in public places.⁸⁴ Raymond describes how radical writers combined plainness with scriptural references and inserted speeches and bursts of drama; this style of writing was designed to obtain the attention of the lower orders.⁸⁵ The public sphere of the 1640s and 1650s provided the people of England with a new forum to express and debate their ideas regarding politics and religion.

The various governments of the 1640s and 1650s were also aware of the power of the public sphere and hoped to manipulate it to their advantage. Such a policy, however, was dangerous, as the public sphere was volatile and unpredictable. An example of a failed propaganda campaign is the Rump’s reporting on the trial of Charles I. Peacey points out that the Rump’s decision to report the trial indicates that it anticipated a benefit from doing so and they assumed Charles I would not score any propaganda points from the trial.⁸⁶ However, Charles’ demeanor at the trial—his refusal to enter a plea and his responses to Bradshaw, the judge overseeing the trial—hindered the propaganda campaign. Royalists found solace in the king’s performance and used the reports of the

⁸³ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 226.

⁸⁴ Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture*, 197.

⁸⁵ Raymond, *Pamphlets and Pamphleteering*, 229.

⁸⁶ Jason Peacey, “Reporting a Revolution: a Failed Propaganda Campaign,” in *The Regicides and the Execution of Charles I*, ed. Jason Peacey (Houndmills, Basingstroke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2001), 162.

king's trial to their advantage.⁸⁷ In November, 1649, the Rump had to ban the publication of one of their own accounts of the trial because it was too beneficial to royalists.⁸⁸ The public sphere was an autonomous entity that no regime could control, yet any assembly or ruler who desired acceptance from the populace needed to interact with it. This was the dilemma that the Interregnum rulers, including Cromwell, had to face. The public sphere was a double-edged sword that could make or break a government.

Why have historians of the kingship crisis failed to acknowledge the significance of the pamphlet culture in the 1650s, particularly the writings of the sects? Woolrych and Hirst do not consider the sects a prominent political force after the end of the Barebones Parliament. The inauguration of the Protectorate brought, in Woolrych's opinion, an end to the threat posed by the Fifth Monarchists in Parliament. Cromwell's first step as Lord Protector was to remove those who considered his regime illegal, namely Fifth Monarchists. Numerous Fifth Monarchists were imprisoned and there was little they could do about it; they no longer had friends at Westminster, their supporters in the army were dwindling, and as time passed and their prophecies failed to materialize, many of their followers simply turned away. Major-General Harrison, an adherent of Fifth Monarchy principles, was still potentially dangerous, but Cromwell forced him to retire to his father's home in Staffordshire where he could no longer create trouble within the ranks.⁸⁹ Rather than Fifth Monarchy sympathies in the army, Woolrych believes that rigid republicans who sat in the Protectoral parliaments were Cromwell's chief threat.⁹⁰ Hirst emphasizes how the decline of Harrison represented the loss of Fifth Monarchy

⁸⁷ Ibid., 174.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 175-175.

⁸⁹ Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, 581.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 609.

power. The silence in the army when Harrison was dismissed demonstrated that discipline in the army was stronger than disruptive millenarianism.⁹¹ Both Woolrych and Hirst note the Fifth Monarchy men's hatred for the Protectorate and their constant writings against it, but since they no longer had any powerful politicians on their side, their influence is assumed to be minimal.

There are two problems with Woolrych's and Hirst's analysis. First, it assumes that once the Fifth Monarchists lost allies in the army, they ceased to be a danger and therefore ceased to be a concern of Cromwell's. But a decrease in the military power of the Fifth Monarchists did not inevitably lead to their political marginalization. Simply because they were no longer a security threat did not mean they could not present arguments that appealed to Cromwell or threaten his legitimacy among the broader population, particularly any other religious extremists. Fifth Monarchists could and did invoke the notion of providence in their writings. The theme of providence always captured Cromwell's attention, regardless of the source. Additionally, once Fifth Monarchists' written critiques entered the public sphere, other sects might read them and start to question the legitimacy of the Protectorate. Providential reasoning had a broad allure at a time when the number of religious sects was exploding. With the ability to pressure Cromwell and undermine the legitimacy of his government among the sects, the Fifth Monarchists remained a potent group even after the Barebones Parliament.

Second, although Fifth Monarchists may have been the most vocal critics of the Protectorate, they were only one of many religious groups that chastised the Protectorate. To limit religious critics of the Protectorate to Fifth Monarchists is to leave out a considerable number of other sects. These religious groups may have held varying

⁹¹ Hirst, *England in Conflict*, 285.

beliefs, but their attacks upon the Protectorate were conducted along similar lines. Jonathan Scott has detected commonalities between various groups of English radicals, both religious and secular. He interprets English radicalism as growing out of the Reformation and becoming transformed during the Civil War years when it no longer needed to be defended—instead it could be radicalized.⁹² Groups such as the Levellers, Diggers, Ranters and Quakers shared a religious and social agenda based on a dedication to “radical reformation.”⁹³ Many of the labels historians apply to English radicals do not, according to Scott, describe simultaneously existing groups, but chronological stages of a single process of radicalization.⁹⁴ Scott’s purpose is to demonstrate the religious nature of the radical intellectual movements of the 1650s, particularly republicanism, but his point about the similarities between the various radical groups is relevant to the present study. Fifth Monarchists, Quakers, separatist Puritans and others all assaulted Cromwell’s regime in their writings, and they all employed similar modes of discourse.

A few historians have noted the letters written to Cromwell during the kingship crisis. Worden does mention them briefly, but he does not believe that they contributed to Cromwell’s eventual rejection of the crown. He acknowledges that Cromwell’s delay in taking a definitive stand provided the sects with an opportunity to mobilize resistance; nonetheless, their challenge would not have been unstoppable, and Cromwell could have disabled it.⁹⁵ The problem here is that Worden, like Woolrych and Hirst, is viewing sectarian power in terms of physical rather than intellectual strength and capacity to shape public discourse. True, the sects did not have the ability to overthrow the

⁹² Jonathan Scott, *England’s Troubles: Seventeenth-Century English Political Instability in European Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 236.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 230.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 241.

⁹⁵ Worden, “Oliver Cromwell and the Sin of Achan,” 141.

government, but they did not have to in order to prevent Cromwell from taking the crown, or at least influence him in that direction. They merely had to convince Cromwell that God was not in favor of kingship, and that his assumption of the crown represented a carnal act of the will.

The existing historiography on the kingship crisis does an admirable job drawing attention to the role of providence in Cromwell's life, but it fails to consider the importance of the print culture that surrounded Cromwell. Sectarians who wrote to Cromwell were able to exploit his providential beliefs in order to convince him that accepting the crown would be a violation of God's will. The actual numbers of the sects and the physical threat that they posed to the government is irrelevant. All that mattered was the force of their arguments. The emergence of a public sphere provided the sects with a venue to express their thoughts on kingship and enabled them to obtain Cromwell's attention. The historiography of the power of print culture can complement the high political narrative and provide deeper understanding of the events of the 1650s. Cromwell's own religious convictions are only half the story of his rejection of the crown; the other half is the sectarian milieu that sought to persuade Cromwell of the hazards of monarchy. To focus only on Cromwell, as much of the historiography on the kingship crisis does, is to minimize a powerful influence on Cromwell's decisions.

Chapter 3: Cromwell's Monarchism and the Broader Monarchical Sentiment

Before discussing how the letters and petitions written to Cromwell affected his decisions as Lord Protector, it is necessary to determine Cromwell's own political ideas prior to 1653, when he dissolved the Rump. Once Cromwell's own political ideology has been established, one will be able to observe how the writings he received after he became Lord Protector influenced his understanding of government. Clues to Cromwell's political opinions lie in a number of sources. His comments at the Putney debates, his actions leading up to the regicide, his conversations with Bulstrode Whitelocke, his comments at an army council meeting, and his letters, all provide insights into Cromwell's political mindset. These sources combine to reveal Cromwell as a generally conservative man on political questions, who believed in the institution of monarchy and contractual theories of government.

When he was first elected as a member of the Long Parliament, Cromwell was more interested in religion than the relationship between king and parliament. J. C. Davis describes Cromwell at this early stage in his political career as "a lone operator and loose cannon" primarily concerned with religion.⁹⁶ At the beginning of the Long Parliament, many of Cromwell's proposals addressed religious questions and met with little success. Cromwell, Sir Henry Vane, and Sir Robert Harely had worked on the Root and Branch Bill for the abolition of episcopacy, but the bill was never sent to the House of Lords.⁹⁷ In the early 1640s, a Puritan zeal rather than dissatisfaction with the structure of the English government spurred Cromwell to take action against the king. Prior to 1653,

⁹⁶ J. C. Davis, *Oliver Cromwell* (London: Arnold, 2001), 18.

⁹⁷ J. S. A. Adamson, "Oliver Cromwell and the Long Parliament," in *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution*, ed. John Morrill (London and New York: Longman, 1990), 53.

Cromwell was neither a radical, nor a revolutionary, nor a republican; he was an advocate of the ancient constitution of king, lords and commons with only minor adjustments to the traditional franchise.

Cromwell's conservative nature was prominent at the Putney Debates which occurred from October 28 to November 11, 1647. During this period, tension between the Levellers and grandees ran high. The Levellers were a political movement championing legal reform, expansion of the franchise, and religious toleration. At first they attempted to spread their message by petitioning parliament; however, when MPs responded by ordering the common hangman to burn their petitions, the Levellers formed a tenuous alliance with the army, which had its own grievances with parliament.⁹⁸ The Long Parliament angered the army by failing to pay them and contemplating sending part of the army to Ireland and then dissolving the remainder.⁹⁹ Unlike Cromwell, Levellers proposed reforms that fundamentally altered the existing social structure. Andrew Sharp refers to the Levellers professing a "program of massive constitutional reform."¹⁰⁰ Their belief in what Sharp calls "a God-ordained equality among all men" separated them from the bulk of the English population.¹⁰¹ For the Levellers, a return to the ancient constitution would be unacceptable, as it provided unelected magistrates with too much power. Their ideal constitution granted the House of Commons with supreme power and removed the negative voice of the king and lords. Consequently, they feared that Cromwell's attempts to negotiate with the king would result in a return to the old political order.

⁹⁸ Andrew Sharp, ed., *The English Levellers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), xv.

⁹⁹ Austin Woolrych, "The debates from the perspective of the army," in *The Putney Debates of 1647*, ed. Michael Mendle (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 55.

¹⁰⁰ Sharp, ed., *The English Levellers*, xiv.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, xix.

The pamphlets *The Case of the Army Truly Stated* and *The Agreement of the People*, both of which were proposals that presented major modifications to the existing government structure, concerned Cromwell and Sir Thomas Fairfax. The conflicting ideas in the Leveller pamphlets and the army grandees prompted the Putney Debates. Cromwell's main aim at Putney was to maintain unity among supporters of the parliamentary cause behind *The Heads of Proposals*—a potential settlement created by Cromwell and the grandees—rather than *The Agreement*.¹⁰² The army commanders had their own agenda in 1647—based around negotiating with the king and parliament and obtaining their approval for *The Heads of Proposals*—and they considered the Leveller campaign in October as an interruption.¹⁰³ At the debates, Cromwell and other army grandees argued with army agitators, many of whom espoused the Leveller program, over issues such as the future of the office of king and the extent of the franchise. When the agitators presented the Levellers' *Agreement of the People*, Cromwell was skeptical of its far-reaching breaks with tradition. The Agreement called for a redistribution of constituencies proportionate to the population, election of a parliament every two years which would sit for six months only, and a removal of the veto power of both king and the House of Lords. Additionally, the Agreement outlined four “native rights”: freedom of religion; freedom from impressments; amnesty for everything done by both sides during the Civil War; and equality before the law.¹⁰⁴ H. N. Brailsford views the Agreement not as a written constitution, but rather as a sketch of a settlement, which

¹⁰² Barry Coward, *Cromwell* (London: Longman, 1991), 54-55.

¹⁰³ Woolrych, “The debates from the perspective of the army,” 53.

¹⁰⁴ H. N. Brailsford, *The Levellers and the English Revolution* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961), 261-262.

would have served as the corner stone for a future constitution.¹⁰⁵ Cromwell understood the Agreement as a potentially destabilizing document which he could not allow to be implemented. Woolrych believes that Cromwell's concerns were not without foundation, as the Agreement required the subscription of the whole nation. No royalist would have ever accepted it, and neither would moderate parliamentarians who supported mixed-monarchical constitution.¹⁰⁶

With regards to the Agreement, Cromwell told the agitators:

Truly this paper does contain in it many great alterations of the very government of the kingdom, alterations from that government that it hath been under, I believe I may also say, since it was a nation—I say, I think I may almost say so. And what the consequences of such an alteration as this would be if there were nothing also to be considered, wise and godly men ought to consider.¹⁰⁷

Here, Cromwell was appealing to tradition over innovation. He urged caution when confronted with a document that would radically alter the ancient constitution—better to reflect on the consequences of such change before initiating it. At this point in the debate, he did not describe the consequences he foresaw from the Agreement. Later, however, Cromwell warned Colonel Rainsborough, one of the supporters of the Agreement, that such a government as envisioned by the Levellers would only lead to chaos. He told Rainsborough:

No man says that you have a mind to anarchy, but [that] the consequences of this rule tends to anarchy, must end in anarchy; for where is there any bound or limit set if you take away this [limit], that men that have no interest but the interest of breathing [shall have no voice in the elections]?¹⁰⁸

The prospect of extending the franchise too broadly terrified Cromwell. The extent of the Levellers' franchise is a subject of debate among historians and may never be definitively

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 263.

¹⁰⁶ Woolrych, "The debates from the perspective of the army," 69-70.

¹⁰⁷ A. S. P. Woodhouse, ed., *Puritanism and Liberty* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Limited, 1993), 7.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., 59.

settled, as the Levellers were a diverse organization and the wording in their writings was often ambiguous; however, Cromwell would only allow for a limited extension of the franchise. He was willing to grant the vote to copyholders by inheritance, but that was as far as he would go.¹⁰⁹ If men who did not have a vested interest in the nation—that is, men who had no land—were permitted to vote, the results, in Cromwell’s opinion, would be devastating for the country. As a result of the Levellers’ many proposed changes, Cromwell, along with the rest of the grandees, became skeptical towards tinkering with any aspect of the English government, including the office of king. Cromwell’s overall social and political ideology influenced his attitude toward the institution of monarchy. The English political system, in Cromwell’s eyes, was not broken and, therefore, did not need to be fixed.

The question of what to do with the Charles I and the monarchy itself was raised at Putney, and in other venues throughout the late 1640s and early 1650s. During these years, Cromwell, through his actions and words, revealed himself to be a supporter of the institution of monarchy. At the conclusion of the first Civil War, Cromwell had no desire to try and execute Charles I. In November of 1647, he wrote to Colonel Whalley: “There are rumors of some intended attempt on his Majesty’s person. Therefore I pray have a care of your guards, for if any such thing should be done, it would be accounted a most horrid act.”¹¹⁰ At this point in time, Cromwell was concerned for the king’s safety. He knew that certain elements of the army sought the death of Charles I, but Cromwell still believed negotiation was possible. As other officers in the New Model Army radicalized, Cromwell preferred to wait for the outcome of the Newport Treaty—an

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 73.

¹¹⁰ Abbott, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, I, 551-552.

attempt by fifteen commissioners from parliament to reach a settlement with the king on the Isle of Wight in September 1648—before taking a decisive stand.¹¹¹ Cromwell’s refusal to condemn Charles I and the office of king did not endear him to the regicidal elements in the army. John Berkley’s memoirs chronicle efforts by Cromwell and other Independents to forge an agreement with the king in order to halt the influence of the Presbyterians in parliament. When Charles I became suspicious of the Scots and Presbyterians and desired a personal treaty with the grandees, “both Cromwell and Ireton, and Vane and all their friends, seconded with great resolution this desire of his Majesty.”¹¹² However:

They found a most general opposition [within the army], and that this message of his Majesty had confirmed the jealousy of their private agreement with the King; so that the more it was urged by Cromwell & c., the more it was rejected by the rest, who looked on them as betrayers.¹¹³

Cromwell and anyone else who was willing to deal with the king had, in the eyes of rank and file, betrayed the cause for which the soldiers had fought and died. Negotiating a private treaty with the king was not the manner by which to satisfy a radical army.

Even after Pride’s Purge, Cromwell was not yet prepared to abandon negotiation. In December 1648, Cromwell, with the aid of Whitelocke and Denbigh, attempted a last minute settlement with the king. David Underdown suggests that the failure of the Denbigh settlement, as it became known, was what convinced Cromwell that Charles’ reign as king was over.¹¹⁴ J. S. A. Adamson places Cromwell’s loss of faith in the king

¹¹¹ David Underdown, *Pride’s Purge*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1971), 165.

¹¹² John Berkley, *Memoirs of Sir John Berkley* (London, 1699), found on Early English Books Online, 43.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 169.

slightly earlier; specifically, in April of 1648 when Lord Saye's mission to negotiate with Charles on the Isle of Wight failed.¹¹⁵

Sean Kelsey interprets the events around the regicide differently. He asserts that even the very trial of Charles was staged not with the intention of executing the king, but with the hope of frightening him into negotiation.¹¹⁶ Not until the trial was well under way and the king would still not surrender his position did Cromwell consider regicide as a solution to the problem of Charles I. In this account, Cromwell's decision to pursue the king's death was "motivated more by fearful pragmatism than by idealistic hope."¹¹⁷ All three scholars believe Cromwell's actions in 1648 signify his continued loyalty to the traditional government, with Charles I at its head in some diminished capacity.

Although he supported negotiations with the king in 1648, some of Cromwell's comments at Putney cast doubt on the depth of the commitment. At Putney he said:

I do wish that they [those who demand the king's execution] will take heed of that which some men are apt to be carried away by, [namely] apprehensions that God will destroy these persons or that power [the House of Lords and Office of king]; for that they may mistake in. And though [I] myself do concur with them, and perhaps concur with them upon some ground that God will do so, yet let us [not] make those things to be our rule which we cannot so clearly know to be the mind of God.¹¹⁸

The fact that Cromwell admitted to "concur[ing]" with those who believed "God will destroy these persons [House of Lords] or that power [the office of king]," contradicts his efforts at negotiation in 1648. John Morrill and Philip Barker assert that Cromwell developed the conviction in 1647 that God desired Charles to be struck down; however, Cromwell was uncertain as to when and how. Cromwell cautioned others against

¹¹⁵ Adamson, "Oliver Cromwell and the Long Parliament," 78.

¹¹⁶ Sean Kelsey, "The Death of Charles I," *The Historical Journal*, 45:4 (2002), 728.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 752.

¹¹⁸ Woodhouse, ed., *Puritanism and Liberty*, 106.

regicide at Putney not because he believed killing the king was unjust, but because he did not know if he could successfully accomplish it.¹¹⁹ Johann Sommerville explains this contradiction in Cromwell's words and behavior by asserting that Cromwell felt compelled to attack the king at Putney in order to dispel accusations that he was "king-ridden."¹²⁰ For the present purpose, the exact moment when Cromwell accepted the regicide is of marginal relevance. What is important—and that on which all scholars can agree—is that Cromwell, like virtually all members of the Long Parliament, began the Civil War as a monarchist and slowly gravitated toward regicide of the particular king Charles Stuart in 1647/8. Of all the army officers who supported the regicide, Cromwell was one of the last converts, revealing how deeply he wished to avoid the step of king killing.

Support for the regicide did not necessarily mean opposition to kingship. As Sarah Barber has demonstrated in her book *Regicide and Republicanism*, one could seek the death of Charles I, and then hope one of his sons would take the crown and maintain the Stuart house.¹²¹ Cromwell, indeed, was one such person who believed Charles I's execution did not mean an end to monarchy. During a conference at the house of William Lenthall, the Speaker of the House, in September 1651, Cromwell and other important political figures debated the future of the English government. During the discussion, Cromwell said, "But really I think, if it may be done with safety, and preservation of our Rights, both as Englishmen and as Christians, that a Settlement with

¹¹⁹ John Morrill and Philip Barker, "Oliver Cromwell, the Regicide and the sons of Zeruah," in *Cromwell and the Interregnum*, ed. David Smith (Malden: Blackwell, 2002), 25-26

¹²⁰ Sommerville, "Oliver Cromwell and English Political Thought," 243.

¹²¹ Sarah Barber, *Regicide and Republicanism: Politics and Ethics in the English Revolution, 1649-1659* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).

somewhat of Monarchical power in it would be very effectual.”¹²² Although Charles I was dead, Cromwell still believed that a government with some monarchical element was preferable for England. Cromwell most likely took this stance out of respect for tradition and his desire to bring order and stability to the nation.

Not only did Cromwell think monarchical government best suited England, he also considered himself a possible candidate for the position of king. In a conversation with Bulstrode Whitelocke, Commissioner of the Great Seal, in 1652, Cromwell proposed the question: “What if a Man should take upon him to be King?”¹²³ Shortly after asking this question, he listed advantages of kingship:

And surely the power of a king is so great and high, and so universally understood and revered by the People of this Nation, that the Title of it might not only indemnify, in a great Measure, those that act under it, but likewise be of great Use and Advantage in such Times as these, to curb the Insolences of those whom the present Powers cannot control, or at least are the Persons themselves who are thus insolent.¹²⁴

In this conversation, Cromwell complained about the inadequacies of the Rump and attempted to demonstrate to Whitelocke how much better the nation would be with a king at the head of the government. Whitelocke was not convinced by Cromwell’s arguments and he warned Cromwell of the risks involved with such a step. When Cromwell realized that Whitelocke could not be persuaded, he parted company with Whitelocke “seeming, by his Countenance and Carriage, displeased with what had been said.”¹²⁵ Cromwell’s comments to Whitelocke illustrate not only how strongly he supported the institution of monarchy, but they also suggest a level of personal ambition for the office as early as 1652.

¹²² Abbott, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, II, 507.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 589.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 590.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 592.

Prior to the dissolution of the Rump, Cromwell also held a belief in government by consent. The most famous expression of this conviction occurred at Putney where he declared that “the King is King by contract.”¹²⁶ Cromwell was by no means a democrat, but he held some notion of social contract theory—that is, the idea that the people collectively decided to form a government and that government was contractually obliged to perform certain duties. Sommerville argues that, with regards to natural law contractualism, Cromwell was a product of his time. The outbreak of the Civil War focused attention on ideas concerning government and obedience. Parliamentarians questioned the absolutist argument that Adam’s power was kingly; therefore, fatherly power was also not kingly, it was merely domestic.¹²⁷ Government required the consent of the people, but since direct democracy was impossible, the people had to transfer their authority into the hands of a few magistrates.¹²⁸ Cromwell was a part of this environment, and his political opinions were shaped by it. He considered monarchy an essential institution to the English government, but he also believed that government required a role for the people, even if it were nothing more than granting power to magistrates. In the years before 1653, Cromwell was neither an absolutist nor a republican; he was a proponent of mixed monarchy.

Cromwell’s own inclination towards royal government was paralleled in the country at large. During the 1640s and 1650s, the majority of the population longed for the stability and familiarity of monarchy. This preference for monarchical government must not be confused with loyalty to the Stuart family. While some Englishmen desired a restoration of the Stuarts, others hoped that Cromwell would place the crown upon his

¹²⁶ Woodhouse, ed., *Puritanism and Liberty*, 96.

¹²⁷ Sommerville, “Oliver Cromwell and English Political Thought,” 237.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

own head. The general desire was for monarchy and stability, with only a select group wishing a specific family to rule the British Isles. Cromwell's effort to reconcile the royalists to his government illustrates his willingness to incorporate them into his regime. Many royalists were content to remain in England and only sought to pursue their trade unmolested.¹²⁹ The royalists who were involved in insurrections tended to belong to the zealous second generation rather than the men who had served Charles I during the Civil War.¹³⁰ Only after Penruddock's Rising in 1655 did Cromwell adopt a policy of repressing royalists.¹³¹

The pamphlet culture of the era reflected this wish for a return to the ancient constitution. In writings on the subject, royalists presented arguments based on tradition, security, and scripture to support their claim that monarchy was the ideal government for England. Rarely did any of these writings directly tell Cromwell to assume the royal title. Instead, they pointed to all the advantages of monarchical government and then referred to Cromwell as a king. Many Englishmen in the 1650s possessed an impulse to return to the style of government which governed England for centuries.

The tract *Eikon Basilike* aided in improving the popularity of the Stuarts and rendered Charles I, in particular, to appear very sympathetic. Appearing on the day of the regicide, *Eikon Basilike*, allegedly written by Charles I himself, presented the king's perspective on the events that ultimately led to his execution. Written in the first person, it explained Charles' motives for his actions; it was not a justification of royal policies,

¹²⁹ Paul Hardacre, *The Royalists During the Puritan Revolution* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1956), 125.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Ibid.

but a defence of the king's character.¹³² The work was exceptionally popular both in England and abroad. In 1649 alone, it went through thirty-five English editions; later it was translated into Latin, French, German, Dutch and Danish.¹³³ Elizabeth Skerpon Wheeler suggests that *Eikon Basilike* was widely read because it presented Charles as a man, not Charles as king. This image was more accessible to the common man, thus enabled the readership to identify with their dead king.¹³⁴ The publication of *Eikon Basilike* transformed Charles I into a martyr. Such an image increased the nation's sympathy with their former king and his family.

Some Englishmen felt so loyal to the Stuart house, that they wrote to Cromwell encouraging him to return them to power. Arise Evans and Walter Gostelo were two such men. Both wrote to Cromwell and pointed to the advantages of a Stuart restoration. Neither Evans nor Gostelo can be described as typical, as both experienced visions telling them to contact Cromwell; nonetheless, their efforts demonstrate the attachment certain people in the British Isles had for their former royal family. Evans, a Welshman, had experienced visions since he was fourteen, and attempted to warn Charles I in the early 1630s that he had seen a vision of the king's doom.¹³⁵ In Evans' opinion, a king was required in order to achieve peace in England. He wrote to Cromwell: "That without their conjunction to their native and right KING, there is no hope for peace, certainty, or

¹³² Elizabeth Skerpon Wheeler, "Eikon Basilike and the rhetoric of self-representation," in *The Royal Image: Representations of Charles I*, ed. Thomas N. Corns (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 127.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 122.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 127.

¹³⁵ Thomas N. Corns, "Evans, Arise (b. c. 1607, d. in or after 1660)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/8975>, accessed on 25 July 2007].

safety to this nation.”¹³⁶ Gostelo, who in his two books, an unpublished manuscript, and series of letters, attempted to portray himself as a prophet who had a duty to transmit the divine will to the people of England, referred to the nation as being in favor of the Stuarts.¹³⁷ He stated: “the *Horablest, wisest, best and most considerablest people* in this *Kingdom* desire *kingly government*, the *person*, none but him, whose unquestionable *right the crown* is, CHARLES STUART.”¹³⁸ He described Cromwell as having a “duty” to restore Charles Stuart.¹³⁹ Evans and Gostelo considered Charles Stuart their legitimate ruler and they hoped, in vain, to convince Cromwell that the nation would be better off with Charles II on the throne. Despite the fact that Cromwell attempted to control the press, pamphlets of this type—appeals to Cromwell directly to restore the Stuarts, as opposed to exiled Stuart loyalists trying to ferment conspiracy—were still published.

Combined with the favorable representation of Charles I were negative aspects of the Protectorate. Ronald Hutton describes three aspects of the Protectorate which limited its popularity: expensive taxes, the constant presence of a standing army, and a controversial religious policy.¹⁴⁰ Yet, Hutton recognizes that none of these problems posed an immediate danger to the Protectorate. Cromwell could remain in power despite these problems because “the opposition represented too many viewpoints to achieve coherence, and against all of it could be set the army.”¹⁴¹ No matter how great the

¹³⁶ Arise Evans, *To his excellencie the Lord Generall Cromwell, and his Honourable Council of the army at White-Hall* (London, 1653), found on Early English Books Online.

¹³⁷ Ian L. O'Neill, “Gostelo, Walter (bap. 1604, d. 1662?),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, [http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/74523, accessed on 25 July 2007].

¹³⁸ Walter Gostelo, *For the Lord Protector* (London, 1655), found on Early English Books Online.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁰ Ronald Hutton, *The Restoration: A Political and Religious History of England and Wales, 1658-1667* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1985), 11.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 14.

dissatisfaction with the Protectorate became, or how much people desired a return to Stuart monarchy, the New Model Army could always intervene.

As result of the power of the army, many royalists who remained in England attempted to keep out of the limelight and live quiescently, awaiting the eventual return of the Stuarts. David Smith argues that constitutional royalists—that is, men who were prominent in royal counsels in the period before the king’s answer to the Nineteen Propositions, who were involved in peace negotiations on the king’s behalf from 1642-1648, and tended toward more moderate, mixed constitution rather than an absolutist defence of royal power—survived the 1650s by going into seclusion.¹⁴² Men such as the Earl of Southampton remained close to their homes, although the government placed few restrictions on them.¹⁴³ Since none of the Interregnum regimes permitted them to vote, royalists did not care about the form of the government, provided that they could live peacefully. Expressing this wish to live unmolested, a Roman Catholic royalist said, “If all this ado would procure us a fair pardon, we would make your Cromwell our idol.”¹⁴⁴

At the beginning of his rule, Cromwell attempted to reconcile royalists to his regime. He reviewed the cases of royalist prisoners still in confinement; he intimated to judges that peaceable royalists should be treated leniently; he was troubled by the arbitrary confiscation of royalist land and halted any further sale of William Craven’s—a royalist sympathizer who fled to the continent shortly before the outbreak of the Civil War and remained there until the Restoration—land, which, during the English Republic, had been sold to provide money for the fleet in the impending war with the

¹⁴² David Smith, *Constitutional Royalism and the Search for Settlement, c. 1640-1649* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 259.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, 265.

¹⁴⁴ Hardacre, *The Royalists During the Puritan Revolution*, 106.

Netherlands.¹⁴⁵ Cromwell even personally approached certain royalists in the hope of gaining new allies. He tried, unsuccessfully, to befriend Southampton and the Marquess of Hereford.¹⁴⁶ Cromwell sought to reconcile the royalists because he shared certain beliefs with them. Both Cromwell and the royalists supported a system of mixed monarchy, but they differed in that the royalists sought to put the Stuarts at the head of government, while Cromwell did not. Cromwell knew his regime rested on a weak foundation and had many enemies. His overtures to royalists reveal his wish for acceptance and support from the broadly conservative political classes.

This policy of reconciliation did not last. While most royalists were content to remain on their land and quietly wait for the Stuarts to return, some desired aggressive action. Although Cromwell had the power of the army, any royalist uprising would enjoy what David Underdown has called “a definite, although inarticulate, pro-monarchist sentiment smoldering beneath the surface.”¹⁴⁷ Drunken toasts to Charles II were common enough, as were insults and curses directed at the Interregnum governments.¹⁴⁸ The mobilization of such sentiment was the only chance of a successful revolt. In England, there were two competing royalist conspiratorial organizations. The first was the Sealed Knot, which was connected to Edward Hyde, a prominent royalist in exile. The Sealed Knot had sole authority to supervise plotting in England, it was to discourage attempts that were unlikely to succeed, and it was to prepare for a general rising when

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 108-109; R. Malcolm Smuts, “Craven, William, earl of Craven (*bap.* 1608, *d.* 1697),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2007, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/6636>, accessed on 25 July 2007].

¹⁴⁶ Smith, *Constitutional Royalism*, 265, 273.

¹⁴⁷ David Underdown, *Royalist Conspiracies in England: 1649-1660* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1960), 16.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

conditions were right.¹⁴⁹ Other royalists believed that the Sealed Knot was too cautious; they formed a second group known as the Action Party, which led Penruddock's rising in 1655.¹⁵⁰ The rebellion was supposed to occur in half a dozen locations, but only in one, Salisbury, did any actual fighting take place.¹⁵¹ The 1655 rising was a dismal failure. Part of the problem was the lack of organization of the rebels and the efficiency of the government; however, Underdown asserts that even if the rebellion had been executed properly, it still would have failed. The dislike of Cromwell was not enough to combat the Protectorate's promise of security; public opinion preferred stability to bloodshed.¹⁵² The pro-monarchist sentiment that Underdown describes did not necessarily translate into Stuart loyalism. People might have preferred familiar forms of government to revolutionary ones, but they were less attached to the particular family that occupied the English throne. Since only a certain segment of the population was devoted to the Stuart cause, the rebellion had little hope for success.

Penruddock's rising signaled a change in Cromwell's policy regarding royalists. As Underdown put it: "Royalists had been offered the chance of conformity; to Cromwell's olive branch they had responded with rebellion."¹⁵³ Now Cromwell believed that repression was the only method to provide security. Royalists were imprisoned, were obliged to give bonds for good behavior, and were expelled from London between July 1655 and February 1656. These restrictions made it difficult to organize a conspiracy.¹⁵⁴ Christopher Durston views Penruddock's rising as the event which

¹⁴⁹ Ibid., 89-90.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 115.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 151.

¹⁵² Ibid., 158.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 162.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 166-167.

triggered the creation of the Major-Generals.¹⁵⁵ The Major-Generals generally fell short of achieving their lofty objectives; however, they did make it difficult for royalists to conspire, and ensured the survival of the Protectorate.¹⁵⁶ When the security of his government was at stake, Cromwell did not hesitate to turn on the royalists, a group he had once hoped to incorporate into his government.

Supporters of Charles II were not the only ones who considered monarchy to be the ideal form of government for England. Friends of the Protectorate also thought that the nation would be strengthened with a king at its head; however, they believed that Cromwell should wear the crown. Writers on this subject argued in favor of King Oliver on three grounds: tradition, stability, and scripture. Each one of these arguments appealed to Cromwell's conservative nature, yet they failed to convince him to accept the crown.

Many members of Cromwell's government were anxious for the inauguration of King Oliver I. A discussion between Cromwell, Whitelocke, the Lord Chief Justice, and other members of the government on April 11, 1657 reveals aspects of their logic. This debate occurred between the date of parliament's offer of the crown and that of Cromwell's final decision; it represented an effort to persuade Cromwell that the office of king was beneficial to England. The main argument of the proponents of kingship was that the laws of England were better suited with a king as head of state than a Lord Protector. Whitelocke expressed this view when he said:

. . . it was thought that the title which is known by the Law of England for many ages, many hundreds of years together received, and the Law fitted to it, and that to the Law, that it might be of more certainty and clear establishment, and more

¹⁵⁵ Durston, *Cromwell's major-generals*, 17.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 148.

conformable to the laws of the nation, that the title should be that of *King*, rather than that other of *Protector*.¹⁵⁷

Whitelocke and the MPs who were in favor of kingship believed the re-establishment of monarchy was the vaccine for the political turmoil that had infected the British Isles.

Michael Hawke's pamphlet *Killing is Murder* is a typical example of a pro-Cromwellian writing that espoused monarchical principles. Hawke wrote in response to Edward Sexby's pamphlet *Killing no Murder*, in which the latter author justified assassinating Cromwell. In *Killing is Murder*, Hawke defended Cromwell's position of power, claiming that he ruled England by appointment of God, by right of war, and by consent of the people.¹⁵⁸ Attacking Cromwell's critics, Hawke proclaimed: ". . . yet cannot this imposter [Sexby] find any place or text in the scripture, where any power or commission is given to the people to govern themselves, or choose themselves a governor, or to alter the manners of government at their pleasure . . ." ¹⁵⁹ Hawke argued that in the Bible, God, and not the people, determined the form of government for the Israelites; therefore, the people of England should accept Cromwell as ruler since he, like the kings of Israel, was appointed by God and legitimated by providence. Another reason to uphold the Protectorate was its similarity to earlier English governments. Hawke asserted that the Protectorate brought England "as near as may be to our ancient way of government."¹⁶⁰ The reference to "ancient" government is crucial. During the second Protectoral Parliament, Cromwell established a second house of parliament. The members of this house were selected by Cromwell and functioned much like the old

¹⁵⁷ Abbott, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, IV, 459.

¹⁵⁸ Michael Hawke, *Killing is Murder, and no Murder* (London, 1657), found on Early English Books Online, 10.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 10.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

House of Lords. With the creation of the second house, the Protectorate looked very much like the ancient constitution of king, lords, and commons. By comparing the Protectorate to the ancient constitution, Hawke was implicitly casting Cromwell as king. Finally, Hawke stated that in a monarchy, all social groups were content. He wrote: “. . . by it [monarchy] the nobles and the rich are defended from the injury of the multitude, and the people are protected from the oppressions of the nobles and the rich: So there is no greater liberty than in monarchy . . .”¹⁶¹ Hawke’s work included all the major themes of writings in favor of a Cromwellian monarchy: Biblical support for kingly government; a tradition of kings ruling England; and the social stability that monarchy would bring.

The anonymous author of *A Copy of a Letter written to an officer of the Army by a True Commonwealthsman and no Courtier* addressed many of the same issues. The primary purpose of this pamphlet was to prove that a hereditary monarchy was preferable to an elected monarchy. Like Hawke, the author appealed to the tradition of hereditary monarchy in England. He asked if “any of them [Cromwell’s critics] ever hear or read that the Sovereignty of this place [England] was ever elective?”¹⁶² For the author, the notion of changing the entire system of succession simply because certain factions in England did not approve of Cromwell was ridiculous. He continued by writing: “Do they indeed think that this man that now hath it, is, for his part, so much the worst and most undeserving of any that ever ruled, that, for his exemplary infamy and disgrace, a particular law must be brought in to the prejudice of his prosperity.”¹⁶³ The author also

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 19.

¹⁶² Anonymous, *A Copy of a Letter written to an officer of the Army by a True Commonwealthsman and no Courtier* (London, 1656), found on Early English Books Online, 8.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

contrasted the stability of hereditary monarchy with the factious nature of elective monarchy. He stated: “As thus, Sir, elective and limited monarchies do nourish parties and factions, for want of a common centre of union amongst themselves, so the generality of the subjects and people do in them live in the highest degree of servitude.”¹⁶⁴ This pamphlet was published in 1656, while much debate over Cromwell’s successor was occurring. The fact that the author frames the debate as being between hereditary and elective monarchy, suggests that he considered the Protectorate a monarchy; all that was needed was a secure line of succession.

A somewhat more surprising pamphlet, considering its author, is *The True Cavalier Examined by his Principles* by John Hall. Hall’s defence of monarchy is unexpected because of his connections to prominent republicans. He had a life long admiration for Milton and his works, was a friend of Nedham and it was rumored that he co-edited *Mercurius Politicus* with Nedham.¹⁶⁵ Like most republicans, however, Hall was flexible with forms of government and was willing to justify monarchical government. Hall wrote *The True Cavalier Examined by his Principles* in the hope of convincing royalists that Cromwell’s government embodied all of their principles and they should support it. In the preface of *The True Cavalier Examined by his Principles*, Hall set out his general position. He proclaimed:

But as I had from scripture and reason found monarchy to be the best and only form of government, so to let them see that it was not for any one monarch’s sake that I did it; but out of a desire to maintain perpetual peace and unity among us, I asserted this obedience to be continually due to that person which God in his providence should set over us. And truly I have looked upon submission and

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 28.

¹⁶⁵ Joad Raymond, “Hall, John (*bap.* 1627, *d.* 1656),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/11969>, accessed on 25 July 2007].

conformity to the present power, not only as necessary in respect to duty and care of public peace and benefit, but for advance of private wishes too . . .¹⁶⁶

Like the author of *A Copy of a Letter written to an officer of the Army*, Hall considered the Protectorate a monarchy. He referred to Cromwell's "royal resolution," and, when discussing royalists, he wrote: ". . . there is no party that by their principles stand more inclined and affected to the present government, that is to monarchy, than they."¹⁶⁷ In Hall's analysis, the cause of the royalists and the Protectorate were identical. In defending the Protectorate, Hall focused on its monarchical aspects rather than its republican elements—conversely Marchamont Nedham, as will be shown in chapter six, endorsed the Protectorate because it contained all the ingredients of a republic. Hall did not need to suggest that Cromwell should accept the crown; Cromwell, in Hall's opinion, already was king. Considering Hall's objective of convincing royalists to support the Protectorate, it is not surprising that he described the regime as a monarchy; nonetheless, his labeling the Protectorate a monarchy reflects a common perception.

Neither Hawke, nor the author of *A Copy of a Letter written to an officer of the Army*, nor Hall, ever explicitly told Cromwell to accept the crown. They simply stated that monarchical government was preferable for England, and employed arguments that were consistent with Cromwell's own political thinking. None of their writings were directed to Cromwell himself, but they were all part of the broad print culture of the era, and their comments would not have gone unnoticed by Cromwell. Each of these writings is an example of the sentiment that was pro-monarchy, but anti-Stuart. All three authors understood the benefits of kingly government, but none of them wished to see the Stuarts

¹⁶⁶ John Hall, *The true cavalier examined by his principles; and found not guilty of schism or sedition* (London, 1656), found on Early English Books online, preface.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, A2, A3.

return to the throne. Some of their arguments, such as the stability provided by monarchy, could have appeared in a pro-Stuart pamphlet while others, such as Hawke's discussion of Cromwell ruling by the right of war, were only applicable to Cromwell. The pro-Stuart authors and the Cromwellians shared many of the same values, but differed over the question of whether or not the Protectorate embodied the principles of monarchy. Each group of writers held allegiance to a different man and dynasty; consequently, although they had much in common, supporters of the Stuarts would always consider Cromwell and his followers as usurpers. These monarchical pamphlets, combined with Cromwell's initial desire to reconcile royalists to his government, and the nation's general longing for a return to royal government, all provided Cromwell with strong reasons for accepting the crown.

Cromwell's words and behavior in the years leading up to his dissolution of the Rump, reveal him to be a typical county gentleman who supported the parliamentary cause. His radicalism, to the extent that he was radical, was largely over questions of religion. He was cautious about amending the ancient constitution, and hoped to avoid executing the king and delayed taking a solid position on this issue for as long as possible—his eventual decision to support the regicide separated him from the vast majority of men from his social class and was undertaken reluctantly. And finally, he believed that the English government rested on the foundation of consent. In addition to his own monarchical inclination, the nation as a whole possessed a general sentiment in favor of kingly rule. Pro-monarchical pamphlets presented a case in favor of monarchy that drew on many of the principles in which Cromwell believed: tradition, stability and scripture. These elements of Cromwell's political ideology and attitude of the nation as a

whole conflict with certain actions of his as Lord Protector, namely the rejection of the crown, and make it difficult for a historian to determine exactly what Cromwell's political convictions were. Why would a man who spoke so strongly on behalf of monarchy in 1652 turn down an opportunity to reestablish such an institution? Why would a man who considered making himself king in 1652 refuse the title when it was offered to him in 1657? Why would a man so concerned with "healing and settling" a nation not assume a title that the majority of the country would have welcomed?

Between his conversation with Whitelocke in 1652 and his rejection of the crown in 1657, Cromwell became convinced that accepting the crown would not be in the nation's best interest. The barrage of letters and petitions directed at him after he dissolved the Rump played a significant part in leading him to that conclusion. These writings, particularly those from religious sects, exercised a profound influence over Cromwell and affected his decision regarding the crown.

Chapter 4: Sectarian Pamphlets and their Influence on Cromwell

Cromwell was a deeply religious man who believed that he was fighting for a divine cause. He once told the first Protectoral Parliament “for religion was not the thing at first contested for, but God brought it to that issue at last, and gave it to use by way of redundancy, and at last it proved that which was most dear to us.”¹⁶⁸ Cromwell was a religious man, but what were his precise religious convictions? Answering such a question is difficult due to the fact that he left no precise statement of his religious beliefs.¹⁶⁹ The main evidence historians have is his public remarks regarding religion. At some point in his life, Cromwell underwent a deep spiritual conversion. Based on his speech in the parliament in 1629, John Morrill believes the conversion occurred in 1630 or later.¹⁷⁰ This religious development represented a “shift from formalism and external religion to an inner certainty of a specific call from God that gave an empty life meaning and hope.”¹⁷¹ The outbreak of the Civil War provided Cromwell with the opportunity to answer this call. Davis views Cromwell from 1642-1653 as a man of action, prepared to follow God as He led England out of the wilderness.¹⁷² Cromwell’s repeated military successes confirmed to him that he was doing the work of the Lord.¹⁷³

This belief that God was directing him to victory highlights a key component in Cromwell’s religion: providence. For seventeenth century Puritans like Cromwell, providences were not random or arbitrary acts of God’s will; they formed a pattern that

¹⁶⁸ Abbott, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, III, 587.

¹⁶⁹ J. C. Davis, “Cromwell’s Religion,” in *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution*, ed. John Morrill (London: Longman, 1990), 183.

¹⁷⁰ John Morrill, “The Making of Oliver Cromwell,” in *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution*, ed. John Morrill (London: Longman, 1990), 35.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Davis, “Cromwell’s Religion,” 188.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

any true believer could see.¹⁷⁴ Failing to recognize providences would guarantee divine punishment.¹⁷⁵ As a result of his convictions, Cromwell always had to be alert to providential signs; a slight change in weather at a key moment in battle could be significant.¹⁷⁶ Since Cromwell was so committed to the concept of providence, it often played a crucial role in his decisions.

Another aspect of Cromwell's religion that Davis discusses is his antiformalism. For Cromwell, religious forms were man's creation and served only to divide the godly.¹⁷⁷ This antiformalism had contributed to Cromwell's reputation as the defender of the sects. Richard Baxter—a Puritan minister who valued order, tradition and authority, and feared the influence of radical sects¹⁷⁸—regarded Cromwell as the patron of the sects, as he granted them military commands.¹⁷⁹ Cromwell himself did not view the situation in this light as his relationship with the sects was often strained. As Worden and Davis have pointed out, Cromwell did not want toleration for the sects, but unity of the godly. Even during the early phases of the Civil War, Davis is cautious in interpreting Cromwell as the defender of the sects; instead, he presents him as “a man enamored of godliness but indifferent to its forms, provided they fell within the limits of mainstream, evangelical, Trinitarian Protestantism.”¹⁸⁰ After he became Lord Protector, Cromwell hoped to achieve religious unity among the sects, but he faced a major obstacle: the godly refused to recognize the rights of the other saints.¹⁸¹ In a conversation he had with Fifth

¹⁷⁴ Worden, “Providence and Politics in Cromwellian England,” 63.

¹⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 67.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁷⁷ Davis, “Cromwell's Religion,” 201.

¹⁷⁸ N. H. Keeble, “Baxter, Richard (1615-1691),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/1734>, accessed on 25 July 2007].

¹⁷⁹ Davis, “Cromwell's Religion,” 185.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 189.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 193.

Monarchist John Rogers, Cromwell lamented the fact the many of the sects were violent towards each other. He remarked:

Why, I tell you there be Anabaptists (pointing to Mr. Kiffin) and they would cut the throats of them that are not under their forms; so would the Presbyterians cut the throats of them that are not of their forms, and so would you Fifth-Monarchy-Men. It is fit to keep all of these forms out of power.¹⁸²

Cromwell's relationship with the sects had two sides to it. He needed them in order to achieve harmony among all Protestants, but at the same time, he was frustrated by their inability to tolerate any group besides themselves.

Cromwell's objective of uniting the godly was complicated by the growing number of sects in the 1640s and 1650s. B. Reay asserts that the most significant aspect of religious history of the mid-seventeenth century was the emergence of hundreds of independent congregations.¹⁸³ The question is, to what extent were these new congregations a product of the revolutionary environment, or were they merely a continuation of pre-existing beliefs? Christopher Hill detects unorthodox attitudes among the lower classes prior to 1640. The breakdown of the old church, its courts, and its censorship allowed men to print what they would have otherwise kept secret.¹⁸⁴

Analyzing the Baptists, J. F. McGregor believes that religious radicalism grew out of a separatist tradition, but the political alliances of the Civil War permitted it to prosper.

Specifically, the dispute between Presbyterians and Independents over the governance of the church allowed the Baptists to flourish because the Independents were pushed into an

¹⁸² John Rogers, *Some account of the life and opinions of a fifth-monarchy-man; chiefly extracted from the writings of John Rogers, preacher* (London: Longmans, Green, Reader & Dyer, 1867), 215.

¹⁸³ B. Reay, "Radicalism and Religion in the English Revolution," in *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, eds. J. F. McGregor and B. Reay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 10.

¹⁸⁴ Christopher Hill, "Irreligion in the 'Puritan' Revolution," in *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, eds. J. F. McGregor and B. Reay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 198.

alliance with the Baptists and defended their right to worship.¹⁸⁵ Although the sects held a diverse set of religious beliefs, Reay perceives several commonalities among them: an emphasis on immediate contact with the divine; a belief in experienced truth over given truth; a rejection of the distinction between priest and layman; a hostility to tithes; for some groups and individuals, a refusal to recognize orthodox teachings on the Trinity; speculation about the existence of heaven and hell; less emphasis placed on predestination; and a call for liberty of conscience.¹⁸⁶ Only a minority of the people in England belonged to these new sects, but they were determined to make a major impact on the country.

The sects were conscious of Cromwell's political power and realized that his support was required if they wished to effect any change. They were also aware of the power of print. Focusing on the Quakers, Kate Peters notes the importance of printed pamphlets in the movement. "The use of printed tracts was a key element in generating a national [Quaker] movement."¹⁸⁷ Since the majority of printing was done in London, the Quakers established a reliable network of safe contacts in order to send manuscripts to London and distribute tracts at local meetings.¹⁸⁸ Such a system was required if the Quakers hoped to print pamphlets that contained negative comments regarding the Protectorate. The medium of print allowed Quaker ministers to present a "coherent and homogeneous message" to the entire country.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ J. F. McGregor, "The Baptists: fount of All Heresy," in *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, eds. J. F. McGregor and B. Reay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 26-29.

¹⁸⁶ Reay, "Radicalism and Religion in the English Revolution," 15.

¹⁸⁷ Kate Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 87.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 60.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 87.

In addition to spreading their message, the Quakers and other sects employed printed tracts to pressure Cromwell. During his rule as Lord Protector, letters and petitions from various religious groups provided Cromwell with counsel on how to govern. The religious organizations that petitioned Cromwell ranged from the militant Fifth Monarchists to moderate Independents. The sects filled these letters with religious arguments and biblical references, and wrote in a language that would appeal to a man like Cromwell, that is, a devoutly religious man who was deeply concerned with his own salvation. As a result, these writings exercised a profound influence over Cromwell's major decisions, not only on religious matters, but political ones as well.

The kingship crisis generated much fear among the sects, and motivated them to write to Cromwell. Employing language of judgment and providence, religious groups sent letters and petitions to Cromwell advising him not to take the crown. These writings contributed to convincing Cromwell that his soul was at stake over the issue of kingship, a thought which rendered him weary of the title King Oliver I. So powerful was the sectarian milieu that it caused Cromwell to question whether or not a king would be beneficial to the British Isles. Other factors, of course, did play a role. Coward's point about Cromwell attempting to remain above the factions in his government is relevant. Accepting the crown would have angered certain elements in the country, particularly in the army. Even though he had the power to dismiss officers, Cromwell preferred, if possible, to satisfy every faction in part. Cromwell's own understanding of providence, as Worden, Hirst and Sommerville point out, also contributed to his interpretation of the regicide as the destruction of the office of king. Cromwell's own providentialism primed him to be susceptible to sectarian influences. Many of the sects' arguments against

kingship would only be effective on a man who believed in the power of God's providences.

Despite the diversity of religious beliefs held by the sects, four themes repeat themselves throughout the letters that cautioned against kingly government. Each of these themes also appears in Cromwell's speeches, suggesting that he both read and was influenced by the sectarian letters. The four themes are: Cromwell, by accepting the crown, would rebuild an institution that God had destroyed; a warning that God would one day judge Cromwell for his actions; a charge that Cromwell was offending the Godly; and a warning that God was presently withdrawing from Cromwell's designs. Each of these messages struck a cord with Cromwell and played a significant role in convincing him to reject the crown.

The sects had their own reasons for fearing a return to monarchical government. Many of them believed that the destruction of the monarchy would usher in a New Jerusalem. Baptists hoped that with the monarchy and established church removed, they could obtain legal toleration and an end to tithes.¹⁹⁰ According to the Quakers, the Civil War was fought against "the tyrannical Kings and bloody Bishops."¹⁹¹ They anticipated that through the execution of the king, breakdown of episcopacy, and abolition of the House of Lords, an equal society could be established.¹⁹² A return to monarchy would threaten all these goals, as the sects identified kingship with a hierarchical society, national church, and an oppressive religious policy. Fifth Monarchists had additional motives for wishing the royal office to remain buried. They had a specific view of

¹⁹⁰ McGregor, "The Baptists: Fount of all Heresy," 53.

¹⁹¹ B. Reay, "Quakerism and Society," in *Radical Religion in the English Revolution*, eds. J. F. McGregor and B. Reay (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 151.

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

history based on prophecies in the Book of Daniel. In the visions of Daniel, there were four beasts, representing world empires—Babylon, the Medes and Persians, Greece, and Rome. Once the last beast had been destroyed, the saints would reign forever, that is, the Fifth Monarchy.¹⁹³ The execution of Charles led many Fifth Monarchists to believe that the way had been paved for the rule of the saints. For example, Mary Cary, a Fifth Monarchy prophetess, identified Charles as the little horn on the fourth beast.¹⁹⁴ All of the ancient constitution and existing society, according to the Fifth Monarchists, was part of the antichristian fourth Monarchy.¹⁹⁵ Now that the fourth Monarchy had been brushed aside, there was no returning to the old habits of governing. If Cromwell were to assume the title king, he would, in the minds of the Fifth Monarchists, be usurping a title that rightfully belonged to King Jesus.

Religious sects began to write letters to Cromwell and publish tracts regarding his government shortly after his inauguration as Protector and continued to do so throughout his reign. Printed tracts permitted the sects to expand their influence without the aid of the army or any other physical force. Through the medium of print, “Quaker leaders engaged in a systematic and practical campaign to expose the inadequacies of the religious legislation of Interregnum governments, and to argue for the establishment of a truly godly magistracy.”¹⁹⁶ The sects could use pamphlets to present their case to Cromwell or to galvanize their supporters across the nation. Perhaps the most powerful issue raised in the letters addressed to Cromwell was the assertion that God had destroyed monarchical government. If God had removed the office of king, and Cromwell was preparing to

¹⁹³ B. S. Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men: A Study in Seventeenth-century English Millenarianism* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), 23.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 131.

¹⁹⁶ Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers*, 196.

assume the crown, then he was acting in defiance of God's will. Like most Puritans, Cromwell believed God's providences directed him and his fellow countrymen to a specific end; if he were to act contrary to that ends, he risked destroying God's destiny for England.

One key sectarian figure who wrote to Cromwell was the Fifth Monarchist John Rogers, whom Cromwell would imprison for seditious writings. Fifth Monarchists like Rogers were dissatisfied with the Protectorate as it grew out of the dissolution of the Barebones Parliament. The Fifth Monarchists were a marginal group, but the Barebones Parliament enabled them to excise a level of influence disproportionate to their numbers in the nation. In May of 1654, Cromwell ordered soldiers to search Rogers' house for books that might be dangerous to the government.¹⁹⁷ Rogers was imprisoned on the Isle of Wight for almost a year before eventually being released. The fact that Cromwell searched his house and imprisoned him demonstrates that he was aware of Rogers' writings and took them seriously.

In his pamphlet *Mene, Tekel, Prez*, Rogers criticized the newly established Protectorate, claiming that Cromwell was not following his own promises and pointing to the similarities between the Protectorate and Stuart monarchy. Rogers wrote:

May you be pleased to see but a little in the midst of our agony and trouble, how like this present government looks to that which the Lord (by the faith and prayers of his despised people I. Heb. 33) hath so eminently engaged against, laid in the dust, and stamped upon with disdain (fulfilling his word therein) and whilst you were with the Lord (therein) he was with you . . .¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ *Calendar of state papers, Domestic series, 1649-1660*, (London: Longman, 1875-1886), 163.

¹⁹⁸ John Rogers, *Mene, Tekel, Prez, or A little Appearance of the Handwriting (In a Glance of Light) Against the Powers and Apostates of the Times* (London, 1654), found on Early English Books Online. The spelling of all lines quoted from Early English Books Online has been modernized.

Rogers' fellow Fifth Monarchist Anna Trapnel shared Rogers' fate of imprisonment. Officials interrogated Trapnel in January, 1654, during which she experienced visions and at times broke into song. Trapnel's comments were published in a pamphlet entitled *The Cry of a Stone*. Trapnel spoke of Cromwell's dissolution of the Rump in admirable terms, but prophesized the downfall of the Protectorate as Cromwell had become an enemy of God. At one point she said:

If he were not (speaking of Lord Cromwell) backslidden, he would be ashamed of his great pomp and revenue, while the poor are ready to starve, and art thou providing great palaces? Oh this was not Gideon [she often referred to Cromwell as Gideon] of old, oh why dost thou come to rear of the pillars, the stones which are laid aside?¹⁹⁹

Her image of Cromwell raising pillars and stones that have been "laid aside" will reoccur in Cromwell's speeches. For Trapnel, as for other Fifth Monarchists, there could be only one king, Christ. Cromwell's regal power and ceremony became sacrilegious as he was taking a title that belonged to Christ and Christ alone. During her interrogation, she sang:

Oh do not thou aspire, for to
So high a title have;
As King, or Protector: But oh
Unto Christ that do leave.²⁰⁰

She sang of Christ being a better general, king and protector than Cromwell. In this account, Cromwell becomes a usurper.

The pamphlet *A Word for God. Or a Testimony on Truths behalf; from several Churches, and divers hundreds of Christians in Wales (and some few adjacent) against wickedness in High Places*, directed to Cromwell, contains a message similar to Rogers' and Trapnel's. This pamphlet has numerous signatures, including Vavasor Powell who was a prominent Fifth Monarchist and, like Rogers and Trapnel, was imprisoned. It may

¹⁹⁹ Anna Trapnel, *The Cry of a Stone* (London, 1654), found on Early English Books Online.

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

be impossible to determine the religious affiliation of every person who signed this pamphlet, but the presence of Powell's name suggests Fifth Monarchy sympathies among the signatories. Like Rogers' work, the primary purpose of this pamphlet was to undermine the legitimacy of the Protectorate by invoking religious arguments. The end of the pamphlet states: "And it is most evident to us, that they [Cromwell and the members of his government] there by build again, what before they did destroy; and in so doing they render themselves and the cause, religion, name and people of God abominable to heathens, papists and profane enemies."²⁰¹ Cromwell, according to the writer of this pamphlet, was attempting to establish a government that God had destroyed and in doing so, he was acting contrary to God's wishes.

Fifth Monarchists such as Rogers and Trapnel were some of the most vocal critics of the Protectorate in its early years; nonetheless, they were not the only religious group to assert that Cromwell was building what God had crushed. The Quakers John Camm and Francis Howgill employed similar wording in their public letter to Cromwell. In a like fashion to the Fifth Monarchists, Camm and Howgill portrayed Cromwell as acting against God's will. They wrote: "What saith the Lord, have I thrown down all the oppressors, and broken their laws, and art thou now going to establish them again? Art going to build again, that which I have destroyed."²⁰² The Quaker founder George Fox expressed an identical view in his pamphlet *A Warning from the Lord*. This pamphlet, as the title suggests, was a warning to Cromwell that his actions were displeasing to God,

²⁰¹ *A Word for God. Or a Testimony on Truths behalf; from several Churches, and divers hundreds of Christians in Wales (and some few adjacent) against wickedness in High Places* (London, 1655), found on Early English Books Online.

²⁰² John Camm and Francis Howgill, *This Was the word of the Lord which Iohn Camm and Francis Howgill was moved to declared and write to Oliver Cromwell* (London, 1654), found on Early English Books Online.

particularly his style of government. Fox told Cromwell: “. . . how you set up that which is abomination to God, which is out of the light, this is all for condemnation, for the sword and for the famine.”²⁰³ Quakers and Fifth Monarchists were radical religious sects and attacked many of the fundamental pillars of early modern English society—such as the king and episcopacy—but the two groups differed in several ways.

Fifth Monarchism emerged when the Rump Parliament and then Cromwell failed to promote godliness; Fifth Monarchy was a reaction to fading hopes of the millennium.²⁰⁴ The members of the Rump had been religiously conservative and, given the fragility of the new English republic, had no time for godly reformation. Once Cromwell dissolved the Rump, future Fifth Monarchists looked to him as the bringer of further reformation. Yet, when Cromwell accepted the voluntary dissolution of the Barebones Parliament, he too became an enemy of the Fifth Monarchists. Both Fifth Monarchists and Quakers were millenarian groups, but the Fifth Monarchists placed greater emphasis on this concept. Bernard Capp considers the Fifth Monarchists unique among the sects because for them, the belief in the imminent Kingdom of Christ was the very reason for the group’s existence, rather than a desire to end social injustice and create an equal society.²⁰⁵

Quakerism grew as a protest movement not only to religious issues but to political and social ones as well. As a movement, it began in 1652 when George Fox and other preachers moved throughout rural areas of Northern England gathering groups of separatists.²⁰⁶ Many early Quakers engaged in disputes with their landlords over rents

²⁰³ George Fox, *A Warning from the Lord* (London, 1654), found on Early English Books Online, 3.

²⁰⁴ Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*, 58.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

²⁰⁶ Reay, “Quakerism in Society,” 141.

while others were refusing to pay tithes. Another commonality among the first “converts” was a rejection of much of the ideology and organization of orthodox Puritanism.²⁰⁷ A key aspect of Quakerism was a belief in the inner light that dwelled inside each person. The Quakers were, in the words of Reay, “spiritual millenarians.”²⁰⁸ They thought that Christ had already come in them and would come in others; the Quaker millennium was inward. Unlike Fifth Monarchists who supported the doctrine of predestination, Quakers asserted that salvation was possible for anyone, as all people possessed the inner light of God.²⁰⁹ Despite the differences between the belief system of the Fifth Monarchists and Quakers, the two groups deployed similar language in attacking Cromwell’s government.

The pamphlet *The Protector (so called) in part unveiled* further indicates the diversity of radical religious opinion arrayed against Cromwell’s assumption of the crown. The pamphlet was written anonymously, hence, the author’s religious convictions cannot be known for certain; however, a few clues are present in the pamphlet. The author stated that although he frequently advocated on behalf of John Biddle, he was not of the same mind as Biddle and, therefore, not an anti-Trinitarian. Biddle published numerous anti-Trinitarian tracts throughout the 1640s and early 1650s and repeatedly faced judicial hearings and imprisonment. On October 5, 1655, Cromwell banished him to St. Mary’s Castle on the Isles of Scilly.²¹⁰ In the postscript of *The Protector (so called)*, the author noted that many readers would think him—due to his discussion of the Fifth Monarchy principles and those who advocated them—a staunch Fifth Monarchist,

²⁰⁷ Ibid., 141.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., 146.

²⁰⁹ Capp, *The Fifth Monarchy Men*, 179; Reay, “Quakerism in Society,” 145.

²¹⁰ Stephen D. Snobelen, “Bidle, John (1651/1616-1662),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/2361>, accessed on 25 July 2007].

intolerant of other opinions. The author asserted that this perceived intolerance was not the case. He insisted that he did “freely own all that are godly, under what form soever, . . . and am not for imposing upon, or persecution, and imprisoning of any, as to the matter of faith, and things pertaining to conscience, . . .”²¹¹ Throughout the pamphlet he advocated the Fifth Monarchists’ position, but in the postscript, he shied away from a clear religious stance. Perhaps he was a Fifth Monarchist but did not declare himself so in order to avoid the stigma of that label. Or perhaps he was a separatist Independent who believed in liberty of conscience and spoke on behalf of the Fifth Monarchists because they faced much persecution. Historians may never be able to definitively confirm the religious denomination to which the author belonged; what is certain is that he promoted a fairly broad concept of liberty of conscience.

This pamphlet focused its attack on the Instrument claiming that it was written under shadowy circumstances and granted Cromwell too much power. Cromwell and his supporters were portrayed as hypocrites because they were recreating a government they had previously destroyed. In the opening section of *The Protector (so called)* the author declared:

. . . they who profess to be Christians, and to have been so much called by the Lord to his work, and have been so instrumental in his hand, in destroying the antichristian brood: should notwithstanding be setting themselves in many of the same places and things, and thereby give nourishment to that which they had destroyed . . .²¹²

Later, the author wrote: “. . . the monarchical foundation on which he [Cromwell] stands, is that which the Lord by his spirit in his people, and by their hands without them, hath

²¹¹ Anonymous, *The Protector (so called) in part unveiled* (London, 1655), found on Early English Books Online, 87.

²¹² *Ibid.*, To the Reader.

destroyed.”²¹³ This example is not quite as powerful as the Fifth Monarchist and Quaker writings, as in this case Cromwell and his allies were the ones who destroyed royal government, rather than God; however, the recreation of the old government still appears antichristian and hypocritical. Monarchical government belonged to Cromwell’s private interests, not the broader interest of the godly who recognized the evil of the royal office. If Cromwell desired to be saintly, he had to forgo his kingly ambitions.

As speculation concerning the crown grew, the publicized appeals to Cromwell continued to flood in from around in the country. The churches of Gloucestershire, most likely Independents, voiced:

We humbly propose to your Highness, whether all the arguments that by the first Parliament and army were so pressingly urged against Monarchy, as such, are not now of equal validity as then they were; as utterly inconsistent with the cause of God, and the good and safety of the Commonwealth.²¹⁴

The Anabaptist ministers in London were even more forceful in their writing. They warned Cromwell that the MPs were “persuading you to re-edify that old structure of government, which God by you and them, had singly born testimony against, and destroyed . . .”²¹⁵ This last letter being from Anabaptist ministers (Anabaptists were a sect that rejected the national uniform church and Puritan Calvinist predestination—for them all people could achieve salvation through faith²¹⁶) further illustrates the range of religious denominations that were against kingship. Radical Fifth Monarchists were not the only ones who opposed the idea of King Oliver. Since such a diverse group of

²¹³ Ibid., 18.

²¹⁴ *Remonstrance from the Churches in Gloucestershire, &c. to the Lord Protector, 1656*, found in *Original letters and papers of state, addressed to Oliver Cromwell; concerning the affairs of Great Britain. From the year MDCXLIX to MDCLVIII. Found among the political collections of Mr. John Milton*, 140. The spelling of all lines quoted from *Original letters and papers of state, addressed to Oliver Cromwell* has been modernized.

²¹⁵ *Address of the Anabaptists Ministers in London, the Lord Protector, April 3, 1657*, found in *Original letters and papers of state, addressed to Oliver Cromwell*, 142.

²¹⁶ McGregor, “The Baptists: Fount of All Heresy,” 24-28.

religious sects were united in their aversion to the crown, the case against kingship was strengthened.

The sects' assertion that God had destroyed the office of king was powerful, and affected Cromwell deeply. In his speeches to parliament explaining his reasons for rejecting the crown, Cromwell emphasized this point. Cromwell first discussed the Humble Petition and Advice on March 31, 1657, but he delayed providing a definitive answer to the offer of the crown until April 13. On this occasion, he told parliament:

Truly the providence of God hath laid this title aside providentially. . . . And God has seemed providentially not only to strike at the family but at the name. As I said before, *de facto* it is blotted out, it is a thing cast out by Act of Parliament, it's a thing has been kept out till this day.²¹⁷

These comments about God providentially striking down the office of king dramatically contradict Cromwell's earlier comments. At Lenthall's house in 1651, he had said the English government ought to have some element of monarchy in it in order to preserve the nation's safety and the people's rights, and in 1652, in a conversation with Whitelocke, he suggested taking the crown himself. On April 13, 1657, however, he believed that God had destroyed kingship. How could Cromwell perform such an about-face? The sectarian writings of the mid 1650s likely played a role in convincing Cromwell that God did "not only strike at the family but at the name [of king]."

A few sentences later in his speech, Cromwell employed language that directly linked him to the sectarian writings. He said, "I would not seek to set up that which providence hath destroyed and laid in the dust, I would not build Jericho again."²¹⁸ This statement of Cromwell's parallels the letters he received in two ways. First, the phrase "laid in the dust" appears in John Rogers' *Mene, Tekel, Prez*. Historians will probably

²¹⁷ Abbott, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, IV, 437.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

never know whether or not Cromwell actually read *Mene, Tekel, Prez*; however, Cromwell's repetition of the language and arguments of *Mene, Tekel, Prez* suggests some awareness. *Mene, Tekel, Prez* was typical of sectarian writings in the mid-1650s. It reminded Cromwell of his past declarations, it lamented over the suffering of the godly, and it set kingly government in opposition to God's will. These writings were a prominent part of the public sphere of the 1650s. Even if Cromwell did not read every letter and pamphlet directed to him, he still must have known the general attitude of the sects due to the intelligence gathering of his Secretary of State, John Thurloe. He was willing to meet with sectarian figures and debate issues with them. Between the meetings and pamphlet literature, Cromwell could not have remained ignorant of sectarian opinion.

At times, Cromwell's encounters with sectarian opinion was more direct. One of Cromwell's more famous meetings with a religious figure was his conversation with John Rogers. After Cromwell had Rogers imprisoned, a group of Rogers' friends pleaded with Cromwell in 1655 to release him. In the petition they sent to Cromwell, Rogers' supporters addressed Cromwell in religious terms. They wrote:

. . . so long as you go on thus, we dare not but join our suffering brethren (viz. in what prisons soever) for their consciences, and this cause of Christ, and declare and testify against you (and the rest that adhere unto you, whether in power or out) so long as you are the enemies of Christ and his cause at this day, . . .²¹⁹

These comments must have affected Cromwell, as he named this petition as a reason for meeting with Rogers. When he encountered Rogers, Cromwell told him: "I promised to send for you, for some of your friends came and spake sharply to me, as if I had apostated from the cause of Christ, and persecuting godly ministers, naming Mr. Rogers and Mr.

²¹⁹ Hur Horton, *The Faithful Narrative of the late Testimony and Demand made to Oliver Cromwell, and his Powers, on the behalf of the Lord's Prisoners, in the Name of the Lord Jehovah (Jesus Christ) King of Saints and Nations* (London, 1655), found on Early English Books Online, 2.

Feake, and spake other things that were sharp enough.”²²⁰ Cromwell was clearly offended by being called an enemy of Christ and sought to defuse this charge by conversing with Rogers.

Cromwell’s discussion with Rogers reveals that there was a time when he respected Rogers. Their former friendship provides additional reason to believe that Cromwell paid attention to Rogers’ work and beliefs. During the conversation, Cromwell said to Rogers, “Well, you know that the time was there was no great difference betwixt you and me. I had you in my eye, and did think of you for employment (and preferment); you know it well enough.”²²¹ Cromwell even admitted to sharing some opinions with Rogers. He told him, “I believe you speak many things according to the Gospel, but you suffer for evil doing.”²²² The respect that Cromwell once held for Rogers coupled with the identical phrasing suggests that Cromwell was being guided toward an ideological and religious framework similar to that of Rogers.

The second way Cromwell’s words paralleled the sectarian writers relates to the notion of Jericho. In the Bible, Jericho was a city that the Israelites, under the command of Joshua, captured. The Israelites destroyed the city and Joshua put a curse on anyone who would dare to rebuild the city. With this biblical background in mind, one can easily relate Cromwell’s reference to Jericho to the wording of the sectarians. Although none of the sectarian writers discussed above made specific mention of Jericho, they all described Cromwell building what God had destroyed. Trapnel’s description of Cromwell setting up pillars and stones which had been laid aside creates an image of Cromwell rebuilding a fallen city. By referencing Jericho, Cromwell entered the public discourse. He knew

²²⁰ Rogers, *Some account of the life and opinions of a fifth-monarchy-man*, 191.

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 203.

²²² *Ibid.*, 196.

how the sects interpreted his government and the offer of the crown, and he had to develop a method to counter such accusations. By speaking of Jericho, Cromwell demonstrated that not only was he aware of the perception of kingship in the public sphere, but also that he took the criticism seriously. Such accusations required Cromwell to engage sectarian writers within the public sphere in an attempt to defend his regime. The audience for Cromwell's speeches was not merely the MPs; the speeches were published in *Mercurius Politicus* and available to the entire nation. Acting in defiance of God's will was a powerful charge to place on a man who believed in God's providences. Due to his own religious convictions, Cromwell could not allow such an accusation go unanswered. Through this speech, he hoped to end the sects' fears and convince them that he would not act against the will of God by rebuilding Jericho or anything else leveled by God.

Related to the claim that Cromwell was reestablishing what God had destroyed, is the notion that God would one day judge Cromwell. If Cromwell was defying God by reconstructing Jericho, then he had little to look forward to on the last judgment. Many of the writers who related the Protectorate to the old forms of government also discussed God's future judgment of Cromwell. In *Mene, Tekel, Prez*, Rogers wrote concerning the changes in government that Cromwell had orchestrated. In the pamphlet, Rogers remarked that he and his followers felt no anger or hatred towards any people, "only against the sins and evil of this change in government, which God will (and if righteous we are sure must) judge . . ." ²²³ While Rogers only mentioned God judging the alteration in government, John Camm and Francis Howgill stressed God personally judging Cromwell. They wrote to Cromwell: "Thou must give an account to the Lord how thou

²²³ Rogers, *Mene, Tekel, Prez*, 1.

hast ruled for him, for the mighty day of the Lord is come, and is coming, wherein all faces shall gather blackness, . . .”²²⁴ Here, Cromwell is giving an account of himself before God, but there is no discussion of Cromwell being condemned or losing his soul. Rogers, Camm and Howgill sought to remind Cromwell of God’s eventual judgment; nevertheless, they did not include any mention of Cromwell suffering eternal damnation. Camm and Howgill’s fellow Quaker George Fox adopted a harsher tone. His pamphlet *A Warning from the Lord* reads: “. . . for the judgment of God is gone out against you, and you are to be cut down with the sword, and with the light you are to be condemned . . .”²²⁵ The message here is more powerful than Rogers’ Camm’s and Howgill’s, as in this case Cromwell is to be “cut down” and “condemned.”

Written in 1655, *A Word for God, A Short discovery of His Highness the Lord Protector’s intentions touching the Anabaptists in the army*, and *A Ground Voice* all refer to the punishment Cromwell would receive at the hands of God. *A Word for God* states:

Therefore we earnestly wish you [Cromwell] to pursue and weigh it, as in the sight of God, with a calm and Christian like spirit, and harden not your neck against the truth as you will answer it to the great judge, before whose impartial Tribunal you (as well as we shall be very shortly cited to give an account of all things done in the body.²²⁶

The pamphlet makes no specific mention of Cromwell being damned, but his neck is on the line. *A Short Discovery* was written anonymously; however, it addressed the rumor of Cromwell dismissing all Anabaptists from the army and listed reasons why this action would not be beneficial to Cromwell. The pamphlet was, therefore, likely written by an Anabaptist or at least someone who was sympathetic to them. Towards the end of the pamphlet, the author noted: “Whether the excessive pride of your [Cromwell’s] family,

²²⁴ Camm and Howgill, *This was the word of the Lord*.

²²⁵ Fox, *A Warning from the Lord*, 2-3.

²²⁶ Anonymous, *A Word for God*, 2.

do not call for a speedy judgment from Heaven, seeing pride never goes without a fall.”²²⁷ The author also pointed to signs that God was not pleased with Cromwell and was preparing to punish him. He asserted: “Whether the six coach-horses did not give your Highness a fair warning of some worse thing to follow, if you repent not, seeing God often forewarns before he strikes home.”²²⁸ The author cautioned Cromwell, but he still implied that there was hope for Cromwell, if he repented.

The anonymous author of *A Ground Voice* took a different approach. He emphasized Cromwell’s weakness when the Lord passes judgment. Addressing the soldiers about the day of the Lord’s visitation, he asked the question, “What will become of your Protector in this day? Where will his strength be?”²²⁹ The author was attempting to compare the power of Cromwell with the power of God, and demonstrate that the latter was clearly superior. He thought Cromwell’s supporters were deceived, “as to think the kingdom of Oliver Cromwell can stand against Christ.”²³⁰ The soldiers had to pick a side, Cromwell or Christ. If they were to have any hope of salvation, the soldiers had to abandon Cromwell and his worldly government. This method differs from the other writers who addressed the theme of God judging Cromwell; part of the reason for this difference is the author of *A Ground Voice* was addressing the soldiers rather than Cromwell directly. However, the message of Cromwell being powerless before God remains the same.

The warnings to Cromwell continued in 1656 and 1657, as his assumption of the royal title seemed likely. One such warning was issued from William Bradford.

²²⁷ Anonymous, *A Short discovery of His Highness the Lord Protector’s intentions touching the Anabaptists in the army* (London, 1655), found on Early English Books Online, 6.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Anonymous, *A Ground Voice* (London, 1655), found on Early English Books Online, 2

²³⁰ Ibid., 3.

Bradford's religion is unknown, but a few clues exist in the letter he wrote to Cromwell. Unlike Fifth Monarchists, Bradford makes no reference to his co-religionists being imprisoned. The only complaint that he raised regarding the Protectorate was the possibility of kingship. Bradford briefly referred to the Anabaptists. He wrote: "The Anabaptist says you are a perfidious person, and that because you promised them at a certain day to take away tithes, but did not perform with them."²³¹ The reason he mentioned the Anabaptists was to illustrate the religious differences that were dividing England. Bradford himself does not complain about the existence of tithes and portrays Cromwell as one vulnerable to the persuasion of advisors. Cromwell's true friends, Bradford claims, desire him to refuse the crown. At one point, Bradford referred to himself as "having gone along with you [Cromwell] from Edge-Hill to Dunbar."²³² This statement coupled with his emphasis on Cromwell's past military glories suggests that he may have served in the army. Bradford's religion cannot be definitely determined from his letter, but it is unlikely that he was a Fifth Monarchist or Anabaptist.

When discussing kingship, Bradford exclaimed: "The hazard will be more than their remedy can help; there will be more safety to yourself and the nation, for you disown the vote [for the crown]."²³³ Here, Bradford was urging Cromwell not to take the crown in a logical manner, a simple cost benefit analysis. Later in the letter, Bradford invoked the power of God. He told Cromwell to "remember that you are but mortal, and must die, and come to judgment."²³⁴ Such a statement forced Cromwell to consider the long-term results of his actions; specifically, how acquiring the crown might affect his

²³¹ *Mr. William Bradford to the Lord Protector*, March 4, 1656, found in *Original letters and papers of state, addressed to Oliver Cromwell*, 141.

²³² *Ibid.*

²³³ *Ibid.*

²³⁴ *Ibid.*

salvation. Bradford presented another warning towards the close of the letter. He stated: “I desire your present business, against oaths and engagements, may not provoke the vials of God’s wrath to break the glasses where your tears are, and I hope will be, if you provoke not further.”²³⁵ The key element of this statement is the end, “if you provoke not further.” The implication was that Cromwell had already provoked God’s wrath and if he were to again, he would face dire consequences. Bradford’s letter introduces the concept that Cromwell was already on negative terms with God; this claim put Cromwell’s salvation at even greater risk.

The theme of God judging Cromwell is epitomized in Mary Howgill’s letter to Cromwell written in 1657. Howgill stressed a change that had occurred in Cromwell. At the beginning of his military and political career, Cromwell relied on God’s strength to achieve greatness; now, he was relying on his own strength. Cromwell, who once served God, was now serving his own interests. Howgill lamented: “Oh! What shameless things are done in thy name and by thy authority.”²³⁶ Such acts would not go unnoticed or unpunished. Cromwell would one day have to face God and then he would suffer for his misdeeds. At the close of her letter, Howgill wrote:

And when thou givest account of all those actions which have been acted by thee, and in thy name, and by thy power, oh what a day will it be for thee! For as my soul lives these things will be laid to thy charge; And for us, whom the Lord hath redeemed from the vain-glory of the world, and hath graced us into himself, he will plead our cause, yea the righteous cause of himself, and he will make thee an example to all the great ones in the world; and when that day comes upon thee, thou shalt me remember, that thou wast warned of all thy evil.²³⁷

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Mary Howgill, *A Remarkable Letter by Mary Howgill to Oliver Cromwell, called Protector* (London, 1657), found on Early English Books Online, 3.

²³⁷ Ibid., 3-4.

Howgill separated Cromwell, of whom God would make an example, from the godly, whom God would redeem. Formerly, Cromwell and the godly were fighting for the same righteous cause, now Cromwell had taken up his own cause; as a result, God would judge each of them differently. Cromwell would have to answer for every unjust action he had done, every act of persecution against the godly, every attempt at personal aggrandizement. In Howgill's account, the day that the Lord comes would clearly not be a pleasant one for Cromwell.

Cromwell himself was preoccupied with God's judgment. Davis notes Cromwell's six religious objectives after he dissolved the Rump: remain a servant of providence; promote a reformation of manners; prepare for the possible millennium; establish liberty of conscience; and "promote Christianity of substance, of the heart and spirit."²³⁸ This final objective refers to Cromwell's own salvation.²³⁹ How God judged Cromwell could potentially affect the entire British Isles. Worden points out that Puritans like Cromwell believed that if an individual's actions displeased God, then God might punish the entire community.²⁴⁰ Cromwell's speeches reflect this obsession with salvation. When addressing parliament, Cromwell always stressed that he felt confident that he could justify all his actions to God. Cromwell's defense of himself represents a further engagement with the public discourse. He was aware that in the public sphere his actions were criticized; therefore he offered a reply. Cromwell's relationship with the sectarian pamphlets resembles that of the parliamentarian and royalist pamphlets of the early 1640s. Cromwell's speeches and the sectarian pamphlets responded to each other and invited the populace to compare arguments and pass judgment on the situation.

²³⁸ Davis, "Cromwell's Religion," 190-191.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 191.

²⁴⁰ Worden, "Oliver Cromwell and the Sin of Achan," 128.

On April 3, 1657, when discussing the Humble Petition and Advice but not yet offering a definitive answer on the title of king, he told parliament: “And I must say, that if I were to give an account before a greater tribunal than any that’s earthly, why I engaged all along in the late wars, I could give no account but it would be wicked, if it did not comprehend these two ends [religious and civil liberty].”²⁴¹ In saying these words, Cromwell was attempting to achieve two goals: convince his critics that he had done nothing to merit a harsh judgment from God, and convince himself that he had done nothing to merit a harsh judgment from God. On May 8, 1657, still speaking of the Humble Petition and Advice but after he had outlined his reasons for refusing the crown, Cromwell stated: “But, in things that respect particular persons, every man that is to give an account to God of his actions, he must, in some measure, be able to prove his own work, and to have an approbation in his own conscience of that, that he is to do, or to forbear.”²⁴² This statement provides another example of Cromwell’s concern for his own salvation and an answer to his critics. He stressed that a man must be able to justify his actions to his own conscience, not anyone else’s. If Cromwell could appease his own conscience that he had acted for the good of the nation, then it did not matter what sectarian writers thought. Personal salvation was not an issue Cromwell took lightly; the sectarian pamphlets on the topic clearly hit a nerve that he could not ignore. Cromwell’s comments represent in part a response to the sectarian claim that God would one day punish him, and are part of a dialogue that existed between sectarian writers and Cromwell.

²⁴¹ Abbott, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, IV, 445..

²⁴² *Ibid.*, 513.

A close textual analysis of Mary Howgill's letter and Cromwell's own words reveals further connections between sectarian writings and Cromwell. In her letter, Howgill noted: "For I say unto thee, thy way is now in darkness, and thou hast turned your back on him that is our strength and light."²⁴³ Comparatively, Cromwell said to parliament on April 13, 1657, the day he explained why he was unwilling to accept the crown:

. . . so truly that men have been led in the dark paths through the providence and dispensations of God. Why surely it is not to be objected to a man, for who can love to walk in the dark? But providence does oftentimes so dispose, and though a man may impute his own folly and blindness to providence sinfully, yet that must be at my peril. The case may be, that it is the providence of God that does lead men in darkness.²⁴⁴

The obvious similarity between the two is the biblical symbol of light and darkness. Howgill, who disapproved of the monarchical nature of Cromwell's government, contrasted Cromwell, who was wandering in darkness, with the light of God. Cromwell, speaking about the offer of the crown, portrayed his decision over the crown as dark, but he looked to the light of God to direct him. By invoking the image of light and darkness, Cromwell addressed the criticism towards his regime for becoming too monarchical and defying God's will; in a time of darkness, Cromwell turned to the providence of God which ushered him into the light, that is, away from the crown.

The third theme in the writings from religious groups relates to Cromwell's relations with the godly. For many years, the sects had regarded Cromwell as their patron. Several churches commented on Cromwell's efforts to keep the people of God safe. The baptized churches of Northumberland wrote to Cromwell:

²⁴³ Howgill, *A Remarkable Letter of Mary Howgill to Oliver Cromwell*, 2.

²⁴⁴ Abbott, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, IV, 473.

That which we further crave of your Highness is, a gracious acceptance and Christian construction of these our honest addresses, for the vindication of our integrity and affection; no longer desiring protection from you, then we shall in all humble subjection demean and approve ourselves.²⁴⁵

These churches referred to Cromwell as protecting them; this assessment implies that without Cromwell's assistance, they would have experienced persecution. In a similar fashion, the churches of Newcastle proclaimed: "From that divine principle, which God hath endowed you with, for that protection of his people, will not be unrequited in that day, when Christ will reward any kindness shown to the least of Saints."²⁴⁶ In this instance, Cromwell and the godly appear on the same side in the war over liberty of conscience. These letters reveal how certain religious groups considered Cromwell an ally of theirs or at least held out hope that he might return to the role of their champion.

Cromwell's own thoughts on his role as patron of the sects are more complicated. In some of his speeches he made statements that might cause one to think he espoused acceptance of all Christian denominations. In his speech to open the Barebones Parliament he outlined his ambitions for the nation. He told the members: "I hope that will teach you to pity others, that so Saints of one sort may not be our interest, but that we may have respect unto all, though of different judgments."²⁴⁷ Later in the same speech he said, "And if the poorest Christian, the most mistaken Christian should desire to live peaceably and quietly under you,—I say, if any shall desire but to lead a life of godliness and honesty, let him be protected."²⁴⁸ For Cromwell, at least at this point in his career, the possibility of inflicting harm on one of the saints was terrifying. However, one must

²⁴⁵ *Address from the Baptized Churches in Northumberland &c. to the Lord Protector*, January 11, 1654, found in *Original letters and papers of state, addressed to Oliver Cromwell*, 135.

²⁴⁶ *Address from the Churches at Newcastle, &c. to the Lord Protector*, January 12, 1656, found in *Original letters and papers of state, addressed to Oliver Cromwell*, 138.

²⁴⁷ Abbott, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, III, 62.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

be careful interpreting Cromwell's words. He sought to protect the saints, but whom did he mean by that term? Certainly not Fifth Monarchists. While giving his opening speech to the first Protectoral Parliament—this speech was not unlike his one to the Barebones Parliament, in both cases he praised the members and spoke of the wonderful objectives he expected them to achieve—he said, “But I say, there are others more refined, many honest people, whose hearts are sincere, many of them belonging to God, and that is the mistaken notion of Fifth Monarchy.”²⁴⁹ Fifth Monarchists were far too dangerous and potentially subversive for Cromwell to welcome them into the fold. Yet, although he called the movement “mistaken,” he still referred to its members as “honest.” Considering his relationship with John Rogers, this comment should come as no surprise. Fifth Monarchists may not have been part of Cromwell's saints, but he was still willing to listen to their opinions and he was aware of the potential danger they posed to his government.

The questions of how far Cromwell would extend liberty of conscience has become a topic of interest among historians. Blair Worden states that Cromwell, having no desire for religious toleration, had a narrow definition of liberty of conscience. In Worden's words, Cromwell “could not enter the world of Ranters and Quakers and Socinians.”²⁵⁰ Worden's work has completely destroyed any notion of Cromwell promoting religious toleration. Scholars now focus their discussion on what were Cromwell's limits with regards to liberty of conscience. Davis believes that Cromwell supported a broader range of liberty of conscience than Worden suggests, pointing to his freeing of Quakers from prison and willingness to provide John Biddle with a weekly

²⁴⁹ Ibid., 437.

²⁵⁰ Blair Worden, “Toleration and the Cromwellian Protectorate,” in *Persecution and Toleration: Studies in Church History*, ed. W. J. Sheils (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984), 211-212.

allowance funded out of his own pocket.²⁵¹ Anthony Fletcher asserts that Cromwell's saints consisted of only Presbyterians, Independents and Baptists.²⁵² Cromwell's definition of the saints was unquestionably exclusive; nevertheless, simply because a group was not part of Cromwell's saints does not mean that he ignored their opinions. When groups that were not part of the saints, such as the Fifth Monarchists or Quakers, wrote to Cromwell informing him that the saints had abandoned him, he took the claim seriously. As mentioned above, Cromwell considered many of the Fifth Monarchists "honest people" who had merely been duped by a malignant principle. Fifth Monarchists could obtain Cromwell's attention by discussing the saints just as easily as Baptists could.

The sectarian writers who sought to dissuade Cromwell from accepting the crown manipulated his admiration for the saints to perfection. Many letters informed Cromwell that the people of God now considered him an enemy due to his regal behavior and aspirations. The pamphlet *A Word for God*, published in 1655, raised this issue. It stated that Cromwell had "caused great searching of heart, and divisions among many of God's people by a sudden, strange, and unexpected alteration of government, . . ." ²⁵³ Rather than protecting the saints, as a man in his position of power should, Cromwell was dividing them by his actions. Specifically, the creation of the Protectorate led some saints to question Cromwell's role as their champion. On the next page, the pamphlet directly informed Cromwell that the saints had turned against him. It reads: "First the filling of the Saints hearts and faces with inexpressible grief and shame: And secondly, the stopping (at least) of the strong current of their prayers, which was once for you; if

²⁵¹ Davis, "Cromwell's Religion," 196.

²⁵² Anthony Fletcher, "Cromwell and the Godly Nation," in *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution*, ed. John Morrill (London and New York: Longman, 1990), 211.

²⁵³ Anonymous, *A Word for God*, 1.

not the turning directly against you.”²⁵⁴ Cromwell had gone from being an ally of the godly to a target of their wrath. The anonymous author of this pamphlet crafted this claim well; he accused Cromwell of offending the group whose opinion he valued the most. The comments in this pamphlet were designed to capture Cromwell’s interest, and in that they succeeded.

John Spittlehouse also employed the theme of Cromwell offending the godly. Spittlehouse was a Fifth Monarchist who, like John Rogers, thought favorably of Cromwell when he dissolved the Rump but turned against him after the end of the Barebones Parliament. For his writings, Spittlehouse faced judicial punishment. On November 30, he was ordered “to be brought before the Council when the report is made from the Committee for Examinations on the Isle of Axholme.”²⁵⁵ A few days later, on December 9, “The Committee for Examinations to call for John Spittlehouse, and learn whether he will own his several petitions to Council, and his printed petition to Parliament against Mr. Thurloe, and to report his answer.”²⁵⁶ Spittlehouse’s troubles did not end there. On October 19, 1654, Spittlehouse’s book *An answer to one part of the Lord Protector’s speech* was “sent to the Attorney-General, who is to proceed against them [Spittlehouse and his publisher Livewell Chapman] according to the law, give account to the council of his opinion, and meanwhile the serjeant-at-arms is to retain them in custody.”²⁵⁷ While in custody, Spittlehouse petitioned Cromwell, but to no avail. Spittlehouse was one of the most outspoken critics of the Protectorate and of Cromwell in particular. Once he even wrote that Cromwell and the other authors of the Instrument of

²⁵⁴ Ibid., 2.

²⁵⁵ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series, 1653-1654*, 294.

²⁵⁶ Ibid., 294.

²⁵⁷ *Calendar of State Papers Domestic Series, 1654*, 378.

Government should be charged with high treason for enslaving the nation to the rule of a single person.²⁵⁸ Spittlehouse was not an unknown writer who flew under the radar; he was a prominent Fifth Monarchist whose ideas both Cromwell and the judicial system recognized and attempted to curtail.

In his pamphlet *Certain Queries Propounded to the most serious Consideration of those Persons Now in Power*, Spittlehouse concentrated on blasting the Instrument of Government, but he was able to link England's first written constitution to Cromwell's mistreatment of the godly. Spittlehouse, speaking of the new government's failure to eliminate the standing army, tithes and lawyers, and to take the necessary steps to convert the Jews, wrote: "Whether the refusal of the present rulers, and the army so to do, must not unavoidably put them on a desperate principle of persecution of such of the people of God."²⁵⁹ In Spittlehouse's account, the Protectorate itself became offensive to the godly because it failed to address their most pressing issues, such as the removal of tithes. Although his approach was not as direct as the author of *A Word for God*, he still portrayed Cromwell's actions as offending the very people he hoped to protect.

In his conversation with Cromwell in 1654, Rogers adopted a similar approach. Rather than tell Cromwell that the saints had turned against him, Rogers reminded Cromwell how much the saints suffered to remove monarchical government, which Cromwell was now reconstructing. Rogers told Cromwell:

Now, my Lord, let the loud cries of the blood, shed against these things you have set up, be heard, and make restitution of that blood, those lives, tears, bowels, faith, prayers, limbs, and skulls of us and our relations left in the fields and laid out against this kind of government, whether in Civil or Ecclesiastical.²⁶⁰

²⁵⁸ John Spittlehouse, *Certain Queries Propounded To the most serious Consideration of those Persons Now in Power* (London, 1654), found on Early English Book Online, 4.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 11-12.

²⁶⁰ Rogers, *Some account of the life and opinions of a fifth-monarchy-man*, 211.

Rogers' image of the blood shed by the saints in the Civil War recalled the sacrifices the saints made in order to rid England of kingly government; the implication being that without these sacrifices Cromwell would not have been able to rise to the position he now occupied. Cromwell in a sense owed a debt to the saints and the creation of the Protectorate was not the appropriate manner by which to pay them back. In a similar fashion, the anonymous author of *A Short discovery of His Highness the Lord Protector's intentions touching the Anabaptists in the army* noted the importance of the Anabaptists in Cromwell's career. He wrote: "Whether your Highness had come to that height of honour and greatness as you are now come to, if the Anabaptist (so called) had been as much your enemies as they had been your friends?"²⁶¹ The message was that without the aid of the Anabaptists, Cromwell could not have achieved what he did and now they deserved some acknowledgment of their faithful service.

Unlike the assertion that God would one day punish Cromwell for his misdeeds, Cromwell could offer no response to the claim that godly were offended by his government. With the other accusations, Cromwell maintained that he was satisfied in his own conscience that he was following God's providences. Issues such as God's will are always subject to interpretation and, therefore, attacks on the Protector and Protectorate based solely on divine will were not difficult to counter. Cromwell merely had to state how he understood God's will and how he believed his actions were consistent with it. If, however, members of the saints were writing to Cromwell stating that they were dissatisfied with him and no longer considered him an ally, Cromwell could not simply dismiss their charges. He valued the support of the godly and had no

²⁶¹ Anonymous, *A Short discovery*, 3.

intention of losing it. With this possibility looming, Cromwell had no desire to provoke them any further by assuming a title that they detested.

In his speech to parliament on April 17, 1657, in which he offered his most comprehensive explanation for rejecting the crown, Cromwell listed the opinions of the godly as one of the reasons he could not accept the royal title. He announced to parliament:

I tell you there are such men in this nation that are godly, men of the same spirit, men that will not be beaten down with a carnal or worldly spirit while they keep their integrity. I deal plainly and faithfully with you, I cannot think that God would bless me in the undertaking of anything, that would justly and with cause grieve them. That they will be troubled without cause, I must be a slave if I should comply with any such humours. . . . But if that I know, as indeed I do, that very generally good men do not swallow this title, though really it is no part of their goodness to be unwilling to submit to what a Parliament shall settle over them, yet I must say that it is my duty and my conscience to beg of you, that there may be no hard thing put upon me, things I mean hard to them, that they cannot swallow.²⁶²

Cromwell's comments illustrate that he was aware of what the saints thought about the prospect of kingship, which suggests that if he did not actually read the sectarian letters sent to him, he at least had someone inform him of their content. Cromwell did not intend to govern the nation in a manner that would offend the godly. "Healing and settling" were his goals. All the policies he adopted and decisions he made were implemented with the intention of satisfying all elements of the country, especially the godly. His interaction with the public sphere revealed to him that although he had good intentions, the saints did not approve of the path he was pursuing. When Cromwell justified his decision to refuse the crown he offered three reasons, one of which was the attitude of the godly (the other two were that the office of king was not so interwoven into the laws of England as to make it necessary, and that God had providentially

²⁶² Abbott, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, IV, 472.

destroyed the title king). The fact that he named the godly as a reason for his decision about the crown reveals how influential they were. Cromwell's awareness of their contempt for the office of king resulted in him resisting his natural impulses, and ultimately, refusing the crown.

The final theme in the sectarian letters suggested that God, because of Cromwell's actions, was now turning His back on Cromwell's designs. This theme is different from the idea of God one day passing judgment on Cromwell. The writers who stated that God was withdrawing from Cromwell were referring to a specific military operation—the failure of the Western Design—as opposed to an event at a nonspecific date in the future when Cromwell would have to answer before God. The notion that God was no longer guiding him was a terrifying prospect for Cromwell who had always counted on the strength of God to meet his objectives. Throughout his career he had attributed his success in battle to God. After his victory at the battle of Naseby in 1645, he informed the Speaker of the House of the triumph, but assured him “this [the victory] is none other but the hand of God; and to Him alone belongs the glory, wherein none are to share with Him.”²⁶³ During his campaign in Ireland, Cromwell's letters back to parliament continued to reflect a belief in the hand of God steering him towards victory.

Commenting on his recent military achievements over the Irish, Cromwell wrote:

It was set upon some of our hearts, That a great thing should be done, not by power or might, but by the Spirit of God. And is it not so, clear? That which caused your men to storm so courageously, it was the Spirit of God, who gave your men courage, and took it away again; and gave the Enemy courage, and took it away again; and gave your men courage again, and therewith, this happy success. And therefore it is good that God alone have all the glory.²⁶⁴

²⁶³ Abbott, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, I, 360.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, II, 127.

Without the aid of God, Cromwell did not think he could achieve greatness on the battlefield. If God were to abandon him, then victory would be impossible. Winning a battle, however, confirmed to Cromwell that he was following the divine path.

In the political arena, it was more difficult to determine God's will; however, after one of the hardest political decision he had to make—the forced dissolution of the Rump—Cromwell received confirmation from across the country that he had proceeded through God's providences. The people of Durham wrote to Cromwell on April 28, 1653: “The continuation of the Lord's preference with your hearts, in moving you to dissolve the present government, whose actions in these later days, were so contrary to their own declarations and the army's engagement.”²⁶⁵ Similarly, the people of Herefordshire stated: “We bless the God of heaven, who hath called you forth and led you on, not only to the high places of the field, making you a terror to the enemy, but also (among those mighty ones whom God had left) to the dissolving of the late parliament.”²⁶⁶ Although the people of Bedfordshire did not specifically mention the dissolution of the Rump, they conveyed the same message. They wrote to Cromwell: “Now eyeing and owning (through grace) the good hand of God in this great turn of providence, being persuaded that it is from the Lord that you should be instruments in His hand at such a time as this . . .”²⁶⁷ Dissolving the Rump was not an easy decision for Cromwell and in future speeches he spent more time attempting to justify it than any other controversial action. When he first summoned the Barebones Parliament, the

²⁶⁵ *Address from the people of Durham, to the Lord General and council of officers*, April 28, 1653, found in *Original letters and papers of state, addressed to Oliver Cromwell*, 91.

²⁶⁶ *Letter from the people of Herefordshire, to the Lord General Cromwell*, May 7, 1653, found in *Original letters and papers of state, addressed to Oliver Cromwell*, 92.

²⁶⁷ *Letter from the People of Bedfordshire, to the Lord General Cromwell, and the councill of the army*, May 13, 1653, found in *Original letters and papers of state, addressed to Oliver Cromwell*, 92.

majority of his opening speech was devoted to explaining his expulsion of the MPs. Cromwell emphasized that he had explored all constitutional means for settling his differences with the MPs before he resorted to force. He said, “We [Cromwell and the army leaders] did, as we thought according to our duty, a little, to remind them by a petition . . . we, divers times, endeavored to obtain meetings with divers members of Parliament.”²⁶⁸ In this speech, Cromwell attempted to create the appearance that he had no alternative other than dissolution. He said, “. . . that which hath been done in the Dissolution of the Parliament was as necessary to be done as the preservation of the cause.”²⁶⁹ Even with all the letters of support, he was still unsure of the righteousness of expelling the members of the Rump. With the Western Design, he had to contend not only with his own doubts, but also with pamphlets telling him that God no longer favored him.

In theory, the Western Design was the type of event that would verify to Cromwell that he was acting in accordance with God’s providence. It was a military operation and Cromwell had experienced nothing but success with warfare. The Western Design was part of Cromwell’s plan to attack the Spanish Empire. In December 1654, a fleet of thirty ships and 3,000 soldiers set sail for the Caribbean with the intention of capturing the Spanish West Indies. On April 25, 1655, however, the English forces were thoroughly defeated at San Domingo. What remained of the English expedition withdrew to the undefended Island of Jamaica, and then returned to England.²⁷⁰ A military disaster on this level was previously unknown to Cromwell and deeply affected

²⁶⁸ Abbott, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, III, 55.

²⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 60.

²⁷⁰ Coward, *The Cromwellian Protectorate*, 68.

him. After hearing the news, Cromwell shut himself in a room for a whole day.²⁷¹ The Swedish ambassador suggested that Cromwell was on the verge of assuming the royal title but the failure of the Western Design upset him and threw all his plans off balance.²⁷² Other members of Cromwell's government were also shocked by the events and questioned their significance. Major-General Charles Worsley said, "The Lord help us to know what our sin is, and what his pleasure is, that we are so crossed and visited in Jamaica."²⁷³ A regime that had known nothing but success in military affairs had experienced its first defeat. A government whose strength lay in martial power had suffered heavy losses in men and resources. Such an event was bound to raise doubts in the minds of the men leading the nation.

To add to Cromwell's own feelings of doubt regarding the Western Design, a few sectarian writers seized on this issue as an example of God abandoning Cromwell. The anonymous pamphlets *A Ground Voice* and *A Word for God*, and Samuel Chidley's letter to Cromwell—both pamphlets were published in 1655, while the letter was written in 1656—discuss the role of God in Cromwell's recent military failures. *A Ground Voice* reads:

When the army that was sent by O Cromwell came to Hispanola, they landed eight thousand men, and in marching twenty miles many of them fell down dead, and the rest when they came to engage, fled when none pursued. The army of eight thousand men did never see one hundred Spaniards in a body, and yet such a spirit of fear possessed your fellows; that they fled, and these few Spaniards pursued and killed them till they were a weary; the Lord did exceedingly appear against them suitable to that in Judges 5 and 20.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Robert, trans. and ed., *Swedish Diplomats at Cromwell's Court*, 169.

²⁷³ Coward, *The Cromwellian Protectorate*, 69.

²⁷⁴ Anonymous, *A Ground Voice*, 6.

The author emphasized the numerical superiority the English forces held, yet the Spanish still defeated them. Events such as English soldiers falling down dead while marching point to divine intervention; God's will doomed the expedition to fail. Chidly—a Leveller pamphleteer who, after the Leveller movement collapsed attempted to establish a separatist congregation in London—made a similar case in his letter. He pointed to all the evil acts Cromwell had perpetrated and discussed how they would bring about his ruin. Regarding the Western Design, he wrote: “And how can such your frequent appearances of evil avail you in your Spanish Wars, O ye mortal gods, who must die like men, and fall like one of the Princes?”²⁷⁵ Such ideas were not out of line with what Cromwell himself was thinking and only reinforced his fears that he had provoked God's anger.

Although the pamphlet *A Word for God* does not mention the Western Design by name, it still made the same point. When listing the “sad effects” of Cromwell's “pride, luxury, lasciviousness, changing of principles and forsaking the good ways,” the pamphlet includes “God's single withdrawing from you and your designs.”²⁷⁶ The pamphlet did not need to describe the failed expedition in detail. When anyone mentioned God withdrawing from Cromwell's designs in 1655, Cromwell would have interpreted the comment as referring to the Western design. War had always brought Cromwell reassurance that he was following God's path. His first major military defeat left him confused, questioning his every decision. In this vulnerable state, the sectarian writings were even more influential. When Cromwell was following God's wishes, as he had during the Civil War, God granted him victory in war. When he was acting in

²⁷⁵ Samuel Childley, *To His Highness the Lord Protector, &c. and to the Parliament of England* (London, 1656), found on Early English Books Online, 3.

²⁷⁶ Anonymous, *A Word for God*, 2.

defiance of God, as the sects believed he was by becoming kingly, God would ensure that he experienced only defeat on the battlefield. With a catastrophe like the Western Design before him, Cromwell could not argue with the claims of the sects.

The assertion that God was now undermining Cromwell's plans did receive a response, but not from Cromwell. George Smith's pamphlet *God's Unchangeableness* argued that Cromwell still enjoyed God's favor and would continue to do so. In the "To All Freeborn People of England" section, Smith wrote: "As to my vindication of the Lord Protector, whom providence hath exalted, providence will yet further order him, and all his counsels and actions, *after the counsel of God's will*: God hath a great work for him to do, and it shall be done."²⁷⁷ Smith's description of Cromwell contrasts with the accounts examined above. For Smith, God had not turned his back on Cromwell, but rather continued to use Cromwell to achieve his ends. Providence, according to Smith, orders everything in the world down to the last detail. All that had happened before, including Cromwell's rise to prominence, occurred through God's will. If God placed Cromwell at the head of the English state, then it must have been for the benefit of the nation. Smith asserted:

. . . blessed be that providence that hath prevented those designs, and freed us from that yoke, giving us comfort in hopes of a settled peace and holy reformation, with the restoring of us again to our laws and true privileges, by that illustrious and noble champion OLIVER Lord Protector of England, Scotland, and Ireland &c. whom providence hath made instrumental to hinder destruction to the nation, and provide that our teachers are not driven into corners, as the Lord hath promised they shall not be.²⁷⁸

Cromwell, in this account, becomes the hero of providence, the nation's savior destined to provide peace and security. The sectarian claims that Cromwell was acting against

²⁷⁷ George Smith, *God's Unchangeableness* (London, 1655), found on Early English Books Online, A3.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 15.

God's providence undoubtedly played a role in motivating Smith to write his pamphlet. Cromwell's generally feeling of depression after the Western Design prevented him from answering charges relating to providence; however, in the broader print culture, defenses of him and his regime emerged as part of the discourse between supporters and enemies of the Protectorate.

When Cromwell explained to parliament why he had rejected the crown, two of the three reasons he provided find representation in the sectarian writings: offence to the godly, and God's providential destruction of title king. Without the barrage of religious writings Cromwell would not have known that accepting the crown would outrage the godly and he would not have seen it as an act against God's providence. The onslaught of sectarian writings was possible because the sects utilized the print medium to its fullest extent. The Quaker's establishment of firm networks around the country permitted them to print copious amounts of material of which the government disapproved. Although many sectarian writings were addressed to Cromwell or other members of the Protectorate, they were intended for a broader audience in the hope of rallying people against the possibility of kingship. In Peters' words: "The elision between the government and the people of England in Quaker tracts suggests strongly that their authors sought to achieve widespread political participation through the medium of print."²⁷⁹ Peters points to alarmed comments by contemporaries as evidence that the Quakers were effective in spreading their message, or at least in the eyes of the authorities they were.²⁸⁰ Sects may not have had the physical power to threaten the

²⁷⁹ Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers*, 230.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 44.

Protectorate, but their skilled use of the printed word had the potential to create dissent in every corner of England.

Cromwell's comments regarding kingship prior to 1653 illustrate an inclination towards the office, even after the regicide. He supported a traditional mixed monarchy and hoped such a government would secure peace and prosperity in the nation. However, one thing he valued more than traditional government was his own soul; he was not willing to risk his salvation even if doing so provided the British Isles with a stable government. The sectarian writers convinced Cromwell that the stakes over the kingship issue were high, so high that the wrong decision would lead to eternal damnation. Once Cromwell believed assuming the royal title would cost him his soul, his rejection of the crown was inevitable.

Chapter 5: Republican Attitudes of Cromwell and the Protectorate

Like the monarchists and sectarians, republicans wrote numerous political tracts during the Protectorate offering their cures for the problems that plagued England and their vision for the ideal government. Although not as numerous as monarchists or sectarians, republicans were aware of the power that Cromwell held, and they directed many of their writings to him personally. They produced many political treatises in which they outlined their theories of liberty and government. The issue of kingship affected each republican differently, as some considered monarchy an unacceptable form of government under all circumstances, while others were willing to tolerate a king with limits on his authority. Republicans rarely mentioned Cromwell or his dilemma over the crown specifically, preferring to discuss the strengths of a free-state and weaknesses of a tyranny. The disunity and subtlety of republican writers makes classifying a particular pamphlet as republican difficult, as many tracts have some small element of republicanism in them. This difficulty is evident in the debates among historians of English republicanism, who often argue over who in English history was a republican.

Many historians focus their analysis on republicans whose most significant works appeared during the Restoration. While historically important, these republicans wrote after Cromwell's death and, therefore, their contribution to the development of English republicanism is peripheral to the present study. Despite historians' fascination with the subject, a consistent definition of republicanism has eluded them. Blair Worden detects two prominent interpretations.²⁸¹ The first he labels "constitutional republicanism,"

²⁸¹ Blair Worden, "Republicanism, Regicide and Republic: The English Experience," in *Republicanism: A Shared European Heritage*, eds. Martin can Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 307.

which represents a commitment to anti-monarchical government and is maintained by Quentin Skinner. Indeed, anti-monarchical sentiment is an important aspect of republicanism for many historians. Markku Peltonen notes that an elected rather than inherited government and a mixed constitution over an absolute monarchy were key features of pre-Civil War thought.²⁸² Peltonen attempts to demonstrate that these concepts did not disappear from English political thought in the late 1500s, but continued to be relevant until the Civil War. David Norbrook also views anti-monarchical thinking as a key component to English republicanism. Like Peltonen, Norbrook believes this sentiment has its roots in the pre-Civil War years. Analysis of the poetry and other literary works at the time of Buckingham's assassination and the years immediately before the Civil War convinces Norbrook that certain Englishmen were beginning to question the value of kingship.²⁸³ This cuts against the grain of the broader historical consensus which has minimized the prominence of outright anti-monarchical outlook in the political culture of the 1640s. Like Skinner, he interprets the MPs in the Long Parliament as possessing republican values when they took a stand against Charles I.²⁸⁴ Skinner, Peltonen and Norbrook all consider a dislike of kingship as an essential feature of English republicanism; they differ on the issue of how far back into English history this tradition lies.

The second interpretation defined by Worden is "civic republicanism," which involves a type of civic virtue based on Machiavelli's *Discourses* and is espoused most

²⁸² Markku Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism in English Political Thought* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 308-309.

²⁸³ David Norbrook, *Writing the English Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 55.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 95-96.

prominently by John Pocock.²⁸⁵ Pocock recognizes that in pre-Civil War England, Machiavellianism needed to be modified to fit the political environment. Pocock's English Machiavellianism was, to borrow a phrase of Worden's, "monarchialised and gentrified."²⁸⁶ The civic virtue, the *vita activa*, and the armed citizen remained, but Machiavelli's support of republican government had not yet established roots in England. Not until the regicide itself destroyed the ancient constitution could the idea of republican government gain any support in England.²⁸⁷ No historian stresses the concept of civic republicanism as strongly as Pocock, but Scott and Peltonen do include certain elements of it in their accounts of republicanism. Scott states that English republicanism defined itself in relation to moral principles, not constitutional forms; most republicans recognized that no single constitution would suit all times and places.²⁸⁸ Peltonen devotes much attention to discussing the *vita activa* and its significance in late Tudor and early Stuart England. English writers of the mid and late 1500s contrasted the *vita activa* with the *vita contemplata*; these writers believed that the aim of human life was the common good pursued through the *vita activa*.²⁸⁹ Peltonen's comments on the *vita activa* in Tudor writings, coupled with the suggestion that certain Elizabethan and Jacobean political theorists supported an elected government over a hereditary one, places his interpretation partly into both constitutional and civic republicanism. His work demonstrates that the two terms are not mutually exclusive; aspects of both can be combined.

²⁸⁵ Worden, "Republicanism, Regicide, and Republic," 303-304.

²⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 308.

²⁸⁷ J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine political thought and the Atlantic republican tradition* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), 358.

²⁸⁸ Jonathan Scott, *Commonwealth principles: republican writing of the English Revolution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 151.

²⁸⁹ Peltonen, *Classical Humanism and Republicanism*, 20-21.

Worden himself interprets the entire phenomenon of republicanism differently. He points out that no one before the Puritan Revolution called himself or herself a republican.²⁹⁰ For Worden, English republicanism was a consequence rather than a cause of the regicide. Cromwell and the other regicides pursued the king's death with religious zeal and little thought as to what the political system would look like after the execution.²⁹¹ Sarah Barber shares this view, and suggests that the regicide did not inevitably lead to ideological republicanism. If one thought Charles I was guilty of treason, then he could be judged and executed but the existing constitutional system could remain.²⁹² This interpretation is completely contrary to Skinner's understanding of the Civil War, which construes republican sentiment as a motivation for the MPs who warred against Charles I.²⁹³ In sum, this question of when English republicanism emerged as a distinct ideological movement has been highly contested. All commentators, however, agree that whatever republicanism represented, it had its most prominent presence after the regicide and during the era of the Commonwealth and Protectorate.

What then was English republicanism of the 1650s? In an effort to amalgamate all radical groups, Scott stresses a religious element in English republicanism and views republican goals as identical to those of the Quakers, Ranters and other sects. Scott notes that humanism in England was Christian humanism. He describes a Christian-Classical synthesis that resulted in English republicanism containing elements from both

²⁹⁰ Worden, "Republicanism, Regicide and Republic," 307.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 315.

²⁹² Barber, *Regicide and Republicanism*, 3.

²⁹³ Quentin Skinner, "Classical Liberty and the coming of the English Civil War," in *Republicanism: a shared European Heritage: vol. 2. The values of republicanism in early modern Europe*, eds. Martin van Gelderen and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 14.

Christianity and antiquity.²⁹⁴ The various labels historians use to refer to radical groups during the Civil War—Levellers, Seekers, Diggers, Fifth Monarchy Men, Quakers—do not describe simultaneously existing factions but chronological stages of a single process.²⁹⁵ These radical groups formed in response to Laudian formalism, which they considered divisive.²⁹⁶ In addition to a common anti-formalism, the radicals had a common religious and social agenda that included toleration and an end to the traditional hierarchy.²⁹⁷ Worden does not share Scott’s sense of unity amongst Interregnum radical groups. Unlike Scott, he does not minimize the Machiavellian civil religious tendencies among English republicans in order to lump them together with religious radicals. Not even among republicans in Worden’s view, let alone all political and religious radicals, was there a shared platform. Seventeenth-century republicanism was, for Worden, “a language not a program.”²⁹⁸ Republicans did not have a common proposal for the structure of government or a coherent strategy for amending the problems of the nation. Rather, they shared a few values, such as love of liberty and reverence for antiquity, which motivated them to oppose tyrannical government and praise free-states. Worden’s and Scott’s interpretations of English republicanism lie at opposite ends of the spectrum: a large group with united goals and similar understandings of politics at one end, and a scattered set of individuals connected vaguely by a few shared values at the other.

Although they interpret the phenomenon of English republicanism differently, Worden and Scott both believe that republicans in England were not satisfied with the

²⁹⁴ Scott, *Commonwealth Principles*, 44.

²⁹⁵ Scott, *England’s Troubles*, 241.

²⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 230.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁹⁸ Blair Worden, “Classical Republicanism and the Puritan Revolution,” in *History and Imagination: Essays in Honour of H. R. Trevor-Roper*, eds. Valerie Pearl and Blair Worden (London: Duckworth, 1981), 193.

English Republic that existed from 1649-1653. Worden views the republicanism of the 1650s as a protest against the English republic, not an endorsement of it.²⁹⁹ The execution of the king did create a republic, but not the kind of republic for which men like Nedham and Harrington had hoped. One reason the Rump did not act as the republicans had hoped was the conservative nature of many of its MPs, who were ideologically similar to the MPs who sat before Pride's Purge.³⁰⁰ Scott interprets the situation differently, but still believes the English republic failed to achieve the goals of republicans. He rejects the notion that radicals, religious and secular, were constantly rising up only to be repressed; radicals did achieve power during the revolution, but they were gradually defeated by the experience of holding power.³⁰¹ The aims of the English radicals proved too ambitious and, consequently, radicalism was "disappointed in relation to the grandeur of its own moral ambition."³⁰² In Scott's analysis, the radicals were not dissatisfied with the form of the English Republic as much as with its absence of virtue. The English Republic, in this account, was a failure because it was not based on the moral principles which Scott's radicals espoused.

If the Republic was unsuccessful, what did republicans think of the Protectorate? This question is complicated. Although many aspects of the Protectorate, such as the large amount of power held by the Lord Protector, ran contrary to republican theory, prominent republicans such as Marchamont Nedham and John Milton wrote in defence of the Protectorate. However, as Scott points out, there is no easy equation between

²⁹⁹ Blair Worden, "Marchamont Nedham and the Beginnings of English Republicanism," in *Republicanism, Liberty and Commercial Society*, ed. David Wootton (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 48.

³⁰⁰ Blair Worden, *The Rump Parliament* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 25.

³⁰¹ Jonathan Scott, *England's Troubles*, 267.

³⁰² *Ibid.*, 268.

adherence to a cause and allegiance to a regime.³⁰³ The constant changing of Interregnum governments forced many Englishmen to shift their loyalties. Although the Protectorate was not the ideal form of government for republican theorists, it contained certain elements that they appreciated. When analyzing how republicans viewed the Protectorate, it is best to examine each author on an individual basis. The validity of Worden's characterization of republicanism as a disunited movement emerges when one contrasts their various responses to the Protectorate. Republicans' failure to present a united attack against the Protectorate partly accounts for their lack of influence over Cromwell; unlike the sects, they were not all advising Cromwell in the same manner. Additionally, republicans were not as effective at utilizing the new public sphere as the sects. Due to the fact that some of the greatest English republicans, Nedham and Milton, were on the government's pay roll, their critiques of the Protectorate were indirect, and their analysis of government and politics was too complex for the average Englishman to comprehend, republicans were unable to mobilize supporters through the public sphere in the same manner that the sects did.

As mentioned in the introduction, the three republican authors on which this study will focus are Marchamont Nedham, John Milton and James Harrington, the three most prominent republican theorists of the era. All three published republican tracts in the 1650s had some connection to Cromwell. Nedham was a propagandist for the Protectorate, writing newssheets and formal defences of the regime. After being frustrated with the Rump's unwillingness to call new elections, and disturbed by the religious fanaticism of the Barebones Parliament, Nedham was pleased that Cromwell

³⁰³ Scott, *Commonwealth principles*, 14.

became Lord Protector.³⁰⁴ The inauguration of the Protectorate prompted Nedham to write *A True State of the Case of the Commonwealth*, which incorporated an earlier news editorial from Nedham's paper *Mercurius Politicus*, and emphasized the republican elements in the Instrument of Government.³⁰⁵ Milton had defended the regicide and the English Republic, and served the Protectorate as a civil servant. Milton's knowledge of languages allowed him to communicate with audiences abroad. While Nedham's defence of the Protectorate was designed for an English audience, Milton's *Defensio Secunda* was written in Latin and geared towards a European audience.³⁰⁶ Milton also served the Protectorate by translating diplomatic communications.³⁰⁷ Harrington began the Civil War on the royalist side and according to some accounts, he was present with Charles I on the scaffold.³⁰⁸ Troubled by the regicide the political chaos of the Interregnum, Harrington wrote his most famous work, *Oceana*, which outlined his solutions to the problems in the British Isles. Harrington dedicated *Oceana* to Cromwell. Towards the end of the Interregnum, Harrington associated with republican MPs such as Henry Neville, and the ideas in *Oceana* were debated in Richard Cromwell's parliament.³⁰⁹ Each of these writers criticized the Protectorate—often very subtly—but also supported certain of its policies. Yet, in his public speeches, Cromwell rarely expressed any republican concerns.

³⁰⁴ Joad Raymond, "Nedham, Marchamont (bap. 1620, d. 1678)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/19847>, accessed on 25 July 2007].

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

³⁰⁶ Gordon Campbell, "Milton, John (1608–1674)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, May 2006, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/18800>, accessed on 25 July 2007].

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

³⁰⁸ H. M. Höpfl, "Harrington, James (1611–1677)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, Sept 2004; online edn, Oct 2006, [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/12375>, accessed on 25 July 2007].

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

When most historians discuss the work of Nedham, they focus on how Machiavelli's writings shaped his political thought. John Pocock and Jonathan Scott note the similarities of the two writers on the topic of war. Both Nedham and Machiavelli endorse the concept of the armed citizen and the expansive republic.³¹⁰ Vickie Sullivan interprets Nedham as embracing Machiavelli's principles, but marshalling them to a liberal purpose. In his early writings, Nedham incorporated many of Machiavelli's ideas into his pamphlets. For Sullivan, the turning point occurred in *The Excellency of a Free-State*, published in 1656, in which Nedham rarely referred to Machiavelli and was less impressed with Rome's conquests than Machiavelli.³¹¹ Quentin Skinner sees Machiavelli's *Discourses* as providing inspiration for Nedham's understanding of a free-state.³¹² Unlike Sullivan, Skinner asserts that in *The Excellency of a Free-State*, when Nedham wrote of republics being better suited for achieving glory, "his borrowing from Machiavelli is never more evident."³¹³ There is no doubt that Machiavelli did influence Nedham; however, historians' seeming obsession with tracing the origins of English republicanism has caused them to pay insufficient attention to how republicans such as Nedham interacted with the Protectorate.

Nedham's major republican text during the Protectorate was *The Excellency of a Free-State*, published in 1656. Drawing heavily on examples from antiquity, this pamphlet points out all the flaws in monarchical government and stresses the advantages of free-states. In the opening of the pamphlet, Nedham claims that he is responding to

³¹⁰ Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment*, 383; Scott, *Commonwealth principles*, 220-221.

³¹¹ Vickie B. Sullivan, *Machiavelli, Hobbes, and the formation of a liberal republicanism in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 131-132.

³¹² Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 26.

³¹³ *Ibid.*, 64.

certain statements in a royalist tract published by Mr. Howel.³¹⁴ Worden believes that *The Excellency of a Free-State*, while it might appear to be an endorsement of the Protectorate, indirectly censures Cromwell and his government. Nedham's Machiavellian republicanism, so prominent in the early issues of *Mercurius Politicus*, was still present in *The Excellency of the Free-State*.³¹⁵

Worden is correct to read *The Excellency of a Free-State* as critique of the Protectorate. Although he never accused Cromwell by name, Nedham cited examples from ancient Rome that were meant to parallel the situation in the Protectorate. When discussing the Roman expulsion of the kings, Nedham wrote: “. . . who when they drove out kings, forgot to drive out the mysteries and inconveniences of kingly power, which were all reserved within the hands of the senate. By this means the poor people missing the first opportunity of settling their freedom, soon lost it again.”³¹⁶ Here, when Nedham mentioned the Roman people, he was actually referring to the English people, in thinly veiled fashion. Like the Romans, the English had destroyed the institution of monarchy, but they had established a government possessed of the same arbitrary power as the tyranny of Charles I. First the Rump exercised complete unchecked control over the nation and then, under the Instrument, Cromwell possessed a dangerous amount of power. A couple of pages later, Nedham likens Cromwell to Brutus after he expelled Tarquin. Nedham condemns Brutus because he “cheated them [the Romans] with a mere shadow and pretense of liberty: he had indeed an ambition high enough, and opportunity fair enough to have seized the crown into his own hand; but there were many

³¹⁴ Marchamont Nedham, *The Excellency of a Free-State* (London, 1656), found on Early English Books Online, To the Reader.

³¹⁵ Worden, “Marchamont Nedham and the Beginnings of English Republicanism,” 78.

³¹⁶ Nedham, *The Excellency of a Free-State*, 7.

considerations that deterred him from it.”³¹⁷ In 1656, the official offer of the crown to Cromwell had not yet been made, but rumors of it were prominent. Nedham was undoubtedly aware of the speculation regarding the crown and believed that Cromwell desired the royal title. The first part of the statement, regarding the “shadow and pretense of liberty,” was also arguably a slight at Cromwell. Although he had killed the king and founded a government that was not, at least in name, a monarchy, Cromwell had failed to grant the people true liberty. He still ruled as a king, keeping all the power in his hands as opposed to the people’s.

Nedham later issued a warning to all states regarding the danger of over-mighty statesmen which may have reflected England’s own experience with Cromwell. He stated: “one prime principle of state, is, to keep any man, though he had deserved never so well by good success or service, from being too great or popular: it is a notable means (and so esteemed by all free-states) to keep and preserve a commonwealth from the rapes of usurpation.”³¹⁸ Over the course of Cromwell’s career, Nedham had witnessed him accomplish great military feats for the nation and receive honours for these achievements. Nedham—a propagandist for the cause of parliament—appreciated what Cromwell had done on the battlefield. However, such victories did not justify the amount of power that Cromwell possessed. He had become a Caesar-like figure, using his military triumphs to secure a political dominance. For a republican such as Nedham, a single person presiding over the government in kingly fashion, even if he had reached this position through his own merit, was unacceptable.

³¹⁷ Ibid., 9.

³¹⁸ Ibid., 75.

Nedham's careful criticism of Cromwell in *The Excellency of a Free-State* contrasts with his earlier comments regarding the Protectorate. When the Protectorate was first established, Nedham wrote *A True State of the Case of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland, And the Dominions thereto belonging*, which formally defended the dissolution of the Rump and the structure of the Protectorate. Nedham supported the Instrument of Government because it provided the proper balance between Protector and parliament, as each acted as a check on the other.³¹⁹ The Protectorate, according to Nedham, was "sufficiently popular, the ancient liberties of England not only secured, but enlarged; and that although the executive powers be placed in a single person, yet it stands on a fairer account than former times."³²⁰ Why would Nedham earnestly defend the Protectorate in 1654 and then delicately critique it in 1656? Joad Raymond suggests that by 1656, Nedham felt disenchanted with Cromwell and the Protectorate's conservative tendencies.³²¹ The early dissolution of the first Protectoral Parliament and the rule of the Major-Generals might have convinced Nedham that Cromwell was not the man to restore liberty to England.

When historians such as Worden, read *The Excellency of a Free-State*, they interpret it as a subtle critique of Cromwell and the Protectorate, although the pamphlet ostensibly defended both. Cromwell, however, would have not viewed the pamphlet in this manner, assuming he ever read it. *The Excellency of a Free-State* successfully passed the scrutiny of Secretary Thurloe and the censors, so they apparently did not believe it questioned the regime or its ruler. Nedham never denounced Cromwell by

³¹⁹ Marchamont Nedham, *A True State of the Case of the Commonwealth of England, Scotland, and Ireland, And the Dominions thereto belonging* (London, 1654), found on Early English Books Online, 33.

³²⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

³²¹ Raymond, "Nedham, Marchamont."

name, he only referred unfavorably to Roman figures who shared similar qualities to Cromwell. Being employed by the Protectorate as a propagandist, Nedham had to be cagey when describing the Protectorate. Any overt criticisms of the Protectorate, and Nedham's political masters would have noticed the pamphlet and disciplined him. Nedham's elusive style partly explains why Cromwell did not respond to Nedham's comments in his speeches in the manner he did with sectarian writers; he did not answer them because he did not think there was anything to answer.

One element in Nedham's republican writings that does appear in Cromwell's speeches is the concept of all political power resting in the people; yet, even in this case, Cromwell's statements did not closely parallel Nedham's attacks on the Protectorate or participate in a common discourse. In *The Excellency of a Free-State*, Nedham devoted an entire section to describing how "The Original of all Just Power is in the People."³²² In his public pronouncements, Cromwell at times spoke of the importance of the people in governing the nation. On February 4, 1658, he dissolved the second Protectoral Parliament. In his dissolution speech, Cromwell justified himself and his government, asserting: "I would not choose to accept of this Government unless I knew that there would be a just reciprocation between the government and the governed, whether the governed representative or the whole collective body."³²³ Earlier, when he dissolved the first Protectoral Parliament on January 22, 1655, he was also on the defensive. The first Protectoral Parliament refused to recognize the legitimacy of Instrument because it had been imposed by army officers. In answer to their objections, Cromwell told the MPs "I would not have been adverse to any alteration [of government], of the good of which I

³²² Nedham, *The Excellency of a Free-State*, 129-136.

³²³ Abbott, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, IV, 730.

might have been convinced, although I could not have agreed to the taking it off the foundation on which it stands, *viz.* the acceptation and the consent of the people.”³²⁴

Cromwell, after both failed Protectoral Parliaments, stated that he believed in the consent of the governed. At first glance, his comments appear to align him with Nedham and suggest that the republican milieu was a source of influence upon Cromwell. However, Cromwell held these ideas before the emergence of a visible republican ideology.

Consider Cromwell’s remarks at Putney. During the debates, he said, “the King is King by contract.”³²⁵ Cromwell did think that the people should play some role in selecting their governments; nevertheless, these thoughts were present in his mind in 1647 and, therefore, not evidence of the influence of Nedham or other republicans. They are more plausibly interpreted within England’s constitutionalist tradition.

For all of Nedham’s dislike of the form of the Protectorate—that is, rule of a single person and subservient parliaments—he did approve of one of its core policies: efforts to repress certain radical religious sects such as the Fifth Monarchists. Nedham approved of a national, state-run church. Jeff Collins views Nedham’s “conviction that state-dominated religion, freed from clerical authority, was critical to political stability” as aligning him with Cromwell on questions of clerical government.³²⁶ Unlike Scott, who believes Nedham defended the Protectorate because it was a balanced government,³²⁷ Collins understands Nedham’s approval of the Protectorate as centering on Cromwell’s establishment of a state church.³²⁸

³²⁴ *Ibid.*, III, 588.

³²⁵ Woodhouse, ed., *Puritanism and Liberty*, 96.

³²⁶ Jeffrey Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 198.

³²⁷ Scott, *Commonwealth Principles*, 139.

³²⁸ Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes*, 201.

What were the principles of Cromwell's church? Anthony Fletcher describes the Cromwellian church as resting on a "negative principle." By this he means a commitment to defending the rights of Presbyterians, Independents, and Baptists to worship in their own manner while at the same time working for peace and harmony with men who professed several forms of godliness.³²⁹ Collins notes that many of Cromwell's closest advisors on questions of religious governance believed in "magisterial Independency;" that is, they possessed a "willingness to countenance some coercion over religious practice" and "a specific deference to the religious authority of the state."³³⁰ One problem facing Cromwell was the fact that in 1653, there were many vacancies at the parish level. His solution involved the creation of the Triers, a commission established in 1654 "for approbation of public preachers."³³¹ The central government now held authority over who was ordained a preacher. To accompany the Triers, Cromwell organized Ejectors, who could remove preachers already ordained for "ignorance, insufficiency, scandal in their lives and conversions or negligence in their respective callings and places."³³² Linked to the Triers was the issue of tithes. Collins considers the controversial maintenance of tithes as a major part of the Cromwellian church settlement. Tithes were essential to supporting the Triers, in the absence of a new means to maintain and control the clergy, Cromwell refused to consider the abolition of them.³³³ Cromwell's church, therefore, was a state run apparatus that sought to provide liberty of conscience for a select group of Christians; however, it did not meet the hopes of more radical sectarians who sought to disentangle religion from political power.

³²⁹ Fletcher, "Cromwell and the Godly Nation," 220.

³³⁰ Jeffrey Collins, "The Church Settlement of Oliver Cromwell," *History* 87 (2002), 23.

³³¹ Fletcher, "Cromwell and the Godly Nation," 220.

³³² *Ibid.*, 221.

³³³ Jeffrey Collins, "The Church Settlement of Oliver Cromwell," 31.

Nedham unquestionably considered the separation of secular and ecclesiastical authority as the source of political unrest. In *The Excellency of a Free-State*, he proclaimed:

. . . most of the civil wars, and broilers, throughout Europe, have been occasioned, by permitting the settlement of clergy-interest, with the secular, in national forms, and churches, it will doubtless be understood, that the division of a state into ecclesiastical and civil, must needs be one of the main errors in Christian polity.³³⁴

Nedham despised many of the religious groups that had sprung up during the Civil War and he even spied on the Fifth Monarchists for the Protectorate. On December 20, 1653, he reported to the government the details of a meeting of Fifth Monarchists that occurred on December 19. At the meeting, the Fifth Monarchists discussed the prophecies in the Book of Daniel and how the ten horns on the Beast represented ten kings of Europe. They also blamed the army officers for the high level of taxation.³³⁵ Nedham infiltrated the meeting and disclosed this information to the council the next day. On February 7, 1654, he wrote to Cromwell providing him with further information on the Fifth Monarchists. Nedham noticed that these meetings were becoming “dull” as Cromwell had imprisoned many key figures in the movement. Nedham conveyed: “There is reason for the total dissolution of that meeting, as you have proceeded against the leaders, and a digest of the papers I have given in, with comments upon them, should be printed at the same time.”³³⁶ Nedham was only too happy to assist Cromwell in the dismantling of the Fifth Monarchy movement and had few objections to Cromwell’s overall religious policy.

³³⁴ Nedham, *The Excellency of a Free-State*, 152.

³³⁵ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series, 1653-1654*, vol. 6, 304-308.

³³⁶ *Ibid.*, 393.

Nedham's hatred of Quakers emerged in his weekly newsheets, *Mercurius Politicus*. When describing arrests of Quakers, *Mercurius Politicus* was all but rapturous.

On February 26, 1656:

Divers Quakers have been apprehended as they were roving the country in Leicestershire, and among them one Fox, a principle leader of that frantic party, they are brought up hither, and detained in custody; It hath been observed, that in the said country, there have of late been many meetings of those people, called Quakers, Ranters, and others, which are disposed by some of our horse. This Fox being brought to Whitehall had divers followers, poor, silly melancholy people . . .³³⁷

Nedham despised the Quakers because he feared they were a source of corruption and sedition. They could potentially turn Baptists and members of other sects into Quakers, thus spreading social and political dislocation. Reporting from St. Martins in Cornwall on April 17, 1655, *Mercurius Politicus* stated: "Those of the Baptized judgments have had several public meetings at Bodmin of late. Many of them, who have had a great appearance of godliness, fall off to be Ranters; others Quakers. The Quakers have been very diligent in sowing their corrupt seed lately in these parts."³³⁸ Quakers, it was feared, could infiltrate the army and use the soldiers to create disruptions. From Dublin on April 23, 1656, *Mercurius Politicus* related: "That sort of men called the Quakers are here increased very much. They have prevailed so far, as to reduce divers officers and soldiers; and they have lately been the occasion of raising a tumult; which was likely to have drawn blood."³³⁹ Nedham might not have approved of Protectorate's structure of government and he might have questioned Cromwell's personal ambition; however, he had no objections to Cromwell's efforts to control rebellious religious sects. The Protectorate was not perfect, but it did offer Nedham something he could appreciate. The

³³⁷ Marchamont Nedham, ed., *Mercurius Politicus*, (22 February – 1 March, 1655), 5164.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*, (17 April – 24 April, 1656), 6909.

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, (24 April – 1 May, 1656), 6940.

fact that Nedham did applaud Cromwell's religious policy partly accounts for the lack of any direct criticism on the Protectorate; Cromwell had his flaws, but at least he knew, in Nedham's opinion, how to handle the critically important religious issue. Crucially, Nedham's most positive appraisal of the Protectorate was a direct inversion of the sects most damning critique. Where they saw the ungodly chaining of souls, Nedham saw a prudent control of zealotry.

As with Nedham, scholars tend to be more interested in Harrington's connection to Machiavelli and his understanding of liberty than his thoughts on Cromwell. The link between Machiavelli and Harrington is most clearly documented by Pocock. For Pocock, Harrington is the key figure who transmits Machiavelli's ideas from the Renaissance context into England and eventually the wider Atlantic world.³⁴⁰ In Pocock's theory, a figure such as Harrington is necessary as he adapts Machiavellian republicanism to England, and inspires a group of late seventeenth-century republicans whom Pocock dubs the "neo-Harringtonians." Sullivan surveys in detail the principles of both Machiavelli and Harrington in order to determine what ideas were common between the two men and which ones were not.³⁴¹ Skinner notes Harrington's praise for Machiavelli and focuses his analysis of Harrington's doctrine on questions of civil liberty and consent of the governed.³⁴² Harrington's opinion of Cromwell and the Protectorate receives little attention. In a similar fashion, Scott dissects Harrington's natural philosophy, his "science of peace," and his intellectual relationship with other republicans and with Thomas Hobbes; however, Harrington's thoughts on the government of the day are not

³⁴⁰ Pocock, *Machiavellian Moment*, 395.

³⁴¹ Sullivan, *Machiavelli, Hobbes and the Formation of a Liberal republicanism in England*, chapter 4.

³⁴² Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, 46-47.

mentioned.³⁴³ Alan Cromartie interprets Harrington differently; nevertheless, his work still addresses the same issues. Cromartie believes that Harrington held many opinions that were contrary to Machiavelli's. Unlike Machiavelli who despised the leisured class, Harrington considered prosperity and leisure to be "the natural foundation of the virtue of the few."³⁴⁴ But as with the other scholars, Cromartie's chief concern is to determine whether or not Machiavelli influenced Harrington.

One historian who does discuss how Harrington's work relates to Cromwell is Blair Worden. Worden focuses on how the Archon—the lawgiver—in *Oceana* represents Cromwell. Harrington's *Oceana* outlines the process by which the commonwealth of Oceana is founded. The Archon is the figure who, in conjuncture with a legislative assembly, founded the government of Oceana. Harrington compared the Archon to Moses, both created a new commonwealth out of nothing. He wrote: "And such was the art whereby my Lord Archon, taking counsel of the commonwealth of Israel as of Moses, and of the rest of the commonwealths as of Jethro, framed the model of the commonwealth of Oceana."³⁴⁵ At that time, Cromwell was frequently compared to Moses. John Morrill notes the importance of the Cromwell/Moses comparison in pro-Cromwellian writings. Men as diverse as the Digger Gerard Winstanley and the Fifth Monarchist John Spittlehouse linked the two figures.³⁴⁶ Winstanley referred to Cromwell as Moses in 1651 and Spittlehouse did so in 1653 when the Fifth Monarchists looked to Cromwell as the man to promote their cause. Both Winstanley's and Spittlehouse's

³⁴³ Scott, *England's Troubles*, chapter 14.

³⁴⁴ Alan Cromartie, "Harringtonian Virtue, Machiavelli, and the Method of the Moment," *Historical Journal* 41 (1998), 1000.

³⁴⁵ James Harrington, "The Commonwealth of Oceana," in *The Political Works of James Harrington*, ed. J. G. A. Pocock (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 209.

³⁴⁶ John Morrill, "Cromwell and his Contemporaries," in *Oliver Cromwell and the English Revolution*, ed. John Morrill (London: Longman, 1990), 271-272.

hopes were disillusioned and both men became enemies of Cromwell during the Protectorate. Cromwell never openly called himself a new Moses, but his speeches were filled with references to the crossing of the Red Sea, and leading the people of England out of bondage. When he opened the Barebones Parliament, Cromwell, with the intention of paralleling England with Israel, spoke of the Old Testament God leading the Jews. He told the members of the Barebones Parliament:

it puts me in mind of another Scripture, that famous Psalm, sixty-eighth; which indeed is a glorious prophesy, I am persuaded of the Gospel churches it may be of the Jews also. There it is prophesied that He will bring His people again out of the depths of the sea, as once he had led Israel through the Red Sea. . . . But sure I am, when the Lord shall set up the glory of the Gospel-church it shall be a gathering of people out of the deep waters, out of the multitude of waters.³⁴⁷

The comparison between the English and Israelites became explicit when Cromwell opened the first Protectoral Parliament. On September 4, 1654, Cromwell stated:

Much recapitulation of providence, much allusion to a State, and dispensation in respect of discipline and correction, of mercies and deliverances,—the only parallel of God’s dealing with us that I know in the world, which was largely and wisely held forth to you this day,—Israel’s bringing out of Egypt through a wilderness, by many signs and wonders towards a place of rest.³⁴⁸

By likening the Archon’s/Protector’s role in government to that of Moses, Harrington participated in a discourse that was, at least potentially, flattery to Cromwell.

But if Cromwell and the Archon had a similar part to play in the building of a new commonwealth, their actions differed. Chiefly, Harrington’s Archon had no personal ambition and was eager to step down from his position of power as soon as his task was complete. Once the Archon had established the constitution to govern Oceana:

he resolved that all carnal concupiscence should die in the place, to which end, that no manner of food might be left to ambition, he entered into the senate with

³⁴⁷ Abbott, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, III, 65.

³⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 434-435.

unanimous applause and, having spoken of his government as Lycurgus did when he assembled the people, abdicated the magistracy of Archon.³⁴⁹

He removed himself from power, while Cromwell continued to occupy the office of Lord Protector seemingly indefinitely. For this reason Worden describes the Archon as the “anti-Cromwell.”³⁵⁰ *Oceana*, in Worden’s opinion, emphasizes the contrast between the type of man England needed in 1653, and the type of man Cromwell was.³⁵¹ Harrington disapproved of Cromwell’s long tenure in power. The permanency of Cromwell’s office gave the Protectorate a monarchical quality. According to Harrington, “monarchy, reaching the perfection of the kind, reacheth not unto the perfection of government, but must have some dangerous flaw in it.”³⁵² Conversely, “popular government, reaching the perfection of the kind, reacheth the perfection of government that hath no flaw in it.”³⁵³ Harrington despised monarchical government, and he was particular about the type of popular government he desired. Scott points to Harrington as the exception to the rule that English republicans had little concern over constitutional forms.³⁵⁴ In *Oceana*, Harrington formally laid out a detailed constitution that he believed could provide England with stability. The constitution is far too complex to be fully explored here; two of the most important aspects of his constitution were the notion of “freezing” the balance of land and creating an elaborate constitutional machinery similar to that of Venice.³⁵⁵ Harrington’s agrarian law would forbid the inheritance of land worth more than 2000 pounds a year. This system would create a stable balance of property and prevent

³⁴⁹ Harrington, “The Commonwealth of Ocean,” 342.

³⁵⁰ Blair Worden, “Harrington’s ‘*Oceana*’: Origins and Aftermath, 1651-1660,” in *Republicanism, Liberty and Commercial Society*, ed. David Wootton (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 120.

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 121.

³⁵² Harrington, “The Commonwealth of Oceana,” 179.

³⁵³ *Ibid.*

³⁵⁴ Scott, *England’s Troubles*, 324.

³⁵⁵ Blair Worden, “James Harrington and ‘The Commonwealth of Oceana,’ 1656,” in *Republicanism, Liberty and Commercial Society*, ed. David Wootton (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994), 88-89.

competition between rich and poor, and between rich and rich.³⁵⁶ In order to avoid faction and corruption, the principle of “motion” or “exquisite rotation” was at the centre of the constitution.³⁵⁷ Representative bodies would be permanent, but one third of their members would rotate every year. Unlike Nedham, Harrington had a specific image of what a free-state should look like.

What Nedham and Harrington did have in common was how they condemned the Protectorate. Harrington never directly mentioned Cromwell in *Oceana*, he merely drew parallels with the Archon. The criticisms of Cromwell were disguised in the form of a treatise.³⁵⁸ Until the Protectorate fell, Harrington refrained from openly attacking Cromwell. Harrington dedicated *Oceana* to Cromwell, but, as Worden notes, the dedication did not have any of the praise that would normally follow.³⁵⁹ As with Nedham, Harrington’s concealed critique of the Protectorate was unlikely to attract Cromwell’s attention precisely because it was concealed. Cromwell and other members of the Protectoral government would not necessarily have interpreted *Oceana* as an assailment upon their regime. Their understanding of *Oceana* explains why Cromwell never addressed Harrington’s proposed constitution or ideas of governance in his speeches. Harrington’s careful style contrasts with the bluntness of sects. Sectarian authors had a clear purpose, convince Cromwell to refuse the crown, and they channeled all their energies to achieving this goal. Harrington may have had a clear purpose, persuade Cromwell to adopt the constitution in *Oceana*, but he failed to stress the urgency of the situation to the same degree as the sects, and his indirect style left *Oceana*

³⁵⁶ Ibid.

³⁵⁷ Ibid., 89.

³⁵⁸ Worden, “Harrington’s ‘Oceana,’” 125.

³⁵⁹ Ibid., 124.

open to interpretation. No such debate was possible with sectarian writings, their message was always unambiguous.

One aspect of *Oceana* did appear in Cromwell's public speeches; specifically, the Archon, or Lord Protector, stepping down from power once his duties were complete. Harrington believed that when a commonwealth was being built, a strong central figure was required to create the laws. Thereafter he was no longer needed. If the individual remained in power after the constitution was established, he was doing so out of personal ambition. Cromwell continued to occupy the position of Lord Protector, and he was unquestionably aware that certain people in England disapproved of his long tenure in power. In his speeches, he stressed the reluctance with which he held his office and the necessity of remaining there. When speaking of the Humble Petition and Advice to the second Protectoral Parliament on April 20, 1657, Cromwell said, "I have not desired the continuance of my power or place, either under one title or another: that I have not!"³⁶⁰ Shortly after this statement, he explained why he continued to hold a position that brought him no joy. He said:

. . . and if the wisdom of this Parliament should have found a way to settle the interests of this nation, upon the foundations of justice and truth and liberty to the people of God, and to the concernments of men as Englishmen, I would have lain down at their feet, or anybody's feet else, that this might have run such a current.³⁶¹

Cromwell did not yet believe that the nation had been properly settled; therefore, he could not abdicate lest the country descend into chaos. Cromwell's comments do signify a response to the accusation that he was staying in power too long; the question is, was Cromwell answering a criticism from the republican milieu or was he simply replying to

³⁶⁰ Abbott, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, IV, 481.

³⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 481-482.

a general perception that he had held power for too long? Cromwell was clearly offended by the notion that he was keeping his position out of personal ambition, but where did he believe this notion originated? It is impossible to answer this question with any certainty; all one can do is search for additional traces of common themes in Cromwell's words and the various milieus that inhabited the public sphere. Other aspects of Harrington's thought do not appear in Cromwell's speeches. Cromwell never discussed the details of Harrington's proposed constitution even though *Oceana* was dedicated to him. Perhaps Cromwell did not bother addressing Harrington's constitution because he was not concerned with forms of government. Issues relating to the structure of government might not have sparked Cromwell's interest, but the republicans' assertion that Cromwell had remained in power too long could still have prompted his comments. Whether Cromwell actually read *Oceana* and whether his defence of his continual hold of power was a response to *Oceana* or a general sentiment in the country will never be definitively known.

Although the Protectorate did not match Harrington's constitutional model and Harrington himself disapproved of Cromwell remaining in power indefinitely, he, like Nedham, did endorse Cromwell's church settlement. Focusing on the context of the counter-reformation, Mark Goldie asserts that Harrington believed "the Reformed civil state was the bastion of uncorrupt religion."³⁶² Using the Roman religious forms as the proper guide to the Christian church, Harrington viewed the Roman "citizen-priest" as the model for the Christian patriot.³⁶³ Collins describes Harrington's religious policy as

³⁶² Mark Goldie, "The civil religion of James Harrington," in *The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anthony Pagden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 207.

³⁶³ *Ibid.*, 218.

an attempt to reconcile a national religion with individual conscience.³⁶⁴ Harrington proposed controls on the clergy, free exercise for gathered churches, and state supremacy over national religious life.³⁶⁵ These ideas are very similar to the religious settlement Cromwell enacted. In *Oceana*, when the Archon spoke of protecting the sects who do not “disturb” the government and warns the clergy “not to meddle with affairs of state,” he was mimicking Cromwell.³⁶⁶ Goldie and Collins both agree that *Oceana* was “essentially vindicating the religious policies of the Cromwellian Independents.”³⁶⁷ Politically, Harrington and Cromwell might have had many disagreements, but on the question of religious governance, they saw eye to eye.

The diversity among early modern English republics most clearly emerges in Milton’s writings. Milton represents an anomalous position in the republican discourse. Unlike Nedham and Harrington, Milton disapproved of Cromwell religious policies but could accept the structure of the Protectorate. His belief in liberty and his opposition to tyranny places him in the republican milieu, but his unique view of the Protectorate shatters any hope of unity among republican critics of Cromwell. Scholars generally agree that Milton had little concern for constitutional forms. Even monarchy was an acceptable form of government to him under certain circumstances. Thomas Corns notes that Milton first appears as a regicide, not a republican. Milton employed legal theory to demonstrate that the king was accountable for his actions, not to justify a republic.³⁶⁸ In *Eikonoklastes*, Milton’s most famed defence of the regicide, kingship was not the issue,

³⁶⁴ Collins, *The Allegiance of Thomas Hobbes*, 187.

³⁶⁵ Ibid.

³⁶⁶ Ibid., 188.

³⁶⁷ Ibid.

³⁶⁸ Thomas N. Corns, “Milton and the characteristics of a free commonwealth,” in *Milton and Republicanism*, eds. David Armitage, Armand Himy, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 26-27.

Charles I and his crimes were.³⁶⁹ In other works, Milton explored the difference between monarchy and tyranny; for Milton, monarchy and republic were two possible forms of government, preference for one or the other could change over time.³⁷⁰ Worden also comments on the seeming paradox of the “republican” Milton who defended the Protectorate, even though it sprang from the ashes of the English republic. Like Corns, Worden points out that when Milton wrote in favor of the Protectorate, he distinguished between monarchy and tyranny.³⁷¹ Milton never stated how to achieve the ideal republic; instead, he focused on the concept of “internal liberty.”³⁷² In a similar vein, Martin Dzelzainis detects an indifference in Milton towards constitutional forms. Dzelzainis attacks Zera Fink’s notion that Milton supported a mixed constitution at all times, as many of Milton’s arguments in favor of a republic could not be reconciled with the concept of mixed monarchy.³⁷³ These three scholars, Corns, Worden and Dzelzainis, all emphasize Milton’s flexibility on constitutional questions.

Skinner and Scott have a different opinion. They construe Milton as an opponent of monarchy. Skinner, whose definition of republicanism stresses anti-monarchical sentiment, points to Milton’s propaganda for the Rump, in which he argues that an assembly of representatives is the best form of government. Further, in 1660 Milton proclaimed that a Commonwealth without a single person or House of Lords was ideal.³⁷⁴ However, Skinner does admit that many republicans would have accepted a mixed

³⁶⁹ Ibid., 32.

³⁷⁰ Ibid., 33.

³⁷¹ Blair Worden, “Milton and Marchamont Nedham,” in *Milton and Republicanism*, eds. David Armitage, Armand Himy, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 166.

³⁷² Ibid., 170.

³⁷³ Martin Dzelzainis, “Milton’s classical republicanism,” in *Milton and Republicanism*, eds. David Armitage, Armand Himy, and Quentin Skinner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 8.

³⁷⁴ Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, 34.

government provided that safe guards on personal power were in place.³⁷⁵ Skinner's point concerning Milton's comments in 1660 has not gone unnoticed by other scholars. Worden and Dzelainis are aware that Milton spoke out against monarchy in 1660, but prior to the fall of the Protectorate, he took no definitive stance on the question of monarchical government. They view his silence on the issue as part of Milton's indifference to governmental forms.³⁷⁶ Conversely, Scott interprets this silence as an aversion to monarchy. He stresses the fact that there is nothing in Milton's writings—or Nedham's or Algernon Sidney's for that matter—that suggest that he thought the restoration of a limited monarchy was desirable. "For the government of a free people even legal monarchy was a fatally flawed system, hostile to virtue and productive to corruption."³⁷⁷ Milton's decision not to write definitively on the suitability of monarchy until after the fall of the Protectorate generates this disagreement among scholars.

The crucial question for the purpose of this study is why did Milton, regardless of what his political thoughts were, defend the establishment of the Protectorate with his *Defensio Secunda* in 1654? At this point, Worden's comments regarding the failure of the Rump to live up to the expectations of English republicans need to be recalled. The Rump regime did not satisfied the desires of Milton, or any other republican figure. Milton, like Nedham, had urged his countrymen to sweep away all aspects of the ancient constitution, including the House of Commons, and turn to the Mediterranean republics for inspiration.³⁷⁸ When the Rump failed to meet Milton's expectations, he lost faith in it. Towards the end of the Rump, Milton realized that the English republic had been

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 54.

³⁷⁶ Dzelainis, "Milton's classical republicanism," 19.

³⁷⁷ Scott, *England's Troubles*, 305.

³⁷⁸ Worden, "Milton and Marchamont Nedham," 168.

achieved by the effort of a determined few, that the government did not represent the popular will, and that most of his countrymen were not fit for freedom.³⁷⁹ Milton's lack of faith in his fellow Englishmen reveals his elitism; he did not believe the common people were capable of understanding true freedom. Such a situation was far from that for which Milton had hoped. He could no longer tolerate the existence of the Rump. In the words of Milton's biographer William Parker, Milton believed that "If the majority of people were so stupid as to want a new tyranny over conscience, then a strong man like Cromwell should interfere."³⁸⁰

At the time of Cromwell's elevation, the future of the English Commonwealth was very much in doubt. The possibility of a Stuart return loomed as the exiled royalists were hoping to take advantage of the chaos in England.³⁸¹ Cromwell, with the support of the army, was the one man who could prevent this danger. Worden suggests that Milton endorsed Cromwell's rise because he had the power to curtail the twin threats of Stuart royalism and Presbyterianism.³⁸² Parker emphasizes how worried Milton was about the future of his country.³⁸³ Milton had had high hopes for the English Republic, yet none of these dreams were realized. The nation faced a possible royalist invasion from abroad and a preference for a new tyrannical government among the people.³⁸⁴ Without help, the Commonwealth was in danger of collapsing and everything the parliamentarians had fought to achieve would be lost. Dissatisfaction with the Rump and fear of royalists moved Milton to become a supporter of Cromwell and the Protectorate.

³⁷⁹ William Riley Parker, *Milton: A Biography* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1968), 415.

³⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

³⁸¹ Blair Worden, "John Milton and Oliver Cromwell," in *Soldiers, Writers and Statesmen of the English Revolution*, eds. Ian Gentles, John Morrill and Blair Worden (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 255.

³⁸² *Ibid.*

³⁸³ Parker, *Milton*, 415 and 435.

³⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 415.

Yet, how sincerely did Milton champion Cromwell? Twice Milton wrote of Cromwell—a sonnet dedicated to him in 1652 and *Denfsio Secunda* in 1654—and in each instance, Worden detects a warning to Cromwell. Milton may have been able to tolerate the type of government Cromwell established, but he could not accept the state-dominated Cromwellian church. In the 1652, John Own, a former chaplain in Cromwell’s army and later Vice-Chancellor at Oxford, submitted to parliament a plan for “the propagation of the gospel.”³⁸⁵ Owen’s system would later be revised into the Triers and Ejectors that Cromwell established.³⁸⁶ The recommendations in Owen’s proposal outraged many sects. The Baptists had three objections: they disapproved of the state having any power in appointing preachers; they were against the notion of compulsory attendance at a national church; and they were concerned by the restrictions placed on matters of faith.³⁸⁷ Such a scheme involved far too much state power in ecclesiastical affairs for Milton’s taste. Milton’s sonnet directed to Cromwell was part of a large campaign undertaken by the sects against Owen’s proposals. Although he was not the first to write on the topic, Milton was the first to go over the head of the Committee for the Propagation of the Gospel and appeal directly to Cromwell.³⁸⁸ Milton viewed Cromwell as the one man who had the power to halt the proposed religious settlement and might be sympathetic to sectarian concerns. The possibility of a state-dominated church was an issue that terrified both Milton and the sects as they believed that it would lead to religious repression.

³⁸⁵ Worden, “John Milton and Oliver Cromwell,” 246.

³⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁸⁷ Carolyn Polizzotto, “The Campaign against *The Humble Proposals* of 1652,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 38 (1987), 573.

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 577.

Milton belonged to no sect, but he still desired the separation of church and state and the disestablishment of the ministry.³⁸⁹ His *A Treatise of Civil Power in Ecclesiastical causes*, published in 1659 after Cromwell's death, highlights Milton's attitude regarding church and state. Milton believed that the main sources of religion were scripture and "the illumination of the Holy Spirit so interpreting that scripture as warrantable only to ourselves."³⁹⁰ Since scripture could not be understood without divine illumination, "no man or body of men in these times can be the infallible judge or determiners in matters of religion to any other men's consciences but their own."³⁹¹ In Milton's opinion, the state had no right to oblige every member of society to attend a national church. Such action would not advance religion, but "compel hypocrisy."³⁹² Milton focused on the differences between Protestants and Catholics to illustrate his point. State-dominated religion was associated with popery, while Protestantism, with its emphasis on reading the scriptures for oneself, permitted many religious denominations. Milton remarked: "For ask them, or any Protestant, which hath more authority, the church or the scripture? They will answer, doubtless, that the scripture."³⁹³ If the English were true Protestants, they would place the authority of the scripture above that of the church, and not permit authorities, civil or religious, to interfere with an individual's understanding of the Bible.

Worden interprets Milton's sonnet to Cromwell as a call for help. The "new foes" to which Milton referred in the sonnet were the proposed church settlement of Owen.³⁹⁴

³⁸⁹ Worden, "John Milton and Oliver Cromwell," 248.

³⁹⁰ John Milton, *A Treatise of Civil power in Ecclesiastical causes* (London, 1659), found on Early English Books Online, 5.

³⁹¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

³⁹² *Ibid.*, 40.

³⁹³ *Ibid.*, 20.

³⁹⁴ Worden, "John Milton and Oliver Cromwell," 250.

Through the sonnet, Milton hoped to convince Cromwell of the dangers of Owen's plan. Parker views the sonnet similarly. The praise for Cromwell, he asserts, was genuine, but at the same time Milton was urging Cromwell to use his power for other business concerning God, namely freedom of religion.³⁹⁵ When Milton wrote *Defensio Secunda* in 1654, his thoughts on religion had not changed. He still believed in the separation of church and state and still hoped that Cromwell would accomplish this goal.³⁹⁶ After *Defensio Secunda*, Milton did not mention Cromwell in his writings until after the Protectorate. Perhaps once the Cromwellian church was established, Milton lost faith in Cromwell's ability meet his religious aims. The church settlement that Cromwell ultimately enacted flew in the face of everything Milton believed. Yet Milton did not openly attack Cromwell until after his death. The sonnet and *Defensio Secunda* contain not criticisms of Cromwell, but warnings and advice; none of which he followed during his rule as Lord Protector. Milton stands apart from other English republicans because he found Cromwell's government to be acceptable but was not satisfied with his religious policy. Milton's poetry has caused his fame to swell beyond that of any other English republican, yet he was an anomaly within English republicanism. His writings, particularly those relating to Cromwell, must be read with knowledge of his religious and political attitudes towards the Protectorate in order for his uniqueness to emerge.

Both republicans and religious sects of the 1650s published many important tracts commenting on the political changes they witnessed, yet each went about writing pamphlets in a very different manner. The sects focused on the power of God and His judgment, describing salvation as the ultimate goal. Republicans championed the

³⁹⁵ Parker, *Milton*, 413.

³⁹⁶ Worden, "John Milton and Oliver Cromwell," 253.

concept of a free-state, and argued that liberty was the aim for all states. The quantity of sectarian pamphlets was much greater than that of republican treatise. Sectarian writers were also not receiving payment from the government and, therefore, did not need to veil their criticisms. With more writings and no need to worry about offending their employer, the sects were able to make better use of the public sphere and project a clear message to the population. The message from each sectarian writer was simple and identical: Cromwell must not accept the crown. The same cannot be said of republicans who each had their own ideas about liberty and government. After analyzing the work of Nedham, Harrington and Milton, the validity of Worden's point regarding the lack of cohesion among republicans is clear. They emphasized different problems with the Protectorate, launching an uncoordinated verbal assault that attracted little attention. Scott's effort to combine the republicans with religious radicals appears flawed considering their differences in writing style. The sects were unified in their fight against monarchy, while republicans were not.

The sects, as discussed in the last chapter, exercised a significant level of influence over Cromwell, and their pamphlets forced Cromwell to respond to their criticisms. Republican writings contained censure of and advice for Cromwell, yet he rarely answered their remarks. One reason for this lack of response might have been the fact that republicans and Cromwell had distinctive methods of communicating. They referred to the exploits of the heroes of antiquity, while his speeches made little mention of Greece or Rome. They spoke of complex theories of liberty, while he never addressed such philosophical issues. They officially praised regimes and simultaneously subtly critiqued them, while he stated exactly what was on his mind without any deception.

Republicans and Cromwell spoke different languages. The Republicans failed to influence him because they were unable to present their ideas in a manner that appealed to him. Without a translator, Cromwell would never understand or concern himself with republican criticisms of him and his government.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

During the years of Oliver Cromwell's rule, 1653-1658, print culture flourished in England and impacted the conduct of high politics. The expansion of printed works marked a change in communicative practice, hence, the traditional channels for expressing a grievance to the monarch had lost their effectiveness. Rather than contacting their local lord, people would prepare a remonstrance appealing to the public for legislative change.³⁹⁷ Anyone now had the ability to not only express their political views, but also reach much of the nation with their message. The prevalence of petitions reflects their utility as tools of propaganda.³⁹⁸ Print culture cannot be separated from the politics of the Cromwellian court as these two worlds interacted with each other throughout the 1650s. In response to Cromwell's political actions and decisions, the pamphlets attacked him in an attempt to discredit his government. In response to criticisms in the public sphere, Cromwell defended his regime in an attempt to win approval from the nation. Since his speeches were published in *Mercurius Politicus*, Cromwell's own words became part of the public discourse on government, forcing people to consider his arguments as well as those of his enemies. In a sense, print culture and Cromwell shaped each other's actions. His policies determined how the tracts would censure the Protectorate, and the ideas in printed works impacted the content of Cromwell's speeches.

The printed world was comprised of many diverse elements. This study has focused on three segments of pamphlet culture: monarchism, sectarianism, and republicanism. Although each group had a profoundly different ideological basis, they

³⁹⁷ Zaret, *The Origins of Democratic Culture*, 211.

³⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 221.

shared one thing in common: they all sought to influence Cromwell on the kingship issue. Ultimately, Cromwell found the sects' arguments the most convincing and this fact reveals much about Cromwell's character. His ideology contained both monarchical and sectarian elements, yet on the issue of kingship he sided with the sects. But did he completely ignore his monarchical tendencies? Cromwell's government involved more than just a title, and in these other areas he was able to satisfy his monarchical impulse. Before discussing the significance of the sectarian and monarchical dimensions of Cromwell's own thought, it is necessary to summarize the arguments and style of the three groups in order to determine why sectarian ideas influenced Cromwell in a manner that monarchical and republican ones did not.

Monarchists supported the prospect of kingship; some hoped that Cromwell would place the crown on his own head, while others preferred a Stuart restoration. They appealed to tradition, pointing out that for centuries kings and queens had governed England; therefore, all the laws of England were fitted to royal rule. Monarchy could stabilize a fractured nation by establishing a firm line of succession. Additionally, monarchists could point to the general sentiment in the nation that longed for a return to familiar forms of government. Of the three groups, monarchists' arguments were the most grounded in the political reality of the time. Their emphasis was on ending political turmoil and satisfying the people—both were achievable goals.

The sects, conversely, unwaveringly opposed the possibility of kingship. From the beginning of the Protectorate, they expressed their concerns about the royal title. These religious organizations disapproved not only of King Oliver, but of kingly government in general. In their opinion, monarchy oppressed the godly and they were

happy to see Charles I executed. The Civil War and regicide had brought new power and benefits to the sects who had no wish to return to the old manner of governing. They declared that the regicide signified God's desire to remove monarchy from England. If Cromwell were to establish himself as king, he would be acting in defiance of God's providences. The sects also informed Cromwell that the saints, formerly his allies, now considered him their enemy due to his monarchical tendencies and efforts to work with conservative MPs. As proof that Cromwell was provoking God's wrath, the sects pointed to his recent military failures. The catastrophe of the Western Design provided the sects with all the ammunition they required to besiege the Protectorate. The concepts invoked by the sects were on a much grander scale than those of the monarchists. Rather than attempting to end the immediate woes of nation, they believed that Cromwell should focus on the long-term consequences of his actions, namely his salvation. For the sects, God and His judgment were more important than tradition and the people of England.

Like the sects, republicans appealed to lofty ideals and, in some cases, opposed monarchical government; however, those republicans who did write against monarchy had different reasons for opposing kingly rule and espoused distinct principles. Drawing primarily on evidence from antiquity, republicans sought to demonstrate that kings were tyrants who prevented the people from experiencing true liberty. A free-state was one in which the people ruled, rather than a single person. Republicans listed example after example of ancient free-states that prospered, and monarchies that oppressed their subjects and failed to achieve glory. Although they never addressed the Humble Petition and Advice directly, republican writers were clear about the type of government they preferred. Instead of heavenly salvation, republicans wrote of ideals that existed in the

earthly realm. Liberty above all else was what they hoped to attain; through the establishment of liberty, men would fully develop their faculties and become citizens, not mere subjects. Such a vision was much more admirable and much less likely to ever be realized than supplying England with a long-lasting government.

Given Cromwell's own religious and political convictions, one would expect monarchical and sectarian writers to influence him. Cromwell supported government with some form of monarchy in it; unlike the sects, he did not, at least initially, believe that the regicide represented God's condemnation of the office of king. He also desired to heal and settle the nation, a goal which, as the monarchical writers pointed out, could be accomplished through the reestablishment of monarchy. His belief in the power of providence suggests that sectarian writings could also affect Cromwell. Constantly being alert to divine signs, Cromwell could not ignore sectarian warnings about providence. Additionally, Cromwell's objective of uniting all saints required him to take notice of sectarian grievances.

Of the three groups, the republicans had the least in common with Cromwell, and were ineffective in exploiting the public sphere. Their theories of liberty and government were rooted in Rome and Renaissance Italy, while Cromwell's belief that "the king is king by contract" lay in the English traditions of the ancient constitution and common law. The republicans did not launch a united assault upon the Protectorate; instead, each republican developed his own ideas and criticisms regarding Cromwell and his government. When they wrote treaties, republican writers officially defended the Protectorate—some of them were on the government's payroll—while subtly critiquing

it. Such a strategy may have permitted their pamphlets to pass the censors, but it did not spark Cromwell's interest.

Once published, republican pamphlets were just as unsuccessful in galvanizing the public as they were with Cromwell. Jason Peacey stresses that when analyzing print culture, it is crucial to take into account the target audience. Comparing the parliamentary and royalist campaigns, he notes that parliamentarians sought to establish support based on issues, while royalists preferred to "lecture" the populace.³⁹⁹ The arrogant tone of the royalists hindered the reception of their message. A somewhat similar result occurred with republican publications. Citing classical sources and discussing complex theories of liberty would not have appealed to the majority of the English population. Milton's frustration with his countrymen's refusal to embrace the prospect of liberty illustrates the inability of republican writings to stir the passions of the nation.⁴⁰⁰ Republican ideals were elite and would only resonate with an educated reader, while sectarian writings drew on familiar stories from the Bible and addressed religious themes that would attract all Englishmen. The ineffectiveness of the republican pamphlet campaign ensured that their movement would never be numerous or appear dangerous to the Protectorate. Cromwell shared few values with the republicans and did not consider them to be a major threat; therefore, republican writers were unable to influence Cromwell and their work had little impact on his decision to reject the crown.

Based solely on his own beliefs, Cromwell could have gone either way on the question of kingship. The monarchical and sectarian arguments displayed in the public sphere represent a tension within Cromwell, as he could understand the merit of both.

³⁹⁹ Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers*, 324.

⁴⁰⁰ Parker, *Milton*, 415.

His sympathies with both contentions explain why he delayed in giving a definitive answer on the Humble Petition and Advice. Why did sectarian ideas regarding kingship appeal to Cromwell more than monarchical ones? Part of the answer lies in the sectarian style of writing. The sects expressly told Cromwell not to accept the crown while the monarchists merely outlined the advantages of kingly government. Sectarian writings also had a critical tone. Stressing the faults of the Protectorate and Cromwell himself, pamphlets written by religious figures aimed to demonstrate that the Protectorate was a profane government. Conversely, monarchical writings often praised Cromwell as a great military and political leader who deserved the royal title. Given the fact that he was obsessed with his own salvation, criticisms were bound to concern Cromwell more than laudatory remarks. The sects also laid greater emphasis on the disastrous results that would follow the resurrection of the monarchy, namely God's harsh judgment upon Cromwell. The monarchists were unable to inspire the same sense of fear in Cromwell when they addressed the consequences of not returning England to monarchical rule. Generally, the sects were more forceful in their writing and as a result, they exercised more influence over Cromwell.

Additionally, the sects, especially the Quakers, mobilized their supporters through the medium of print with greater efficiency than any other interest group. Through the army, Quakers established connections with printers in London and lines of communication between London and their bases of support.⁴⁰¹ Peters notes the key role played by print in the development of a Quaker lobby movement which had the power to pressure the national government.⁴⁰² Sectarian tracts may have been addressed to

⁴⁰¹ Peters, *Print Culture and the Early Quakers*, 51-60.

⁴⁰² *Ibid.*, 210.

Cromwell and other members of government, but they were intended for a broad audience and sought to encourage large-scale political participation.⁴⁰³ Contemporaries were aware of the success the sects were having with the new pamphlet culture and were worried about the consequences of the printed word being in the hands of religious fanatics.⁴⁰⁴ With so many tracts being thrust into the public sphere, the sects had the potential to turn all members of the godly against the government, a prospect which would have concerned those in power.

Unlike those of the sects, the arguments of monarchical writers had a significant complication for Cromwell. He may have been the *de facto* head of state, but the exiled Charles Stuart was still the *de jure* ruler of England. For a man like Cromwell who believed in English traditions and the ancient constitution, it was difficult to assume a title that still had a lawful claimant. Charles Stuart was the legitimate king of England, while Cromwell had no royal blood in his veins and no right to the English throne other than that of conquest. He had no legal grounds for becoming king, but the title of Lord Protector could have a legislative basis if the members of the second Protectoral Parliament included it in the Humble Petition and Advice. When discussing the merits of the titles Lord Protector and king with the second Protectoral Parliament on April 20, 1657, Cromwell told the MPs: “And therefore if a thing that hath for its root and foundation but your legislative in an act of yours,—if I may put a but to it. I do not do so, for I say it is [on] as good a foundation as that other title [king] is.”⁴⁰⁵ The MPs did, in Cromwell’s opinion, have the power to install him as Lord Protector, but the title of king could only be bestowed by God who had, through His providences, destroyed the royal

⁴⁰³ Ibid., 227-230.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., 45.

⁴⁰⁵ Abbott, ed., *The Writings and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, IV, 480.

office. No matter how they crafted their arguments, monarchical writers who supported the prospect of King Oliver could not change the fact that Charles Stuart had a legitimate claim to the crown, while Cromwell only had a legitimate claim to the title Lord Protector.

The history of the title Lord Protector might also have increased its validity in Cromwell's mind. When Protector Gloucester ruled for Henry VI and Protector Sommerset led England during Edward IV's minority, the position of Lord Protector was only temporary. Once the young king was of age, he no longer required a noble to rule in his place. Some of Cromwell's comments suggest that he viewed his office in a similar manner. In his speech discussing the Humble Petition and Advice on April 20, 1657, Cromwell said of his title: "I have no title to, the government of these nations, but what was taken up in a case of necessity, and temporary, to supply the present emergency."⁴⁰⁶ This description of Cromwell's title could easily apply to Protector Gloucester or Sommerset. All three Protectors existed out of "necessity," their position was only "temporary," and they had to resolve "the present emergency." Later, in the same speech, Cromwell further connected his office to that of Gloucester and Sommerset. He said, "It hath pleased God that I have been instrumental to keep the peace of the nation to this day, and to keep it under a title that some [say] signifies but a keeping it to another's use, to a better use, that may improve it to a better use."⁴⁰⁷ Gloucester kept power for Henry VI's use, Sommerset for Edward VI, but for whom did Cromwell hold power? The exiled Charles Stuart? A parliament with a proper constitution by which to govern? Cromwell never states whom he expected to succeed his government, but his successor's

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., 481.

⁴⁰⁷ Ibid.

identity is not important to the present issue. The crucial fact is that he, like Gloucester and Sommerset, thought that an individual or assembly would assume his powers once a constitution had been established and all crises averted. By framing his title in familiar terms, Cromwell could legitimize the title Lord Protector to a greater degree than the monarchical writers could justify the title king.

The fact that Cromwell sided with the sects on the issue of kingship reveals something about the Lord Protector himself. Cromwell desired to heal and settle the nation, but when he had the chance to provide England with a sound constitution, smooth succession, and a recognizable form of government, he declined the opportunity. For all his talk about political stability, Cromwell was more concerned about following the decrees of providence than granting England the type of government it needed. He was not willing to risk provoking God and endangering his soul simply because the majority of the population preferred kingly rule. This is not to say that Cromwell was selfishly putting his personal concerns ahead of the nation. On the contrary, anxiety about his country's future motivated him not to accept the crown. He was extremely cautious not to anger God, as he believed that God might punish the whole nation for his sins.⁴⁰⁸ What Cromwell's decision regarding the crown does tell historians is how he defined himself. Cromwell was both a conservative gentleman who believed in mixed monarchy and a Puritan who believed in providence. Since he followed the advice of the sects and refused the crown, Cromwell identified himself by his religious convictions before his political ones. He was a man of God first, and a man of tradition second.

Cromwell's resolution to adhere to the sects' counsel over that of the monarchists also reveals to whom Cromwell felt responsible. Monarchical pamphlets stressed the

⁴⁰⁸ Worden, "Oliver Cromwell and the Sin of Achan," 145.

general yearning for kingly government throughout the country, while sectarian writings emphasized the saints' and God's disapproval of the royal office. Cromwell did not consider himself a popular ruler who held his office only with the sanction of the people; therefore, the wishes of the majority of the population were not a crucial factor in his decisions. He believed that he owed his position to God, and within the earthly realm, the group to which he felt the most loyalty was the saints. The saints shared many of Cromwell's religious convictions and were not, like the rest of the nation, attached to the old, intolerant, ceremonious, Anglican faith. Since Cromwell and the saints had similar beliefs, he valued their opinion more than the rest of the country combined. Cromwell's first priority was to satisfy the demands of the godly; everyone else had to wait in line.

Sectarian influences may have triumphed over the question of kingship itself, but Cromwell's monarchical impulses were not permanently suppressed. He may have ruled as Lord Protector, but his behavior was identical to that of a king. Bulstrode Whitelocke's diary contains many descriptions of royal behavior on the part of Cromwell. When Cromwell was installed as Lord Protector on June 26, 1657—after the kingship crisis had been resolved—the ceremony was very regal. Whitelocke wrote:

His Highness standing under the Cloth of State, the speaker in the mane of Parliament presented to him a robe of purple Velvet lined with ermine . . . then he delivered to him the Bible richly gilded and bossed, after that, the Speaker girt the sword about his Highness & delivered to his hand the Scepter of Massy gold . . . After this, the people gave several great shouts, & the trumpets sounding, the Protector sat in the Chair of State holding the Scepter in his hand, on the right side sat the Ambassador of France, on the left side the Ambassador of the United Providences, near to his Highness stood his son Richard . . .⁴⁰⁹

In addition to these ceremonies, Cromwell altered the structure of his government in order to link it to the ancient constitution. In the later years of the Protectorate, Cromwell

⁴⁰⁹ Ruth Spalding, ed., *The Diary of Bulstrode Whitelocke* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), 462. The spelling of all lines quoted from *The Diary of Bulstrode Whitelocke* has been modernized.

added a second house of parliament that functioned much like the old House of Lords. In his diary, Whitelocke noted that Cromwell's upper house acted as the old House of Lords had. His entry for January 20, 1658, reads: ". . . the members of the other house summoned by writ met & sat in the Lord's house as the Lords used to do formerly."⁴¹⁰ Cromwell had protested the abolition of the House of Lords in 1649; during the Protectorate, he had the opportunity to amend the Rump's mistake and restore an element of continuity to the English government. His powers and responsibilities also continued to be similar to that of a monarch. He conducted foreign relations in the same manner as English kings, and his title, Lord Protector, became hereditary and passed to his eldest son Richard. All these actions caused Cromwell to appear rather kingly.

Cromwell's policy of rejecting the title king but adopting regal behavior represents a compromise between his monarchical and sectarian values. His belief in providence obliged him to heed the warning of the sects and refuse the crown. His commitment to tradition ensured that the monarchists' calls for conventional government would not be completely ignored. As a Lord Protector who ruled as a king, Cromwell hoped to have it both ways; follow God's providences while at the same time supply the British Isles with an enduring government.

Cromwell had his own ideology, but his understanding of the world was not the only factor in his decision-making process. A public sphere existed during his reign and different groups within it attempted to induce Cromwell to comply with their proposals. Cromwell was not immune to such influences and on the controversial question of kingship, sectarian writings were able to play a significant role in his rejection of the crown. So powerful were sectarian criticisms of the Protectorate that they brought

⁴¹⁰ Ibid., 483.

Cromwell down from his seat in government and into the realm of print culture where his speeches contributed to the debates. Cromwell was the central English political figure of the 1650s and he is essential to studying the era; however, the pamphlet culture of the 1650s must be simultaneously considered as it was intertwined with parliamentary politics and had the potential to affect the Lord Protector's decisions.

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