Abstract

This dissertation investigates how Dissenting writers, among them Samuel Annesley and Richard Baxter, influenced the religious thought of Daniel Defoe. Though some critics, most notably G. A. Starr and J. Paul Hunter, have positioned Defoe within a broad “Puritan” tradition, his religious ideas are more properly understood within the specific circumstances of post-Restoration England, as the unique pressures engendered by the Interregnum impelled many Dissenting writers to privilege “Practical Religion” over abstract theology. The aversion to “doubtful disputations” that Defoe inherits from this discourse informs not only the modes of argument Defoe employs, but also the genres through which he engages with theological questions. Throughout his writing, however, his attachment to Biblical typology, which is informed by his dependence on the Bible as a stable locus of indisputable “plainness,” comes into conflict with his political tenets, as Scripture provides no firm precedent for the mode of contractual kingship introduced by the Glorious Revolution. At first seeking to mute the incongruities between “Hebrew times” and “modern” circumstances, Defoe is eventually impelled to reconceptualise typology, formulating a theory that both acknowledges the authority of the Bible while allowing William, and the mode of contractual kingship he represents, to surpass Scriptural types. This attitude towards typology fundamentally underpins the narrative of *Robinson Crusoe* (1719), which systematically repudiates Biblical narratives. Rather than adhering to prefigurative Biblical patterns, the novel is built on a series of divergences, first personal and then political, from Scriptural models. Anchored in his specific geographic and economic circumstances, Crusoe’s conversion is markedly distanced from Biblical types, represented as a process unique to his situation, rather than an iteration of an existing pattern. Ultimately, this dissertation contends that Defoe’s religious thought, specifically his commitment
to “Practical Religion” and the typological hermeneutic this discourse underpins, is fundamentally informed by his relationship with post-Restoration Dissent.
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# Table of Contents

Abstract........................................................................................................................................ii

Acknowledgements..................................................................................................................iv

Chapter 1: Introduction..............................................................................................................1


Chapter 3: Defoe, Dissent, and the Discourse of “Practical Religion”........................................66

Chapter 4: “A New Turn to the Text”: Typological Conflict, Adaptation, and Alteration...............128

Chapter 5: “Making Very Free with the Holy Scriptures”: *Robinson Crusoe* and the Disruption of Typology.........................................................170

Conclusion................................................................................................................................217

Works Cited.............................................................................................................................224
Chapter 1: Introduction

Follow him by the scent of his scraps of scripture, and you’ll find him at Salter’s, or Pinner’s-Hall...

Anonymous, The Shortest-Way...with its Author’s... Name Expos’d, his Practices Detected... (1703).

In early April of 1705, Daniel Defoe received a letter from his friend John Fransham, a Norwich linen-draper and fellow Dissenter, updating him on the local popularity of his new satire *The Consolidator*, a story of a lunar society that paralleled that of England (*Letters* 83). Defoe responded a few weeks later, expressing his pleasure that his new work was well received. This success, he wrote,

> is the Token for good to me that the work I am upon is of him whose immediate hand by wonderful steps have led me through the Wilderness of Troubles... This is the glory of his infinite Wisdom that brings to pass the great ends appointed by his foreknowledge by the agency of us his most despicable Instruments and the interposition of the minutest Circumstances. To him be all the praise both of his own work and our little, little, very little share in it, and let the success of his service encourage all the Lovers of Truth to stand up for the Lord against the Mighty, who knows but now is the day of our deliverance. (84-85)

For those familiar with the pragmatic, materialistic mentality on display in Defoe’s novels and economic tracts, this is an unexpected tone; the passage sounds more like Bunyan than Defoe. The language and phraseology reveal an extensive knowledge of Scripture, not only featuring numerous Biblical images but also following a trajectory anchored in the Old Testament. Perhaps we might assume that Defoe, more concerned with profits than piety, is only putting on a show of religion for his friend. But what is significant about this passage is that it is not, in essence, particularly exceptional. On the contrary, this Biblical language is typical of Defoe. His writing comprehends thousands of Biblical allusions, drawn from nearly every book of Scripture. Whatever his topic – trade, politics, history – his thought is rooted in the Bible. As Valentine Cunningham observes, “his ideolect is intensely Biblical” (349). Certainly, we cannot perfectly
measure the depth and sincerity of his faith. But we can profitably study, across thirty years of his writing, the contexts, characteristics, and development of his religious attitudes and ideas.

This dissertation undertakes one aspect of this endeavour, contending that Defoe’s religious thought, specifically his commitment to “Practical Religion” and the typological hermeneutic this discourse underpins, is fundamentally informed by his relationship with post-Restoration Dissent. The conventional image of Defoe paints him as an unprincipled, worldly man whose mindset was fundamentally secular and mercantile. This view is underpinned by a constellation of interrelated assumptions about the eighteenth century, about the development of the novel, and about the relationship between author and text. While we might trace this perspective back to the eighteenth century itself, when literary and political opponents blasted Defoe as a “monster” and a mercenary “hypocrite,” its modern manifestation is rooted in the work of twentieth-century biographers, who were inclined to see Defoe as an unprincipled dissembler, especially after the legal details of his 1692 bankruptcy were investigated by James Sutherland in 1933 (Lockhart 229; Judas Discover’d 3; Sutherland, “Troubles” 275-290). Moreover, as scholarship focused more sharply on his political writing, the uncertainty of his allegiances (now largely vindicated) came under fire and “his image as a pious and zealous reformer, misused by his own generation, was rapidly redrawn into that of an unscrupulous hack” (Hunter, Pilgrim xi; Guilhamet 12). For critics, Defoe’s unscrupulousness and “duplicity” fit only too well with his fictional characters, which substantiated the image of him as “an essentially unreligious rationalist” driven from his faith by his allegiance to reason – a portrait that fit Defoe neatly into a Whig history of the period (Stamm 227-241). The religious aspects and arguments of his writing, critics argued, were nothing more than “conventional, if economically inexpensive, tributes” (Andersen 46). This conception of Defoe was widely
disseminated and popularized in literary criticism by Ian Watt, who argued, in *The Rise of the Novel* (1957), that all of Defoe’s characters, Crusoe and Moll especially, were “embodiment[s] of economic individualism” driven by “the fundamental tendency of economic individualism” (68). As Watt’s book had an impact far beyond Defoe studies, it disseminated and popularized an image of Defoe as an essentially secular thinker who gave only lip-service to religious matters – what Defoe would condemn as “a God-I-thank thee Pharisee” (*Family RDW* I.46). By the second half of the twentieth century it became commonplace to conclude, in various terms, that “Defoe was not, in fact, a truly religious man at all,” a perspective that led naturally to the conclusion that “Defoe’s religious belief was simply irrelevant” to his writing (Bastian 87). Arguing that commercial priorities overrode all religious concerns in his writing, Denis Donoghue argues that “Defoe assented to Christian ethics only to the extent that it proved amenable to the analogies of trade” (290). As such, many biographies focus far more on his political and economic attitudes than on his religious thought, while the majority of literary studies treat the religious aspects of his writing dismissively or carelessly. This tendency is now being corrected, but it is still quite typical that no chapter on his religious identity is included in *The Cambridge Companion to Defoe* (2009).

In the wake of Watt, a body of critics partly redressed this skewed image by elucidating the religious underpinnings of Defoe’s writing. This shift was initiated in the 1960s, when Defoe’s narrative technique was connected with seventeenth-century religious discourse by two studies published in close succession: G. A. Starr’s *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography* (1965) and J. Paul Hunter’s *The Reluctant Pilgrim* (1966). Both books aimed, in part, to correct the neglect of Defoe’s “moral and religious” ideas by situating his writing in a “puritan tradition” (Hunter, *Pilgrim* 6). As Hunter remarked in his preface, both he and Starr “regard Defoe’s
religious background as enormously important” (xiii). In his study, Hunter identified religious guides, “providence” accounts, and spiritual autobiographies as important sources for the novel. In his own treatment of the topic, Starr focused exclusively on spiritual autobiography, arguing that Defoe had been significantly influenced by the genre, which typically recounted the “soul-experiences” of the author (4). Though the details of their schema differed, both authors contended that Robinson Crusoe (1719) followed an essentially Christian pattern of rebellion, repentance, and deliverance. Though this interpretation did not wholly displace the conventional impression, it has exerted significant influence. Most critics now consider spiritual autobiography one of the most important influences on Robinson Crusoe, a view that has helped counterbalance the traditional image of Defoe as an irreligious hypocrite (McKeon 318).

While the work of Hunter and Starr has directly contributed to many studies on Defoe’s religious thought, some tracing influences and others elucidating his religious beliefs, it has provided all critics, whether studying the generic, economic, political, feminist, or post-colonial aspects of Defoe’s writing, with a more nuanced perspective on Defoe as an author and thinker. While the study of Defoe’s religious thought has provided a salutary corrective to the conventional impression, the existing scholarship is limited in a number of ways. Following Starr and Hunter, much of the research on Defoe discusses his religious thought in terms of a “puritan” tradition. Whether examining Defoe’s religious views, his political tenets, or his

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1 A wide range of studies on the novel, including those by Michael McKeon and J. Paul Hunter, have sought to revise the conventional understanding of the generic status of Defoe’s novels. While reference to Defoe’s mercantile mindset has been a commonplace for more than a century, the past fifty years have seen more nuanced treatment of the topic; Novak provides a detailed analysis of his economic ideas in Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe (1962), while scholars like Sandra Sherman and James Thompson have studied Defoe’s engagement with the connections between value, finance, and fiction. The intellectual foundations of his political ideas are traced in Novak’s Defoe and the Nature of Man (1963), while Schonhorn studies the “anti-Lockean” aspects of his political thought. In recent years, the growing interest in Defoe’s treatment of gender has been stimulated by scholars like Stephen Gregg and Mona Scheuermann. Once largely ignored by critics, the racial and colonialist aspects of Defoe’s writing have been investigated most notably by Srinivas Aravamudan and Peter Hulme.

2 Though Starr consciously “seek[s] to show that many of Defoe’s religious attitudes are… [not] distinctively or exclusively Puritan,” the well-established connection between spiritual autobiography and Puritanism has led most critics to consider his work a study of an essentially “Puritan genre” (xi; Clark 2).
narrative techniques, it is now commonplace to reference his “puritan morality,” his “Puritan background,” his “Puritan-sounding” language, and, above all, the “puritan character” of *Robinson Crusoe* (Wiegman 45; Bell 29; Egan 452; Kim 796; Zimmerman 18; Shinagel 193).

Frequently ill-defined, the term often simply provides a shorthand for restrictive morals. Sophie Gee argues, for example, that “working within and coming out of the Puritan tradition, Defoe would... have been struggling with Puritan attitudes toward the body” (128). Not only is the term largely anachronistic after the implementation of the Clarendon Code, but it is inconsistent with the writing of Defoe, who considered himself a Dissenter, not a Puritan. Defoe wrote hundreds of pages on “Dissent,” but he almost never uses the term “Puritan,” which he applies almost exclusively to pre-Restoration history. The deficiencies of this focus, however, are more than simply semantic or historiographic; the focus on a “puritan” tradition has distracted critics from the specific circumstances of post-Restoration Dissent. There are certainly benefits to situating Defoe within a “long” intellectual and theological tradition, as studies like that by Leopold Damrosch demonstrate. Treating Defoe predominantly as a “Puritan,” however, has significantly prevented analysis of how his religious thought was inflected by the discursive and legal pressures unique to the situation of Dissenters living under the penal laws. Neither Hunter nor Starr, nor nearly all critics who connect Defoe to a “puritan” background, mention the Clarendon Code, the Toleration Act, or even the Glorious Revolution – three of the most significant factors in his identity and development. Analysis of Defoe’s religious thought has also been limited by the conservative motives of the scholarship on the topic, which have inclined critics to emphasize the conventional aspects of his techniques and attitudes. As both Starr and Hunter aim to connect patterns in Defoe’s writing with established genres or traditions, they attend to aspects of his writing that are consistent with generic conventions; they work to trace conformity and
imitation. Starr aims to identify “conventional elements” in Defoe’s novels, while Hunter strives to fit Crusoe into an established “pattern” of redemption (52; 184). As McKeon observes, both studies focus on “assimilating Robinson Crusoe to something like an ideal of Protestant narrative religiosity” (319). In a similar mode, research on Defoe’s religious beliefs has generally emphasized his “conservative – or traditional – heritage” and mindset (Schonhorn 10). Katherine Clark, for example, traces his commitment to orthodox Trinitarianism and “old Dissent,” arguing that his devotion to Christian eschatology “was the abiding architecture of his mental world” (13). Setting himself against the tendency to treat Defoe as a “modern,” Manuel Schonhorn argues that Defoe’s political ideas are significantly informed by a “Sauline” conception of Biblical kingship. This scholarship provides an important corrective to the conventional image of Defoe as a secular thinker, but it has necessarily downplayed the unconventional, innovative aspects of his religious thought, such as his “impious” or “irreverent” alterations of Scriptural narratives (Howe, Consideration 27; Owens, Introduction 34). At the same time, since most of the scholarship on Defoe’s religious thought connects him primarily with religious writing of his age, there has been little examination of his direct engagement with Scripture. There is no book-length study on Defoe and the Bible, and the handful of articles on the topic only briefly summarize a few of his attitudes and techniques. While Defoe was certainly engaged with the didactic and theological writing of his day, there was no text more important to his writing and thought than the Bible.

While this dissertation is based on the belief, made possible by established research, that Defoe was deeply engaged with Christian religious writing, it aims to redress existing deficiencies by investigating how Dissenting discourse underpins his religious thought, particularly his inventive approach to Biblical typology. Throughout the decades that followed
the Interregnum, the widespread hostility towards Dissenters fundamentally shaped how they presented themselves and their beliefs. In the debates surrounding toleration, Dissenting writers advertised their numbers and wealth – a discourse Defoe adopted and developed in much of his writing on Dissent. In religious tracts, a body of Dissenting writers, some closely connected to Defoe, consciously privileged “practical religion” over abstract theology. The discourse of “practical religion” fundamentally informs not only the modes of argument Defoe prefers, but also the genres through which he engages with theological questions. Since he aims, in his writing on religion, to “bring[g] the clouds down to us,” Defoe is particularly fond of Biblical typology (Magick SFS VII.232). His attachment to typology is intimately connected to his commitment to “Practical Religion,” as Defoe frequently appealed to the “plain[ness]” of Scriptural accounts as a means of “Repuls[ing]… cavilling Enquiries” (Reflections N III.181). In this sense, the Bible served as the cornerstone of his “Practical” rhetoric, particularly on controversial political issues like the Revolution and monarchical authority. Throughout his writing, however, his attachment to this mode of thought comes into conflict with his political tenets, as the Bible provided no simple type for the mode of contractual kingship introduced by the Glorious Revolution. At first seeking to mute the incongruities between “Hebrew times” and “modern” circumstances, Defoe is eventually impelled to reconceptualise typology itself, formulating a theory that both acknowledges the authority of the Bible while allowing William, and the mode of contractual kingship he represents, to surpass Scriptural types. This approach to typology fundamentally underpins the narrative of Robinson Crusoe (1719), which systematically repudiates Biblical narratives. Rather than adhere to prefigurative Biblical patterns, the novel is built on a series of divergences, first personal and then political, from Scriptural models. Anchored in his specific geographic and economic circumstances, Crusoe’s
conversion is markedly distanced from Biblical types, represented as a process unique to his situation, rather than an iteration of an existing pattern. Offering a reading of *Robinson Crusoe* that analyzes, rather than simply identifies, Biblical patterns, this thesis situates Defoe’s religious and political thought in the specific discursive circumstances of post-Restoration Nonconformity.

The history of post-Restoration Dissent is so well known that it often seems unquestionable. According to the established account, inaugurated by Max Weber’s influential *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), Dissenters rose from persecution to prosperity by dint of their distinctive affinity for trade. Coming to constitute the backbone of the rising middle class, Nonconformists were apparently disproportionately involved in the commercial development of the nation. This affinity was partly intellectual and partly practical; shut out from political power by the penal laws, Dissenters reportedly turned their energies to commercial occupations (Perkin 71; E. Thompson 57-8). The alleged link between Dissent and trade remains a regular feature of modern scholarship, serving to underpin a wide range of studies on the social, cultural, and economic history of England (Ashton 14-15; White 54). By 1970, the “enormous” commercial influence of Dissenters was already “too well-known to need emphasis,” and in modern scholarship the history has now ossified into fact (C. Wilson 342; Perkin 14). This conception of post-Restoration Dissent informs scholarship on Defoe, who is frequently located at the heart of this narrative, as well as interpretations of *Robinson Crusoe*, which is often read in the context posited by Weber’s theory.

This is a story, however, rooted in the seventeenth century itself, one which is often accepted too facilely. The image of Dissenters as a “sober, industrious, trading” people was developed, in large part, by Dissenting writers aiming to renovate their reputation after the Restoration (South 33). Due to their involvement in the Civil War, during the decades that...
followed the return of Charles II many considered Dissenters “Rebels, Murtherers, [and] King-Killers,” as Defoe recalls (Consolidator SFS III.75). The Clarendon Code, the series of laws intended to eradicate heterodoxy, was largely premised on the belief that Dissenters were fundamentally seditious. As the category comprehended Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, and Quakers, Dissenters were hardly a coherent party. Nonetheless, in the debate on religious toleration which took form throughout the 1670s and 1680s, it became rhetorically advantageous to argue on behalf of “Dissenters,” rather than individual denominations. Throughout Defoe’s lifetime, the image and status of Dissenters improved substantially. Though he never lived to see Nonconformists granted full civil liberty, nor to see anti-Dissenting sentiment fully extirpated, by the end of his life existing hostility had significantly abated and the most oppressive legal restrictions had been lifted. This change was informed by two parallel shifts in national priorities. Anti-Catholic sentiment, galvanized by the Exclusion Crisis and the 1687 Declaration of Indulgence, encouraged many Anglicans to promote Protestant unity. Dissenting writers, including Defoe, exploited these sentiments, warning that “we must either unite, or we must perish” (Bold 5). At the same time, the growing importance of national trade allowed tolerationists to challenge the penal laws on economic grounds – as a policy that was “destructive to the trade and well-being of our Nation” (Penn, Letter 29). While philosophical and Biblical arguments remained common, appeals to political and economic motives played an important role in the advancement and legislation of toleration.

Often treated as impartial evidence, claims about the commercial importance of Dissenters were part of this endeavour to renovate their image and promote toleration. It is almost invariably Dissenters themselves who claimed that Nonconformists were “the richest, most active, industrious, [and] thriving” people of the nation (Bethel 9). Moreover, such claims
did not exist in isolation; they were nearly always a component of arguments against the penal laws. In a word, claims about the numbers and wealth of Dissenters did not simply record their image; they helped construct it. As demographic research on Dissenters has demonstrated, Nonconformity was a far more heterogeneous category than once thought. Representations of Dissenters as a “commercial” people projected a distortedly consistent, favourable image, one that played a crucial role in the case for toleration. Acknowledging the disjunct between textual and demographic records does not invalidate established scholarship; Dissenters did play an important part in the economy, albeit one they often puffed or exaggerated. On the contrary, attending more carefully to the circumstances and contexts of contemporary claims alerts us to the rhetorical aspects of Nonconformist history, enhancing our understanding of exactly how the image and status of Dissenters improved throughout the decades that followed the Restoration. This conception of post-Restoration Dissent highlights the significance of Defoe’s arguments on the commercial influence of Dissenters. Defoe is not simply another commentator recording the prosperity of Nonconformity; he adopts and propagates this discourse, developing his own narrative adaptation of demographic claims. This new perspective on post-Restoration Dissent situates Defoe in the discursive contexts unique to his lifetime.

Though critics and biographers regularly label Defoe a Dissenter, the development of his relationship to Dissent is frequently neglected.\(^3\) In general, studies observe his attendance at the Dissenting academy of Charles Morton but quickly abandon the topic thereafter. It often seems as though Defoe was only a Dissenter at school. In fact, he quite consciously remained a Dissenter throughout his life, and his relationship with Dissent was remarkably complex. He was raised and educated within the Dissenting community, and Dissenters came to constitute the bulk

\(^3\) The most focused and detailed background on the topic is provided by John Richetti, *The Life of Daniel Defoe* (1-69).
of his friends and acquaintances. He undoubtedly benefitted from his commercial contacts among Dissenters, but his persistent refusal to conform seems to have been largely motivated by matters of conscience, not convenience. In fact, in the years that followed the turn of the century Defoe aimed to be more than simply a Dissenter. Through more than a dozen pamphlets on Nonconformity, he worked to become known as the voice of English Dissent. Yet, while he often conceived of himself as an impartial and loyal champion and defender of the “Dissenting Interest,” his abiding commitment to Protestant orthodoxy indicates that his Nonconformity was underpinned by firmly held religious convictions (Defoe, More Short-Ways 7). Visible in his earlier writing, Defoe’s antipathy to deism, scepticism, and atheism increased markedly throughout his lifetime, culminating in a number of substantial works on the supernatural published in the 1720s. Though traditionally dismissed as insignificant occult oddities, these works are underpinned by the same impulse that animated his Nonconformity: an unyielding commitment to his religious beliefs.

Critics have often been troubled, however, by the glaringly pragmatic, materialistic approach to religion in Defoe’s writing, especially in Robinson Crusoe. Brushing aside more difficult theological questions, Defoe engages with religion through remarkably secular images, arguments, and genres. If he purportedly aims to repudiate deism and atheism, why, we might ask, does Defoe formulate his account as A History of the Devil, instead of A Treatise on Deism, Atheism, and the Supernatural? While a few critics have briefly observed that Defoe is more concerned with practice than belief, none has studied the contexts of his “practical” discourse (Girdler 591; Sutherland, Critical 132).4 The consciously pragmatic approach to religion Defoe employs is fundamentally informed by Nonconformist rhetoric. As part of the broader endeavour

4 Though she spends only one paragraph on the topic, Penny Pritchard is one of the only critics to connect the “practical” priorities of Nonconformists, specifically William Bates and John Howe, with Defoe’s “language of practical interest” (34).
to renovate their reputation in the decades that followed the Restoration, a body of Dissenting writers promoted “Practical Religion,” a discourse that crucially influenced Defoe’s religious thought. Though appeals to “practicality” had been effective since the formation of the Scientific Revolution, they gained enhanced importance in the writing of post-Restoration Dissenters, since Nonconformists were frequently associated with impractical, abstract theological disputation. Defoe inherits his abiding hostility to theological abstraction and dispute from this discourse, which was propagated by both Samuel Annesley, his family minister, and Charles Morton. Most immediately evident in his self-conscious abjurations of “difficult” theological questions, particularly controversial ones, this attitude also informs his modes of argument and generic choices. When he is impelled to comment on religious issues, such as occasional conformity or Dissent, he dextrously sidesteps theological quandaries. In his tracts on the supernatural, Defoe employs a range of rhetorical techniques and generic markers to evade the theological “difficulties” that he necessarily encounters (Devil SFS VI.76). Though at first glance his preference for “practical” questions and modes of argument might suggest his commitment to Christianity is shallow or undeveloped, this aspect of his religious thought is fundamentally informed by his identity as a Nonconformist.

Yet for all this, Defoe often seems to treat Scripture irreverently, altering Biblical narratives or employing them in unconventional or unsuitable contexts. In A Hymn to the Mob (1715), for example, he gives “a new turn” to the story of the Gadarene demon, presenting it as an ambiguous parable about the inherent authority of the people. Jesus is relegated to the periphery as the swine, deprived of “their Right and Property,” become the central focus of the narrative (Defoe, Letters 199; Mob SFS I.424). Certainly, sermons provided some precedent for making “practical improvements” on Biblical topics, as did religious epics, such as those by
Samuel Wesley, Richard Blackmore, Abraham Cowley, and John Milton. Defoe occasionally invokes the latter two poets to justify his “poetic flights” on Scriptural narratives (*Family RDW* I.73; *Divino SFS* II.192; *Reflections N* III.245). But the impulse behind Defoe’s “intriguingly flexible” Biblical allusions is markedly different; Defoe did not aim to justify divine providence (Merrett xv). As such, it is tempting to dismiss his “idiosyncratic manipulation of… biblical narrative” as “irreverent” or insignificant, especially as it seems occasional or haphazard (Schonhorn 112; Owens 34). Richetti, for example, finds that Defoe’s Biblical analogies “feel… at times deeply inappropriate, even comically self-aggrandizing” (*Defoe* 122). But Defoe’s inclination to give a new “turn” provides a key to not only his engagement with Scripture, but to the eventual development of *Robinson Crusoe*. This tendency is rooted in his attachment to typology, a hermeneutic which figures events, objects, and individuals as “types” of established “antitypes,” or models. The hermeneutic was originally employed in Biblical exegesis as a means of reconciling the Old Testament and the New Testament, a process which Defoe describes, in extensive detail, in *More Reformation* (1703): “Law was but Gospel under Types conceal’d, / And Gospel was those Types and Laws reveal’d… Thus both in equal strength remain alive, / That Antecedent, this the Relative” (*SFS* I.224; Defoe, *Sincerity* 8). By the seventeenth century, however, Biblical typology had come to play a significant role outside theological and devotional discourses, particularly during the Civil War (Zwicker 117-127). As Paul Korshin observes, as the hermeneutic was increasingly detached from its traditional exegetical role, Biblical types came to serve as recognizable “typological signs” in a wide array of profane forms, especially political and satirical works (147-203). Since the Bible was known more extensively and profoundly than any other text, Scriptural types carried unrivalled ideological and political import. For example, representing Charles II as a type of Moses, as

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5 The most influential studies of literary typology are those by Miner and Korshin.
many Royalist writers did in the decades that followed the Restoration, not only positioned his return within a legitimizing providential framework, but also aligned English Republicans with the Egyptians, justifying their punishment and naturalizing their exclusion from the liberated Israelite (English) nation. A wide range of writers, including Marvell, Butler, Dryden, Swift, and Pope, exploited the rhetorical potential of typology.

While Defoe’s adherence to a typological perspective is well known, scholars have neglected how his conception of typology was fundamentally reshaped by conflicts between his hermeneutics and his politics. In general, critics assume that his engagement with Scripture is entirely conventional, especially in Robinson Crusoe (Korshin 216-220). But throughout his poetry, from A New Discovery of an Old Intreague (1691) to A Hymn to the Mob, Defoe’s attachment to Biblical typology clashes with his commitment to a contractual model of kingship, impelling him to reconceptualise the relationship between “Hebrew times” and “modern” realities (Intreague SFS I.41; Mourners SFS I.146). As he acknowledges in his first poem, which responds to the “chiming” typology of Absalom and Achitophel (1681), Biblical models of kingship, including Saul and David, were chosen by divine right (Intreague SFS I.41-42). In his sustained endeavour to panegyrize William, the Revolution of 1688, and the form of contractual kingship it represented, Defoe rejects direct typology with increasing confidence and clarity, developing a conception of the hermeneutic that authorizes adaptations and alterations of Biblical narratives. Paradoxically, it is his profound devotion to the Bible that drives Defoe to this approach. It would be difficult to overstate the importance and “authority of Scripture” for Defoe (Apparitions SFS VIII.75; New RDW III.215). The Bible was “the Rule of Life”; “every thing needful to our life here… or useful to our being hereafter, [was] contain’d in” the Scriptures (Family RDW I.53). As it was “highest” and “most ancient” authority, the Bible
always came first; whether he was discussing politics, history, trade, family, or religion, Scripture provided the “originals” of every topic (Magick SFS VII.146; Apparitions SFS VIII.48, 51). Defoe begins his Present State of the Parties in Great Britain (1712), for example, not with Grotius or Locke, but with St. Paul (1). And yet the Bible also always had the last word. Especially in cases of uncertainty, Scripture provided conclusive, “undeniabl[e]” evidence, since it was “the Oracle of all Truth, establish’d and undisputed in it self” (Review VIII.410; New RDW III.199). Even in his most sceptical reflections, Defoe refuses to challenge the “absolute” veracity of the Bible (New RDW III.209). As such, unlike many of his contemporaries, Defoe remains unwilling to abandon Biblical models after the Glorious Revolution, but rather gradually minimizes the typological proximity between contemporary life and Scriptural history, developing a conception of typology that permits more inventive adaptations of Biblical narratives. He puts this approach into practice in Jure Divino (1706), refiguring the accession of Saul as the origin of popular monarchy, rather than the inauguration of divine right. The exigencies of constructing a Biblical foundation for popular sovereignty demanded techniques that became crucial in the development of Defoe’s fictional mode, including the incorporation of dramatic dialogue and the manipulation of paratext. As his attitude towards the people was significantly complicated by the riots of 1710 and 1715, A Hymn to the Mob comprehends Defoe’s most complex and ambivalent representation of popular sovereignty. He remains committed to building his account on a Biblical foundation, tracing the origins of “the mob” back to Genesis itself. Doing so, however, drives Defoe to his most unconventional and original adaptations of Biblical narratives, the poem marking, simultaneously, his abiding commitment to Scripture and his developed disavowal of typological patterns.
This attitude towards typology fundamentally shapes *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe*, which is formulated on a comprehensive repudiation of typological prefiguration. Critics who have identified Biblical allusions and types in the novel, such as the Prodigal Son, have typically assumed they set out prefigurative patterns that Crusoe fulfills. On the contrary, the narrative accentuates the incongruities between Biblical typology and the unconventional nature of Crusoe’s “surprizing” character and experience (*Crusoe N* I.54); like William, Crusoe is too “modern” for Biblical types to fully accommodate. The early portion of the narrative is defined by the invocations of Proverbs and the parable of the Prodigal Son. Rather than serve to denigrate Crusoe, however, his divergence from prefigured paths institutes an anti-typological dynamic that defines the narrative, as Scriptural types fail to account for the economic, philosophical, and psychological realities of contemporary existence – for the “uneven State of human Life” (*Crusoe N* I.172). Crusoe’s isolation on the island introduces a set of circumstances, geographic as well as political, that cannot be properly represented typologically. As his religious sensibility takes form, Crusoe attempts to represent himself as an Israelite wandering the wilderness, but his geographic constraints compel him to reject the conception of “deliverance” attendant to this typology. In the political register of the text, Biblical typology is particularly central, as Crusoe endeavours to figure himself as a type of Biblical monarch – both David and Saul. But critics have often been misled by the mere presence of these allusions to conclude that Crusoe follows these established patterns. In fact, *Robinson Crusoe* traces his failure to align with these types, marking how his unique situation is incompatible with both Old Testament and New Testament models of authority. As Crusoe’s

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6 While a number of critics have emphasized the importance of treating the Crusoe trilogy as a whole, the *Farther Adventures* (1719) and the *Serious Reflections* (1720) are far less engaged with typology, in part because in responding to critics, particularly Charles Gildon, Defoe endeavoured to represent *Robinson Crusoe* as a consistent allegory.
conversion makes clear, the novel repudiates prefigurative typology, not Scripture itself. His conversion, in fact, is premised on a disavowal of established patterns; his experience is deliberately atypical. From his prophetic dream, which diverges conspicuously from Biblical forms, to his tobacco-induced transformation, Crusoe’s metamorphosis is significantly anchored in his own circumstance and experience. Initially obstructed by a typological hermeneutic, the process of conversion culminates with a dramatic affirmation of Crusoe’s own unique engagement with Scripture, his moment of transformation formulated on a phrase adapted to his situation. In a sense, his religious experience is “homemade,” as Sutherland once suggested (Defoe 26); it is built with materials rooted in the island itself. In this way, Crusoe’s conversion affirms the essential importance of the Bible while nonetheless evincing his independence from established Biblical types of political authority and spiritual “deliverance.”

Though his commitment to the Bible never wavered, by 1719 Defoe could no longer maintain a typological hermeneutic. While his preference for “practical religion,” inherited from Dissenting discourse, made typology a particularly prevalent mode of thought in his writing, his poetry manifests an increasing emphasis on the distance between “Hebrew times” and “modern” life, one stimulated by the incongruity between William and the “Hebrew Heroes” of Scripture (Intreague SFS I.41; Mourners SFS I.146). Yet, as this conflict between his politics and his hermeneutics pressures him to reconceptualise the role of Biblical types, it significantly inspires the more creative engagement with Scripture that forms the foundation of Robinson Crusoe. We need not read the novel as a conventional rehearsal of established types to situate it within a devotional context; the narrative is a “parable,” as Defoe suggests, but one, like Crusoe himself, “broke[n] loose” from Biblical patterns (Reflections N III.53; Crusoe N I.60).
A Note on References and Attributions

During the last three decades, the Defoe canon has changed significantly, in large part due to the research of P. N. Furbank and W. R. Owens, who have de-attributed more than 200 works. While some of these de-attributions have been convincingly questioned or challenged, in general the revised canon they propose, pared down to 276 separately numbered works, is the most authoritative currently available (Novak “Canon” 86-104; Marshall 209-234). Treating works on a case-by-case basis would be ideal, but doing so is beyond the scope of this study. Moreover, the new edition of Defoe’s writing published by Pickering & Chatto, currently the most detailed and comprehensive, is based on this revised canon. As such, this dissertation is based only on works that Furbank and Owens have attributed to Defoe in their *Critical Bibliography of Daniel Defoe* (1998).

References to the Pickering & Chatto editions identify both the name of the work and the volume in which it may be found. Unless otherwise noted, sources from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are available through *Early English Books Online* or *Eighteenth Century Collections Online*. Biblical passages are from the King James Version, specifically from Matthew Poole’s two-volume *Annotations Upon the Holy Bible* (1683, 1685), which was used by Defoe.
Titles

Advice  
Advice to All Parties (1705)

Apparitions  
An Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions (1727)

Challenge  
The Dissenters Answer to the High-Church Challenge (1704)

Consolidator  
The Consolidator (1705)

Crusoe  
The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Robinson Crusoe (1719)

Devil  
A Political History of the Devil (1726)

Dissenters  
An Enquiry Into the Occasional Conformity of Dissenters (1697)

Divino  
Jure Divino (1706)

Enquiry  
An Enquiry Into the Occasional Conformity of Dissenters (1697)

Family  
The Family Instructor, Volume 1 (1715)

Gentleman  
The Complete English Gentleman (1728-1729)

Honesty  
A New Test of the Church of England’s Honesty (1704)

Intreague  
A New Discovery of an Old Intreague (1691)

Loyalty  
A New Test of the Church of England’s Loyalty (1702)

Magick  
A System of Magick (1726)

Misrepresented  
The Dissenter Misrepresented and Represented (1704)

Mob  
A Hymn to the Mob (1715)

Mourners  
The Mock Mourners (1702)

New  
The New Family Instructor (1727)

Observations  
Brief Observations on Trade and Manufactures (1721)

Occasional  
An Enquiry Into Occasional Conformity (1702)
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<th>Peace</th>
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<td>Plan</td>
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<td>Preface to Delaun’s <em>Plea for the Non-Conformists</em> (1706)</td>
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<td><em>Serious Reflections During the Life and Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe</em> (1720)</td>
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<td>Review</td>
<td><em>A Review of the Affairs of France</em> (1704-1713)</td>
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<td>Serpents</td>
<td><em>Wise as Serpents</em> (1712)</td>
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<td>Spy</td>
<td><em>A Continuation of Letters Written by a Turkish Spy</em> (1718)</td>
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<td>Subordination</td>
<td><em>The Great Law of Subordination Consider’d</em> (1724)</td>
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<td>Weakest</td>
<td><em>The Weakest Go to the Wall</em> (1714)</td>
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**Pickering & Chatto Editions**

- **N** | The Novels of Daniel Defoe |
- **PEW** | The Political and Economic Writings of Daniel Defoe |
- **RDW** | Religious and Didactic Writings of Daniel Defoe |
- **SFS** | Satire, Fantasy and Writings on the Supernatural by Daniel Defoe |
Chapter 2

A “Sober, Industrious, Trading” People?

English Protestant Dissent, 1662-1731

If you would go on to distinguish us... let us trade by our selves; let us card, spin, knit, weave and
work with and for one another... Let us fraught our ships apart, keep our money out of your
Bank, accept none of our bills... and see how you can go on without us.

Daniel Defoe, An Enquiry Into Occasional Conformity (1701)

When Charles II set foot on English soil in 1660 after more than ten years in exile, the throngs of
cheering Englishmen who had assembled on the shores at Dover cast a veneer of euphoria over
the religious and political fissures that still fractured the nation. In his Diary, Samuel Pepys
records a scene of national jubilation familiar to scholars of the Restoration period: an “infinite...
crowd of people and horsemen, citizens, and noblemen of all sorts,” gathered for the return of the
King, whose “shouting and joy... [were] past imagination” (I.158). Yet if for many
contemporaries this momentous homecoming brought liberty from the heterodoxy and instability
of the collapsed Protectorate, for others the return of the king inaugurated a period of oppressive
exclusion and persecution. Aboard the HMS Royal Charles, amidst an “extraordinary press of
Noble company and great mirth,” Pepys naturally experienced only the optimism and elation of
the victors (I.156). But for the Nonconformist leader Richard Baxter, who was ejected from his
livings and repeatedly arrested and imprisoned under the new regime, the return of the king
occasioned far more anxiety. In his memoirs, these watershed years are described with
considerable bitterness and disappointment, as they are associated primarily with the introduction
of the Clarendon Code, the set of laws which recast religious heterodoxy as a distinct legal
category: Nonconformity (or Dissent). 7 Rather than produce religious uniformity, however, this

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7 Both terms signified those who refused communion with the Anglican Church, but their connotations differed. In
earlier writing, Dissent suggested a firmer rejection of the Established Church than Nonconformity. As such, more
divisive legislation largely served to define and create a substantial community of
Nonconformists which endured, in the face of considerable popular and political antagonism,
alongside the Established Church.

Conventional studies of Nonconformity have chronicled the history of post-Restoration
Dissent in broad, optimistic strokes, tracing an auspicious link between Nonconformity and
economic progress. This narrative, however, is more convenient than it is accurate. Between
1662, when the Act of Uniformity was introduced, and 1718, when the Schism Act was repealed,
the reputation and status of Dissenters improved, in large part, based on two discourses, one
political and the other economic. As pressure to unite against Catholicism grew, particularly
surrounding the Popish Plot and the 1687 Declaration of Indulgence, contemporaries were
impelled to accommodate Dissent. At the same time, concerns about the national economy
reshaped political and popular attitudes towards Dissenters, as proponents of toleration argued
that the penal laws hampered trade. Both of these shifts, however, were developed, in large part,
by Dissenting writers themselves who actively constructed and advertised an image as a loyal
“trading” people (Penn, Letter 3). As recent demographic research has revealed, Nonconformity
was a far more heterogeneous than contemporary accounts suggest. Tracts by Dissenters did not
simply record their image; they helped construct it. Throughout Defoe’s lifetime, Nonconformist
writers worked energetically to convince contemporaries that English Dissenters could not be
oppressed without endangering the economic prosperity of the nation. This mode of argument
was supported by distorted representations of their demographic and socio-economic importance,
as Dissenting writers overstated their numbers and wealth. Defoe himself participated

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moderate Dissenters often preferred to identify as Nonconformists. For a sample of the contemporary debate
concerning the two terms, see John Corbet, A Second Discourse (9) and Richard Perrinchief, Indulgence Not
Justified (31-32). Historians disagree on exactly which laypeople should be included in this category, since some
attended both Anglican and Dissenting services. I categorize any who attended non-conforming conventicles
Dissenters, as this was the primary definition used in contemporary legislation and writing.
significantly in this discourse, as he not only propagated a favourable image of Dissent but extrapolated narratives aimed to assert the importance and influence of Nonconformists. Though Nonconformists played no inconsiderable role in the national economy, their image as a “Sober, Industrious, Trading” people was significantly developed and disseminated by Dissenting writers themselves (South 33).

The Strait Door to the Church: The Clarendon Code

Introduced in the tense years that followed the restoration of the Anglican regime, the collection of acts comprising the Clarendon Code was designed to stamp out the religious heterodoxies that had contributed to the Civil War. 1661, the year after Defoe was born, was, in many ways, the most promising English sectaries would know for decades. Nearly a month before his return, Charles, motivated by an array of political and personal factors, had promised that “no man [would] be disquieted, or called in question, for differences of opinion in matters of religion,” offering his support for any act of indulgence or toleration introduced by Parliament (Breda 58). Presbyterians in particular, among them the parents of Defoe, had reason to expect favourable treatment, since a Presbyterian majority in the Convention Parliament had effected the king’s return. As John Coffey suggests, in the inaugural days of the Restoration “an unprecedented window of opportunity had been opened for a moderate and tolerant church settlement” (167).

But the largely Anglican Cavalier Parliament that met in May of the following year rejected the tolerant approach recommended by the king, aiming to enforce religious uniformity rather than permit pluralism. Following the proliferation of heterodoxy under the Commonwealth, many writers pressed for agreement on religious questions, since political stability was typically linked

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8 As John Coffey remarks, this title, applied retroactively to the collection of penal laws passed during 1661-1666, is somewhat misleading, since others played a more prominent role in the formulation of the legislation than did Sir Edward Hyde, the Earl of Clarendon (167-68).
with religious uniformity (Perrinchief, Discourse 2; Charles II, Worcester 365). Indeed, when it eventually took form, the legislation of uniformity came to be explicitly premised on the belief that “nothing conduces more to the settling of the peace of this nation, nor to the honour of our religion… than an universal agreement in the public worship of Almighty God” (Act of Uniformity 378). Moreover, Anglican clergy who bitterly remembered the expulsion of their ministers under Puritan rule were unsurprisingly disinclined to indulgence. The punitive approach Parliament pursued was also considerably motivated by fears that frustrated Puritans would topple the re-established regime, the permanence of which was still uncertain. Such fears were stoked by the January 1661 uprising of about fifty Fifth Monarchists in London, led by a wine-cooper named Thomas Venner, which resulted in twenty-two deaths (Rogers 112-116; Capp 14). To many, this revolt only confirmed the continued threat of the Good Old Cause. Though Dissenting writers widely disavowed violence and professed their loyalty to the new regime, many writers alleged that Dissenters were only pursuing “new attempts to effect those pernicious ends, the old being frustrated” (Perrinchief, Samaritanism A3). The deep-seated anger and fear that followed the Interregnum helped give such claims wide currency.

To curtail the perceived threat of this persistent faction, Parliament passed four acts, known afterwards as the Clarendon Code, designed to extirpate Puritanism in England. The Corporation Act of 1661 aimed to purge local governments of heterodoxy by requiring all public officials, including “mayors, aldermen, recorders, bailiffs, town clerks, [and] common council men,” to take the sacrament according to the rites of the Church of England (Corporation 375-376). The Act of Uniformity, passed the following year, was designed to produce a uniformly orthodox clergy, and it formed the core of what became known as the Clarendon Code. By this act, clergymen were to renounce the Solemn League and Covenant, denounce violent resistance
to the King, and assent and consent to the *Book of Common Prayer* (“revised with an anti-Puritan bias”), using it in all services (Matthews xii). Parliament rejected a Declaration of Indulgence proposed by Charles in response to this strict legislation, and to prevent ministers ejected by this act from continuing to preach, the Commons soon passed two acts intended to eradicate unauthorized worship. The First Conventicle Act, passed in 1664, forbade meetings of more than five adults for Nonconforming worship, extending the reach of coercive laws to the Dissenting laity, who, for attending proscribed services, could be penalized with fines, imprisonment, or transportation. The Five Mile Act, passed in the wake of the outbreak of Plague in 1666, prohibited ejected ministers from coming within five miles of their former parishes, any city or corporate town, or any borough represented in Parliament. Not only did this legislation further restrict the religious influence of Dissenting ministers, but it prevented them from teaching at English schools and universities, obstructing the training of new Dissenting clergy. English Protestant Dissenters were further disabled by the Test Act of 1673, which was explicitly aimed at Catholics but excluded many Protestant Nonconformists from civil or military service by requiring oaths of supremacy and allegiance as well as reception of the sacrament. Supplemented by the Second Conventicle Act in 1670, as well as by older Elizabethan laws (under which John Bunyan was imprisoned in 1660), this collection of laws inaugurated a long but ultimately unsuccessful endeavour to stamp out heterodoxy in England. Under this array of legal restrictions, thousands of Dissenters across England were punished during the following decades with fines and imprisonment for their refusal to conform. Roughly 1,800 ministers were ejected from their livings under the new legislation – nearly a fifth of the parish clergy (Matthews xiii). August 24, 1662 (Black Bartholomew’s Day as it would come to be remembered) was etched

9 Ministers and laypeople refused to conform to the Established Church for a wide variety of reasons, including beliefs on communion, church government, ordination, forms of worship, and baptism.
into the public memory by the final sermons ejected ministers delivered across England, which were printed in various collections, such as Ashe Simeon’s *Exact Collection of Farewel Sermons* (1662). Most of those who continued to preach usually did so covertly, under the constant threat of punishment. While open to exaggeration, contemporary reports suggest that roughly 15,000 families were ruined and 5,000 Dissenters died in prison (Backscheider, *Defoe* 10). Fines were widely imposed not only on those who led unauthorized worship, but those who attended these meetings. Some Dissenters were financially ruined by fines, especially after the Second Conventicle Act, which allowed fines to be collected from the goods of the offender. After numerous fines, Robert Collins was impelled to sell his house and estate and flee to the Netherlands (Matthews 129). While many of the accounts of persecution are intended to garner sympathy, considering that a footman, for example, made about £7 a year, the £5 fine for a first contravention of the First Conventicle act could undoubtedly ruin many for their refusal to conform.

Dissenters punished only with fines were comparatively fortunate, since life in gaol could be dangerous or even fatal. Conditions varied considerably between prisons, and prisoners with some wealth, connections, or luck could receive comparatively mild treatment. In a few cases, imprisoned Dissenters on good terms with gaolers were allowed to visit family or preach freely, as John Bunyan was when imprisoned at the Bedford gaol. But for the majority of prisoners, prison conditions, if not “dungeon-like,” were certainly afflictive (SP 29/423 f.34). During the twenty-eight years that followed the Restoration, twenty-eight ministers died in prison, including John Delaune, author of *A Plea for the Non-Conformists* (1683), for which Defoe wrote a sympathetic preface in 1706. In his journal, George Fox records that his cells in Scarborough Castle were open to the wind and rain; “the water came over my bed,” he recalls, “and ran about
the room... so that my body was numbed with cold, and my fingers swelled, that one was grown
as big as two” (440). Overcrowding was an issue in many prisons, especially during periods, like
the early 1680s, when prosecutions were pursued with increased vigour. “The gaols are so
filled,” one contemporary noted, “that many are stifled through thronging together” (SP 29/69
f.6). Considering such conditions, it is not surprising that many Dissenters were permanently
debilitated by their time in prison. After six months in “a very cold Chamber” in Southgate
prison, John Hoppin allegedly “got such a Rheumatism, as rendered him a perfect Cripple to the
Day of his Death” (Matthews 276-7; SP 29/368 f.309). Since they refused to take oaths, resisted
tithes, and often stubbornly disobeyed the penal laws, Quakers often suffered the brunt of the
Clarendon Code. Over 15,000 were prosecuted, 200 were banished, and 450 died in jail (Coffey
170). But members of every sect were regularly prosecuted. Baxter himself, who was widely
known as a comparatively moderate Dissenter, was repeatedly targeted by authorities, fined
nearly £200, and imprisoned, even when he was, at seventy years old, “nothing but skin and
bones” (Coffey 179). Certainly, in practice this legislation was not always successfully or
rigorously enforced, and Dissenters who complied with the new laws generally avoided
prosecution. Arnold Matthews notes that about 100 ejected ministers kept schools and roughly
fifty held chaplaincies or other posts in noble households (lvi). The daily realities of the law were
often shaped by the sympathies and character of local magistrates and authorities, and many
cases of lenience existed, especially during periods when the monarch was favourable towards
Dissent. Some writers alleged that the Clarendon Code was not being rigorously enforced,
Richard Bower complaining, for example, that in Yarmouth Dissenters met “publicly in the face
of authority,” in large part because less than half the aldermen and common council had actually
taken Anglican communion (SP 29/250 f.105; Tomkins, Inconveniencies 10). In some parishes,
popular ministers were allowed to continue preaching as they had before the penal laws, and Pepys refers to some Dissenting congregations which worshipped “openly in many places” with impunity in 1667 and 1668 (VIII.584; IX.385). But regardless of any occasional or provisional leniencies, during the nearly three decades that followed the Restoration, English Dissenters generally lived under an oppressive threat of punishment.

The penal legislation was motivated by a pervasive fear and hostility towards Dissenters that persisted throughout Defoe's lifetime. Even before the formulation and implementation of the Clarendon Code, those who disavowed orthodox Anglicanism were in disfavour and danger. Less than a month after Charles returned to England, Quakers were reportedly beaten in North Wales (For the King 4). In London, Presbyterians, including Baxter and Calamy, were mocked in ballads and plays, and Baxter was quickly wearied with being “daily haunted with... accusations... [and] every day calumniated” (Baxter, Baxterianae 302). Many conforming contemporaries throughout England were generally averse to Nonconformists, but attitudes ranged from mild fear to vitriolic hatred. Sentiments at every point of the spectrum were underpinned by a belief, rooted in the Civil War, that Dissenters were disloyal and seditious. As Samuel Rolle observed, for many contemporaries “Nonconformist and traitor were almost convertible terms” (B1⁷). Understandably, contemporaries believed that those who had once rebelled against the monarchy would be keen to overthrow the new regime, and many writers suggested that Nonconformists were only biding their time (A Plain Account 1; Well-Willer 4). Looking back on the Restoration in 1705, Defoe concisely summarized the image of post-Restoration Dissenters: “the Dissenters were Rebels, Murtherers, King-Killers, Enemies to Monarchy and Civil Government, lovers of Confusion… and movers of Sedition” (Consolidator SFS III.75; Peace PEW III.141). While Defoe recalls the more extreme rhetoric, many writers
expressed evident hostility towards Dissenters. In some cases, their opponents contended that their principles were fundamentally anarchical, positing that “they are the Foes of Royal State, / Order is the great Object of their Hate” (Dissenter Truely Described). In others, opponents of Nonconformity characterized Dissenters as physiologically driven to sedition. “Will nothing satisfie your horse-leech appetite,” asked the Anglican minister Daniel Burston, “but a second opening of all the veins of the kingdom that you may drink the blood of Kings, Captains, and mighty men?” (22). Quakers were undoubtedly the most unpopular. If they were not “hated by one and all,” they were most widely considered “dangerous People toward the King and his Government,” particularly during the first two decades that followed the Restoration (Bate 3, P. H. 3). But during the period that followed the restoration of the Stuart regime, all Dissenters lived under significant suspicion and disfavour. As George Savile, Earl of Halifax, would later recall, during this period “the Maxime was, It is Impossible for a Dissenter not to be a REBEL” (15).

The Dissenting Community: Reality and Rhetoric

As the category comprehended Presbyterians, Congregationalists, Baptists, Quakers, and (technically) even Catholics, Dissenters were more heterogeneous than their shared legal title implied. Certainly, the political and popular pressures of the Restoration period stimulated some cooperation between Dissenting denominations. At the local level, the penal laws seem to have, in a few cases, strengthened community bonds. “The sects mingle more than before,” one contemporary noted in a 1664, “and even the Quakers, who differ so much from them” (SP 29/100 f.142). Bemoaning the persistent Nonconformity in Chester, Sir Geoffrey Shakerley wrote that the local Dissenters were “so linked together in the city that it [would] be difficult to
surprise them” (SP 29/126 f.20; SP 29/166 f.100). In isolated areas with few Nonconformists, Dissenters of different sects were sometimes encouraged to worship together, and a network of letters served to connect congregations, at least during the early years of the Clarendon Code (Watts 243; Appleby 21-23). But in general, any cohesion that the penal laws engendered was limited or short-lived; broader agreement between the sects was typically prevented or disrupted by doctrinal differences. The ambitious “Happy Union” formulated in 1691 by Presbyterian and Congregational ministers, for example, fell apart over the following year, wrecked by virulent conflicts concerning Antinomianism. In print, disagreements between prominent Dissenters, like that between Richard Baxter and Edward Bagshaw, frequently split the Nonconformist community, and writers regularly criticized and condemned other sects, as Thomas Hicks did in his Continuation of the Dialogue Between a Christian and a Quaker (1673). In many cases, the antipathy between Dissenting denominations was more intense than that between Dissenters and Anglicans. Divisions between denominations were equally pronounced at the local level. When some of his congregants attended Quaker worship, the Presbyterian minister Thomas Vincent reportedly rebuked them sharply: “If ever you go again,” he warned, “I will give you up, and God will give you up, that you may... be damned” (Penn, Sandy A3'). Since they were generally the most defiant and public in their heterodoxy, Quakers were most often targeted by other Dissenting writers. Baxter had condemned them as “contemptible… infidels,” and he frequently paired them with the hated Papists (Catechism A3'-B1'; Sacrilegious 8). Such prominent disagreements only confirmed what the opponents of toleration regularly alleged: that Dissenters refused to tolerate other denominations even while they promoted religious toleration. As one writer observed, “the Presbyterians have declar'd all the other Sects to be intolerable; the Independents will not endure Anabaptists or Quakers where they have any authority; the Scotch...
Covenanters declare against all those that are without the Covenant... [and] the Anabaptists and Quakers exclaim against Presbyterians and Independants as intolerable " (The Vanity 8-9).

Beyond the numerous doctrinal differences between Dissenters, Nonconformists varied considerably in their attitude towards the penal laws. As one Dissenter observed, “there are high differences… amongst them” (SP 29/369 f.383). Some ejected ministers continued to attend Anglican worship, as Richard Baxter did; after delivering his sermon at his home in Acton, he proceeded with his congregation to the parish church. But many Dissenters forcefully rejected any form of communion with the Established Church, condemning the behaviour of ministers like Baxter and Heywood as hypocritical and impious. The ejected minister Robert Collins, for example, deliberately organized worship on Sunday during the parish service (Matthews 129).

Such fundamental differences existed not only between different denominations, but even within them. In 1686, Roger Morrice observed that Baptists were “extraordinarily divided amongst themselves; those that go the [parish] Church are most heinously censure by those that do not,” while those who rejected Anglican worship “are censured as sharply by those that go to the Church” (III.249). Levels of compliance with the Clarendon Code also varied widely among Dissenters, both between and within Nonconformist sects. Some Dissenters openly flouted the laws, while others worshiped secretly, avoiding detection in a wide variety of ways. Since the Conventicle Act proscribed groups of five or more, some Nonconformists met in groups of four, a practice that other Dissenters condemned (Watts 230-31). According to contemporary letters, some Dissenters were successfully impelled to conformity by the penal laws, a course that “brought [them] into disgrace” with their former brethren (SP 29/434 f.31). Dissenters were acutely divided over the indulgence granted by Charles II in 1672. Many Nonconformists expressed misgivings about the legitimacy and motivation of this indulgence, including William
Love, the Presbyterian M.P. for the city of London, who claimed that he “had much rather see the Dissenters suffer by the Rigour of the Law... than see all the Laws in England Trampled under the Foot of the Prerogative” (Review II.263). But thousands of Nonconformists, both ministers and laity, evidently did not share his attitude; 1,610 licenses were issued for preaching under the Declaration, 939 by Presbyterians, 458 by Congregationalists or Independents, and 210 by Baptists (Matthews xv). Seventy-two Dissenting ministers from Exeter and Devonishire sent an address of thanks to the king for the Indulgence, as did thousands of Nonconformists throughout England (SP 29/320 f.2, f.169; 29/321 f.67). As the most numerous sect of Nonconformists, Presbyterians were in the most obvious position to speak most authoritatively for Dissenters as a whole. But, as Watts observes, among them appeared the widest differences of all (228). While some Presbyterian ministers observed the law by separating their congregations into small groups, others openly courted arrest and urged their congregants to do the same. For many Presbyterians, Nonconformity meant only a refusal to conduct services under the terms of the Act of Uniformity; these ministers continued to attend parish church and even receive communion there. But other Presbyterians vehemently refused to attend parish church, even when compelled by fines and imprisonment. At least thirty-five ejected Presbyterian ministers were excommunicated during the Restoration period for such resistance.

Defoe was intimately acquainted with the deep divisions among Nonconformists, not least because he participated, sometimes quite divisively, in many of the disagreements between Dissenters. While he is typically inclined to exaggerate his importance, it is undoubtedly possible that, as he claims in his Appeal, he was reproached by fellow Dissenters for his first publication, A Letter to a Dissenter from his Friend at the Hague, as many Dissenters supported the Declaration of Indulgence that he systematically rejects in his tract. He was vigorously attacked
for his writing on occasional conformity, the practice of attending an Anglican service periodically (specifically to qualify for office). His position on the front lines of such disputes made Defoe distinctly aware of how divided Dissenters were, despite the legal identity they shared (Challenge PEW III.163-64). In his 1703 Shortest Way to Peace and Union, Defoe observed that Dissenters were “so opposite in their Temper, Customs, Doctrine and Discipline, that… ‘tis as probable all Four [denominations] should Conform to the Church of England, as to one another,” going on to detail the their insurmountable political differences (PEW III.147-150).

“The Dissenters in England,” he noted the following year, “have not so much as a general Correspondence with one another… they have not a Unity in Affection, enough to produce a Unity of Interest” (Misrepresented PEW III.222). Represented as the “Croalians” in his 1705 lunar satire The Consolidator, the Dissenters are divided by a “Selfish, Narrow, Suspicious Spirit”; as for cooperation and union, “they [are] Strangers to the meaning of the thing” (SFS III.119). Defoe’s awareness of these divisions is heightened by his abiding concern with the political influence of Nonconformity, which he recognized was undermined by their internal dissensions. In 1704, he advises Harley that “the Dissenters are Divided and Impolitick.” “They Are Not form’d into a body” he claims, and “They hold No Correspondence among themselves. Could they ha’ been brought to do So, Their Numbers would ha’ Made Them Formidable. But as they are Onely Numbers Irregularly Mixt They are Uncapable of Acting in Any Capascity” (Letters 54; Review II.733). In an issue of the Review from the follow year Defoe claims, in similar terms, that the Dissenters “are not a Body; they are a dispers’d Multitude, without Form, without Engagement, without Correspondence, and indeed without Agreement” (Review II.733).

The divisions between sects, however, were glossed over by their legal identity as “Dissenters” and “Nonconformists,” which functioned as a rhetorical construct that facilitated
political and economic arguments against the penal laws. While it is inaccurate to discuss the theological history of heterodoxy in terms of “Nonconformity” and “Dissent,” the debate on toleration, particularly its political and economic facets, took form in these terms, ultimately to the benefit of Nonconformists. Though in reality Dissenters were “not all of one mind,” as Baxter acknowledged, in the polemical offensive against the penal laws they were typically represented as a coherent body (English Nonconformity 270). As the ejected minister John Howe observed, the Clarendon Code did not “find them one, but [it] made them so in the common notion” (Howe, Letter 29). Even as Defoe, for example, often acknowledges that they are “not… one United Body,” he consistently defends Dissent and promotes toleration on behalf of “the Dissenters,” affirming that they “are generally all swallowed up in the Term given them by the Law, (viz.) Dissenters” (Serpents PEW III.285). Across hundreds of pages on Nonconformity, Defoe almost invariably writes in terms of “the Party, or Body of Men among us, who we call Dissenters,” a perspective he inherits from toleration debates that took form during the first half of his life (Parties 3). It was not Dissenters, but opponents of toleration who emphasized the heterogeneity of Nonconformity, as doing so made Dissenters appear unappealingly fragmented at a time when the majority of conforming contemporaries sought agreement and uniformity, particularly in religious attitudes. “We can scarce find Two among them,” Anglican writers regularly claimed, “who do perfectly agree in the Articles of their Faith” (Keynes A^; Toleration and Liberty of Conscience 39-40; Vanity of All Pretences 4). Opponents of toleration underscored rivalries and disagreements between sects to emphasize “how necessary it is to the preservation of Truth and Peace, that an Uniform Obedience be yielded to one and the same established Rule of Ecclesiastical Polity” (A Letter of the Presbyterian Ministers A3^). A popular technique among Anglican writers was to list numerous sects, setting the multiplicity and
heterogeneity of Nonconformity against the unity and uniformity of the Established Church. One writer, for example, challenged the possibility of Dissenters establishing any national Church, asking “what Communion can the Presbyterians have with Arians, Socinians, Anabaptists, Fifth-Monarchy-Men, Sensual Millenarists, Behmenists, Familists, Seekers, Antinomians, Pantheists, Sabbatarians, Quaker, Muggletonians, Sweet-Singers?” Such “a medley of Religions,” he argued, “cannot frame amongst them any common Scheme, in which their assents can be united” (Bennet 2). The new legal definition of heterodoxy as “Dissent,” which comprehended various sects indistinguishably, became a crucial literary construct for Dissenters, since it glossed over the sectarian and personal divisions between writers. Rather than argue on behalf on individual sects, the majority of contemporary works which challenged the penal laws or promoted toleration did so on behalf of “Nonconformists” or “Dissenters.” In Sacrilegious Desertion of the Holy Ministry Rebuked (1672), for example, Baxter claims to speaks for all Dissenters, explaining their shared principles and characterizing them as universally moderate and accommodating. In his Defence of the True and Impartial Account (1707), John Withers endeavours to “vindicate the DISSENTERS from...[damaging] aspersions,” even though at times it appears he is speaking primarily for Presbyterians (4, 41). As its title promises, The Form of an Address Expressing the True Sense of the Dissenting Protestants of England (1682) consciously endeavours to outline the “common sentiments” of the Dissenting “people” (1). When Defoe defends Dissenters from the aspersions of Sacheverell in his More Short-Ways (1704), he claims, on behalf of all “Dissenting” Protestants, that “They Profess the same Doctrine, the same Faith, the same Saviour, and the same Baptism” as Anglicans (13). Considering the rhetorical facets of the debate, it is not surprising that many proponents of toleration carefully avoided discussing

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10 The term “nonconformist” existed before the Clarendon Code, but it signified only those within the Church of England who refused refused to conform to certain practices prescribed by the Prayer Book of 1559.
individual sects, as did John Owen in his *Peace-Offering* (1667) or Samuel Bold in his *Plea for Moderation towards Dissenters* (1682). Opponents, of course, sought to dismiss the “general toleration” these writers promoted as vague and impractical (*The Vanity* 22). But broadly framing the debate in terms of Nonconformity helped writers avoid acknowledging their considerable differences and disagreements.

**The “Long and Grand Debate About Toleration”: 1667-1718**

Between 1667, when the Earl of Clarendon fell from power, and 1718, when the Schism Act was repealed, the legal status and popular image of English Protestant Dissenters improved significantly. When Defoe was a boy, most Dissenters lived in constant danger of prosecution, and they were daily branded rebels and schismatics in print. By the time *Robinson Crusoe* was published in 1719, most contemporaries considered Dissenters fellow Christians, and even staunch high churchmen had come to “a reluctant acceptance... of a limited toleration for dissenters provided it did not infringe the rights and privileges of the Church” (Wykes, “Introduction” 10). This shift was substantial, but it was by no means uninterrupted, absolute, or inevitable. Surges of anti-Dissenting sentiment throughout this period demonstrated the persistence of established animosities. Though the initial hostility towards Dissenters slowly diminished after the Restoration, between 1678 and 1686 Dissenters suffered a period of intensified persecution as Dissenters fell out of favour with Charles for their support of the

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11 For most contemporaries, toleration meant only extending to non-Anglican Christian sects the legal right to worship in unorthodox ways outside the Established Church. Before 1689 the debate concerned primarily liberty of worship, though after this was granted the debate shifted to civil equality, for which Dissenters struggled well into the nineteenth century. Some Presbyterians and Independents closer in doctrine to Anglicanism sought comprehension, rather than toleration, proposing ways in which the Established Church could be expanded to incorporate moderate Nonconformists. I will focus, however, on the discourse surrounding toleration, in part because it was ultimately toleration, rather than comprehension, which was achieved. For a background on the debate concerning comprehension, see John Humfrey *The Healing Attempt* (1689) and Baxter, *Of National Churches* (1691).
Exclusion Bill. Not only did a new wave of anti-Dissenting discourse appear during these years, but many tracts published in the early years of the Restoration, such as *The Lawfulness of the Oath of Supremacy* (1662), were republished. As the status of Dissenters depended considerably on William III, when he died in 1702 the acrimony that had been suppressed during his reign resurfaced. That year Nathanael Taylor complained, for example, that Anglican clergy were again “represent[ing] Protestant Dissenters as a knot of *Rebels*, and a Crew of wretched *Schismaticks*” (i). Though Defoe was often inclined to overstate the issue, his description of these years is essentially accurate; “the Dissenters [were] branded as rebels… the Presbyterians [were] charg’d with persecuting-principles, the independent with commonwealth tenets, [and] the Quakers unchristianized” (*Divino SFS* II.63). No event galvanized such animosities more sharply than the trial of Henry Sacheverell, a High Church clergyman indicted in 1709 for his anti-Dissenting sermon *The Perils of False Brethren*. In the wake of the trial, riots broke out across England, rioters attacking Dissenting houses of worship. The trial and its aftermath, along with popular opposition to the war, led to a Tory landslide in the 1710 election, which enabled High Church MPs to pass two acts aimed at stemming the growth of Nonconformity: the 1711 *Occasional Conformity Act*, which aimed to prevent the practice, and the 1714 *Schism Act*, which was designed to shut down Dissenting academies by requiring that all schoolmasters and tutors take Anglican communion once per year. Though the acts were in large part a product of shifts in Parliamentary power, they reflect an abiding antipathy that persisted, at least in some degree, long into the eighteenth century.

These surges in anti-Dissenting sentiment, however, existed within a broader shift, albeit uneven and imperfect, towards a more tolerant attitude and policy towards Protestant Dissenters. As anti-Dissenting sentiment was substantially rooted in the Civil War, as time passed its
intensity naturally diminished (despite the best efforts of their opponents). Though established hostility never fully disappeared, in Parliament, in print, and in popular practice, the standing of Dissenters improved significantly throughout Defoe’s lifetime. While the early years of the Restoration regime were inimical to religious toleration, the fall of Clarendon in 1667 initiated a “long and grand debate about Toleration” that gradually gained traction (Walsh A2). In these years numerous pro-toleration pamphlets began to appear, and according to opponents they gained considerable readership in the years that followed (Perrinchief, Discourse 1). By 1680 an increasing number of writers, including Anglican ones, were supporting religious toleration, and by 1685, opponents of toleration even began to acknowledge the growing public sympathy for Dissenters, one conceding that tolerationists were now “on the popular side of the Question” (Assheton 6; Henry 2). Shifts in polemics paralleled changes in popular and political attitudes, which gradually altered during the decades that followed the Restoration. Even during the first twenty years, when religious conformity was more vigorously sought, a minority of writers and politicians were willing to tolerate Protestant worship outside of the Established Church. While he was not invariably favourable towards Nonconformists, Charles II led the way for the first two decades of his reign, making two Declarations of Indulgence, one in 1662 and the other a decade later. There seems also to have been modest support for toleration, as well, among the nobility. William Hook, an Independent divine, claimed that a number of “grandees... [were] ready enough to promote a motion for Toleration of the Protestant suffering party” (Turner, First 22.xi). While the extent and motives of opposition cannot always be conclusively identified, votes on religious policies indicate that support for the Clarendon Code was far from unanimous.

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12 Opposition to tolerating Catholics was almost unanimous among English writers during Defoe's lifetime, though anti-Catholic sentiment diminished somewhat after the turn of the century. For notable challenges to the dominant anti-Catholic discourse, see Peter Walsh, The Advocate of Conscience Liberty (1673), or the anonymously authored A Seasonable Remonstrance (1685).
From the outset, Clarendon himself had endorsed a limited toleration, and the penal laws that were ultimately formulated faced significant resistance in Parliament, most of the votes on penal legislation generating close results. Both Conventicle Acts, for example, were opposed by roughly a third of voting members (Coffey 180). During this period, Dissenters had some influential supporters in Parliament, especially after Clarendon fell from power in 1667. From this period, Anthony Ashley Cooper, the Earl of Shaftesbury actively endorsed toleration, and, though the exact details of his activities are somewhat obscure, George Villiers, Second Duke of Buckingham, acted as a supporter of Dissent, most notably during the Exclusion Crisis (Yardley 317-337; SP 29/193 f.100). In 1667 and 1674 bills were introduced which aimed to encourage more moderate Presbyterians back into the Established Church by making concessions on controversial practices (SP 29/211 f.56; 29/221 f. 76). Both bills failed, but they nonetheless demonstrate a growing desire, in the words of one contemporary, to “find out a better way for the union of Protestants” (SP 29/236 f.106). At the local level, many officials, including Justices and Constables, failed or refused to enforce the new laws, according to contemporary letters and journals (SP 29/78 f.175; 29/261 f.23; 29/419 f.213; 29/421/1 f.90; 29/436 f.102). An example of such “great lenity,” Sir Thomas Peyton, Recorder of Canterbury, served as a “great refuge” to Dissenters, one contemporary complained, rejecting a 1662 order to enforce conformity (SP 29/100 f. 142; 29/62 f.48). At Exeter, in 1666, Sir William Courtenay had an ejected minister, charged under the Five Mile Act, released from gaol and “conveyed him, in his own coach, to his own house” (Matthews 452). Constables sometimes failed to detain Nonconformists or deliberately “forgot” their names after they had dispersed (SP 29/383 f. 60). The imposition of £100 fines for non-compliant magistrates included in the Second Conventicle Act confirms that by 1670, local sympathy for Dissenters was growing. As Bill Stevenson observes, by this decade
“a willingness by both sectaries and the public at large to accommodate each other” began to develop in some communities, and recent research has demonstrated that in many rural areas, Dissenters, including even Quakers, were “integrated into their local communities in a way which we had not previously dreamt” (“Integration” 387; Spufford 37). By the years leading up to the Revolution there indeed seems to have been, as William Penn claimed, a “great unwillingness in all sorts of persons to be active in the Execution of these Laws” (Letter 26).

The Glorious Revolution of 1688-1689 gave legal backing and official endorsement to this tolerant attitude. The Stadholder-King was distinctively dedicated to religious toleration, and in his first declaration to the English, in 1688, he called on Parliament to formulate laws protecting “all Protestant Dissenters… who will live Peaceably under the Government… from all Persecution on account of their Religion.” (4). Since William was perceived as a champion for the Protestant cause, religious toleration could no longer be easily discredited as “a Jesuistical Plot” as it had been during the preceding decades (Olyffe 6; Long 1). The year he acceded to the throne, after considerable concessions on both sides, High Church Tories were convinced to allow what became known as the Toleration Act to proceed. The new law allowed Protestant Nonconformists to worship in licensed meeting houses, and they were exempted from the penalties of the Act of Uniformity. Over 3,900 meeting-houses were licensed by 1710. Certainly, the act did not fully liberate or empower Nonconformists, and Whig histories of toleration have been apt to overstate its significance. The Clarendon Code was not repealed, Dissenting ministers were still required to take new oaths of allegiance and supremacy, and Nonconformists were still required to pay tithes. Mark Goldie, pointing to these limitations, characterizes the bill as “a broken-backed remainder of a large package of reform which came to grief at the hands of High Churchmen” (189; Kamen 211). But regardless of such salutary
qualifications, the act undeniably improved the legal situation of English Protestant Dissenters, and contemporary Nonconformists generally celebrated, rather than critiqued it. Nonconformists could now worship without fear of persecution, and the act gave official endorsement to a more tolerant public attitude towards English Nonconformity. Though Defoe clearly exaggerates when he claims that “no Man ever receiv’d any Disturbances [for Nonconformity] during the Reign of King William,” officials were certainly far less zealous to pursue and prosecute Dissenters, as he suggests (Parties 10).

In the decades that followed the Glorious Revolution, the image of Dissenters improved considerably. John Locke, among the most influential proponents of toleration, published his Letter Concerning Toleration in the immediate wake of the Glorious Revolution, arguing that “toleration… [is] the chief characteristic mark of the true Church” (1). As the Civil War receded into the past, the “cant of rebellion,” if it did not become “a meer Farce,” as Defoe claimed, had certainly grown quite “thread-bare” (Honesty PEW III.198; Withers 76). Though traditional hostility persisted, it increasingly became “the exception rather than the norm,” as Watts suggests (264). Certainly, some writers, such as Henry Sacheverell, never forgot the “old evil Principles” of the schismatics, and a significant remnant of anti-Dissenting sentiment persisted, as the riots in 1710 and 1715 demonstrated (King 4; Baron B2v). Rather than wholly displace traditional animosities, a more tolerant attitude developed alongside existing aversions. The Toleration Act provided Dissenters with an authority, both rhetorical and legal, to which they could now appeal. In 1704, as High Churchmen were mounting an offensive against the growing political influence of Nonconformists, Defoe cited the Act of Toleration as an inviolable “contract between [the Dissenters] and the Church of England,” one which “the Churchmen can never Break… without the Blackest Mark of Dishonesty in the World” (Honesty PEW III.197).
When officials broke into his chapel and seized his possessions, simply for “being a Dissenter,” William Baguely confidently cited his right to worship under the Act of Toleration (Baguley 5; 2). In general, even the remaining opposition to Nonconformity was presented more “calmly and plainly” than it had been in the early decades of the Restoration, opponents premising their arguments on their goodwill towards Nonconformists; what were once sensationalized attacks became “friendly call[s]” to conform (Allen 2). While this tone was perhaps often only a nod to the official standing of toleration under William, many writers, including Defoe, observed that by the early eighteenth century Dissenters, in any case, were publicly considered “fellow Christians” (Advice PEW II.165). As Dee Andrews suggests, after the turn of the century “Nonconformists were no longer perceived by the majority as dangerous schismatics separated from the one true church, but as Christians called by a particular name in legal distinction from the established church” (14). In Parliament, the attitude towards Dissenters depended considerably on the fluctuating balance of Whigs and Tories. But amidst this uncertainty, a powerful alliance developed between Dissenters and moderate Whigs, allowing Nonconformists to exert disproportionate electoral influence, as opponents complained. Though the Tory majority that came to power in 1710 was able to pass the Occasional Conformity Act and the Schism Act, the balance of power shifted decisively in favour of Nonconformists in 1715, when the Whigs came to power with the accession of George I. Not only did the new Parliament vote to compensate Dissenters 5,000 pounds for the damage done during the 1715 riots, but the Occasional Conformity Act and the Schism Act were repealed, establishing the position of English Protestant Dissenters with unprecedented security.
Concerns about the political and religious unity of the nation were a crucial factor in this shift, as antipathy to Catholicism stimulated desires for a Protestant unity. Antipathy to Popery was one of the defining characteristics of the post-Restoration milieu. The significance of anti-Catholic sentiment would be difficult to exaggerate, and it remains “one of the best-known features of seventeenth-century England” (Clifton 23). Though Defoe condemned Catholicism in many of his works, he recognized that Popery was “the universal Scare-crow, the Hobgoblin” of the age (Subordination RDW VI.20). Rooted in the Reformation antipathy to Popery, anti-Catholic sentiment underpinned not only popular attitudes but also political shifts, including the Exclusion Crisis, the Glorious Revolution, and the formation of party politics. As the desire for a unified Protestant nation was primarily a function of anti-Catholic sentiment, the popularity of religious toleration grew alongside a series of political conflicts between Protestantism and Popery. While the Second Anglo-Dutch War stimulated anti-Catholic sentiment to a degree, the appeal of Protestant unity rose most visibly in the late 1670s, as the potential of an openly Catholic monarch succeeding to the throne increased. In 1672, Parliament endeavoured to pass a Bill for the Ease of Protestant Dissenters, which would have allowed Protestant Nonconformists to attend conventicles under certain conditions. The bill failed, wrecked by divisive amendments, but the attempt “marks a shift from the fear of Protestant Dissenters to the fear of Catholics,” as historians suggest (Mensing 74; Miller 125). Nothing fuelled this fear more than the Popish Plot, the alleged Catholic scheme, exposed in 1678, to assassinate the king. Though the plot was fictitious, the ensuing investigation stoked fears of Popery into anti-Catholic hysteria. As John Coffey observes, in the wake of the Plot “Dissenters were suddenly seen as allies against the Catholic threat” (173). The connection was identified by contemporaries, who observed that the
Popish Plot contributed significantly to toleration of Protestant of Dissenters (Olyffe, Essay 3). In *A Plain Account of the Persecution* (1688), an anonymous Anglican writer recalls “how backward the Clergy of London especially, were to comply with” the penal laws during this period (2). Concurrently, the Exclusion Crisis created significant pressure to unite English Protestants. In the years that followed these two crises, Parliament was increasingly careful to avoid alienating Protestant Dissenters, a wide range of MPs demonstrating “a readiness to provide legislative relief for Dissent” (Horowitz 205). As Horowitz points out, it was Sir Edward Dering, a staunch Anglican, who first put forward the bill, in 1679, “for Uniting his Majesty’s Protestant Subjects,” which aimed to modify the existing religious settlement (205). In 1680, Parliament determined that the penal laws from the reign of Elizabeth and James I should no longer apply to Protestant Dissenters. The success of this legislation reflects the growing willingness to accommodate Dissenters for the sake of Protestant unity. Throughout the decade that followed, one of the most popular epigraphs to the numerous tracts on toleration was Matthew 3:24: “If a kingdom be divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand” (Burnet 2). “The known saying the New Testament, that a kingdom divided can’t stand, is very seasonable at this juncture,” one author argued in 1680, “[for] if ever Unity… will be necessary, it must certainly be now” (*The Known Saying* 1). Driven by this sense of urgency, in the years surrounding these two crises, even writers who opposed toleration often characterized Nonconformists as “brethren” and “friends” (Whitby v).

This shift in national sentiment was cemented by James II’s 1687 Declaration of Indulgence. If the Declaration did not completely “br[ea]k the back of Anglican intolerance,” it certainly impelled an unprecedented number of Anglican writers to court the favour of the Nonconformist community (Watts 259). Defoe would later recall how during these years “all
their Sermons and Pamphlets were fill’d with Invitations to the Dissenters to Love and mutual
Forbearance one of another, joyning Hands for general Safety, and standing together against
Popery and Slavery” (Review VII.15; Short-Ways 22). In his 1712 Present State of the Parties in
Great Britain he describes the shift more positively, recalling how fears of Popery and arbitrary
government inclined “Moderate Church-men… to espouse even the Dissenters, who they call
Schismaticks… not for the Sake of their Dissenting, which they did not approve of, but for the
Sake of those Liberties and Priviledges which they enjoy’d in Common with them” (6). While in
decades prior some writers had expressed concerns about the political effects of the penal laws,
after 1687 a wide range began to question the wisdom of dividing Protestants. “Does not the
condition and safety of the nation,” they asked, “require an union of Protestants?” (A Brief
Collection 8). Though much of the goodwill expressed by Anglican writers was probably
insincere or rhetorical, the alliance engendered by the events of 1687-1689 nonetheless
significantly improved the image of English Protestant Dissenters. Even as fears of Popery
diminished after the turn of the century, contemporaries remained anxious to avoid “weaken[ing]
[the] Protestant interest,” especially when forming legislation aimed at suppressing Catholicism
(SP 63/364 f.76).

Though scholars frequently present them as such, Dissenters were hardly passive
beneficiaries of these shifts. Nonconformist writers actively exploited anti-Catholic sentiment,
representing religious toleration as the most certain, if not the only means of saving England
from the imminent threat of Popery. Throughout the period, especially at times when anti-
Catholic sentiment was heightened, Dissenting writers argued that inter-Protestant divisions only
paved the way for Popery. In the wake of the Great Fire, as Nonconformists reportedly
disseminated pamphlets attributing the disaster to Catholic conspirators, Dissenters argued, both
in private and in print, that “the Protestants persecuting one another is… the work of Papists” (Pincus 419; SP 29/417 f.325; Bold 6; Halifax 13). “If you destroy the Dissenters,” Nonconformist writers warned, in an array of ways, “the Papists will afterwards pull down the Church of England” (SP 29/421/2 f.175). Only toleration, Dissenting writers argued, offered the means of rebuffing the “subtility of the Jesuite” (Lover 7). John Milton recommended religious toleration as a way of arresting the growth of the “Romish Weed”; “To save our selves,” he argued, “and resist the common enemy, it concerns us mainly to agree within our selves” (15). In his Plea for Moderation Towards Dissenters (1682), Samuel Bold reiterated the prevailing argument with distinctive clarity and transparency: “We must either unite, or we must perish. It is high time to leave off insisting on little punctilios of Honour” (5). Defoe himself contributed to this discourse in 1706, arguing, in the preface to Jure Divino, that “if this sort of Persecution comes among us, it will make no difference between Church of England and Dissenter.” How “odious will Protestant-Persecution look then!... [as] some that are very forward to persecute for the private Opinions of Men, would do well to consider” (SFS II.53). Certainly, fears of Catholicism could be turned against Dissenters, as a number of scholars have observed (Southcombe and Tapsell 29-31; Tumbleson 80). Works like Union, or Undone (1668) and Brethren in Iniquity (1690) aligned Dissenters with Papists, and some contemporaries urged the need to suppress “all Dissenters whatever” (SP 29/422 f.193). But as pressure to unify the nation against the common enemy grew, particularly surrounding periods of Protestant-Catholic conflict, Dissenting writers were able to convince contemporaries, quite successfully, that “toleration and liberty of conscience [was]… the only panpharmacon” (SP 29/441 f.58). Due in part to this discourse, Dissenters were increasingly characterized, even by Anglican writers, as “Friends both to the Government and the Nation” (A. B., Thoughts 11; Synge 1).
Though political pressures played an important role in improving the image and status of Nonconformity, economic concerns had a more consistent and extensive effect on attitudes towards Dissenters, especially since anti-Catholic sentiment began to diminish after the Revolution. The period of enforced uniformity coincided with a significant shift in political and popular priorities; in the fifty years that followed the Restoration, trade became a more prominent and widespread concern than ever before. By 1670, trade had “become the Lady, which in [that] Age [was] more Courted and Celebrated than in any former,” and by the early eighteenth century, “economics had indeed become a reason of state” (Coke B1; Pincus 275; Observations PEW VII.107). At the political level, this shift in priorities was influenced less by concerns about the quality of English life than by the recognition, pressed home by a number of expensive wars, that money was the basis of military power. “The whole Art of War,” Charles Davenant observed in 1695, “is… reduced to Money” (27). When Defoe asserted in 1728 that “the longest Purse… conquers now, not the longest sword,” his phrasing may have been new, but the idea was a commonplace (Plan PEW VII.152). Concerns about trade, however, extended far beyond politics and policy. At the popular level, persistent anxieties about a perceived “decay of trade” weighed constantly on every rank and region. Though anxieties were highest during times of crisis, such as the Second Anglo-Dutch War or the South Sea Bubble, contemporaries across England felt incessantly frustrated by an economic depression. Even after the nation recovered from the “great decay of Trade” attendant to the Anglo-Spanish War (1654-1660), England remained plagued with “consumption in [their] Purses and Estates” (Well-Wisher 6; Bethel 1). In 1674 “scarce any person [could] be insensible of” the “want of Trade and Money throughout
and fifteen years later scores of pamphlets, such as Richard Haine’s *The Prevention of Poverty*, were still bemoaning the widespread decay of trade (1). “Is it not the general complaint, and out-cry,” writers habitually asked, “that there is an universal decay of Trade? Do not the Merchants complain?... Doth not the Shop-keeper complain?... Doth not the Handicrafts man complain...” (Barton 45-6). Defoe noted that “we have loud complains among us of the decay of our trade,” endeavouring to repudiate the widespread belief that the English economy was faltering (*Plan PEW* VII.119). Nor was this depression limited to urban merchants. If in the city “the Tradesman... shuts up his shop, or tradeth very low,” in the country the farmer “[had] no price for his Corn” and his “Cattle [would] not yield... the third Penny as formerly” (Bethel 1-2). The value of land, contemporary writers claimed, had dropped correspondingly. Sir William Coventry, for example, complained that “the rents decay... [as] every landlord feels” (79). While historians disagree on the details and significance of this depression, throughout the fifty years that followed the Interregnum many contemporaries apparently believed the economy was struggling.

This growing importance of trade, accentuated by this perceived depression, engendered a new means of contesting the penal laws: Dissenting writers argued, with increasing frequency and confidence, that the Clarendon Code hampered trade. As a number of historians have observed, many contemporaries felt that “toleration and trade seemed to go hand in hand” (Tawney 206-207; Schlatter 167). Concerns about the economic effects of such legislation arose even as the laws were being considered in 1660. In a few cases, conforming writers, including Clarendon himself, worried that the penal laws might injure trade (7; *SP 29/421/2/ f.154). In the decades that followed, proponents of toleration, usually Dissenters, criticized the economic effects of the penal laws. This was less an impartial observation than a rhetorical technique. “It
can scarce be imagined,” the Dissenter Thomas Bromley claimed, “how Trade has decay’d since the Act of Restraint [Second Conventicle Act] came out” (Turner, First 26,j). Some tolerationists explicitly attributed the “decay of trade” to the Clarendon Code. Aiming to incline the new Parliament to toleration, an anonymous author asked, in 1689, whether it could “be reasonably supposed that Dissenting Protestant [would] be able to cheerfully Engage in their Trades (by which the Riches of the King and Kingdom are increased) while they are liable every day to undoing Penalties Worshipping of God” (A Brief Collection 8). Such claims empowered Dissenters to challenge the penal laws on economic grounds, presenting the Clarendon Code as unsound policy. “To me,” John Owen argued, “it seems that an attempt for the pretended conformity… is scarce due compensation for his Majesties loss in the diminishing of his Subjects and their Wealth” (Indulgence 23). Toleration, he concluded, would contribute to “tranquility, trade, wealth, and peace” (31). Though tolerationists continued to condemn the penal laws as “unjust and cruel,” they supplemented this approach with economic arguments, claiming, as William Penn did in 1687, that the Clarendon Code was “destructive to the trade and well-being of our Nation” (Letter 29). While some writers focused on the negative effects of imprisonment, others argued that the penal laws drove throngs of hard-working Dissenters out of England. Arguing that the Clarendon Code “dis-people[d] the nation,” Penn claimed that “thousands [took] their flight beyond the Sea, and draw off their Estate, by which means the kingdom is depopulated, [and] the Manufacture of the Nation carryed into foraign Countries” (Reasonableless, 17-19). Walter Harris claimed that upwards of 40,000 Nonconformists were impelled to emigrate, to “the Abatements of Trade and Rents,” and Peter Walsh, in his Advocate of Conscience Liberty (1673), claimed that the penal laws only served to drive away “the trading

13 Considering that only about thirty to forty Dissenting ministers were driven from England by the penal laws, this is probably an overestimation (Matthews xiv).
stock of the Nation” (32). This argument allowed Dissenters to represent religious toleration as a sound economic policy. Rather than struggle to challenge the ethical grounds of the penal laws, tolerationists began to promote a “liberty of conscience, as preserves the nation in trade, peace, and commerce” (Penn, Case 34). In 1691, for example, Walter Harris recommended toleration for “the great increase of [his] Majeties Revenue” it would produce (Remarks 43-44). Though critics disputed the alleged connection between toleration and trade, by the turn of the century even opponents of toleration conceded that the policy might perhaps “tend to the advancement of Trade and Commerce” (Proast 2). By the first decade of the eighteenth century, a wide range of writers concurred that a full union of Dissenters and Anglicans would restore English trade (J. Wilson 12). This discourse played an important part in the implementation of toleration policy. The 1672 Declaration of Indulgence was informed partly by economic concerns; Charles extended liberty to Nonconformists, his Declaration alleged, “for the better Encouragement of all to… Their Trades and Callings” (387). The 1687 Declaration of Indulgence stated economic concerns more fully. James II recommended the Declaration to “whoever is concerned for the increase of the wealth and power of the nation.” The preamble abjured religious persecution because it “spoil[ed] trade,” alleging that James pushed for liberty of conscience as part of an international economic policy (399). While the veracity of these claims is suspect, their growing presence in legislation attests to their significance in contemporary discourse. The Toleration Act, which firmly established the religious liberty of Dissenters in law, was clearly premised on the new importance of trade. “The Advance of a Nation,” it was argued, “lie[s] in the Freedom and Flourishing of Trade, and ingrafting the whole body into common benefit” (King William’s Toleration 1). While the ethical and theological arguments for Dissent were never decisively
won, by the early eighteenth century tolerationists had convinced many contemporaries that toleration should be supported on economic grounds.

**The Demography of Dissent**

This discourse was premised on the commercial importance of Dissenters, which, according to many contemporary accounts, was disproportionately high. According to William Petyt, for example, Nonconformists were “the richest, most mercantile, and the best Manufacturers of *Europe*” (105). As such, oppressing them was especially bad policy, writers claimed, because it discouraged the most productive and wealthy workers (SP 29/235 f.102). Typical is the argument John Barrington, a Nonconformist and dedicated proponent of toleration, who argued that Dissenters were too important to the English economy to be oppressed safely:

> I confess if the Dissenters were all of 'em an inconsiderable parcel of People, poor and Ignorant, without Interest or Influence; their being easie could do us no service, nor their Uneasiness any hurt. But since a great many of the Dissenters are men of Sense and Substance, considerably by their Moneys invested in Trade... It wou'd be worth the while to consider, whether any of the little ends, that the Enemys of the Dissenters should propose to themselves, by disobliging 'em, cou'd counterballance the loss of their direction and their Purse. (14-15)

Though more sophisticated than many such claims, Barrington’s argument features many of the techniques Dissenting apologists employed to shift their cause into a seemingly impartial economic register. He substantiates his authority by framing his argument as a reluctant confession, and he allows himself considerable interpretive freedom by setting his argument against a conspicuous understatement; Dissenters were evidently not completely “without Interest or Influence.” By developing this antithesis at length, Barrington implies that his approach is rational and impartial, allowing him to present his endorsement of toleration as a rational consequence of the fact that Dissenters are “considerably… invested in Trade.” By
characterizing opponents of toleration as “Enemys,” Barrington suggests that their impulses are emotional, rather than rational.

Recent research on Nonconformity, however, has significantly complicated the connection between commerce and Nonconformity, calling into question the accuracy of this established image. During the last two decades, many scholars, identifying this idea of Dissent with a distortive Whig narrative of eighteenth-century history, have increasingly questioned the accuracy of this entrenched idea, finding that “the so-called ‘bourgeois’ nature of post-Restoration sectarian nonconformity does not stand up to close scrutiny” (Stevenson, “Status” 341). “We should be wary,” Tim Harris warns, “of seeing too simple a socio-geographic divide between anglicanism and dissent” (“Introduction” 21). A number of historians, including Linda Colley and Philip Jenkins, have identified links between Toryism and industrialism that belie any exclusive relationship between Dissent and modern industries. The alleged intellectual foundations of this relationship have also come into question. C. John Somerville, for example, has observed that Anglican writers, in fact, promoted diligence in one's calling more than did Dissenting writers (70-81). The claim, which has considerably underpinned the conventional image of Nonconformity, that Dissenters were pushed into trade by their exclusion from office has been discounted by a number of scholars. James Bradley, observing that “the actual workings of the law in relation to the Dissenters has not been sufficiently examined,” argues that “the Dissenters did not become... bourgeois industrialists solely because they were excluded from office, because in fact, many of them enjoyed the benefits of office” (Religion 33-34, 42).

Though ministers were generally more educated than their contemporaries, the fact that only nine

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14 “Since they were excluded from so many areas of English society, Dissenters turned to these commercial areas where they excelled” (Mensing 5). “Excluded by legislation from a direct participation in public affairs, Dissenters of means and social position threw themselves into the alternative career offered by commerce and finance, and did so the more readily because religion itself had blessed their choice” (Tawney 251).
ejected clergy pursued a career in trade is certainly inconsistent with the broader alleged pattern of Nonconformity (Matthews lvi). The “organic” affinity between Nonconformity and industry, developed most influentially by Max Weber, has been convincingly debunked by a number of scholars, who have developed more plausible and rigorous explanations for why Nonconformity flourished in some urban areas. Rather than evidence an intellectual connection between Dissent and industry, the prominence of Nonconformity in certain areas, Watts and De Krey both conclude, was a result of “the failure of the Church of England to adapt its parochial organization to the changing economic and demographic structure of the country” (279-80; 75). In Manchester, for example, the cotton industry drove the population up to 8,000, but in the second decade of the eighteenth century the city had only two parish churches (Watts 278). Margaret Spufford demonstrates that in many towns and villages throughout England the socio-economic character of Dissent was shaped by isolated local factors, including family connections or the influence of a charismatic preacher, rather than by any monolithic pattern of affiliation (23-40).

Questions about the fidelity of the established image of Nonconformity have been fuelled by detailed demographic research on English Dissent, which has revealed that Nonconformity was a far more complex and heterogeneous category than conventional representations suggest. While scholars have been, in some measure, doubtful about the established picture of Dissent since the 1960s, the last two decades have seen increasingly focused efforts, supported by newly uncovered local evidence, to challenge any causal relationship between religion and occupation or socio-economic status (Dickson 302). Michael Watts, whose detailed history of Nonconformity remains the authoritative work on Dissent, observes that while Dissent was correlated with “urban areas,” within towns themselves “Dissenters were not distinguished by occupation or social status from the population at large” (Watts 353-54). Roughly 70% of
Dissenters lived and worked in the countryside, and a significant number were “poor husbandmen, lowly shepherds and farm labourers, humble artisans and small retail tradesmen” (Stevenson “Status” 341). These facts, among others, make it difficult to believe that Dissenters as a whole were, in any comprehensive way, a “class-conscious... bourgeoisie” associated uniquely with trade (Weber 210). Studies of hearth taxes, poor rate assessments, and available censuses have demonstrated that post-Restoration Dissenters were found in every level of society, from the gentry to vagrants (Stevenson, “Status” 357). Rather than reveal any special relationship between Nonconformity and commerce, demographic evidence on English Nonconformity in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century evidences “a variety of puritans and sectarian groups, formed of an infinite mix of different social and economic compositions” (4). W. Stevenson's study of the economic and social status of Dissenters in Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire, and Bedfordshire between 1650 and 1725, exposes not the commercial character, but “the very ‘ordinariness’ of the sectaries.” Dissenters “were not confined to any particular sub-group,” he observes, but rather “they range[d] from lowly servants and labourers, to humble craftsmen and husbandmen, small retailers, prosperous wholesalers, yeomen, professionals and gentlemen” (343-4). Richard Grassby, studying the English business community of the late seventeenth century, similarly finds that Dissenters, as a group, had roughly the same occupational distribution as the rest of the population (274). Though hardly surprising, given that Dissenters constituted a small minority of the population, it is salutary to remember that the vast majority of English merchants and traders were Anglican, and that many of the most influential merchants were sons of Royalist Anglican families. Certainly, Dissent was strong in London, and Nonconformists were disproportionately involved in some industries, such as the clothing trade. But in other trades, like the Near European trade, Dissenters were
proportionately represented or even underrepresented. While writers often represented Nonconformists, as a whole, as a commercial people, considerable socio-economic heterogeneity existed between different denominations. Presbyterians had strong support among tradesmen, but Baptists and Quakers were generally part of the lower social classes. Of course, numbers alone cannot tell us the whole story. The fact that Dissenters were most numerous in London would have given contemporaries a distorted impression of their national population. In some areas or industries, Dissenting traders and merchants were perhaps more conspicuous because of their denominational coherence: while a group of Quaker merchants might arouse interest (and often anxiety), a community of Anglican merchants would have been comparatively unremarkable to contemporaries. More recent studies have sought to emphasize, rather than gloss over, the considerable heterogeneity of Nonconformity. What these studies consistently suggest is that, in reality, the character of Dissent was inconsistent and mixed, rather than predominantly defined by any one class or occupational category. Surveying the revisionist research that has developed during the last three decades, Harris tentatively concludes that “even if dissent was more prevalent among certain social groups, dissenters nevertheless could be found at all levels of society – as indeed could Anglicans” (“Introduction” 22). The distortedly coherent image of Dissenters as an important commercial people is not an unmediated picture of contemporary realities; this is an image that was developed and projected by Dissenting writers themselves.

“A Huge Piece of Rhetoric”? “Computations” of Trade and Toleration

The perceived affinity between Nonconformity and commerce was, in part, a discourse developed largely by Dissenting writers working to improve their status and image. As trade
became an increasingly important aspect of policy and popular opinion, Nonconformist writers worked to convince contemporaries that they were especially numerous and disproportionately productive and wealthy. Though they were more than a “huge piece of Rhetoric,” in the terms of one critic, the claims of Dissenting writers were undoubtedly inflected by the desire to improve their reputation and legal status (Dolus an Virtus? 25).

Population estimates were a prominent aspect of the debate surrounding religious toleration, as Dissenters magnified their numbers to advance the cause of toleration. The technique was employed on both sides of the debate. While in some cases opponents of Dissent aimed to alarm contemporaries with exaggerations, in general they sought to dismiss Nonconformists as an “inconsiderable” part of the nation (Perrinchief, Discourse 30; Happy Future State 281). One writer, to assert the strength of the Established Church, claimed that “the Protestant Dissenters are not esteem’d … to amount to more than a 25th part of the Nation” (A. B., Some Remarks A25). These deliberately low estimates were typically rebuttals to the exaggerations that, as opponents rightly claimed, were regularly made by Nonconformist writers (Perrinchief, Discourse 30). Throughout Defoe’s lifetime, Dissenters made up between 5% and 10% of England. A 1676 census put them at 5% of the national population, and in 1715 Dissenters numbered slightly less than 340,000, or 6% of the nation, according to a contemporary survey. The population was unevenly distributed throughout England, the highest concentrations living in the Northwest, the West Country, the East Midlands and the northern part of the Home Counties (Watts 267-89). Dissenters were most numerous in London,

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15 As a number of historians have observed, since the boundaries between dissent and conformity were porous and vague, there were innumerable laypeople who could be classified as Dissenters, perhaps holding some heterodox tenets or attending conventicles occasionally. As such, some historians have argued that some contemporary surveys of Dissent, like the 1676 census, underestimate the number of Nonconformists (Wykes, “Introduction” 5; T. Harris, Crowds 65; Morgan 66). A 1693 census, for example, calculated that Protestant Dissenters constituted only 0.04% of the English freeholders –almost certainly a significant underestimate (SP 8/14 f.254). But the majority of scholars continue to estimate that Dissenter constituted only “a small minority” of the national population, somewhere between 5% and 10%.
but in no city or town, including the capital, do Nonconformists seem to have accounted for more than a fifth of the local population (De Krey 75). In many areas Dissenters made up less than 1% of the populace, and most historians agree that Nonconformity declined during the early eighteenth century (Watts 270; Robbins 225). As most contemporaries, however, had no access to such detailed data, “estimates” and “comput[ations]” played a crucial role in the debate over toleration. The Nonconformist apologist John Barrington claimed, for example, that “some… compute them according to the most modest calculation, to bear the proportion of 1 to 4” (17). Such claims seemed to confirm the belief, disseminated by Dissenting writers, that Nonconformists were “every where spread through City, and Countrey” (Corbet 23). These “boasts of their numbers” were so common that opponents of toleration often worked actively to challenge them, a counteroffensive that Defoe parodies in his Shortest Way with the Dissenters: “they are very Numerous, they say, they are a great Part of the Nation, and we cannot suppress them” (W. K. 6; Dolus and Virtus? 6-7). Opponents of toleration sometimes claimed they had access to more accurate data that disproved such exaggerations. The author of The Happy Future State of England, for example, complained that “Independents, do in the little Pamphlets they write, trouble us much with proclaiming their Numbers, as if they were not only the sober but the major part of the Nation… contrary to what is in fact true” (D2v). The readiness and confidence with which writers, on both sides of the question, employed such “calculations” and “facts” should alert us to the rhetorical facets of these claims. Estimates of Dissenting influence were among the most hotly contested rhetorical battlegrounds in the debate over Nonconformity.

Though conventionally overlooked by critics, these motives underpin claims about the commercial character of English Nonconformists, which played an equally, if not more significant role in pro-toleration discourse. Often alongside claims about their numbers,
Dissenting writers asserted that they were a crucially industrious, productive, and commercially-inclined portion of English society. As national trade was becoming an increasingly prominent factor of policy and public opinion, Dissenting apologists self-consciously emphasized, prioritized, and exaggerated their economic importance. In two tracts on toleration, William Penn described Dissenters as “a chief part of the Trading People of the Nation,” characterizing them metonymically as “the most Industrious Working Hands of our Nation” (*Considerations* 4, *Letter* 29). Aiming similarly to paint the penal laws as bad policy, John Owen represented those imprisoned under the legislation as “peaceable, honest, industrious, [and] diligent men” (*Indulgence* 9; *Farnsworth* 4). The influential Nonconformist Slingsby Bethel claimed that upwards of 40,000 Dissenting tradesmen were ruined by the penal laws, alleging that “throughout all the Nation, *East, West, North,* and *South,* the richest, most active, industrious, thriving* part of these Tradesmen are such persons… as this age calls *Fanatics*” (9). Like Owen and Bethel, the Whig historian John Oldmixon aimed to discredit the penal laws by juxtaposing the alleged wealth and industry of Dissenters with their persecution, claiming that “the Goals [sic] were crowded with the most substantial Tradesmen and Inhabitants, the Clothiers were forced from their Houses, and thousands of Workmen and Women, whom they employed, set to starving” (*Torism* 12). Though it appears in an evidently polemical tract entitled *Torism and Trade Can Never Agree* (1713), historians regularly treat this account as an impartial record of the period (Levy 12; Roberts 139; Laski 110; Tawney 205). It is anything but. Not only is this narrative at odds with the implementation of the penal laws, which allowed wealthier Dissenters to avoid prison more easily, but many of the details, such as the scene of starving women, are primarily rhetorical, rather than empirical. While in some cases Dissenting writers were simply selective, projecting an artificial consistency onto Nonconformists, many claims were more
manifestly distortive or inaccurate. In his *Second Discourse of the Religion of England*, for example, the Dissenting tolerationist John Corbet alleged that “none [were] of more importance than they in the trading part of the people” (23). Though Dissenters played an important role in the economy, they certainly were not more influential than conforming Englishmen. One critic, in fact, dismissed such claims as “meer falacy,” brushing off the “three of four sullen Clothiers [who] would have packed up their auls.” While this opponent deliberately downplays their importance, it was essentially true that “whether they have Toleration, or whether they be refused it, trade will go on, and if they will, not others will” (*Toleration and Liberty of Conscience* 30-31). Though claims about the commercial influence of Dissenters are based partly on fact, as Dissenters were certainly no inconsiderable part of the economy, they are almost invariably part of arguments for toleration, and as such they typically distortive and inaccurate.

Nowhere is this rhetorical tendency more apparent than in the work of Defoe, who adopts and propagates this discourse in much of his writing on Dissent. Defoe exaggerated the population of Dissenters more regularly and boldly than most of his brethren, claiming, on a number of occasions, that there were more than two million Dissenters in England (*Loyalty PEW* III.90; *Advice PEW* II.101). Considering his superior knowledge of English politics and economics, an estimate that more than quintuples the Dissenting population must be consciously distorted. He also frequently celebrates Dissenters as “Men of Trade and Industry,” often as a means of condemning the penal laws (*Challenge PEW* III.183). In *The Present State of the Parties in Great Britain* (1712), for example, he laments that at the height of the “Persecutions… the Gaols [were] fill’d with [men] of the best Credit and Trade” (5). This discourse, which serves in both cases to evidence the necessity of toleration, underpins his imaginative treatment of demographic discourse. Extrapolating claims about the commercial importance of
Nonconformists, Defoe constructs various versions of a visionary narrative that evince the potential economic power Dissenters wield (Challenge PEW III.183). The story first appears in Enquiry Into Occasional Conformity (1701), in which Defoe rhetorically proposes that, as they are distinguished by religion, Dissenters should be set apart from Anglicans economically. “If you would go on to distinguish us,” Defoe suggests, “Transplant us into Towns and Bodies, and let us Trade by our selves; let us Card, Spin, Knit, Weave, and Work with and for one another, and see how you’ll maintain your own Poor without us. Let us Fraight our Ships apart, keep our Money out of your Bank, accept none of our Bills... and see how you can go on without us” (PEW III.87). While his argument in his Enquiry underscored the wide-reaching industry of Dissenters, his later iterations of the story expand on the hypothetical consequences of their departure, perhaps because anti-Dissenting sentiment was more intense in the years that followed the death of William. In his 1705 Advice to All Parties, for example, he threatens his conforming countrymen with the desolation that would follow a Dissenting exodus, warning that “your Trade wou’d remove with them, [and] they’d carry with them so much of your Cash and Wealth you’d be in a worse Case than the Israelites left the Egyptian Ladies in, without their Jewels” (PEW I.102). Whereas before he had left the consequences deliberately vague, in this tract Defoe extrapolates a more developed narrative from the alleged wealth of Dissenters, one connected with the later development of his fiction by his use of Biblical allusion. Though he expands on the same scenario at length in his 1712 Wise as Serpents, Defoe develops this narrative most fully in one of his earliest imaginative pieces, The Consolodiator, published in 1706 (Serpents PEW III.305). In this lunar satire, Defoe imagines the economic havoc the Dissenters, represented as “Croalians,” could wreak if they were to unite “in… Trade and Interest” (SFS III.114). Premising his account on the fact that the Croalians were “generally of the Trading
Manufacturing part of the World, and very Rich,” controlling 80% of the funds in the capital, he envisions, at length, how their concerted action devastates the lunar economy. Solunarian tradesmen are bankrupted; poor labourers, “for fear of being starv’d, run in Crowds to the Croalian Temples”; the national bank is dissolved when Croalians withdraw all their funds; and even chartered corporations, “like [the] East-India Companies in England” plummet precipitously in price when Croalians sell off their stocks (121-22). At least one contemporary found this distortive tale of Dissent too incredible; “What a Story of Tom Thumb is here,” he exclaimed, claiming it was “introduc’d without any Foundation for it in Truth or Reason, but the mere Imagination of his own Brain” (J. Browne 8). While we would hardly accept such a scene at face value as evidence that Dissenters could hold the English economy to ransom, it is part of the broader discourse, involving pamphlets on trade and religion, that was central to the development of toleration.

While it is tempting to set apart certain types of documents, such as censuses and surveys, from manifestly polemical writing, the underlying conflict over toleration inflects the full range of textual accounts, including one of the most important sources on the demographic and socio-economic strength of early-eighteenth-century Dissent: the Evans List.¹⁶ Produced by the ejected minister John Evans primarily between 1716 and 1718, the List, numbering 151 pages in manuscript, surveys the Baptist, Independent, and Presbyterian congregations throughout England, organizing the details of their congregations into tables outlining the locations of their meetings, their ministers (and their denominations), and the numbers, quality, and voting status of their hearers. As one of the most detailed records of English Nonconformity from the first half of the eighteenth century, the document has been a crucial source for all of the

¹⁶ The full title of the document, currently held in Dr. Williams's Library, London, is List of Dissenting Congregations and Ministers in England and Wales, 1715-1729 (MS 38.4).
most authoritative accounts of Dissent produced throughout the last century. Though many sections remain incomplete, the List is an invaluable source on the locations, sizes, leadership, and socio-economic composition of Dissenting congregations throughout England and Wales. But if historians are rightly inclined to doubt the accuracy of studies undertaken by Anglicans, such as the 1669 census, then we should be equally attentive to the potential biases of the Evans List, particularly concerning the socio-economic character of Nonconformity. From the outset, the origins of the document are anchored in the push for toleration. John Evans, a Dissenting London minister, gathered the information for the list almost exclusively from Presbyterian and Independent ministers. A number of the contributors, including John Barrington and Edmund Calamy, were published proponents of toleration. The timing of the Evans List suggests that the endeavour was hardly impartial. The survey was compiled primarily between 1716 and 1718, the years, following the fall of the Tories, when Dissenters were pushing for the repeal of the Schism Act and the Occasional Conformity Act. As a number of critics have observed, “the chief reason for compiling the list at that date would seem to have been… for the purpose of furthering the agitation for the repeal of the oppressive legislation against Dissenters” (Creasy 3; Watts 267; Bradley, “Nonconformity” 238). While these circumstances do not invalidate the document, they properly situate the List amidst contemporary polemics; this survey aimed to emphasize “the Influence of Trading Dissenters” (Evans 31).

Despite the relative detail of the survey, the Evans List produces a significantly biased image of English Dissent. Some of the systemic biases of the list are unavoidable. Quakers are known to have been of lower socio-economic standing than Presbyterians and Independents, but they are mostly excluded from Evans’ account. As well, since nearly all of the data on the quality of Dissenters is derived from Nonconformist (predominantly Presbyterian) ministers, the
potential for exaggerations is significant. While Bradley identifies some exaggerations in the electoral numbers for Colchester, in general the numbers, though mostly round estimates, appear roughly accurate (Bradley “Nonconformity” 242; Watts 491-510). As the list aimed to influence policy, any inaccuracies in population numbers could have been disputed in Parliament, especially by MPs who had access to more accurate data. The information on the wealth of Dissenters, on the other hand, is recorded in a manner that serves to underscore the prosperity of Nonconformists. When he describes the “quality of the hearers,” Evans consistently begins with the wealthiest, and for many towns, including Brentwood and Portsmouth, he only notes gentleman or those worth at least 500l. (37, 103, 114, 123). Throughout the list, he describes and categorizes wealthy Dissenters in far more detail than the he does the poor. He describes the congregation of Isaac Noble in Bristol: “severall of them are Persons of Condiction, divers of them rich; many more very substantial; of very few of them poor” (147). While for Nottinghamshire the list distinguishes between esquires, gentleman’s widows, and gentlemen, Evans very rarely acknowledges the existence of poor Dissenters. Some are perhaps included among the “labourers” he identifies, but on the whole most of the poor seem to be quietly excluded from the evaluation, even though in nearly all areas they evidently constitute the majority of the congregation. Among William Buckley’s Duckenfield congregation, for example, 781 hearers – 88% of the congregation – are unaccounted for; according to Evans' record, they are neither gentlemen, tradesmen, or yeomen (12). In Cornwall, the four categories Evans defines – Gentlemen, Tradesmen, Yeomen, and Labourers – account for only 34% of the local Dissenting population (16). Evans acknowledges the “meaner sort” in only three counties, and he never emphasizes the poverty of Nonconformists in areas like Berkshire as he does their wealth in towns like Bristol (4, 103-105, 142).
His deviations from the established format serve almost exclusively to emphasize the economic and political power of Dissenters (99). Rather than number the gentlemen and tradesman of the town, the entry for Bicester simply reads “Dissenters ye most susbstantiall of yce town” (94). To his table on Bristol he appends a special report which calculates the wealth of the 4300 Dissenters there at £770,000 (147). “There is also in Bristol,” he further claims,

> a great Body of Quakers who are generally well-affected to the present Government, of large Traders of very rich! Their Number may be supposed about 2000 or upwards; of their Wealth not less than 500000li. And the Strength of all the Dissenters in Bristoll may justly be reckond much more than that of all the Low-Church-Party there. (147)

While it is possible that they were so disproportionately wealthy, we should be especially wary of accepting such remarkably atypical data at face value, particularly as the roundness of the numbers indicates that this appraisal is based on a rough estimate. More significant, however, is the fact that this claim is technically superfluous to the project, which otherwise neglects Quakers. The exclamatory announcement, here, of their impressive wealth demonstrates that Evans aims to advertise the socio-economic power of Dissenters. Throughout the list, Evans includes a number of letters and reports which quite clearly serve this end, as many of them manifest a desire to estimate the influence of Dissenters as highly as possible. To his table on Cheshire he appends a note asserting that “if ye Anabaptists Brethren... could make up... 100 Voters; then the Dissenters of Cheshire would make up near a 4th part of the Voters for that County” (13). While some of these notes focus on political influence, many are intended to highlight the “Influence of Trading Dissenters” (31). Crabbed into the “quality” column on Whitehaven, overflowing far into the adjacent column, is a note underscoring the importance of the local Presbyterian congregation: “Gent. 20. One Merchant worth above 29000li. Four Merchants more worth each about 4000li. The rest Tradesmen, Yeomen or Labourers, Dissenters
here by Trade have such an Influence on Elections at Cockermouth t[hat] with ye Dissenters of
Cock., yey turn ſ as yey please.” (19). Not surprisingly, the list includes no special notes on the
poverty of Dissenters. The Evans List, undoubtedly, offers useful data on Dissent during the
early eighteen century. But like pamphlets and tracts on Nonconformity, which are regularly
treated as impartial accounts, it is deeply involved in the rhetorical contest over the image and
status of English Dissenters.

The alleged affinity between Dissent and trade developed and maintained currency
precisely because it was rhetorically appealing; the discourse projected a homogenized image
that was congruent with contemporary priorities. In reality, Dissenters were remarkably
heterogeneous, both doctrinally and socio-economically, but the debate over toleration took
form, to their benefit, in terms of “Dissent” and “Nonconformity.” While many critics have
observed the role that economic arguments played in the advancement of toleration, claims about
the commercial importance of Dissenters are typically treated as impartial records. Recognizing
the rhetorical facets of this shift offers a new perspective on contemporary debates, illuminating
the extent to which the contest over the reputation and image of Nonconformity shaped a wide
range of accounts. It is in this discursive context that Defoe may be most accurately situated, as
the pressures produced by the Restoration and the penal laws fundamentally shaped the discourse
of “Practical Religion” which became a definitive influence on his religious thought.
Chapter 3

Defoe, Dissent, and the Discourse of “Practical Religion”

As to all the disputes, wrangling, strife, and contention which have appeared in the world about religion, whether in niceties in doctrines or schemes of church government, they were so perfectly useless to us and, for aught I can yet see, they have been so to the rest of the world.

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe* (1719)

In 1679, after more than four years of training at the Dissenting academy of Reverend Charles Morton, the young Daniel Defoe made a crucial decision to pursue a career in trade, rather than take a position in the Nonconformist ministry. For biographers, this moment has often served to mark a decisive and definitive turn away from spiritual life to the secular concerns of worldly business. “Daniel,” Paul Dottin speculates, “had no taste for martyrdom: he dreamed of an active life, of eminent posts, of incalculable riches” (20). But looking back on his decision more than twenty years later, Defoe expresses regrets which characterize his choice less as a manifestation of his abiding indifference to religion than as a product of his youthful opposition to the expectations of his elders. “It was my disaster first to be set apart for, and then to be set apart from, the honour of that sacred employ,” he reflects in 1709 (*Review VI.427*). While Defoe is aiming to permit himself “to preach a little,” the claim is certainly consistent with his abiding commitment to theological topics and sermonic modes. The passive phrasing Defoe employs suggests that, at least in retrospect, he remained attached to the profession. Religion played a crucial role in his social life and literary development long after he abandoned a clerical career. If in the forty years that followed this decision Defoe often considered himself a merchant, he identified as often and as intensely as a Christian, and more specifically as a Dissenter. Certainly, delineating and elucidating his religious ideas and sentiments is difficult, particularly concerning those periods of his life about which relatively little is known. But an extensive array of
biographical and literary evidence, when traced throughout his long and varied life, indicates that from his early youth through to his final years, Defoe remained practically involved with Nonconformity, both in his personal life and in his writing. He spent his youth deeply integrated in Dissenting communities, not only at home and at school, but also on the battlefield – fighting, alongside some of his former classmates, for the Duke of Monmouth. When he began to publish regularly, shortly after his thirtieth birthday, he presented himself as the voice of English Nonconformity, constructing an image as a knowledgeable yet independent apologist for the “Dissenting Interest”. But while he had many acquaintances, friends, and business associates among Dissenters, his uncompromising opposition to heterodoxy, which intensified in his later writing, indicates that he was, in his own words, a “religious dissenter,” one who “dissent[ed] from a real principle of conscience” (Enquiry PEW III.45; Occasional PEW III.83; Defoe, Letters 373; Defoe, Mr. How 14; Defoe, Sincerity 3).

This context is crucial for properly understanding his approach to religion. Though conventionally dismissed as shallow and disingenuous, Defoe’s religious thought is decisively informed by his Dissenting roots, specifically by the discourse of “practical religion” developed after the Interregnum by Nonconformist divines, including Samuel Annesley, the Foe family minister, and Charles Morton, who ran the Dissenting academy at Newington Green where Defoe undertook his ministerial training. This discourse, defined by a conscious disavowal of abstract theology, was part of the broader endeavour to improve the status and reputation of English Nonconformity. Due not only to their role in the Civil War but also to their persistent refusal to conform, Dissenters developed a reputation for abstract, divisive theological disputation and controversy, one writers could not easily disaffirm by explaining their scruples. Motivated significantly by a desire to disavow this image, many Dissenting writers consciously
privileged “practical” divinity, focusing on the application of Christian tenets to quotidian situations, such as business transactions. While this approach informed the content of religious writing, “practical divinity” was defined, more consistently, by a conscious disavowal of abstract disputes. This attitude fundamentally informs Defoe’s approach to religion, which is defined, above all, by an abiding hostility to abstract theological controversy – what he refers to as “doubtful Disputations” (*New RDW* III.203). His aversion to unproductively “difficult” questions, as Defoe frequently labels them, informs not only his modes of argument, but also his generic choices, which enable him to discuss fundamental theological questions while disavowing divisive or disputed issues.

“Set Apart for… that Sacred Employ”: 1660-1681

While his extended ancestry remains somewhat obscure, Defoe was evidently born into a Presbyterian family (Bastian 8-17). Frank Bastian suggests that his grandmother may have been the daughter of a non-conforming minister, and a number of comments scattered throughout his writing link Defoe with a Presbyterian ancestry (14). In *The Dissenters Answer to the High-Church Challenge* (1704), for example, Defoe declares that he wears a mourning ring for the Presbyterian minister Christopher Love, who was executed in 1651 for his unyielding support of Charles II (*PEW* III.180). Though biographers often accept this detail too credulously, especially as Defoe is aiming to assert the loyalty of Presbyterians, it is unlikely he would have made a false claim so easily verified by contemporaries. The parish of St. Giles Cripplegate, where Defoe was born in 1660, was a puritan centre, both during Interregnum and in the tense decades that followed, housing one of the heaviest concentrations of Nonconformists in London (Matthews xiv). While there is no evidence that his upbringing was distinctively “strict” or
“guilt-ridden,” as biographers regularly assume, his detailed and nuanced scriptural knowledge, along with his abiding interest in the religious instruction of young children, suggests that religion was a significant aspect of his childhood (Wilkinson 350; Abse 27). By his own account, he had copied out the entire Pentateuch during his adolescence amidst the fears surrounding the Popish Plot, a claim consistent with his particularly detailed knowledge of these books (Review II.814). However strictly “Puritan” were his parents, their religious beliefs evidently disagreed with those of the Anglican Church, since in 1662 they refused to conform to Anglicanism. The decision to worship outside the Established Church was a difficult one during the decade that followed the Interregnum, when hostility to Dissenters was especially vitriolic. Defoe was only two when his family separated from the Church, and the decision had life-long ramifications on his religious and intellectual development. But Defoe never seems to have considered conforming, even as Nonconformity attenuated after the turn of the century. Certainly, there were social and political reasons to remain a Nonconformist, and Defoe benefitted from his connections with Dissenters. But his unwavering opposition to occasional conformity, as well as his hostility to “political” Dissenters, suggests that his Nonconformity was a matter of conviction, not convenience.

Some time before he was six, Defoe's family moved to a ward indelibly associated with religious radicalism and Nonconformity: St. Stephen, Coleman Street. The parish had been a “focus of radical religion” during the Civil War and the Interregnum, and after the Restoration the street on which Defoe spent his childhood remained a distinctively “radical parish,” identified by informers as a haven for radicals and a locus of conspiracy (Watts 8, 120; Turner First 36-37). John Milton, who reportedly entertained conventicles in his house, lived nearby Defoe (Turner 26). As Paul Seaward observes, “the parish possessed a very evil reputation with
the ministers of the restored monarchy” (61). Officials had reason to watch Swan Alley, where Defoe grew up, especially closely during the years following the Restoration, not least because the street housed many radicals who were gathering weapons in the months surrounding the Restoration (SP 18/220 f.101; f.111). It was from a Dissenting meeting-house on this street that, in 1661, Thomas Venner had led a group of men across London on a violent crusade in the name of King Jesus. The uprising was a manifestation of a more extreme form of Dissent, and Anglicans and moderate Nonconformists alike were quick to condemn the violence. Numerous pamphlets published in the month that followed, such as The Last Farewel to the Rebellious Sect Called the Fifth Monarchy-Men (1661), expressed the widespread animosity towards the Fifth-Monarchists that developed in the aftermath of the uprising. Such works typically condemned the rebels as “Treacherous [and] Tyrannical Phanaticks,” hyperbolically denouncing the uprising as “the [most] horrid, treacherous, and barbarous Insurrection that ever was heard of since the Creation” (A27, A32). Later in life, however, after popular hostility had diminished, Defoe would recount the uprising with sympathy uncommon at the time:

> When the fifth Monarchy Men made a Ridiculous Essay *here*, with 25 Men to fight the Lord against the Mighty, and rais’d a Rebellion against King Charles, for the Restoring of King Jesus, as they term’d it; as an Old Woman, who was a Private Friend to the Design, was talking with some People in the Street, the Morning they were Defeated, every body was crying out, it was a Senseless, Mad Action, unaccountable and preposterous; Ay, says the old Woman, *That’s true*, but what should we have call’d it, if it had succeeded? (*Review* I.180)

Even as he conspicuously reiterates the popular aversion of this “ridiculous Essay,” the scene constructs a subtly supportive portrait of the radical uprising. The term “essay” ascribes a degree of legitimacy to the uprising, figuring it as a planned attempt, rather than as a meaningless outburst of fanatical violence. To distance himself from the sentiment, Defoe identifies the old woman as “a Private Friend to the Design,” but the label figures her connection with the radical
cause in a sympathetic manner. While the term could signify political allegiance, it also invokes an affectionate bond between sympathizers. The gender and age of this sympathizer implies that support for the Puritan sentiments that inspired the rebellion existed widely, far beyond the rash young men to whom it was generally attributed. Moreover, the distinctly conventional character of the “Old Woman” helps defuse the fundamentally radical nature of this uncommon attitude, functioning to mediate the potentially unpopular sympathy Defoe subtly privileges. The passage acknowledges the widespread antipathy to the rebellion, but in his account popular opposition is unappealingly irrational and chaotic. Against the tempered, even-handed response of the old woman, the profusion of popular reaction is markedly heterogeneous; the multiplicity of their opinions, which characterize the design as “Senceless,” “Mad,” “unaccountable,” and “preposterous,” makes each evaluation appear inaccurate and inconclusive, particularly alongside the simplicity and unity of the question the old woman poses. It is clear that these are incoherent outbursts, rather than judicious assessments of the event. Against her calm, reasoned “talking,” the confused “cr[ies]” of the multitude appear disruptively irrational. Her question, which remains unanswered, acknowledges the dominant opinion, but only nominally; her inquiry denaturalizes the prevailing hostility to the uprising, suggesting that popular opinion is nothing more than a function of the ideology of the victors.

Defoe’s life-long identification with Nonconformity was influenced, in large part, by Samuel Annesley, the Nonconformist minister of St. Giles, Cripplegate. It was in his footsteps that the Foe family followed, in 1662, when they left the Established Church and became Dissenters; Defoe’s Nonconformity originated in Annesley’s refusal to conform. Initially ministering to his congregation in his own home, Annesley was preaching almost daily by the time Defoe was nine, and the Foes were among the roughly eight hundred members of his
congregation who met, illegally, in a large meeting house in Spitalfields. Annesley was widely known and respected among Dissenters, and James Foe was a close friend of the eminent minister. When warrants were issued for his arrest in 1670, more than 3,000 people reportedly gathered to defend his meeting (Turner, First 59). As a source of friends, mentors, and models, Annesley's congregation would have provided an important community for Defoe. Backscheider even argues that Annesley himself served as a foundational model for Defoe (Defoe 16). Her contention is corroborated by John Dunton, a friend of Defoe, who claimed that Defoe was “a great admirer and hearer” of Annesley (B4'-B4'). The elegy Defoe wrote for Annesley, at the request of Dunton, suggests a degree of intimacy and familiarity between the two. “Written by one of his hearers,” the elegy features a distinctive emphasis on more intimate characteristics that would have been apparent only to those who knew the minister more closely: his engaging conversation, his “taking Aspect,” and even his “pleasing smile” (Frontispiece, 5, 9).

Considering the fact that Defoe regularly denigrated the religious hypocrisy of the clergy, including Dissenting ministers, the fact that Annesley “had no Priest-craft in him, nor no Pride” is a highly significant and personal compliment (B"', 8). The opening stanzas of the poem are conventional, acknowledging the universal reach of mortality, as are the concluding passages, which look to the immortality of Heaven. But between these frames, the Character frequently shifts into intimate scenes and moments, moving from abstract encomium to personal recollection. “His native Candor, and familiar Stile,” the speaker recalls, “Which did so oft his Hearers Hours beguile, / Charm’d us with Godliness, and while he spake, / We lov’d the Doctrine for the Teacher’s sake” (D1'–D2'). While it is not always easy to discern between rehearsed convention and real “character,” the personal details and imagery of the poem seem to
substantiate the claim, which concludes the preface to the poem, that Defoe was among those who knew Annesley well (B2').

Whether the initial impetus came from his parents, from Annesley or even from young Daniel himself, Defoe was set apart for the Dissenting ministry. Considering the precarious and embattled position of a Nonconforming minister during these years, the choice of this career path suggests that the Foe family was distinctively religious. As Annesley's own demoralizing experience demonstrated, the enticements of the vocation were primarily spiritual; their family minister was arrested and fined numerous times throughout his career (Wesley 10). It was at the grammar school in Dorking, Surrey, a day's ride from London, that Defoe began his formal education. Little is known about the school itself, and Defoe almost never comments on his education there. But there is no doubt that he remained amidst a Nonconformist community. The school was kept by the Reverend James Fisher, an ejected Independent minister, and the town had a disproportionately high number of Nonconformists. Fisher himself held Independent worship at his house, and the town also supported Presbyterian and Baptist services. The fact that many of the congregants came from abroad suggests that the town was a focal point for Nonconformity, and Frank Bastian points out that during Defoe's time in Dorking the Fifth Monarchist leader Christopher Feake held conventicles in the town. Whether Defoe actually “heard from him much fiery and heady stuff” is unclear, but his residence suggests the town was associated with Dissent (Bastian 40). The fact that Defoe had not been apprenticed for any trade by the age of sixteen suggests that by the time he left Reverend Fisher’s grammar school he was probably set apart for a career as a Dissenting minister.

17 During the late seventeenth century, the average proportion of Dissenters was roughly 5%. In Surrey and Southwark, Nonconformists constituted 7% of the local population (Watts 509). According to the 1676 census, Dorking contained 1000 Anglicans, 200 Protestant Nonconformists, and 18 Papists (Whiteman 100).
Defoe undertook his theological training at the Dissenting academy of Charles Morton, at which he was enrolled shortly after his sixteenth birthday. When Samuel Wesley attended the school in the early 1680s, only a few years after Defoe had been enrolled, Morton was teaching nearly fifty students (Wesley 7). Though the academy was not technically restricted to Nonconformists, unsurprisingly nearly all of those enrolled in the Dissenting academies when Defoe was taught were Nonconformists, and Samuel Wesley's account of Morton's academy suggests that the shared religious and political tenets of the students contributed to a sense of community (6-8). Scholarship on the Dissenting academies has generally attended primarily to their distinctively “progressive” aspect, characterizing them as a forward-looking alternative to the moribund English universities. Since these schools provided more instruction in subjects like geography, mathematics, and natural science than did Oxford, Cambridge, or the traditional grammar schools, they appear, in retrospect, uniquely “modern” in character. On the whole, these academies did offer more instruction in conventionally neglected subjects, and Morton's distinctive emphasis on science and vernacular literacy arguably had an important influence on Defoe's attitudes towards new scientific approaches, ideas, and discourses (Vickers 32-51). But the disproportionate attention to the “modern” character of the Dissenting academies has often obscured the fundamentally religious nature of these institutions, and thus the religious education Defoe received there. As David Wykes observes, these academies served, first and foremost, to train the Dissenting ministry (“Contribution” 100-01). The instruction Defoe would have received from Morton on every subject, including logic, languages, and natural philosophy, would have been taught within a religious framework. The dominant emphasis on religious instruction would have made it impossible that Defoe “became so intensely interested in … secular subjects that he forgot the original purpose of his studies” (Stamm 227). At the academy
at Bethnal Green, for example, along with the “moral lessons” that accompanied various subjects, Mondays and Fridays were focused on divine study (Palmer 5). Every day of the week students were recommended “the best Books both of the Episcopal, Presbyterian, and Independent Divines” (6). The theological curriculum required four years to complete, and those completing this course of study at Morton’s academy seemed to serve as models of piety for their younger peers (7). The fact that Defoe remained past his third year indicates that he was enrolled in this course of study. Building on the religious education of his youth, during this course of studies Defoe developed much of the extensive Biblical knowledge he demonstrates in his later writing.

“Set Apart… from that Sacred Employ”: 1680-1698

Some time around 1681, when he was approaching the age of twenty-one, Defoe left Morton’s academy, but for reasons that remain unclear, he did not enter the Dissenting ministry for which he had been training. Many reasons have been suggested why Defoe chose this path, but there is no evidence to indicate he suffered a decisive “crisis of faith,” as many critics have speculated (Stamm 227; Bastian 65). On the contrary, in 1681 Defoe produced his most manifestly Christian composition: his Meditations,18 a series of seven poems on religious subjects. These poems are the earliest known writings by Defoe, predating his earliest surviving publication by six years. But many scholars are surprisingly inclined to ignore them or to divorce them from Defoe's oeuvre or character. Bastian, for example, assumes the Meditations “were far from typical” of his other “adolescent efforts” (53), and the poems generally receive only cursory attention in most biographies. As he never published them, however, either when they were written or when he

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18 The manuscript containing these poems, now in the Huntington Library, comprehends 195 pages, most of which consist of six sermons, delivered by John Collins, which Defoe transcribed in 1681. The poems, seven verse meditations (one fragmentary), appear in the last twenty-three pages of the manuscript.
collected his works in later editions, the *Meditations* remain Defoe’s most private composition, and thus one of the most important for substantiating his religious thought during this early period of his life. The imagery and phraseology of the poems demonstrates a detailed and profound knowledge of Scripture. The foundational metaphor of the opening poem, “Fleeing for Refuge to the Hope Set Before Us,” is built on a practice described in the Pentateuch, which records that in Israel and Judah towns were designated as cities of refuge for any “which killeth any person at unawares” (Numbers 35:11-24). Figuring Christian salvation in terms of travel, Defoe represents God’s grace as the “securer Towne” to which the sinner flees, building an extended metaphor on this concept. But the poem also draws on a wide range of Biblical texts, including Proverbs, Matthew, and Ephesians (3). The fourth poem, “Shall the Clay Say Unto the Potter,” is inspired by Isaiah 29:16. Defoe constructs a fully imagined dramatic scene for the metaphor, constructing a developed narrative from the lines: “And Why This Rude ill-fashion’d Nasty Pott / Destin’d To Every Slavish use, / Why Not,” asks the pot, “This Flower Pott, This Painted Dish or That / Three Minutes Since you Could Not Choose / Now I / Must bee A Drudge & This a Dish of qualitye” (18). The *Meditations*, moreover, express a number of sentiments that connect Defoe with moderate Nonconformist theology. Throughout nearly every poem Defoe emphasizes the primacy of grace over human reason and endeavour, positioning himself among contemporaneous Nonconformist writers including John Bunyan and Edmund Calamy. “None Ever Were Received / For Worthyness,” he asserts, dismissing his “Common Works without ye Truth of grace” (7, 5). Yet, he disavows the most extreme form of Calvinism, affirming that the “Generall Call has No Excepcon Made, / To Any But To Such as are Affraid” (6). Defoe also expresses a level of religious self-contempt associated with a contemporary Dissenting mindset, condemning his “Tainted heart” and “spoil’d” soul (7, 9). “You can do Nothing True,” he tells
himself in various terms (14). The poems are congruent with the recommendation of Dissenting writers like Oliver Heywood, who advised that one should “often say to [oneself], O what a vile sinful Nature have I! How full of corruption, which makes my life full of sin? How empty am I of all good?” (57). While it is tempting to dismiss the conventional sentiments of the poems as commonplace, a number of critics have argued that the *Meditations* express a “genuine” religious devotion, finding it impossible to treat the poems as an academic exercise (Richetti, *Defoe* 7; Wilkinson 354). However earnest the *Meditations* are, the very existence of these poems makes it difficult to believe that his decision to pursue a career in trade evinces a decisive rejection or disintegration of his faith.

Nor did Defoe's departure from the Nonconformist academy mark an end to his involvement in the Dissenting community. Throughout the two decades that followed, he developed and maintained many friendships and connections among Nonconformists, particularly in London. In fact, the very year he left Newington Green, Defoe attended and transcribed a series of six sermons given by the Congregational minister John Collins. One of the six original Pinners' Hall lecturers, Collins was considered “one of the best preachers in or about London” (Matthews 127-8). Defoe listed him among the best preachers English Dissenters had known (*Parties* 352). Collins preached on Mark 16:15-16: “And [Jesus] said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Healey 7). But it was not only at Dissenting meeting-houses that Defoe was surrounded by Nonconformists. Dissenters formed the core of his personal and professional networks. Shortly before his marriage to Mary Tuffley in 1683, whose father was reportedly a lay elder in a Presbyterian conventicle, Defoe settled in Freeman's Yard, Cornhill, a prospering neighbourhood “in a center of Dissent”; a Presbyterian meeting-houses
opened onto the Yard itself (Character of Daniell; Backscheider 33). Two years later, legal records show that Defoe stood for £20 recognizance for two Nonconformist widows charged with attending Dissenting conventicles (Backscheider 43). Whether he knew these women personally, or whether he defended them as fellow Dissenters, by 1688 Defoe seems to have become a prominent member of the Nonconformist community in London. In his History, John Oldmixon records that, as part of the rich procession organized in honour of William and Mary, a troop of volunteer cavalry, “made of the chief Citizens,” rode out to honour the new king and queen. “Among those troopers, who were for the most part Dissenters,” he records, “was Daniel Foe, at that time a Hosier in Freeman’s Yard, Cornhill” (37). Backscheider speculates that Defoe was probably part of the group of Dissenting ministers and laymen who met at Chew’s coffee-houses (48). During these years he was also acquainted with the family of the ejected Independent minister David Clarkson. Defoe considered two of his books, *No Scripture Evidence for Diocesan Bishops* (1681) and *A Discourse of Liturgies* (1689), unanswered justifications for Nonconformity, and during these years he evidently became friends with Clarkson’s son Matthew, to whose character he attested when he petitioned for government office in 1689.

When Defoe married in 1683, Charles Lodwick, David Clarkson’s stepson, alleged the particulars of his marriage license (Bastian 96-97). During this period Defoe also entered into a partnership with James and Samuel Stancliffe, two brothers who, like Defoe, dissented from the Established Church. Samuel remained friends with Defoe until his death in 1695, and the business partnership Defoe built with the Stancliffe brothers was to prove invaluable to his financial success and survival. Thomas Cockerill, who had been also been a member of Annesley’s congregation, published Defoe’s *Essay Upon Projects* (1697), and during these years Defoe also began to collaborate with John Dunton, who commissioned and published a number
of his works. Though not a Dissenter himself, Dunton was the son-in-law of Annesley, and as a publisher he became a focal point of the Nonconformist literary community, printing the writing of many of the most eminent Dissenting divines, including Richard Baxter, Samuel Annesley, and Samuel Wesley.

While Defoe developed and maintained many personal and professional connections in the Dissenting community, his participation in the Monmouth Rebellion suggests that his dedication to Nonconformity was more than simply pragmatic or mercantile.\textsuperscript{19} In 1685, only months after James II had succeeded to the throne, Defoe fought alongside a small band of rebels in an ill-fated attempt to force the new king from the throne and crown his Protestant nephew, the Duke of Monmouth. Unlike many, Defoe was one of the few who escaped capture long enough to receive a general pardon the following year. The fact that comparatively few of the rebels were Londoners makes Defoe’s decision particularly significant, as Backscheider suggests (\textit{Defoe} 37). Considering he has often been characterized as unprincipled and irreligious, his decision to join the Monmouth Rebellion has proved difficult to explain. More than fifty years ago, J. R. Moore, in his biography of Defoe, wondered “why... a merchant not quite twenty-five years old left his young wife to follow an adventurer in battle more than a hundred miles away” (54-55). The question has not yet been conclusively answered. Conventionally, scholars have attributed his involvement in the rebellion to a youthful “recklessness” (Shinagel 27). But religion was undoubtedly an important, if not decisive factor in this decision. For his supporters, Monmouth was much more than an “adventurer”; the rebellion was crucially motivated by religion. As Steven Pincus observes, both the rebels themselves and contemporaries “thought the rebellion was a religious war” (109). Just before his execution, for example, the convicted rebel

\textsuperscript{19} Defoe claimed he was “in arms under the Duke of Monmouth” in his \textit{Appeal to Honour and Justice} (1715)(28). This is confirmed by his appearance among thirty-two rebels listed in an official pardon issued May 31, 1687 (SP 44/337 f.281).
William Jenkyn wrote to his mother that he would “die a martyr for the Protestant religion, and merely for doing [his] duty in opposing of that flood of popery” (qtd. in Pincus 110). Defoe’s participation in the rebellion connects him, more specifically, with Nonconformity. As a number of historians have observed, the rebels “were drawn mainly from the Dissenters” (Earle 5-17; Monod 168-169). Among the fifty-eight London citizens put under special scrutiny the night Monmouth landed were most of the city's powerful Nonconformists, and two hundred prominent Dissenters were arrested (Backscheider 37). In fact, a number of Defoe’s former classmates from Morton’s academy fought alongside him for Monmouth. Certainly, concerns about civil liberties sometimes inform Defoe’s account of the rebellion. But as Defoe, along with many contemporaries, conceived of the revolt primarily in terms of religion, specifically Nonconformity, his participation in the Monmouth Rebellion suggests his identification with Dissent was intimately connected to his faith.

In 1688, Defoe published his first surviving work, *A Letter from a Dissenter to his Friend at the Hague*, which signals his burgeoning concern with what he would come to refer to as the “Dissenting Interest” – the political and legal status of English Protestant Dissenters. Launching into the heated controversy over the Indulgence offered by James II, Defoe demonstrates a significant fluency with the difficulties and debates surrounding Nonconformity. In this pamphlet, the young Defoe aimed to convince Dissenters to vote against those incumbent MPs who would support this Indulgence, which Defoe argued was intended primarily to secure religious toleration for Catholics. Though when he looks back on his *Letter* he portrayed himself as a principled outsider bravely challenging the prevailing attitude of his brethren, his sceptical attitude towards the Indulgence was consonant with the attitude of contemporary Dissenters, as he admits elsewhere (*Weakest PEW* III.343-44; Defoe, *Short-Ways* 21-22). The title of the tract
itself positions Defoe within the contemporary debate begun, the year prior, when Halifax had published his influential *Letter to a Dissenter* (1687). Defoe’s letter is one of dozens of responses so named, among them *Letters* by Henry Care, Thomas Godden, and Roger L’Estrange. Defoe represents his own opinion as markedly distinctive and independent, but his detailed knowledge of the political details of toleration, including the closeting campaign pursued by James II the year prior, demonstrates that he was immersed in the contemporary debate, as does his evident facility with the vocabulary surrounding liberty of conscience and the penal laws (*PEW* III.35). Though he was only twenty-eight when his *Letter* was published, the confident, sometimes brash tone that characterizes most of his writing on Nonconformity is already apparent in this tract, as he advises, with a hint of disdain, his short-sighted brethren. As John Richetti observes, “the pamphlet features a smooth impersonation, we may say, of a much older and wiser man than the 28-year-old Defoe” (*Defoe*, 39). Though he initially presents himself as a “friend,” suggesting a level of equality between himself and the English Dissenters to whom he is ostensibly writing, the closing address of the *Letter* newly identifies him as a “faithful Monitor” (36). The shift in title elevates the status of the speaker, as the term signified a guiding individual or impulse, most often a superior moral or intellectual calibre. Though Defoe does not write on Dissent again for almost a decade, the officious tone he develops in his *Letter* provides the groundwork for his later conception of himself as an impartial expert on Nonconformity.

**Becoming “a Known Dissenter” – one “Worth Quoting”: 1698-1714**

When Defoe began publishing regularly, after 1698, Nonconformity became a characteristic aspect of his literary identity. In his pamphlets on Nonconformity, especially those written after the death of William, his aim was to attain the “authority… to write in the Name of the
Dissenters,” which he comes to do with increasing confidence and certainty throughout this period (Defoe, *Opinion; Occasional PEW* III.93; *Peace PEW* III.142, 154). Throughout his early pamphlets on Dissent, Defoe works to develop a distinctively independent persona, figuring himself as the most perceptive and relevant spokesperson for Nonconformity. More than a personal impulse, the intellectual independence Defoe projects is the cornerstone of his reputation as an authority on Dissent, which he builds during this period. Published first in 1698, his *Enquiry into the Occasional Conformity of Dissenters* criticized the practice of attending Anglican worship occasionally to qualify for public office. Attention had been brought to the practice when Sir Humphrey Edwin, mayor of London, had – in the same day – taken Anglican communion at St. Paul’s and attended Dissenting worship at Pinners’ Hall, compelling his sword-bearer to accompany him to both services. While the incident itself was reportedly offensive “even to the most considerate dissenters,” the practice of occasional conformity was widespread (SP 32/8 f.141). As Penny Pritchard suggests, his uncompromising stance on the topic attests to “the gravity with which Defoe viewed the sincere profession of faith outside the Established Church” (21). The fact that he republished the pamphlet in 1700, largely unchanged but for a new preface, suggests that it projected the persona Defoe aimed to construct. While we might expect such a relatively unaccomplished writer to support his argument with reference to more established authors, such as Richard Baxter or John Owen, the *Enquiry* serves, above all, to assert Defoe’s independence from contemporary commentators. The pamphlet, nearly thirty pages, does not include a single reference to contemporaneous writing. Defoe signals his involvement with Dissent by references to generalized “excuses” and “apolog[ies]” for occasional conformity, but he conspicuously avoids connecting any of his argument with contemporary writing (*PEW* III.47-48). Defoe builds his authority, instead, on sweeping,
perceptive knowledge of English history. The pamphlet opens with a long “review of Past Times,” constituting nearly a quarter of the tract, which serves to situate his argument in historiographical discourse. Even in this, however, Defoe does not cite a single historian, but instead projects an effortlessness intended to substantiate his authority. Defoe implies that not only is his historical knowledge fully independent, but also that he is uniquely able to see through the biases of established historiography. On Henry VIII, Defoe “won’t say he acted from any Principles of Conscience, whatever his Ambition and Interest led him to pretend; but, *that was the Gloss,*” he observes, “as it is in most Cases of Publick Resolutions” (41). Defoe reinforces his independence from established history when he comes to discuss the dissolution of the monasteries; “I’ll for once be so free with the Character of that Prince, as to suppose what to me seems plain, that *neither This Religion, or That, were of much moment in his thoughts, but his Interest,* as the Sequel made plain, by the Seizure he made of the Revenues of the Church” (41). The emphasis on the personal pronoun, as well as his deliberate “plain[ness],” serves to imply that he is “free” from established interpretations. Undoubtedly, Defoe was well acquainted with the disputes on occasional conformity, as his knowledge of the conventional arguments indicates. But in his entry into the debate Defoe deliberately figures himself as a distinctively independent authority on Dissent.

Even as his writing on Nonconformity becomes more intertextual, Defoe maintains this consciously independent persona by citing his own writing regularly and prominently, a strategy that serves to construct a self-promoting network of allusions and citations. The technique depends on the anonymity of many of his tracts on Dissent, which allows him to endorse “De Foe” as a credible commentator on Nonconformity. Rather than remove himself from contemporary discourse, after the success of *The True-Born Englishman* (1701) Defoe accredits
his publications indirectly, citing himself as a preeminent authority. The shift between his 1698 *Enquiry* and his 1702 *A New Test of the Church of England's Loyalty* is demonstrative; in the former Defoe stands conspicuously alone, but in the latter he invokes a legion of contemporary authors. While he comments directly on the writing of William Beveridge and Thomas Wagstaffe, his references, such as those to Sir Roger L’Estrange and Algernon Sidney, serve predominantly to authenticate his knowledge of contemporary religion and politics (*PEW* III.61, 66). Even his attacks on High Church hypocrisy are ostentatiously well-informed. “O Pelling! O Brady! O Sherlock!” he cries when he considers how Anglicans betrayed James II even as they professed passive obedience (67). In his 1704 *The Dissenters Answer to the High-Church Challenge*, he quotes from a wide range of authors, including Richard Baxter, David Clarkson, and Samuel Bold, dedicating much of the paper to summarizing the most important arguments against Nonconformity. More than any of his pamphlets on Dissent, *The Dissenters Answer* demonstrates that Defoe was particularly well versed in the debates surrounding Dissent. The shift in his approach to citation is especially visible in the 1705 edition of *A True Collection of the Writings of the Author of The True-Born Englishman*, in which twenty-one of his works were republished with minor changes. In the *Collection*, Defoe adds citational footnotes to his earlier tracts on Dissent, in particular to *A New Test of the Church of England’s Loyalty*, which newly references Henry Hammond, Edward Pelling, Henry Sacheverell, and Philip Stubbs (59, 60). Defoe even notes that his conception of English monarchy is sourced from the third folio of Sir Humphrey Mackworth’s *Defence of the Right of the Commons of England*. That this precise citation serves a primarily rhetorical purpose is clear from the fact that Defoe misquotes the title, which is actually *A Vindication of the Rights of the Commons of England* (1701).
Rather than situate himself alongside contemporary writers, however, Defoe elevates himself above them by citing his own work as the preeminent authority on Nonconformity. Though Defoe readily quotes himself in his writing on nearly every subject, the technique is particularly common in his writing on Dissent, playing an important role in the construction of his authority; in nearly every one of his pamphlets on Nonconformity, Defoe promotes “De Foe” as a current and trustworthy authority on Nonconformity. Situating himself alongside George Buchanan and Algernon Sidney, in *A New Test of the Church of England’s Loyalty* Defoe invokes his own writing to explain “the avow’d Doctrine of the Dissenters” on contractual government; “the Author of the *True-Born Englishman* is worth quoting in the case,” he decides, quoting fourteen lines of the poem. The format of this quotation, offset from the regular text, distinguishes the source, as does the fact that Defoe formally cites not only the title but also the page number alongside the passage (66). Defoe cites himself as an important authority frequently, for example in *The Dissenters Misrepresented*, in which he concludes that “the *True-Born English Man* appears in the right” (*PEW* III.212). The strategy allows him to legitimize his current argument while projecting authority onto his earlier publications. The technique depends, of course, on the anonymity of his authorship. In the case of *A New Test of the Church of England’s Loyalty*, the pamphlet was published anonymously, and thus Defoe can effectively accredit *The True-Born Englishman*. He employs the same technique in the anonymously published *The Dissenters Answer to the High-Church Challenge* (1704), in which he promotes “De Foe’s *Test of the Church of England’s Loyalty,*” which allegedly remains irrefutable. By Defoe’s account, many of the tracts on Dissent by “De Foe” could not be answered. In the opening of *A New Test of the Church of England’s Honesty*, for example, he remarks that “it is not many months since the World was Enterain’d with a yet unanswered pamphlet, entituled A
Test of the Church of England’s Loyalty” (PEW III.189). Some of his works, such as An Enquiry into Occasional Conformity (1702), functioned in an inverse manner, acknowledging his authorship but citing his other anonymously published works. The frontispiece to the Enquiry attributes the tract to “the Author of the Preface to Mr. Howe,” which Defoe had signed “D. F.,” but the speaker cites, quite prominently in the margin, A New Test of the Church of England’s Loyalty (Enquiry PEW III.49). While it is difficult to determine whether his authorship remained wholly unknown, there is no evidence in contemporary accounts that A New Test was attributed to Defoe in the six months between the two publications. Defoe employs this technique, throughout his writing on Dissent, with remarkable care (Misrepresented PEW III.223). In his writing on Nonconformity, in fact, he cites himself more frequently than he does any other modern author, and nearly all his references are validated by a degree of anonymity. His True Collection, for example, excludes the Dialogue Between a Dissenter and the Observator (1703), which was published a few months beforehand, because the tract served, more than any of his previous works on Dissent, to represent “D Foe” as an authority on Nonconformity – one “all the Town has talkt of” (PEW III.121). Formulated as a dialogue between John Tutchin, author of the Whiggish Observator, and a Dissenter, the pamphlet was intended, in part, to properly explain The Shortest Way with the Dissenters. But the format enabled Defoe to puff his own influence and authority. Though the Dissenter initially claims that “we don’t count him a Dissenter,” the dialogue soon reveals that he agrees with Defoe’s most popular tracts on Nonconformity. Ostensibly unaware that Defoe wrote A New Test, the Dissenter acknowledges that “truly that was a good thing, I lik’t it fully” (123). He supports Reformation of Manners and The True-Born Englishman, and he concedes that Legion’s Memorial “was a good thing indeed” (124). Ultimately, as the other interlocutor interrogates him about his attitude, the Dissenter even comes
to endorse *The Shortest Way* and “love” Defoe (135). While the strategy is quite baldly employed in the *Dialogue*, this mode of intertextual self-construction was pivotal to the formation of his image as a Dissenting apologist.

Though often treated by critics as an “unmitigated disaster,” *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* (1702) played a central role in building Defoe’s reputation as a Dissenting writer (Richetti, *Defoe* 21; Sutherland, *Critical* 233). Based on the hostile reaction it aroused among contemporaries, critics generally characterize the pamphlet as a failure. Readers, both High Churchmen and Dissenters, were unable to detect the irony of the pamphlet, writers on both sides condemning Defoe as an incendiary who intended to foment rebellion. Government officials, equally confused, had charged Defoe with seditious libel; after more than two months in hiding, Defoe was eventually arrested, interrogated, and imprisoned. According to the established view, Defoe crucially “miscalculated” the appropriate level of irony to employ; he had intended to fool High Churchmen while subtly warning more moderate readers, who would ostensibly perceive his irony (Shinagel 59; Richetti, *Defoe* 21; Novak “*Shortest Way*” 411; Leranbaum 235). While some critics argue that Defoe intended to deceive even the Dissenters themselves, all agree that his primary aim was to expose the High Church. But if his aims were partly polemical, they were also partly professional; the pamphlet was clearly intended to incite controversy, setting Defoe apart from his competitors. This approach is consistent with his other tracts on Dissent, especially with those on occasional conformity, which are deliberately provocative. Aiming to set himself apart from other commentators, in his writing on Dissent Defoe consciously takes up minority opinions and antagonistic tones. Rather than simply a botched ruse, *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters* is a part of this approach, and in this sense, it was enormously successful. As Owens observes, the pamphlet became “one of the most widely-discussed pamphlets of the
period" (17). Indeed, Charles Leslie, who vehemently condemned the pamphlet and Defoe, complained that *The Shortest Way* had an “effect all over the Town, among all sorts of People” (6). When Defoe looked back on the fiasco, both in 1706 and 1712, he claimed that the tract “had all the effect he wish’d for”; he had intended, he alleged, to deceive all his readers (*Parties* 20-24). Though Defoe might be trying to put the best face on the scandal, it certainly played a decisive role in his public image. Moreover, it is significant that, rather than let the scandal fade into the past, Defoe incessantly recalls the *Shortest Way* in his later writing, especially in pamphlets published anonymously (*Peace PEW* III.145, 156; *Challenge PEW* III.164, 167, 177; *Honesty PEW* III.189, 195, 201). Reading his other pamphlets on Dissent, one would think that “De Foe’s” *The Shortest Way* was the most influential political satire of the age. It is primarily after the publication of *The Shortest Way* that Defoe became widely known as a Dissenting writer. In 1703, a contemporary pamphlet described him as “a known Dissenter,” and an attack on Defoe published that year, directly inspired by *The Shortest Way*, advised authorities to “follow him by the scent of his scraps of scripture, and you’ll find him at Salter’s, or Pinner’s Hall,” two prominent meeting-houses of Dissenters (Wotton 41; *Shortest-Way* 4). “A Character of Daniell de Foe,” an attack published the following year, identified him as “a profest Dissenter” (f. 165). His correspondence with Fransham also suggests that his Nonconformity was known well outside London (*Letters* 83). While Defoe was undoubtedly unhappy with the legal repercussions of his ruse, it was his *Shortest Way*, perhaps more than any other pamphlet on the topic, that caused him to become known, both to allies and enemies, as “a Dissenter, and one of the most zealous” (Oldmixon, *History* 545). According to Leslie, London Nonconformists denied that Defoe was a Dissenter, “but he [was] too well known in the City to have that Pass” (6). If we assume that Defoe aimed only to subtly expose High Churchmen, *The Shortest Way* is
undoubtedly a puzzling blunder. But considered as part of his endeavour to build a provocative and distinctive reputation, the excessively subtle satire is a performance that served, quite successfully, to make Defoe one the best known Dissenting writers in England.

This endeavour to become the voice of English Nonconformity is paralleled by a tendency to identify with Dissent, both personally and emotionally. Though Defoe often discusses Dissent in the third person, during this period he shifts with increasing frequency from discussing “the Dissenters” to speaking for “us,” particularly during the surge of anti-Dissenting sentiment that followed the death of William (Loyalty PEW III.76; Challenge PEW III.164; Defoe, More Short-Ways 7). In An Enquiry into Occasional Conformity, he moves into a more personal tone than ever before, setting himself, alongside Dissenters, against the Established Church. “You… [may] Build a Fence of Impregnable Laws,” Defoe tells Anglicans, but “leave… us Liberty to serve God according to our Consciences,” he demands (PEW III.85). The spatial imagery of the metaphor reinforces his alignment with Nonconformity, especially as the fence was a commonplace image for the boundaries of the Established Church, one outside of which Defoe clearly sets himself. A Dialogue Between a Dissenter and the Observer publicly identifies Defoe as a Dissenter, and in 1706 he signs his name, “D. Foe,” to the preface of Thomas Delaunes’s Plea for the Nonconformists, in which he passionately expostulated on “the Necessity of Toleration [and] the Mischief of Persecution” (PEW III. 278). Yet, while these identifications are largely rhetorical, Defoe’s commentary on Nonconformity manifests a growing emotional identification with Nonconformists. This is most evident in his accounts of persecution, which sensationalize and exaggerate the suffering of Dissenters. In a 1705 issue of the Review, for example, Defoe claimed that the penal laws had “ruin’d, impoverish’d. or injur’d above seventy thousand families” (Review II.821). While his wording is deliberately vague, the
statement is manifestly sympathetic to Dissent. In his preface to Thomas Delaune’s *Plea for the Non-Conformists*, as well as in his *Review*, Defoe estimated that 8,000 Dissenters had died in prison during the reign of Charles alone (*Preface PEW* III.271). Considering his characteristic rigour on other historical details, his willingness to propagate such an exaggeration is certainly significant. Such moments of sympathetic identification are even more notable in his private letters to Robert Harley, who himself came from a Dissenting background, as they represent exceptions to his typically calculated treatment of Nonconformity. In his correspondence as in his pamphlets, Defoe’s sympathy with Dissenters seems to have been stimulated significantly by the anti-Dissenting sentiment that followed the death of William. “Tis hardly credible with what insolence we were Treated in all Socety,” Defoe writes to Harley in 1706 (*Letters* 51).

Elsewhere in his letters, Defoe sometimes betrays a special concern for the plight of Nonconformists. In his report on the Union negotiations, he presses Harley to consider how Kirk clergy might be appeased. While doing so had political importance, he acknowledges that his account is perhaps coloured by personal sympathies, asking “pardon [for his] warm way of Expressing it”; “I confess,” he concludes, “I am Concern’d in my thoughts that some way may be found Out to mak them Easye” (174-75). In 1712, when the Whigs compromised with Tories on the Occasional Conformity Bill, Defoe wrote Harley that it was, above all, the Dissenters “who[se] True Interests [he] belive[d] [he] served” (363). He felt, Defoe wrote, a “Duty to the Dissenters Interest” (365). Though for rhetorical purposes he often discussed Nonconformity in a detached, abstract tone, his writing occasionally betrays a deep-seated identification with his brethren.

The fact that the Dissenters were often hostile towards Defoe seems to have intensified, rather than diminished, his dedication to their cause. As he consciously adopted provocative
opinions and approaches, Defoe regularly incensed his brethren, particularly with his pamphlets on occasional conformity and with *The Shortest Way*. His 1713 *Letter to the Dissenters*, in which he advised his brethren to be grateful for the toleration they already possessed, undoubtedly caused many of his brethren to consider him a “Wretch that [had] sold both his Principles and Pen” (*Oldmixon, Remarks* 3). For Defoe, however, the hostility of Dissenters imbued his independence with a heroic quality. In 1703, in the wake of the *Shortest Way*, Defoe wrote to an acquaintance that “even Dissenters like Casha [sic] to Caesar lift up the first Dagger at me: I confess it makes me reflect on the wholl body of the Dissenters with something of contempt more than usuall, and gives me regret that I suffer for such a people” (*Letters* 4). Though Defoe was probably disappointed by the animosity of his brethren, he regularly figures their displeasure as evidence that he is pursuing “a just and righteous cause” (*Review* VIII.3). Moreover, his unpopularity with Dissenters enhanced his sense of loyalty, as he felt he was defending their cause based on principle, rather than interest. “It is impossible for the Dissenters in this nation to provoke me to be an enemy to their interest,” he claimed; “should they fire my house, sacrifice my family, and assassinate my life, I would never requite them in defending their cause, and standing to the last against all those that should endeavour to weaken or reproach it” (*Review* VIII.3). It is unlikely Dissenters had threatened to murder his family, but Defoe often sets himself against such extreme examples to puff his steadfastness. However much this principled steadfastness was genuine, the hostility of Dissenters gave Defoe a means of representing himself as an unappreciated martyr bravely committed to defending his people.

This developing identification with Nonconformity in print corresponds with increasing practical involvement with Dissent throughout England. Defoe continued to participate in leading services at the Merchants’ Lectures throughout London, and he reportedly attended
Dissenting sermons at Salters' Hall. The fact that Dunton asked Defoe to write an elegy for Annesley in 1697 strongly suggests that Defoe remained in contact with the minister during these years, as most biographers have assumed. During the final years of the seventeenth century, perhaps after the death of Annesley, Defoe seems to have joined one of the London Societies for Reformation of Manners. First developed within the Church of England, the London Societies were significantly composed of Dissenters by the time Defoe was a member (Russell 10; Jekill A4'). Though probably originating much earlier, many of his most pervasive moral values, among them his hostility to drunkenness and swearing, were undoubtedly bolstered by his involvement with the Society. He continued to build professional relationships with his Dissenting brethren, among them Christopher Hurt, who served as his agent and travelling companion, the Dissenting minister Josiah Eveleigh, who served as Defoe’s agent at Bowden Hill, and Thomas Cockerill, a publisher who had also been a member of Annesley’s congregation (Letters 19, 96, 61). Backscheider suggests that Dissenters were quite probably the chief market for the tiles Defoe produced at his Essex pantile factory (Defoe 64). The Stancliffe brothers played a crucial role in his financial survival during this period, and his dealings with them indicate a deep level of trust; to manage his 1695 bankruptcy, he surrendered all his goods to Samuel, and roughly a decade later James served as his trustee when old debts again caught up with him (202). During such crises, Defoe was fortunate to have many friends among Nonconformists, among them Samuel Elisha, a Shrewsbury attorney, and John Fransham, a Norwich linen-draper (Letters 56, 63, 64). When he fled capture after his indictment for the Shortest Way, it is highly likely he found shelter among Dissenting acquaintances, and he turned to Nonconformists for both spiritual and political support when he was eventually imprisoned (Letters 8). He asked three prominent Dissenting ministers, including John Howe, to visit and
pray with him, and he made applications to both William Paterson, a Presbyterian Scot who had
been one of the founders of the Bank of England, and William Penn (Defoe, More Reformation
51-2). Penn, who had himself been imprisoned for his refusal to conform, was known to help
Dissenters in need, and he endeavoured to acquire Defoe a pardon or respite (SP 34/3 f.3).
Though it was ultimately Harley and Godolphin who arranged for his fines to be paid, it was his
friend James Stancliffe who appeared in court to pay the surety (Backscheider, Defoe 124).

Beyond these friends and acquaintances, during this period Defoe was deliberately
building a network of Dissenting correspondents throughout England, one which he hoped could
contribute to the safety and solidarity of the “Dissenting Interest.” After the accession of Queen
Anne in 1702, Dissenters suffered a resurgence of popular hostility, and the partial liberty they
had achieved under William III was under threat. As Defoe would recall years later, “Dissenters
began to be insulted in every Place... [and] their Meeting-Houses and Assemblies assaulted by the
Mob” (Parties 18). The need for solidarity was widely recognized by Dissenters, among them
Defoe himself. In his letters to John Fransham he alludes to a body of Norwich Dissenters, and
throughout 1704-1707 he sent Fransham copies of many of his works, in some cases to furnish
fellow Dissenters with “arguments to defend the cause against a clamorous and noisy Enemy”
(72). To this end, Defoe explained in a December 1704 letter to Fransham, he was actively
establishing a network of “Friends all over England” to whom he could send parcels of
publications on Nonconformity (72). The following April, this network was evidently taking
form, as Defoe sent Fransham dozens of his publications to distribute among Dissenters (83-84).
Two years later, following the publication of his Remarks on the Letter to the Author of the
State-Memorial (1706), Defoe sent Harley a list of recipients that demonstrates this network was
highly developed. Of the sixty-three recipients Defoe identifies, a disproportionate number were
Dissenting ministers or teachers (at least 15, or 24%). In Weymouth, for example, the
independent minister John Fenner, whom Defoe had visited in 1705, served as his distribution
agent (Letters 97, 116). Much of this network was probably developed during the survey of
English towns Defoe undertook in 1705, during which he frequently lodged in the homes of
Dissenting acquaintances, among them Nathaniel Priestley, Thomas Bere, and John Morley
(Backscheider, Defoe 185). According to contemporary reports, “Defoe ke[pt] company with
none but Presbyterian and independent preachers, visiting them in almost every parish” (SP 34/6
f.105; SP 34/24 f.115). By 1710, Defoe could promise Harley a well-developed network of
correspondents and agents “all Over Brittain,” and his connections in Scotland were perhaps part
of the reason Godolphin considered him a suitable agent to promote the Union in Scotland
(Letters 276, 286). Certainly, this was a qualification Defoe emphasized, claiming that his status
as a Dissenter would help him quell “jealousies… about the secret designs… against the Kirk”
(Letters 126). Defoe reported that he was “in dayly conferences with the ministers,” and
apparently in October he had not only been invited to join the synod, but also was permitted to
give his opinion on the issues they addressed (246). Considering the specificity and consistency
of his information on the Kirk, there is little reason to doubt that Defoe was treated as a “friend”
and confidante by many Scottish ministers (173).

But while his friends and acquaintances among Dissenters served important economic
and political roles, Defoe’s burgeoning hostility to religious heterodoxy, specifically “deism,
atheism, [and] scepticism,” suggests that his Nonconformity was underpinned by firm dedication
to “orthodox principles”: the existence of God, the divinity of the holy trinity, and the necessity
of faith, repentance, and redemption through Christ (Divino SFS II.58-59). His commitment to
Christian orthodoxy was first brought out in 1700 by the publication of John Asgill’s An
Argument Proving that... Man may be Translated... Without Passing through Death. In the pamphlet, Asgill argued that, according to Scripture, man could attain eternal life without dying. Like many of his contemporaries, including the Irish MPs who had Asgill expelled from Parliament, Defoe believed this argument was not only “contrar[y] to the Principles” of Christianity, but even theologically “danger[ous]” to the “Honour and Purity of the Christian Religion” (Defoe, An Enquiry A2v-A3r). He opposed the claim first in The True-Born Englishman, published the same year, stating that he “wou’d be very glad to know, / Whether our Asgilites may drink or no.” “The Enlight’ning Fumes of Wine would certainly / Assist them much when they begin to fly,” he suggests, “Or if a Fiery Chariot shou’d appear, / Inflam’d by Wine, they’d ha’ the less to fear” (SFS I.99). Defoe dismisses the argument as a drunken delusion, figuring Asgill as another example of English drunkenness. The passage functions by associating the ascension imagined by Asgill not with spiritual transcendence but with the physiological effects of wine. Not only does literalizing the process he theorizes as “flying” diminish his argument, but Defoe figures it as a physical effect of the “Englight’ning Fumes” of wine. This emphasis on the material is even more prominent in the metaphor that follows, as it invokes the ascension of Elijah, who was separated from Elisha by a chariot of fire before ascending to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11). The flames that Asgill experiences, however, are not spiritual; he is only “inflam’d by Wine.” But if Defoe dismisses Asgill lightly in The True-Born Englishman, he nonetheless took his argument quite seriously, devoting a lengthy pamphlet to refuting his unorthodox theory of spiritual translation. Published in 1704, though ostensibly begun three years prior, in An Enquiry into the Case of Mr. Asgil’s Translation Defoe aims to defend “Orthodox Principles” from Asgill’s “false Glosses... [and] Sophistry” (A3r-A3v).
At this point in his writing, Defoe associates the growth of heterodoxy with the proliferation of vice, satirizing deists alongside politicians. Though he continued, as late as 1727, to deride the “accomplishtly whimsical Mr. Asgill,” Defoe condemned most frequently and inveterately the deist John Toland, most famous at the time for his book *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696), in which he had argued that all religious doctrine could be deduced through observation and reason (*Magick SFS* VII.36). Defoe targets Toland first in his 1702 poem *Reformation of Manners*, representing his deistic conception of religion as part of the broader swell of impiety and vice. “Socinian Tol—d” serves, Defoe claims, as the “ghostly priest” of Sir Robert Clayton, who hypocritically attends church but denies God at home (*PEW* III.163). He returns against to Toland when he concludes the first part of the poem, acknowledging the legal dangers of censuring the blasphemies of the powerful. “B[lack]bourn may banter Heaven, and Asgil, Death,” he observes, “and Toland poison Souls with his infected Breath.” Though Defoe places Toland alongside Blackbourn and Asgill, his characterization of Toland clearly sets him apart from them. The former two “blaspheme[r]s” are connected by a zeugma, one which dismisses their conduct as “banter[ing].” Certainly, heaven and death are not subjects to be mocked, but the stanza shifts significantly in grammar and tone as it turns to Toland, whose influence is far more extensive and dangerous than that of Blackbourn and Asgill. Not only does the association with poison suggests that the ideas of Toland are far more insidious than irreverent bantering, but the shift into a spiritual register also signals the greater danger he poses. Most importantly, the metaphor of the “infected Breath” shifts the threat from private to public, invoking an epidemiological metaphor that identifies Toland as the source of a potentially national spiritual disease. Defoe soon reinforces this characterization, proclaiming that “To—and, if such a Wretch is worth our Scorn, / Shall Vice’s blackest Catalogue adorn; / His hated
Character, let this supply, / Too vile even for our University” (173). As the tension between identification and abjuration suggests, though Defoe includes Toland among the drunkards and whores, his antipathy to deism exceeds the boundaries of the reform discourse he pursues during this period.

Old Values, New Perspectives: 1714-1731

After 1714, political and professional changes brought about a shift in Defoe’s religious priorities, turning his attention more sharply to his own personal convictions and beliefs. In the years surrounding the death of Queen Anne, one of his most pressing priorities was to defend Harley, who had been dismissed as Lord Treasurer in the summer of 1714. In one sense, the endeavour seems to expose Defoe at his most unattractive, as he struggles to justify manifestly controversial policies, such as the employment of Jacobites and the Occasional Conformity Bill. Across a series of pamphlets published between 1714 and 1715, especially his three-part Secret History of the White Staff, Defoe works to represent Harley as a patriotic statesman who perceptively manipulated Jacobites for the good of the nation. While political motives perhaps partly inform his unpopular defence of Harley, Defoe’s unyielding dedication to him reflects his religious convictions, as his loyalty is motivated by an impulse which he frequently considered a fundamental element of Christianity: gratitude. As Sutherland observes, “Defoe’s motives were complicated; but one of them was his genuine gratitude to Harley, and his consequent desire to serve him in any way that was consistent with his own principles” (Critical 9). For Defoe, repaying this debt of gratitude was a deeply religious endeavour. In Roxana, for example, the Dutch merchant, who serves as a model of honesty, explains to Roxana that “gratitude... [is] so twisted with honesty, nay, and even with religion too, that he question[s] whether either of them
could be found where gratitude was not to be found” (N IX.207). “Ingratitude” is the “basest” vice in *The True-Born Englishman*, and it forms the central focus of *The Mock-Mourners*. In *The Family Instructor* (1715) as much as in *Robinson Crusoe*, gratitude serves as the foundation of genuine religious feeling (*RDW* I.49-50). The abiding religious significance of gratitude throughout his writing gives credence to his own justification of his fidelity in his *Appeal to Honour and Justice* (1714), in which he represents his loyalty as the product of the “Gratitude and Fidelity... inseparable from an honest Man” (13). This explanation is certainly consistent with the letters between Defoe and Harley, in which Defoe incessantly expresses his desire to demonstrate his gratitude to his deliverer. Upon his release from Newgate, Defoe represents himself to Harley as “a man ready to dedicate [his] Life and all Possible Powers” to his interests (10). This sentiment is no knee-jerk reaction. Defoe regularly reminds Harley, for years, of his abiding desire to repay his “debt of gratitude,” even when Harley fails to respond for weeks at a time (16, 27, 65-66, 245, 250, 264, 271, 274, 373, 379). The fact that Defoe continued to defend Harley when doing so was unpopular, both in 1710 and 1715, suggests that his gratitude is not only sincere, but anchored in his religious convictions.

Though in 1715 his reputation reached a nadir, Defoe made some new connections to Nonconformity. He continued to work with the publisher Christopher Hurt, and Samuel Wright, a well-known Presbyterian minister, provided an recommendatory letter for Defoe’s *Family Instructor* (1715), endorsing the work as “very much fitted to do good” (*RDW* I.332). Yet, if Hurt and Wright represented one end of the Dissenting spectrum, Samuel Keimer represented the other. In the years that followed the fall of Harley, Keimer published five pamphlets for Defoe. One of the most unorthodox Dissenters with whom Defoe ever worked, Keimer was a member of the Camisards. He wore green ribbons with his Camisard name, “Jonathan, of the Tribe of
Asser,” written inside, so he could be identified by God on the upcoming day of judgment (Backscheider, Defoe 376-77). Ezra Maxfield dismisses their relationship as nothing “more than a matter of convenience,” but when Keimer was imprisoned in 1717, Defoe alone responded to his pleas, sending not only his prayers but also money (180). “I should be glad,” he concluded his letter to Keimer, “to render you any Service within my Power, having been always perhaps more than you imagin’d, Your sincere Friend and Servant” (449). The highly personal tone of the letter, along with the poem that Defoe includes, suggest his sentiments are genuine. Certainly, there would have been little obligation for Defoe to send money to one of his printers in these circumstances, but he evidently identifies with both Keimer and his difficult situation.

While his didactic works from this period, such as his Family Instructor, are deliberately non-denominational, his imaginative writing evinces an especial interest in the perspective of Dissenters. Even before he began work on Robinson Crusoe, Defoe had begun to write in the persona of a Quaker, a technique that, as a number of critics have suggested, he may have learned from Keimer (Backscheider, Defoe 377). In A Friendly Epistle by Way of Reproof from one of the People called Quakers (1715), Defoe reprimanded the independent minister Thomas Bradbury for urging revenge against Harley. The opening lines demonstrate the mock-Quaker tone Defoe adopted: “Friend Thomas Bradbury,” he begins, “I have deemed thee sundry Times to be worthy of Rebuke; nevertheless I have forborne to speak unto thee publickly, desiring rather that thou shouldest Reform those Things wherein thou hast done foolishly” (5). Though the overwrought style is deliberately parodic, the Quaker persona nonetheless serves, both here and in his Sharp Rebuke, as a voice of “plain,” uncompromising honesty, one that permits him to employ a markedly personal, sententious mode of criticism (6). Defoe develops this persona in both Roxana and Captain Singleton. This specific interest in Quakers, however, is part of a
broader inclination towards a Dissenting persona. Though not explicitly identified as such, Crusoe is aligned with Nonconformity not only by his ancestry, but also by his emphasis on the primacy of grace and the supremacy of Scripture. Roxana is more certainly represented as a Dissenter, the opening lines of *The Fortunate Mistress* (1724) identifying her as the daughter of French Huguenot refugees and describing their persecution from an evidently Dissenting viewpoint (*N IX.23*). Perhaps because of his familiarity with the suffering of early Dissenters, Defoe associates isolation and hardship with a Nonconformist context.

During the last third of his life, the most notable characteristic of Defoe’s religious thought is his intensifying concern with Christian worship and belief. While the fall of Harley left Defoe newly unemployed, it also afforded him a greater degree of literary freedom. It is significant that his first major publication was an extensive, innovative guide to family religion, *The Family Instructor* (1715). Focused on family worship and instruction, the text evinces a deep concern with the growth of impiety, particularly swearing and Sabbath-breaking. Though such concerns may seem superficial to some modern readers, for Defoe they are serious contraventions of Biblical commandments. Yet while proper conduct is the most immediate and prominent topic of *The Family Instructor*, the text also allows Defoe to reinforce doctrines that were under increasing pressure from sceptical and atheist modes of thought. Though he does not comment directly on religious debates, as his aim is decidedly didactic, many of his assertions clearly engage with contemporary controversies. The first dialogue, for example, between an inquisitive young boy and his father, provides an occasion to challenge the claims of deists who “despise[d] all Revelation and all Scripture” (*New RDW* III.205). When the boy asks his father to confirm “that the Bible is the Word of God,” he responds “Yes, Child, [I am] very sure of it” (*RDW* I.64). In particular, Defoe is keen to defend Trinitarianism, which was under sharp
pressure from writers like John Toland, Anthony Collins, and Thomas Woolston. The comparatively technical language of his account of the Trinity suggests that Defoe aims, in large part, to reinforce orthodox tenets, specifically the belief that “there is but one God; yet Jesus Christ is essentially God, tho’ in a second Person; he is God co-equal, co-eternal, that is, the same in Being, Nature, and Attributes” (*RDW* I.58). While Defoe was certainly concerned about anti-Trinitarianism, atheism was the most dangerous and offensive form of scepticism for Defoe, and his writing from this period provides occasions to expand on one of his favourite “testimonies” against the “gross absurdity” of the attitude. His concern with defending orthodoxy is made explicit in *A New Family Instructor* (1727), which, despite its title, might be more properly associated with Defoe’s contemporaneous tracts on the supernatural. In his final instalment of the *Family Instructor* series, Defoe retains the same dramatic mode but he aims more certainly to repudiate the “THREE GRAND ERRORS of the TIMES”: scepticism about the authority of Scripture, about the messianic status of Christ, and about the divinity of the Trinity (*New RDW* III.25). The entire second half of the work is dedicated to this project, the children asking the father questions that allow him to elucidate the boundaries of orthodox belief.

The fact that Defoe often privileges precise explanation over realistic dialogue suggests the importance he ascribed to clearly refuting these “new Errors” (203). Towards the end, the work becomes essentially an elaborate treatise on the divinity of Christ, rather than a lively dialogue. The narrative ends with a lengthy poem on “The Trinity: or, the Divinity of the Son” (281). While this shift into a poetic mode is incongruous with the rest of the text, this poem serves an important purpose, as it affirms the need, dramatized in *Robinson Crusoe*, for an emotional commitment to orthodoxy, not simply a rational one, which is nothing more than “reasoning Folies” (282). The father offers many logical affirmations of the Holy Trinity, but it is fitting that

Though they seem, at first glance, somewhat unrelated to his didactic works, Defoe’s writings on the supernatural, to which he turned during 1726 and 1727, form the centerpiece of his offensive against unorthodoxy and disbelief. Earlier biographers were generally dismissive of these “quaint” pieces, in part because Defoe’s “superstitious” interest in “the occult” seemed inconsistent with the rest of his oeuvre (Trent 260; Sutherland Critical 232). But as critics have recognized more recently, The Political History of the Devil (1726), A System of Magick (1726), and An Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions (1727) represent a concerted effort to combat the development of religious scepticism, deism, and atheism. To a modern reader, the sceptical approach Defoe employs is familiar, as Defoe debunks, often quite comically, established superstitions about demons, apparitions, and witchcraft. But Defoe is not trying to wholly disprove these phenomena. On the contrary, his aim is to forcefully assert the existence of an “invisible world” – “a world of spirits” (Apparitions SFS VIII.43; Reflections N III.221).

For Defoe, a belief in the supernatural, not only in devils but all types of spirits, was fundamental to orthodox Christian belief. As he explained in The Serious Reflections, doubts about the supernatural were the first step towards atheism: after convincing themselves that “there are no Spirits at all, either in the visible or invisible World,” Defoe warns, sceptics “carr[y] it on farther, they next annihilate the Devil, and believe nothing about him, either of one Kind or another… [and] when they have prevailed on themselves to believe there is no Devil,” he explains, “the next Thing is, and they soon come to it, That there is no God” (Reflections N III.259-60). Thus,
his derision of superstitious “chimney-corner” tales is intended “to bring the world to a right Temper between [the] Extremes” of credulity and disbelief, both of which, Defoe demonstrates, are destructive to sound Christian belief (Apparitions SFS VIII.39). But if Defoe is content to laugh away superstition, he is deadly serious about atheism, which he considers so shocking and unnatural that it is beyond even Satan himself (Magick SFS VII.179-80). In all three tracts, his opposition to disbelief generally remains implicit, but Defoe occasionally voices his intention to repudiate sceptics, deists, and atheists (Magick VII.182). In a few instances he singles out a specific “blasphem[ers],” such as William Whiston and Thomas Emlyn, and at one point he fantasizes about the possibility of having “broachers of atheistical, deistical, and enthusiastic whynsies” put to death (Magick SFS VII.64, 172, 107). Though he disdains to “set up fire and faggot,” the suggestion serves to indicate the serious threat Defoe believes such opinions pose to society. Elsewhere, Defoe is typically content with disproving unorthodox “absurdities” and “atheistic notions” more broadly (Magick VII.184, Reflections N III.260-273). After recounting a narrative of a ship saved by supernatural warnings, for example, he turns to ask “how will those modern wits, of which our age is so full, account for this, who allow no God or Providence, no invisible World”; “Which way will such men solve… such a case as this,” he demands (Apparitions SFS VIII.192). As this challenge suggests, his “histories” of supernatural phenomena provided Defoe a mode of indirectly repudiating heterodoxy and disbelief, one which he considered distinctly irrefutable (New RDW III.206). Though a modern reader may easily mistake his tendency to deride superstitions as a secular impulse, his tracts on the supernatural evince an intense desire to defend what he considered the fundamentals of Christianity.
Dissent and the Discourse of “Practical Religion”

The image of Defoe that emerges from this account, however, seems sharply at odds with the tone and tenor of his religious thought. His upbringing and education was distinctively religious, and he remained involved with the “godly” people of England, as Dissenters often referred to themselves, throughout his life. We might dismiss his Nonconformity as purely political or mercantile if it was not, at every stage of his life, attended by a visible concern with Christian belief and life. But while his writing manifests an abiding interest in religious subjects and an extensive knowledge of Scripture, his language and modes of thought are distinctively pragmatic and worldly. He frequently refuses to participate in contemporary debates about faith and worship, and he carelessly brushes off any “difficult” theological questions he encounters, however germane they are to his topic (Apparitions SFS VIII.46). Though he identifies himself as a “religious” Dissenter, he discusses Nonconformity almost exclusively in terms of politics and history, rather than doctrine and belief; he seems far more concerned with “the Dissenting Interest” than with doctrine (Parties 3). As he admits in his Review, he rarely talks much about “any of [his] divinity” (VI.341). For a writer who wrote so extensively on religion, it is surprisingly difficult to identify his religious tenets clearly. When he does engage with theological questions, such as the existence of the devil, he does so almost wholly through secular genres and discourses, treating his subject in terms of history, politics, economics, or psychology. Though he wrote thousands of pages, both prose and poetry, on Christian belief, he is rarely considered a “divine” alongside Baxter or Calamy. As a whole, his religious thought is remarkably intertwined with the language and imagery of secular trade and politics. This essential characteristic of his religious thought has inclined many critics to see his religious thought as shallow and superficial.
Defoe’s approach to religion, however, is anchored in contemporary Dissenting discourse. During the decades that followed the Restoration, a large body of Nonconformist writers were developing a discourse of “Practical Religion” which crucially influenced Defoe’s religious thought. In works like John Bartlet’s *The Practical Christian* (1670) and Thomas Crosby’s *An Important Case of Practical Religion* (1702), Nonconformist writers focused distinctively on the practical aspects of Christianity, detailing the application of Christian doctrines to quotidian earthly concerns, including family management, urban life, and modern trade. Many of these writers explicitly characterized their work as “practical religion” or “practical godliness,” setting their approach more against abstract treatments of Christian theology and doctrine – against “the Disputative Humour” (Rule A3⁵; Heywood 172; Howe, *Carnality* 78; Alsop A3⁵; Flavel 186; Piggott 126; Foster 32; S. Browne A2⁵). Certainly, practicality was not exclusively the concern of Dissenting writers; many Anglican works expressed a concern with the practical aspects of Christianity, offering advice on topics like marriage or parenting. But as a number of scholars have recognized, the writing of post-Restoration Dissenters is visibly more concerned with practical activities and everyday questions (Hunter, *Pilgrim* 26; Tawney 243-253). Richard Baxter, certainly one the most prolific and influential Nonconformist writers of the age, promotes “practical godliness” in many of his works, often in opposition to the “controversies” and “Divisions… about niceties” that divide the nation (Appeal 4; Crucifying A2; Good 18; *Christian Directory* 76; Saint 161; Reasons 194; *Paraphrase ZZZ*³). Calamy believed England “never afforded one more earnestly intent on the promoting [of] Practical Religion” than Baxter (61). Even opponents of Nonconformity, like Samuel Parker, considered “Practical Godliness” a Nonconformist term (*Defence*, 82). Of those surviving sermons, guides, and tracts on religion published between 1662 and 1731 which
promoted “practical religion,” “practical godliness,” or “practical divinity” on the title page, roughly 70% are by English Dissenters. Considering they constituted such a small part of the population, this proportion firmly connected the discourse of “Practical Religion” with Nonconformity.

Samuel Annesley and Charles Morton, two of the Dissenters most important to Defoe’s intellectual and religious development, actively promoted this discourse. Best known for his engagement with the quotidian cases of conscience which confronted contemporary Dissenters, Annesley presented many of his works as guides to “Practical Religion.” His most successful work, *The Morning-Exercise at Cripple-Gate* (1661), consisted of sermons preached at the Morning Exercise, a series of sermons on cases of conscience delivered every second Sunday morning. As the frontispiece advertised, these sermons “Practically Resolved” important questions about Christian life, such as “What is the Danger of a Death-Bed Repentance?” His *Casuistical Morning-Exercises*, published in 1690, was explicitly aimed at promoting “Practical Godliness,” and it even contained a sermon on “How… Practical Godliness Better Rectifie[s] the Judgment than Doubtfull Disputations” (241). Defoe’s characterization of Annesley, in fact, suggests that he especially admired his conscious emphasis on “practical religion.” Defoe concedes that there were perhaps “Men of more sublime Parts and general Learning,” listing the numerous ways in which a man might excel: “some are more Masters of Polite Language; some write finer than they speak; some excel in Polemical Divinity, some in Controversal; some are greater Linguists, some greater Logicians.” “But,” he concludes, “these are not Clauses in which *I distinguish him so much…* Practical Divinity was his Business” (B2r-B2v). Even as Defoe makes a show of acknowledging other forms of knowledge, he sets Annesley against examples

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20 This is based on a search of all documents available through EEBO and ECCO containing any of these terms in the title. Of those works with identified authors, 13 are by Dissenters, 2 are Anglicans, and 4 cannot be placed in either category.
that are subtly superficial. Charles Morton was equally committed to the promotion of “Practical Religion.” Concerned primarily with the “practical judging” of everyday questions than with disputed doctrines, Morton writes on topics especially relevant to modern Dissenters, including debts, “merchandizing,” gambling, and health-drinking (Debts 2, 8). He shifts readily between Biblical precepts and quotidian practice, and even his examples are markedly practical. He illustrates Ecclesiastes 10:19, for example, with reference to his own horse and his servant (Debts 7-8). Not surprisingly, Morton deeply admires Baxter, whose Christian Directory he considers a “voluminous Treasure of practical Doctrines” (Health-Drinking 31). While Defoe read quite a wide range of Dissenting writers, the emphasis on “practical religion” pursued by Annesley and Morton undoubtedly had a significant impact on his religious thought.

This emphasis on “practicality” was part of the broader endeavour to renovate the image of Dissent following the Interregnum. Due in part to the role of religious heterodoxy in fomenting the Civil War, in the decades that followed the Restoration Dissenters were widely associated with impractical abstraction and theological disputation. Conforming writers regularly claimed that Dissenters sought “vain disputes, and frivolous debates,” hopelessly chasing paradoxes and impossibilities (Allen 8; Perrinchief, Revised 57). Nonconformists, their opponents claimed, selfishly disregarded “the general good and peace of the Nation” in favour of their own “private totty pate Opinions and fancies” (Union or Undone 6). One writer argued, for example, that Nonconformists were consumed by an “inclination to thwart all the world though it be for nothing but their mindes sake” (H. S. 3). The theological scruples that prevented Dissenters from conforming were represented as abstract, “metaphysical Notions and Niceties” which, though they might appear plausible from afar, would fall apart when they were “touched by the hand of a solid understanding” (A2r). Drawing on the well-known hierarchy of words and
things, critics often figured their attacks in terms of semantics, alleging that Nonconformists
“pick[ed] quarrles with words or phrases… hiding themselves in a maze of words” instead of
attending to the solid things these words served to signify (Parker, *Discourse* iii, xvii).

Perhaps nowhere is this image of Dissent more richly developed than in Samuel Butler's
*Hudibras* (1663-1678), the popular mock-epic poem which extensively satirized the Puritans
involved in the Civil War. In the opening verse paragraphs of the first canto, the titular hero Sir
Hudibras, identified as a militant Presbyterian, is introduced as a scholastic pedant more
concerned with theories and abstractions than with practice and application:

Beside, he was a shrewd PHILOSOPHER,
And had read ev'ry text and gloss over;
Whate'er the crabbed'st author hath,
He understood b' implicit faith:
Whatever sceptic could inquire for,
For ev'ry why he had a wherefore;
Knew more than forty of them do,
As far as words and terms cou'd go.
All which he understood by rote,
And, as occasion serv'd, would quote;
No matter whether right or wrong,
They might be either said or sung.
His notions fitted things so well,
That which was which he could not tell;
But oftentimes mistook th' one
For th' other, as great clerks have done. (6)

Drawing on the antipathy to scholastic philosophy that had been developing since the sixteenth
century, the passage figures the learning of Sir Hudibras as superficial and abstract even as it
outwardly celebrates his erudition. Though today the word has lost most of its negative
connotations, when the poem appeared the term “shrewd” would have identified Hudibras as
mischievous and stubborn, priming the reader to recognize his learning as divisive and specious.
The hyperbolic claims that Hudibras had read every text and every gloss serves to undermine the
authority of the speaker, suggesting his laudatory portrait is unfounded and inaccurate, especially
since references to specific authors are conspicuously absent. The meter of the passage itself contributes to this dynamic, as the striking frequency of elision formally embodies the intellectual imbalance to which the lines gesture; like Hudibras himself, these lines manifest a procrustean oncern with formal rules. As the passage progresses, the speaker identifies a series of examples, ostensibly intended to demonstrate Hudibras’ learning, which characterize his knowledge as superficial. The image of Hudibras responding to “sceptic[s]” associates him with scholasticism, and the claim that he was more knowledgeable than forty sceptics suggests that his learning is insular and self-contained, an implication reinforced by the alliteration of “why” and “wherefore.” The purely linguistic nature of his knowledge, which comprehends only “words and terms,” identifies it as superficial, as does the fact that he has learned it by rote. While his indifference to whether his “quotes” are “right or wrong” quite explicitly signals the speciousness of his learning, the following line is, in one sense, as significant, as it suggests, in paralleling the pairs, that this binary has been superseded by a purely aesthetic one; even the words of his quotes are less important to Hudibras than the sound. Extending this trajectory, the closing lines of the passage narrate a complete disintegration of meaning, as Hudibras completely loses sight of the boundary between “notions” and “things,” reversing one of the most well-known seventeenth-century hierarchies of language.

While this image was rooted in the Civil War, many Dissenting writers inadvertently bolstered their reputation for abstraction and contention during the decade that followed the Act of Uniformity. In attempting to demonstrate that their Dissent was not based on “opinionativeness, singularity, vain-glory, [or] uncharitableness… as some [were] apt uncharitably enough to censure,” many Dissenting writers explicated their objections in detail, sometimes alongside each passage of the prescribed oaths, carefully parsing the language of
religion and consent (Douglas). One pamphleteer, for example, distinguishes “ceremonies” from the “circumstances” of worship (A. B., *Letter* 1). Since Dissenters argued from a defensive position, as “apologists for [their] non-compliance,” their rhetorical strategies were more limited than those of their opponents (M. D. A3r; Humfrey, *Peaceable* 1). In theory, this approach offered the most systematic method to justify their nonconformity to their contemporaries. But in practice, this emphasis on the “punctilios” of religion contributed to the image of the Nonconformist as a querulous schismatic who was “not contented with the general and plain Doctrines of Christianity... but bet[o]o]ke [himself] to odd and uncouth Subjects, which do not concern the Substance of a Christian’s faith, or life” (Long B1r; Curate 6). Proponents of religious conformity frequently deployed such sharp binaries to cut through the “cobweb distinctions” of Nonconformist apologists, setting practice against theory, fundamentals against particulars, things against words (Burston 7). Against such fussy “trifling” Anglican writers could set simplicity and plainness – characteristics with far broader appeal at a moment when people, “wearied with... Contentions and Divisions,” sought agreement and uniformity (Curate 6; Baxter, *Baxteriana* 366). To apologies that were impelled to draw on fine semantic, metaphysical, or legal distinctions, opponents could respond with forceful clarity: “but you may conform” (Humfrey, *Peaceable* 7). While Dissenting writers identified many legitimate reasons to separate from the Established Church, it was easy to make these objections seem like “over-nice scruples” (*A Perswasive* 8). In fact, though he often endorsed a practical approach to religion, Baxter himself could sometimes be drawn into “a farrago of Negatively's, and Positively's, that reach as far as Thirtiethly, or Fortiethly,” in endeavouring to explain the doctrinal grounds of Nonconformity, as his opponents alleged (Tomkins, *Distemper A8*-A8v). As such, rather than contribute to improving the reputation and status of Nonconformists,
arguments which concerned the theological objections of Nonconformists often made Dissenters appear quarrelsome and pedantic, only confirming the abusive allegations of their opponents.

The emphasis on “practical divinity” was, in part, a reaction against this unfavourable image. Foregrounding the practical implementation and application of Christianity served to distance Nonconformists from their association with impractical abstraction and theological dispute. We need not dismiss this preference as wholly disingenuous to recognize that appeals to practicality had powerful rhetorical effects. Privileging “practice” over “doctrine or notion” was a highly persuasive strategy, particularly at a time when contemporaries sought Protestant solidarity against the French and their allies. Many invocations of “practical divinity” were quite self-consciously rhetorical, Dissenting writers deliberately setting themselves against the theological disagreements dividing the nation (Olyffe 17). While a commitment to practice was evident in the content of “practical” works, explicitly abjuring abstraction and “doubtfull disputation” was the rhetorical cornerstone of his discourse (Woodcock 241). In his Christian Directory (1673), for example, Richard Baxter proclaims that “this PRACTICAL RELIGION will afford both to church and state, and conscience more certain and solid peace, than contending disputers, with all their pretences of orthodoxness and zeal… will ever bring, or did ever attain to” (a1r). The strategy is particularly prevalent throughout Baxter’s writing, but a range of Dissenting writers foregrounded this approach (Reasons 194; Certainty A4r). In The Trades-Man’s Calling, for example, Richard Steele decisively sets himself against contemporary controversies; “whilst others are… canvassing more doubtful points in Doctrine or Worship,” he declares, “my present Province shall be to direct the Mind and Practice of conscientious Christian in his daily Employment” (A2v). As William Penn’s England’s Present Interest Discover’d makes clear, the disavowal of abstract controversies could appeal to nationalistic

One of the most striking instances of this discourse appears in John Owen’s *Truth and Innocence Vindicated* (1669), in which Owen forcefully interrupts his argument, self-consciously refusing to participate in the controversy surrounding conformity and conscience. “I find myself,” he explains, “utterly beside and beyond my intention, engaged in particular controversies... [and] I shall chose rather to break off this discourse, than to further pursue the ventilation of those differences, wherein I shall not willingly, or of choice, at any time engage” (381-2). Where other writers declare their aversion to disputation, Owen formulates a scene of dramatic action, presenting the reader with the moment of rejection itself. The scene draws conspicuous attention to his irenical intentions, which he implies are so important that they jarringly interrupt not only his course of thought, but even the flow of the tract itself. We need not, of course, wholly dismiss these claims as disingenuous. But as so many of the appeals to “Practical Religion” make clear, this discourse was significantly informed by the rhetorical exigencies of the post-Restoration atmosphere – by the pressure on Dissenters to repudiate their reputation as impractical disputers.

**The “Usefulness of Practical Divinity”: Disavowing “Disputations” and “Difficulties”**

This discourse directly informs Defoe’s conception of religion, which is fundamentally inflected by the hostility to abstract theology on which “practical godliness” was premised. Following the most prominent Nonconformists of his day, including Baxter and Annesley, Defoe consistently pursues “Practical Divinity,” self-consciously disavowing “metaphysical trumpery,” particularly on controversial questions (Defoe *Mr. How* 15; *Devil SFS* VI.50; *Reflections N* III.159-160). His religious thought is defined, above all, by the idea, inherited from post-Restoration
Nonconformity, that “Controversie and Disputes… do but breed strifes” (Baxter, Paraphrase ZZZ3, Reflections N III.161). Across more than twenty years of writing, Defoe repudiates abstract religious questions as a source of “needless”, divisive controversy, rather than a means to divine knowledge. This abiding attitude, which has received little scholarly attention, not only informs his modes of argument, but also his generic choices.

Defoe consistently defines his own approach to religion in opposition to abstract theology. Whether he is censuring the “squaring of circles” or the “Formalities of the Schoolmen,” he regularly condemns the pursuit of theological questions he considers excessively abstract, such as the nature of the holy trinity (Peace SFS I.387; Magick SFS VII.183; Reflections N III.182). Whether he is writing on religious history, Christian doctrine, or family worship, Defoe consistently privileges behaviour and “practice” over belief and “opinion” (Family RDW I.46; Reflections N III.151). Defoe evidently aims to act the part of the “perfectly Orthodox” minister he favours in the second part of A New Family Instructor: though “strict in the Practice of [his] Doctrines… [he] insisted much, in his Discourse, upon the Usefulness of Practical Divinity, rather than to run into doubtful Disputations” (RDW III.203). Defoe defines his religious thought not only by denigrating abstraction, but equally by self-consciously balking at theological quandaries. In his Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions, for example, he is brought to comment on Matthew 27:52, which recounts how multiple saints are resurrected alongside Jesus. The account is certainly germane to his inquiry, but Defoe dramatically refuses to comment; “this... would admit a long Exposition,” he acknowledge, “but I am no Annotator” (SFS VIII.77). The rhetorical nature of such claims is evident from that the fact that they are often contradicted by the evident erudition of the speaker. In the New Family Instructor, for example, the father declares, in the opening dialogue of the second part, that he “[is] no Divine,
no Casuist,” explaining that he “had not studied the Dispute other than as a private Christian had, and as every private Christian ought, to furnish [him] self with so much of the Argument, on both Sides, as satisfied [him] in the Choice of [his] own Principles” (RDW III.200). This account of “disput[ation]” allows Defoe to justify his own degree of argumentation, which he associates with duty and necessity, while productively disavowing excessive “stud[y].” The distinction, of course, is arbitrary; the father is extremely well-versed in both the Scriptural and contemporary arguments against deism and scepticism, certainly more so than a “private Christian” need be. But the statement allows Defoe to distance his repudiation of deism and anti-Trinitarianism from abstract “divin[ity]” and “casuistry.” As this passage suggests, when Defoe does engage with religious questions, his aversion to abstraction informs his argumentative approach. In his preface to Jure Divino, Defoe begins to wade into a quagmire of controversial interpretation and explication as he endeavours to promote religious toleration. But he quickly turns about, declaring that he “will not undertake a Comment upon this text, or enter into the Debate, what Errors are meant by the Doctrines these taught.” “To me it seems plain,” he asserts, “that the Church need not tolerate doctrines which are destructive of [God’s] Honour, and of the Nature of Religion, Heretical and Abominable” (SFS II.57). In this instance, Defoe employs a number of strategies that, throughout his writing, allow him to evade controversial or difficult theological questions. Not only does the personal register Defoe invokes distance the attitude from public dispute, “avoid[ing] long Paraphrases” and commentary, but his appeal to “plain[ness],” however logically insufficient, serves to preclude more detailed analysis (Defoe Lay-Man’s 2). This technique is crucial not only to his “Practical” approach, but also underpins his attachment to typology, which links modern politics with the “plain” accounts of Scripture. As he is elsewhere, Defoe is remarkably vague about exactly what doctrines should be abjured, or even what
constitutes the “nature of religion.” As a Dissenter himself, Defoe is certainly invested in this
debate, so his vagueness is significant. But especially when discussing Nonconformity, Defoe
refuses to detail specific doctrines or scruples, so as to avoid dispute. When he recounts the
history of Puritanism, for example, he refuses to describe the disagreements between Puritans
and the Established Church, and he even fails to name particular sects (Occasional PEW III.44).
His description of Nonconformity is always as generalized as possible; he describes the
Dissenter as one who “finds that in his Opinion there are some Things in the Establish’d Way of
Worship, which do not seem to correspond with the Rule he has found out in the Scripture” (83).
While Defoe occasionally acknowledges the precedence of conscience, he consistently aims to
reduce the distance between Anglicans and Dissenters, encouraging his brethren to reconcile
with the Church as much as possible (Family I RDW I.68; Occasional PEW III.46). He
frequently reminds his readers that “both are Christians,” and in his instructional works, such as
The Family Instructor, he “studiously avoids” distinctions between Anglicans and Dissenters,
consciously aiming to accommodate “all Denominations of Christians,” whether they attend the
Church or the Meeting-House (Family RDW I.68, 172, 230-33). This conciliatory attitude tells us
less about Defoe’s personal tenets, which were actually remarkably uncompromising, than about
the pragmatic persona he aimed to project.

Defoe repeatedly avers that the pursuit of “dark aenigma’s” of doctrine only fomented
unnecessary and destructive disagreement between Christians (Reformation SFS I.180; Devil
SFS VI.81; Defoe, An Enquiry A2). Rather than a productive path to divine knowledge, abstract
questions and “unanswerable… Cavils” about Christian theology produce controversies that
interfere with “practical” piety, Defoe regularly argues (Reflections N III.134). Agricultural
metaphors are among his favourite metaphors for expressing the destructive nature of religious
disputes. In his *Present State of the Parties*, for example, Defoe recalls how in the years that followed the Restoration “Seeds of Strife… had been sown among” the English “on account of Religious Matters” (5). Defoe develops this metaphor extensively in *Eleven Opinions about Mr. H*—y (1711), in which he argues that the disagreements between Christians threaten to destroy Christianity itself. “Our Divisions about Circumstances,” he avers,

> have run on to destroy Principles, and left vast Vacancies among us, large Tracts of Land, where the Plant, Religion, has been quite rooted up by the Hand of Strife, and meer Opinion planted in its Room; which comes up so thick, and grows so rank, that Religion is self, *a nice and tender Plant*, is choakt, can take no Root, or have space to spread its Branches; so it withers, hangs its Head, and at last dies. *(Eleven PEW II.181)*

This metaphor not only allows Defoe to discuss current divisions without naming specific doctrines or sects, but it also shifts his discussion into a topic that draws wide agreement: national productivity. Though their allegiances varied, both Dissenters and Anglicans – Whigs and Tories – would agree that large tracts of devastated farmland are undesirable. Assigning agency to the divisions themselves, which “run on” and grow independently, serves to withdraw blame from any party or sect, ensuring that the discussion itself is conciliatory, rather than disruptive. The agricultural mode of the metaphor suggests that the solution to this devastation is, at once, both difficult and accessible. On the one hand, the thickness and toughness of the weeds signal that they will require assiduous and laborious effort to uproot. Yet, the fact that Religion itself is a plant suggests that once replanted, it will grow naturally. Moreover, the expertise needed for this endeavour is not uncommon, but rather is quite widely known.

Defoe’s commentary on the debate surrounding occasional conformity, which constitutes a significant portion of his early writing, is fundamentally shaped by this self-consciously “practical” approach to Christianity. At first glance, his participation in this debate seems to belie his abiding aversion to theological controversy, since the practice was entangled with complex
and contentious theological questions. Defoe, however, consciously avoids theological disputation, framing the debate as a simple choice between essentially secular categories. His epigraph to the pamphlet is from 1 Kings 18.21: “If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him” (Occasional PEW III.37). Rather than initiate a detailed dispute on the Biblical justification for occasional conformity, this epigraph delineates an uncompromising binary that, Defoe suggests, leaves no room for such theological equivocation. “Mediums are impossible,” Defoe contends (45). The distinction between God and Baal, in fact, provides a framework for a constellation of distinctively worldly similes which allow Defoe to discuss the topic in an almost exclusively secular mode. The practice of simultaneously dissenting and conforming, Defoe claims, is “like a Ship with her Sails hal’d some back, and some full: ‘Tis like a Workman, that builds with one Hand, and pulls down with t’other: ‘Tis like a Fisherman, who catches Fish with one hand, and throws them into the Sea with another” (45). This selection of similes serves to shift the topic out of a theological mode, positioning the question in an economic register on which, Defoe implies, all his readers can agree, regardless of their religious (or political) values. The occupations Defoe identifies are distinctively mundane and corporeal, further distancing his argument from any theological “ambigu[ities]”; these are activities firmly connected to English land and sea. That this technique serves crucially to sidestep controversial theological disputes becomes evident in the paragraph that follows, where Defoe depends upon a detailed maritime metaphor to represent contemporary disagreements without mentioning their specific theological details. “As to the different Modes and Ways, which are the Circumstantials of this Sacred Thing I call Religion,” Defoe explains,
yet going to the best of their Judgment by the direct Rules of the Scripture, may arrive at the same Heaven. (45)

As with his agricultural metaphor, this maritime metaphor distances Defoe from the heated disagreements over the different “modes and ways” of Christianity. Moreover, the invocation of maritime trade is designed to appeal to the nationalistic sentiments of readers. Though so brief that it might be missed, the opening refusal to discuss the topic is significant, as it signals Defoe’s unwillingness to engage in the controversy. Yet, by suggesting that different courses are engendered by disparities in navigational “skill,” Defoe naturalizes doctrinal differences. At the same time, however, his invocation of the “Rules of Navigation” serves to unite Anglicans and Dissenters under a single standard, one that is connected by the “Rule of the Scripture” they share. Quite importantly, this metaphor quietly excludes those who disregarded these rules, among them deists, atheists, and non-Christians.

Defoe’s deep hostility to the Bangorian Controversy, one of the most divisive disputes of his adult life, is based on this aversion to destructive disputation. The controversy was sparked in 1716 when Benjamin Hoadly, Bishop of Bangor, responded to non-jurors by arguing that the Established Church had no claim to any earthly authority, either political or religious. According to John 18:36, Hoadly argued, the only true church could be found in heaven, and thus priests had no unique authority to represent God or interpret scripture. Hoadly’s Erastian conception of the Church provoked a violent deluge of responses, engendering over 200 pamphlets from more than fifty writers. As David Blewett observes, at the height of the controversy charges and rebuttals appeared daily, sometimes hourly (Introduction 7). The majority aimed to rebut Hoadly or his supporters, accusing the bishop of dishonesty, sedition, and heresy. All arguments on both sides of the questions, however, were necessarily engaged in divisive questions about the political and spiritual status of earthly churches. Defoe evidently followed the controversy
attentively, dedicating a number of pamphlets during 1717 and 1718 to condemning the divines involved in the controversy. The controversies Hoadly raised about the authority of the Church had evident ramifications for the legal and spiritual status of Nonconformity. But rather than offer his own answer to these complex questions, Defoe decisively condemns the debate itself as a destructive, shameful, and fruitless feud. In *The Conduct of Christians Made the Sport of Infidels* (1717), he satirizes the English proclivity for constant “Discord and eternal Strife,” tracing the development of the Bangorian controversy in detail (*SFS V.35*-40). Doing so through the perspective of Kara Selym Oglan, a Muslim who visits London during at the height of the dispute, serves to emphasize how remarkably hypocritical and unchristian the controversy is; such disputes, Defoe suggests, are even below heathens, who are at least true to the “Principles and Rules” of their faith (41). As the narrative progresses the inverted perspective, through which Christians as “Infidels” and “Idol-Worshippers,” becomes less an amusing novelty than an incisive criticism, as Oglan demonstrates that Christians are “a People justly detestable by faithful Believers,” most of all because of “the infernal Spirit of Contention which rages among” them (27, 35). Drawing on a discourse that was central in the debates surrounding toleration, Defoe implies that these internal disputes weaken Protestant unity, leaving England open to her enemies. These “innumerable Divisions,” Oglan advises the mufti, are “ever auspicious to our invincible Empire, whose Foundations were laid in the first Dissentions of the Princes of the Nazarenes” (26). While this account situates this dynamic within a longer history, the opening references to France, Germany, and Holland, which Oglan has visited prior, stress the immediacy of this threat by situating it in modern politics (25). Though the title seems to signal a light tone, one that will reassure Christians of their supremacy, *The Conduct of Christians* is a biting
condemnation not only of the controversy itself, but also of the participating divines, who degrade the Christian below even “the Followers of Mahomet” (41).

Published later that year, Robinson Crusoe (1719) dramatizes this attitude, presenting Defoe’s most developed repudiation of abstract theology. Though the novel is undoubtedly informed by his hostility to the Salters’ Hall debates, as Backscheider suggests, it is evidently part of Defoe’s broader antipathy to “doubtful disputations” (New RDW III.203). The circumstances of the narrative themselves imply that learned annotation and disputation are superfluous. Not only is Crusoe himself redeemed without the help of any such aids, but he is able to instruct Friday with only the Bible that he has salvaged from the wreck. The striking isolation of their religious development accentuates the inherent sufficiency of Scripture, demonstrating, as Defoe regularly affirms, that the Bible alone has “every thing needful” to salvation (New RDW III.216). Crusoe voices these implications quite explicitly, affirming that “all the disputes, wranglings, strife, and contention which have happened in the world about religion, whether niceties in doctrines or schemes of church government… were all perfectly useless to us, and, for aught I can yet see, they have been so to the rest of the world… And I cannot see the least use that the greatest knowledge of the disputed points of religion, which have made such confusion in the world, would have been to us, if we could have obtained it (N I.220-21). The passage is among Defoe’s clearest disavowals of theological dispute, and he employs a the full range of terms that served, for Defoe as for other proponents of “Practical Religion,” to exclude certain topics from debate. At the same time, the multiplicity and plurality of these terms is set against the “perfec[t]” unity of Crusoe’s doctrine. His repeated invocations of “the world” gives this contrast a geographic aspect, connecting this attitude with the island itself, which provides a unique space wholly removed from these contentions. This distance is emphasized not
only by the attention to utility, as the isolated Crusoe can only consider what is “use[ful]” and “useless,” but also by the highly subjective, specifically visual mode he employs; Crusoe rejects these disputes based on what he “can.. see” and what he “cannot see.” As this connection between his practical and religious priorities suggests, life on the island raises questions not only about what objects are useful, but also which religious tenets are practical.

This abiding, self-conscious disavowal of theological “wranglings” resurfaces in a number of scenes throughout Robinson Crusoe. During his religious discussions with Friday, Crusoe is confronted with one of the most difficult theological questions in Christian theology: if He is omnipotent, Friday asks, “why God no kill the Devil?” (218). Crusoe clumsily pretends he has not heard the troubling question, but Friday earnestly persists, baffling Crusoe and driving him to a markedly unsatisfactory answer: Satan, he effectively concedes, is preserved so that he may be pardoned. The heterodoxy of this claim, which effaces the fundamental spiritual difference between humans and Satan, is emphasized by Friday’s response, which effectively ends, but does not resolve the debate. “Well, well,” Friday says, “that well – so you, I, devil, all wicked, all preserve, repent, God pardon all” (219). The prominent repetitions in this response serve to emphasize the theological faultiness of this response. As Mullan observes, “of course… we are not to suppose that you, I and the Devil are wicked in the same way” (10). Nicholas Hudson suggests that Defoe himself is unsure, but Friday’s conclusion is directly at odds not only with Revelations 2:7-10, but also with many of Defoe’s own statements. In his Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions, for example, Defoe confirms that Satan is uniquely exempt from repentance and salvation; he “shalt never repent, or be forgiven,” he asserts (SFS VIII.178; New RDW III.215). Yet, the scene does not denigrate Crusoe for his failure to resolve such a difficult question. On the contrary, this conspicuous failure serves to privilege simplicity and
practicality over uncompromising accuracy. The scene enacts, in narrative form, the rejection that Defoe self-consciously performs in his non-fictional works: presented with a difficult theological quandary, the speaker rejects the question. Though not invariably derogatory, the term “Casuist” often had negative connotations, implying one who speciously equivocated on religious questions. In the *New Family Instructor*, for example, the father distances himself from excessively abstract disputation by declaring that he is “no Divine, no Casuist” (*RDW* III.200). Moreover, throughout Defoe’s writing he refers to unnecessarily complex theological issues as “difficulties.” Indeed, in his *Serious Reflections* Crusoe himself consciously disavows “the Interpretation of Scripture Difficulties” (*N* III.201). Thus, Crusoe’s concession that he was “ill enough qualified for a Casuist, or a Solver of Difficulties” is a partly favourable characterization, representing him as one who is auspiciously unable to pursue such questions. After all, Friday becomes a model Christian despite Crusoe’s inability to resolve such “difficulties.” That Friday, as well as the reader, is left with an uncertain resolution to the question indicates the unparalleled importance of avoiding this controversy from the outset.

When Defoe engaged directly with theological questions during 1726 and 1727, as part of his effort to confront deism and atheism, his opposition to abstraction fundamentally informed his argumentative strategies and generic choices. Certainly, the subjects he undertook during these years, comprehending the scope of divine agency and the nature of the trinity, not only called for detailed theological argument, but also demanded engagement with other divines. But throughout *The Political History of the Devil, A System of Magick*, and *An Essay on the History and Reality of Apparitions*, Defoe self-consciously repudiates this approach, projecting indifference and even hostility to such methods.
Appealing to the unalloyed “plainness” of Scripture is among his most common and elemental strategies in all his tracts on the supernatural; Defoe averts abstract disputation by representing Biblical passages as unequivocally “plain” records. “I lay every thing down with the utmost plainness,” he repeatedly avers (Apparitions SFS VIII.53, 74). Doing so, Defoe claims, “put[s] an end to cavil and quarrel,” allowing him to avoid “critics[ing] upon bare words” (Apparitions SFS VIII.130, 53). When Crusoe sets out to explain the workings of Providence in his Reflections, he firmly “Repulse[s]… cavilling Enquiries” and “needless Distinctions” about the Trinity with a single concise reference to Psalm 33:6 (N III.181). Defoe relies heavily on this technique throughout many of his works on religion, such as The Family Instructor, but it is particularly pervasive in these three works on the supernatural, which employ variations of the term “plain” roughly thirty times each. Though some of his readings, despite his protestations, are certainly “strain’d,” his constant avowals that his arguments are “plain from the text” serve to distance him from abstract disputers (Magick SFS VII.64, 85). “The language is plain,” Defoe says of Luke 37:39, and “it is plain that there was an apparition” in the account of Abimalech’s dream (Apparitions SFS VIII.132, VIII.181). “‘Tis plain,” Defoe concludes, that the magicians referred to in Daniel were nothing more than “men of learning” (Magick SFS VII.44, 47, 123). In some cases, particularly when he turns to especially ambiguous passages, his professions of “plainness” are more aggressive. The meaning of Luke 9:31, concerning the apparitions of Moses and Elijah, “is so plain and unquestionable… that they who dispute it, must not only doubt the divinity of Scripture, but must dispute its being an authentick history” (Apparitions SFS VIII.77). Asserting the “plainness” of Biblical passages not only permits Defoe to employ Scripture more readily as evidence, but it also represents him as an author concerned more with “useful” facts and examples than with impractical “dispute[s]” (Magick SFS VII.118). It is a
technique that underpins his attachment to Biblical typology, which allows him to represent modern politics in a manner distanced from political disputes.

Identifying his religious tracts as “histor[ies]” is part of this “practical” impulse, as doing so authorizes Defoe to repudiate excessively divisive or “nice” theological questions (Apparitions SFS VIII.184). By presenting his works as “histories,” Defoe allows himself to engage with certain theological questions while, at the same time, disavowing others as too abstract or contentious for his purposes. When Defoe comes to a battery of difficult questions about how sin could develop in Heaven, for example, he boldly “break[s] off at the difficulty.” He is only “writing… history,” Defoe argues, “not solving… difficulties,” and thus “this is no part of [his] present enquiry” (Devil SFS VI.76). Though their content is considerably theological, Defoe associates these three works with secular “histories,” such as Eleazar Albin’s A Natural History of Insects (1720) or Charles Brockwell’s The Natural and Political History of Portugal (1726). All three of his tracts on the supernatural draw significantly on Sir Walter Raleigh’s The History of the World (1614). The term “history” signified not only “a narration of incidents,” as it does today, but also a systematic account of “the facts relating to animals, plants, or other natural objects or phenomena” (“History”). In the latter sense, the “histories” of the period were part of the broad endeavour, inspired by the Scientific Revolution, to compile information into useful catalogues and surveys. While all three of his tracts on the supernatural pursue a roughly “historical” chronology, his emphasis on comprehensiveness and utility equally connects these works with this mode of “natural history” (Magick SFS VII.111). Invoking this genre enables Defoe to privilege facts and examples over more abstract questions, which he may legitimately dismiss as irrelevant (Apparitions SFS VIII.97). “Let the divines read us lectures upon the nature of spirits,” Defoe states; “that I have nothing to do with here; my business is to
observe the matter of fact” (*Apparitions SFS* VIII.147). Defoe, of course, is indeed writing a type of “lecture upon the nature of spirits,” but the crucial distinction in his generic mode allows him to abjure a spectrum of topics he considers unnecessary to his project. When he comes to examine why the Devil might be sent on errands by heaven, for example, he decides “to leave arguing upon inscrutables, [and] come to narration of facts” (*Apparitions SFS* VII.97). Why do angelic visitations no longer occur as they did in Scripture, one might ask? “The question might be answer’d many Ways,” Defoe acknowledges, but he need not answer it, “as we are not writing Divinity” (*Apparitions* VIII.56-57). Defoe occasionally gestures towards the specific disputes of “learned expositors and annotators,” but he generally decides that with “so many difficulties to reconcile,” it is “not… [his] business to reconcile these distant and clashing opinions, at least not in this work” (*Apparitions SFS* VIII.61-62). As the final clause suggests, this attitude is authorized by the genre he undertakes; his commitment to “history” provides him a pretence to dismiss theological difficulties as “needless” (*Magick SFS* VII.99). In most cases, Defoe only mentions disputes so he may that repudiate them as unproductive and irrelevant. Rather than position himself among contemporary “divines,” Defoe distinguishes himself from the abstract questions and sophistical disputes they pursue (*Apparitions* VIII.46). Though he is occasionally hostile towards contemporary disputes, he generally projects indifference to such questions, suggesting they need not be conclusively answered. “Be that as it it will,” he frequently concludes. As for exactly what type of serpent the staff of Moses transformed into, for example, “that is not to [his] purpose”; “take it which way you will,” Defoe carelessly advises (*Magick* VII.40, 78, 70, 75). Rooted in his affinity with writers like Annesley and Baxter, this conscious disavowal of impractical questions figures Defoe as a writer concerned primarily with what is “practicable” – what is “good for mankind” (*Magick SFS* VII.114).
At the same time, the generic status of his religious “histories” allows Defoe to take on theological questions using forms of evidence, such as anecdotes and poems, comparatively insulated from theological controversy. While he is able to defuse disputed passages by asserting their “plainness,” in all three tracts he moves away from Scriptural evidence as his argument progresses, relying instead on anecdotes, reports, and even poetry, including that of Rochester and Milton. In retrospect, he described his approach as “historical and mathematical” (Magick SFS VII.63). Though originating in Scripture, his history of magic consists significantly of orientalist tales and invented accounts of modern magicians and cunning men, such as Dr. Boreman, a benevolent “magician” living in Kent (Magick SFS VII.225). Foiled crimes, thwarted seductions, and ghost stories form the foundation of his theories on apparitions. In all three tracts, Paradise Lost furnishes evidence for many of Defoe’s claims. Those, for example, who doubt “that the Devil can… infuse midnight thoughts” Defoe “refer[s]… to Mr Milton, who shews us the Devil in the Shape of a Toad… injecting lustful or loose and wandering thoughts into [Eve’s] chaste mind” (Magick SFS VII.100). While we might expect Defoe to refer to a theological tract, connecting his argument with Milton situates him in a literary mode comparatively distanced from controversy. Defoe’s reliance on such profane accounts is crucial to his “practical” approach, as it allows him to discuss supernatural phenomena through secular modes of argument, such as appeals to probability, psychology, and political economy. To prove that the deceased cannot return as ghosts, for example, Defoe depends considerably on appeals to legal and economic probability. “How many wealthy landlords would be turn’d out Possession, and rich Tradesmen oblig’d to refund,” he asks, if “all the injur’d souls… were able to come back”; “what confusion would Exchange-Alley and the Exchange of London be in?” (Apparitions SFS VIII.122-23). Many of his “suppositions” about the history and nature of
supernatural phenomena are based on what would be “reasonable” or “unreasonable” – a standard which he applies not only to Moses, Jesus, and God, but to angels, spirits, demons, and even Satan himself (*Magick SFS* VII.89). This approach is consistent with his discussion of the Devil in *Robinson Crusoe*, in which Crusoe considers the role of the Devil in terms of psychology and probability. Indeed, Defoe’s conception of the Devil, in nearly all his writing, is formed, almost exclusively, “with a rational prospect” (*Magick SFS* VII.93). It is easy to brush off this approach to the topic as “facetiousness” or “wry merriment,” but this method is part of Defoe’s broader commitment to a decidedly “practical” engagement with theological questions (Damrosch 193; Starr “Introduction” 13).

More than a century of scholarship has made it difficult to imagine Defoe as a religious writer. Certainly, for those familiar primarily with his novels, it is surprising to find, in the new Pickering & Chatto edition of his work, ten volumes of religious and didactic writing. As such, Defoe has often been treated as the very type of man he renounced – a “Politick… Dissenter” (*Occasional PEW* III.46). Yet, his lifelong refusal to conform, alongside his growing commitment to Christian orthodoxy, confirms that his Nonconformity was a fundamental aspect of his identity. Living in a period when Dissenters were concerned with repudiating their image as scholastic schismatics, Defoe inherited and developed the discourse of “Practical Religion,” defining his religious thought by a sustained disavowal of “doubtful disputation” on Christianity. For Defoe, the “plain” word of Scripture answered any such questions readily and immediately; like Crusoe, he can depend exclusively on the Bible. Yet, when this attitude comes into contact with his political values, it comes to undermine the very typological mode that his esteem for Scripture underpins.
Chapter 4

“A New Turn to the Text”: Typological Conflict, Adaptation, and Alteration

Some Harmony with Hebrew Times may be, / In some things differ, and in some agree. / The chiming Parallel runs counter more, / On all the different steps than it agreed before. 
Daniel Defoe, A New Discovery of an Old Intreague (1691)

In January of 1707, as Defoe was struggling to assuage the grudges of kirk clergy that persisted in the aftermath of the Union, the established flow of intelligence reports between himself and Harley was interrupted – mid-letter – by the news that Harley had suddenly been taken ill (Letters 199-200). Shifting readily from political advisor to personal counsellor, Defoe invoked 2 Corinthians 4:7 to remind his benefactor to take better care for his health. “Tho’ the Vigour of your Mind quallifyes you for Uncommon Burthens, yet Sir,” he warned Harley, “We have all these Treasures In Earthen Vessells.” As Defoe after acknowledges, he employs the traditional parable in a strikingly unconventional manner. “‘Tis a New Turn to Text,” he explains, “but I presume it will hold” (199). In contemporary interpretation, the image of the treasure in earthly vessels most commonly served as a reminder, especially concerning clergy, that the divine aspect of mankind was “of God, and not of us” (J. Taylor, Discourse 32; Pennington 29; Addison 72; Spalding 85; Fox, Gospel-Truth 51). In a minority of texts, most often funeral sermons, the metaphor signified the frailty of human life (Norton 241; Gilling 11; Farington 2). But nowhere, in any prior text published during his lifetime, is this parable given such a distinctively worldly inflection. Defoe figures the “treasure,” traditionally representing divine knowledge, as Harley’s exceptional political talents. The image of the “earthen vessels” signifies, in this “new turn,” the physiological fragility of the body, rather than its spiritual inadequacy. In fact, as Defoe reformulates the metaphor, it serves to celebrate, rather than devalue, worldly abilities and
achievements. Considering that reports (albeit false) of Harley’s death soon reached Edinburgh, this hardly seems an appropriate occasion for such self-indulgent novelty.

This inventive impulse is part of a tendency, which develops throughout Defoe’s writing, to experiment with supplementary or alternative uses and interpretations of Biblical images and parables. The desire to avoid controversial disputes made the Bible an especially important aspect of Defoe’s rhetoric, as appeals to the “plainness” of Scripture allowed him to evade impractically difficult questions – questions inconsistent with “Practical Religion.” As such, he turns to Biblical typology not only because he considered “the Bible… the master text”, but also because a typological mode allows him to engage with controversial topics, specifically the accession and reign of William, at a remove from disputes (Merrett 115). As in his engagement with theological “difficulties,” in his political writing the Bible provided Defoe a stable, indisputable locus of authority that enabled him to readily dismiss quandaries and cavils. Though frequently treated as an emotional or psychological habit, Defoe’s use of biblical allusions is always deeply rhetorical, even in his most seemingly unguarded personal letters. Conventionally ignored or treated dismissively, Defoe’s tendency to modify or rewrite Biblical narratives is part of a well-developed theory of typology, one which is connected to the most fundamental aspects of his political thought. One of the only critics to study Defoe’s typological hermeneutic, Robert Merrett suggests that Defoe cites Scripture “plurally and inventively to defy atheism and to unsettle unorthodox creeds” (110). But it is no coincidence that Defoe’s most frequent and unconventional adaptations of Scripture concern kingship; this impulse is a product of a deep-seated conflict between his typological hermeneutic and his political outlook. In his representation of William and the Revolution Settlement, political typology is among his most important rhetorical strategies. Defoe’s employment of Scriptural types, however, is
fundamentally shaped by incongruities between Biblical monarchy and modern kingship. His desire to represent William as a Biblical type, manifest in his early satirical poems, impels him to reframe the relationship between Scripture and literature, producing a less restrictive conception of Biblical typology. While his first poem, *A New Discovery of an Old Intreague* (1691), justifies typological incongruities within an aesthetic framework, in *The True-Born Englishman* (1700) Defoe formulates a conception of typology that celebrates this incongruity as a political virtue. Enacting this liberating theory of typology, *The Mock Mourners* (1702) dramatically disavows Biblical types, adapting Scriptural narratives to fit William, rather than endeavouring to align him obliquely with David. Engaging with these typological conflicts directly, *Jure Divino* (1706) confidently moves beyond the narrative limitations of earlier poems, not only looking to a broader range of parables, but also supplementing and altering Biblical accounts with invented dialogue. In *A Hymn to the Mob* (1715), which comprehends his most audacious adaptations of Scripture, Defoe deliberately exploits the potential ambiguity that his unconventional typologies raise. The poem evinces a complete contravention of conventional typology, marking the degree to which Defoe has come to acknowledge the marked distance, both conceptual and historical, between “Hebrew times” and “modern” existence.

**The Profitable Servant: The Rhetoric of Biblical Allusions in Defoe’s Letters**

Critics and biographers have almost invariably attributed Defoe’s invocations of Scripture to an emotional or psychological impulse. Studying the use of Biblical allusions in his correspondence with Harley, for example, Paula Backscheider argues that Scriptural analogies “are Defoe’s private form of emotional release… and [they] help to unlock some of his most basic personality traits” (“Personality” 1). Biblical allusion, she avers, often “gives Defoe a restrained means of
expressing powerful emotion” (5). Valentine Cunningham traces Scriptural references through a wide range of his writing, contending that the Bible consistently served as a store of associations, the words and stories of Scripture coming to “him and his… characters as it were naturally” (350). Characterizing Scripture as an “imaginaire Defoe never stopped carrying in his head,” he suggests that Biblical phrases and images manifested in his writing spontaneously (352). Both David Blewett and Paul Alkon refer to Defoe’s Biblical allusions as a “habit of mind” (40; 29). What all these perspectives share is a belief that Defoe’s typological figurations are essentially impulsive and constant, providing a window into subconscious associations.

Throughout Defoe’s writing, however, invocations of Scripture are always deeply rhetorical. Considering the extent and depth of his Biblical knowledge, contemporary events would certainly have brought to mind many Scriptural parallels and analogues, and perhaps in some cases Defoe drew on such personal associations. But his writing, even when it seems most uninhibited, never communicates his thoughts or emotions transparently. On the contrary, as his biographers have repeatedly acknowledged, Defoe is an especially deceptive author, his writing on every topic “filled with disguise, lies, indirection, [and] forgery” (Davis 155). Rather than serve to expose his true identity, his extensive knowledge of Scripture made Biblical allusions one of the most significant and versatile rhetorical techniques of his writing. The parables Defoe invokes fit more than simply the scenes and situations he describes: they fit his rhetorical aims. He regularly draws on Scripture to denigrate his political opponents, invoking a wide range of Biblical figures including Cain, Goliath, Achitophel, Jezebel, and Judas. Among his favourite figures is Jehu, the man who became king of Israel after being anointed in secret and slaying Jehoram (or Joram), son of Jezebel. Though he subsequently exterminated the house of Ahab and systematically annihilated the worshippers of Baal, Jehu permitted the golden calves at Bethel
and Dan. As such, he became a “typological sign” of hypocritical zeal. In many cases, Defoe employs the type in this conventional manner, often in reference to High Churchmen, whose zeal for Christianity he represents as specious. Overzealous Anglicans are “Sons of Jehu” and “Sons of Nimshi” in A New Test of the Church of England’s Honesty. They call upon England “in the Language of Honest Jehu, and say, Come see our Zeal for the Lord” (PEW III.193, 204, 201). In A Hymn to the Mob Defoe describes militant High Churchmen as “Nimshites, who with furious Zeal drive on, / And built up Rome to pull down Babylon” (SFS I.247). Defoe’s invocation of Jehu, however, is not always so conventional or straightforward. In Some Reflections Upon a Pamphlet Lately Publish’d (1697), Defoe represents logical fallacy in terms of Jehu’s flawed zeal, alleging that in opposing a standing army John Trenchard has “driven on furiously.” “Like Jehu,” he asserts, you have “called all the World to see your Zeal; but like him too you have not Demolished the high Places; you have Demolish’d the Army, but you have not provided against Jacobitism” (PEW I.39-40). In some cases, the signification of Jehu shifts so considerably that it is impossible to believe he held a stable psychological association for Defoe. In his Six Distinguishing Characters of a Parliament-Man (1700), for example, Defoe emphasizes the providential role of Jehu, since he aims to mark a clear distinction between the “contraries” of Protestantism and Papism: “Jehu was made use of to bring to pass the Ruin God had foretold,” he recalls, “but ‘twas a Josiah and a Jehosaphat, for whom God reserv’d the Work of Reformation, and the Destruction of Idolatry” (PEW I.37). The rhetorical role of Jehu is completely reversed in The Evident Approach Approach of a War (1727). Rather than serve as a symbol of hypocritical zeal, Jehu represents the drive and dedication necessary to punish France for obstructing English trade. Shall peace continue, Defoe asks, while the French “interrupt our Commerce?” Defoe responds “as Jehu did… [when] the King of Israel… asked, Is it Peace,

21 Nimshi was the grandfather of Jehu (2 Kings 9:2).
Jehu?”: “What Peace, while the Whoredoms of thy Mother Jezebel and her Witchcrafts are so many? So I say, What Peace, when the Encroachments on our Trade… are so many? What Peace, while the League and private Confederacies are so many?” (32-33). Certainly, Biblical stories and figures probably conjured particular images and emotions for Defoe. But his use of Scriptural references is determined more by conventional and rhetorical parameters than by subconscious impulses.

It is tempting to treat Defoe’s private letters as a window to his psyche, but Scripture serves a central rhetorical function throughout his correspondence. Of all his letters, none seems more unaffected than his first to Harley, sent to thank him for orchestrating his release from Newgate. Defoe was deeply grateful for this clemency, and his ensuing behaviour suggests that the thankfulness he expresses is unfeigned. To communicate the depth of his gratitude, Defoe looks to the story of Jesus healing ten lepers, recounted in Luke 17:11-19: “I Sir,” he tells Harley, “Like that One Gratefull wretch am Come back to Pay the Tribute of thankfulness which this So Unexpected Goodness Commands from me” (Letters 10). While the letter is partly intended to communicate sincere gratitude, it also serves another important purpose, one which an emphasis on emotion significantly obscures: this is an “application” for employment (10). Though he characterizes this “petition” as a “conclu[sion],” his impassioned plea to serve the government constitutes the bulk of the letter, which quickly becomes a petition for a government position. Not only had the fiasco surrounding The Shortest Way damaged both his reputation and his literary prospects, but his imprisonment had also led to the failure of his pantile factory in Essex (17). Understandably, while Defoe is appropriately grateful for his release, one of his first concerns is securing a new income, both for himself and his family. Admittedly, representing himself as a helpless leper or cripple does not appear immediately beneficial, and it is remarkable
how readily he shifts from this deferential address to his petition for official employment. However, by representing Harley’s assistance as an analog of this parable, Defoe extrapolates from an isolated favour a perennial relationship, one which comprehends mutual obligations. As this Biblical narrative aligns Harley with Jesus, it figures him as a benefactor who is expected to reward his faithful servants. This relationship does not “prefigure the relationship between Friday and Crusoe,” as Backscheider suggests (“Personality” 4), since it is Defoe himself, in the role of willing servant, who initiates, defines, and manages this dynamic. As Harley is not a master, but rather a Christ-like saviour, this relationship is distinctively advantageous to Defoe.

The reappearance of this dynamic in his other professional applications suggests that this allusion served such a rhetorical purpose. In a 1705 letter to Charles Montagu, Baron Halifax, Defoe begins by expressing his gratitude for his unexpected generosity,22 invoking the story of Jesus healing a crippled man told in John 5:1-16: “I my Ld Am like the Cripple at the Pool, when the Moment happen’d No Man was at hand to put the Wretch into the water” (81). The narrative itself is markedly similar, as is the signification Defoe assigns to it; in both letters, these metaphors figure Defoe as a helpless invalid healed by Christ, with whom his benefactor is aligned. Not only does Defoe again characterize himself, in the same terms, as a “wretch,” but the grammatical structure of the sentence itself is nearly identical. As in his letter to Harley, Defoe follows this allusion with a petition for employment. “I… Might be able to act something for your Service,” Defoe suggests, sending a copy of The Consolidator along with his letter. When Harley temporarily fell from power in 1708, Defoe returned again to the same parable when he begged his new employer, the Earl of Godolphin, to relieve his starving family: “I have layn My Ld at the Pool for Deliverance a long Time, But have Ever Wanted the Help Needfull when the Moment for Cure happend; I most Humbly Seek your Ldpps Help: which with the

22 The details of this assistance remain obscure.
breath of your Mouth Can Restore the Distresses of your Faithfull Servant” (264). As he is requesting money directly, rather than applying for employment, Defoe distinctively underscores the economic implications of this allusion, which remained implicit in his earlier invocation of the parable. The reiteration of this dynamic, particularly in this instance, strongly suggests that such allusions served partly as a professional technique, rather than simply as a psychological or emotional reaction. If these markedly different situations did evoke the same Biblical parallels, they were parallels that Defoe nonetheless recognized as both professionally and rhetorically advantageous. Though outwardly disempowering, the reciprocal relationship between supplicant and saviour which these parables initiated permitted Defoe to appeal to the Christ-like generosity of his benefactors, which he does with increasing frequency and confidence in his correspondence with Harley. “I Refer… to your Goodness,” Defoe writes a year later, “that if possible I may be Delivered from the Unsufferable Disorders of my affaires,” requesting that Harley either employ him in the Auditors office or send him money (15). Defoe maintains this technique throughout his letters with Harley. In 1712, for example, he opens his letter to Harley with an acknowledgment of his present “goodness,” figuring himself as an embattled type of David (379). Emphasizing Harley’s “Bounty and Goodness” – his “great Goodness” – Defoe eventually turns to his desire “to Take a Journey North” at government expense. Though he mentions that he might be “usefull” in this capacity, his supplication appeals primarily to Harley’s “Goodness”; rather than “be forward and Craveing,” Defoe explains, he “had Rather [his] Circumstances Should Silently Move [Harley’s] Tenderness and Compassion” (381). Positioning his petitions within this Christian framework legitimates these ongoing requests for money and favours. Rather than characterize his income as payment, Defoe consistently
conceives of his work for Harley within a religious framework, representing his work as a service to Christ.

Defoe regularly reinforces this advantageous dynamic, throughout his correspondence with Harley, by invoking a constellation of Scriptural references that identify Harley with Christ. Awaiting Harley’s orders in 1704, for example, Defoe characterizes his planned survey of eastern England as a form of divine work. Alluding to John 9:4, he warns Harley that as “The Night Comes, Winter will be upon me in which of This Affair I may Say No Man can Work.” The allusion reinforces the religious signification of his abiding intention “Not [to] be An Unprofitable Servant” (27), a term which invokes the parable of the Parable of the Talents recounted in Matthew 25:14-30. This allusion is among Defoe’s most regular means of representing their relationship within a religious framework, as he concludes many of his letters by expressing his desire to play the part of the profitable servant, who is faithfully rewarded for his judicious care of his master’s assets (211, 227, 275, 387, 313, 327). Defoe, however, draws on a remarkably wide range of allusions to figure Harley as Christ. In 1704, he censures the opposition Whigs for distancing themselves from Harley. Defoe finds the “Principall Reason” for this betrayal in a Biblical example, connecting the contemporary situation with two Scriptural accounts of unreasonable expectations: Acts 1:6 and Matthew 20:20-24. In both narratives, Harley implicitly occupies the role of Christ, as he corrects his misguided followers. Correspondingly, as Harley began to lose favour in 1713, Defoe connects his fall with the crucifixion of Christ; “if They do This in The green Tree,” he asks, alluding to the words of Christ as he approached the cross, “what would They do in the Drye?” (412). While his letters abound with such direct connections, in many cases Defoe develops this typology indirectly, associating Harley with Christ in an oblique manner. Advising Harley on public policy, Defoe
warns him to ensure his servants are not secretly profiting from his self-conscious generosity, for, he explains, “one Gehezai in your Attendants Will undo the Merit of all your Actions” (32). Most immediately, in this example Gehezai serves as an exemplar of the dishonest servant; Gehezai obtained gifts from the Syrian commander Namaan after his master, Elisha, had refused any reward for healing him (2 Kings 5:20). As Elisha heals Namaan of leprosy in this story, however, the narrative surrounding this allusion connects Harley with Christ, particularly with the story at the core of the relationship between Harley and Defoe. Moreover, Elisha was regularly considered a type of Christ. Biblical images and stories undoubtedly possessed unique evocative power for Defoe, as they did for many of his contemporaries. But his writing, particularly his political thought, pivots on the rhetorical manipulation of these associations, rather than their unmediated expression.

**The Glorious Revolution, William III, and Biblical Typology**

Defoe’s political thought is fundamentally typological; he regularly interprets contemporary political events as types of Scriptural antitypes. His first published poem, *A New Discovery of an Old Intreague* (1691), consciously engages with the contemporary development of political typology, and it is often considered an imitation of Dryden’s *Absalom and Achitophel*, since it foregrounds the relationship between modern politics and Biblical history. The poem was occasioned by a controversial petition, presented to the House of Commons on 2 December 1690, which challenged the legitimacy of London Whig office holders, particularly the mayor, Sir Thomas Pilkington, and the Chamberlain, Leonard Robinson. The exposure of a Jacobite plot, discovered on the night of 31 December, only confirmed the suspicions of Whigs, including Defoe, that the petition was intended to undermine political opposition to the Pretender.
The humble loyalty of Samuel with the treachery of Jacobite clergy, *A New Discovery* represents modern England as ancient Israel. Though critics often treat the poem as a particularly topical satire, the relationship between past and present provides the underlying structure for the poem. In the initial line of the Introduction, the speaker looks back to “ancient Times when men of Worth were known,” initiating a logical tension which is only fully resolved in the opening line of the poem proper, when he firmly locates his commentary within the modern news cycle. “Of Modern Fame which hourly Pacquets bring, / And actions born of Yesterday, I sing,” he announces (38, 41). This proclamation underscores the incongruity between “ancient Times” and “modern” existence, as each image accentuates the unprecedented pace of contemporary life. Set against the “renown” of ancient heroes, present “fame” appears comparatively limited, both in duration and worth (7). The medium of modern discourse, “hourly Pacquets,” is diminished, their frequency and brevity corresponding with the ephemerality of modern fame. As the speaker makes clear in the following line, such transient reports are suited to the limited scope of modern achievements, which the speaker depreciates by figuring them within a discordantly protracted perspective. More than a facile obloquy of contemporary life, however, the bathos of this transition serves a crucial purpose: it underscores an incongruity between the past and present, providing the framework for his own unconventional conception of typology.

Rather than assert a precise correspondence between Biblical and contemporary events, Defoe sets himself in opposition to the direct typology employed by Dryden and his imitators. “No Parallels from Hebrew times I take,” he boldly declares in the opening stanzas of *A New Discovery*. Considering this is his first published poem, we might dismiss this as an artistic pretence – an attempt to distinguish himself from the tradition on which he is drawing,
particularly *Absalom and Achitophel*. Indeed, even as he disavows Biblical typology, Defoe develops a detailed typological connection between Scriptural history and contemporary politics. But this is not an isolated claim. This attitude appears repeatedly throughout his poetry, almost always in the same context: surrounding the representation of William III and the Revolution. In his encomium on the king in *The True-Born Englishman* (1700), Defoe eschews Biblical analogies in nearly identical terms: “No Parallel from Hebrew Stories I take” (921), he proudly proclaims. He maintains this attitude, two years later, in *The Mock Mourners*; again calling on Britannia to glorify her saviour, Defoe boldly renounces Scriptural typology. The heroes of the Bible, he asserts, are insufficient: “If back to *Israel’s* Tents I shou’d retire, / And of the *Hebrew Heroes* there enquire,” he proclaims, “I find no Hand did *Judah’s* Scepter wear, / Comes up to *William’s* Modern Character” (346). As this pattern suggests, there is a significant connection between Defoe’s political allegiances and his conception of Biblical typology.

This persistent rejection of conventional typology is more than rhetorical posturing: these claims acknowledge the fundamental inability of Biblical antitypes to properly represent William and the “modern” circumstances of his authority (*Mourners SFS* I.146). As Defoe acknowledges in each of these poems, the realities of William’s accession and reign conflicted with Scriptural models of monarchy. Between 1689 and 1702, championing William and celebrating the Revolution were among Defoe’s most prominent concerns. *The True-Born Englishman*, in which Defoe condemned the xenophobia of his countrymen, was certainly his most successful defence of the king. But throughout William’s reign Defoe published more than twelve tracts celebrating “*Great Nassau*” and promoting his policies (*Intreague SFS* I.56). To call Defoe a “Williamite” is almost an understatement, and his nearly obsessive admiration for William is one of the most manifest and critically acknowledged aspects of his writing and character (Sutherland, *Critical* 6;
Novak, *Defoe* 103). For Defoe, William was, without question, “the best King that ever sat on the *English* throne” (*Short-Ways* 14). The first Book of *Jure Divino* concludes with an account of his apotheosis, as he ascends to heaven adored by the stars and attended by “Seraphic Anthems” to his name. He was “the best of Monarchs, and of Men to Me,” Defoe concludes (100). The frequency and fervour of his praises suggest that it would be difficult to overestimate his esteem for William and his enthusiasm for the Revolution Settlement. As Richetti suggests, “as far as Defoe was concerned, this dynastic shift was the most important political moment in his life” (*Defoe*, 11). Celebrating William and promoting the contractual mode of kingship he represented was, for much of Defoe’s life, his highest priority, so it is hardly surprising that to properly exalt William Defoe looks to Biblical types, variously representing William as Moses, Saul, David, and Christ. Whether he is extolling William’s political, military, or religious importance, Defoe looks first and foremost to the Bible for favourable types.

“On all the different steps than it agreed before”: *A New Discovery of an Old Intreague*

Defoe’s promotion of William and the Revolution, however, is impeded by the incongruity between Scriptural monarchy and contemporary kingship. This conflict was precipitated primarily by the Glorious Revolution. The events of 1688 and 1689 put unprecedented pressure on the traditional theory of divine right, the belief, in the words of Defoe, that “the King receiving his Authority from no human Sanction, but from God alone, is accountable to none but Him… [and] That his Right is Inherent, his Person Sacred, and the Obedience of his Subjects a Debt of Religion” (*Divino SFS* II.44). After the English had largely accepted a foreign king who had supplanted the rightful monarch, it was much more difficult to believe that kings were divinely appointed and authorized by God. For Defoe, the manifestly contractual basis of
William’s authority compelled all loyal Englishmen to disavow any strict theory of divine right. Though he drew extensively on historical precedents, the dethroning of James II provided the most immediate and irrefutable evidence that kings “have no Powers immediately Deputed from Heaven superiour and unsubjected to the Good of those they govern” (Divino SFS II.101). For Defoe, this attitude was more a matter of fact than political opinion; after the Revolution, he often argued, the traditional theory of divine right was logically untenable. It was “impossible,” he argued, “to reconcile the Principle of Passive Obedience with the whole Proceeding of the Late Revolution” (Divino SFS II.37). Though Defoe was certainly influenced not only by John Locke but also Algernon Sidney, as Cody Dodwell observes, it was the events of the Glorious Revolutions themselves that provided the foundation for his political thought (415-442).

Throughout his writing on the topic, Defoe revels in drawing out the contradictions that the Glorious Revolution engendered. “Was King James treated like a Man that could do no Wrong,” he asks provocatively in the preface to Jure Divino (37). Among his favourite contradictions was the fact that High Church proponents of passive obedience had opposed James, an act he endeavoured to equate with the execution of Charles I (Loyalty PEW III.64-65). Whether looking to the reign of Henry VII or of James II, Defoe repeatedly expands contradictions that, he contends, can only be resolved by an alternative conception of kingship, one which acknowledges the decisive role of the popular voice. In A New Test of the Church of England’s Loyalty (1702) he presents divine right supporters with a set of choices which, he implies, unavoidably compel them to accept that “this Doctrine of Absolute, Passive and Non-resistant Obedience, is an Absurdity in it self” (PEW III.68). Certainly, there were ways to explain the contradictions and paradoxes Defoe identified, but he considered them irrefutable evidence that the traditional theory of divine right had become logically and practically untenable.
As Defoe acknowledges, however, Biblical monarchy was largely inconsistent with this new model of kingship. Since he considered the Bible unsurpassed in authority and dignity, Defoe endeavours, throughout his poetry, to celebrate William as a Biblical king, as great as Saul or David. But the contractual model of kingship that William embodied, and which Defoe aimed to elucidate and endorse, was incompatible with the accounts of monarchy in the Bible. As proponents of divine right had regularly demonstrated, Biblical models predominantly demonstrated that the power of kings was divinely ordained and absolute. As Filmer put it, quite succinctly, “Scripture is not favourable to the liberty of the people” (27). Among the most explicit endorsements of divine right was Romans 13:1-2: “Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God. Whosoever therefore resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God: and they that resist shall receive to themselves damnation.” Many other passages, such 1 Samuel 24:6-10 and 2 Samuel 1:14-15, could serve to demonstrate, quite convincingly, that the monarch was appointed and anointed by God, and thus could not be lawfully resisted. Defoe even acknowledges that in ancient Israel “Kings were more particularly of Divine Right than anywhere” (Loyalty PEW III.71). Furthermore, the most attractive Biblical monarchs were markedly unsuitable types for William, as they held their power by divine right. David, who was the most appealing type of monarch, was chosen “by Jus Divinum of the Heavenly Call,” as Defoe admits (Intreague SFS I.110). While his social satires and political polemics draw on Scripture selectively and provisionally, aligning his opponents with an array of unfavourable types, his encomiums on William demanded a more developed, focused Biblical typology. While typology necessarily admitted some incongruities, such a fundamental difference significantly undermined the legitimacy of typological figurations.
Defoe was not the only author who struggled with this incongruity; after 1689, many poets and satirists engaged with the typological conflict introduced by the Glorious Revolution. The distinctively unconventional circumstances of William’s ascension, and the form of contractual power it comprehended, fit uneasily with conventional Scriptural typologies of kingship. Even the most successful panegyrics to the new king manifest “some serious signs of strain” (Miner, “Poems” ii). Dryden was in a particularly difficult position, as he had been among the most prolific and prominent champions of the Stuart regime. He had drawn on Scripture extensively to celebrate Charles, firmly aligning many of the most prominent Biblical types, including David and Christ, with a model of kingship markedly at odds with that embodied by William. As Steven Zwicker observes, after the Revolution Settlement Dryden withdraws his earlier political typologies, turning instead to Scriptural models of private piety (129-140). Authors who aimed, like Defoe, to eulogize William most frequently foregrounded Classical figures, including Jupiter, Mars, and Hercules, instead of Biblical types (Halifax 5; Hughes 8). Though it did not situate William within a providential framework, this typology was well suited to celebrating his military character. As Zwicker observes, after 1688 “there is no sustained effort by a major writer to assert a biblical mythos for the new regime” (134-35). This is not evidence of growing secularism; the Bible remained, long into the eighteenth century, the single most important and authoritative text to which writers could appeal. But Scriptural monarchy was markedly less compatible with William’s accession and authority than it had been with the Stuart line he supplanted. After 1688, most English authors necessarily found alternative frameworks and methods to justify or celebrate William’s power.

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23 For a concise summary of the types to which other poets turned, as well as the range of difficulties they sought to manage, see Miner (“Poems” ii-vi).
A number of factors, however, precluded such solutions for Defoe. His extensive historical knowledge left him unwilling to idealize secular history. As his contemporaries composed odes connecting William with the glorified kings of England’s past, including King Arthur, Defoe often recognized the violence and injustice that defined English history. For example, he dedicates Book X of *Jure Divino* to tracing the genealogy of modern tyranny, including even the most appealing English monarchs, such as Edward III, in his sweeping censure (*Jure Divino* 311; Hughes 10). Nor could Defoe easily turn to Classical types, as did many of his contemporaries. As his opponents charged, and as he himself partly admitted, his Classical training was deficient, particularly in comparison to his extensive Biblical knowledge (*Review* II.221-22; *Review* VII.520-21). While Dryden, Swift, and Pope could draw readily on a prodigious corpus of Classical images, narratives, and figures, Defoe rarely demonstrates more than a superficial familiarity with Classical narratives. In a number of cases, his translations are imperfect or his allusions misattributed (*Reflections* N III.167). In general, he privileges a Classical tradition only in his celebratory hymns, such as *A Hymn to Victory* (1704) and *The Double Welcome* (1705). Partly as a result of his training, which focused predominantly on the Scriptural tradition, his conception of kingship is decidedly Biblical. As a number of critics have observed, Defoe’s political thought, in particular, is firmly grounded in the Old Testament, especially in the books of Samuel (Schonhorn 4). At the same time, Defoe’s attachment to typology is informed by his commitment to “Practical Religion.” As the Bible provided a locus of “plain” meaning removed from contemporary disputes, it served as important a rhetorical purpose in his political writing as it does in his political thought, especially concerning the uncertain authority of William III. For poets, like Defoe, who continued to seek Biblical types

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24 The title of his epic poem, *Jure Divino* (1706), was grammatically incorrect, but Defoe defended it on its artistic merit: “I know some will cavil at the Title… [but] if it will not pass as a Latin Sentence, it may pass as a proper Name or Title to a Book” (*Divino SFS* II.63).
after 1688, Moses became the most common alternative to David and Saul. Though this trope was limited by the fact that Moses was never king of Israel, this typology figured William as an appealing redeemer, one who fatefuly rescued England from the idolatry and slavery imposed by James (Guy 3). Yet, at the same time, Moses was a remarkably unsuitable type for William, since he failed to signify the military prowess that many of his supporters, especially Defoe, lauded the most passionately. Defoe aligns William with Moses once, in the opening stanza of *The Mock Mourners*, but he quickly abandons this typology when he turns to celebrate William’s military achievements; to do so, he must look to Joshua and David (*SFS* I.137).

As Defoe is unwilling to abandon conventional Biblical typologies, the conflict between his politics and his hermeneutics impels him to reconceptualise the relationship between “Hebrew times” and modern events, developing an approach that justifies unconventional applications, interpretations, and alterations of Scriptural accounts. This impulse forms the basis of his first published poem, in which Defoe endeavours to align William with David while simultaneously defusing the problematic differences between Biblical monarchy and modern kingship. The poem unavoidably recalls *Absalom and Achitophel*, as it looks to the reign of David to censure the opponents of the king. But while Dryden was able to represent Charles II as a type of David, Defoe cannot as readily represent William as a Davidic king. Instead, announcing his rejection of direct typology, Defoe develops a detailed musical metaphor intended to justify the incongruities between Biblical monarchy and contemporary kingship:

No Parallels from Hebrew times I take,  
And leave the Jingling Simily to speak;  
Who faithful Balm to Englands Wounds applyes,  
The Danger shows before the Remedies:  
Some Harmony with Hebrew Times may be,  
In some things differ, and in some agree.  
The chiming Parallel runs counter more,  
On all the different steps than it agreed before. (*SFS* I.41)
The terms in which this metaphor is formulated, from the outset, denigrate the typologies employed in other poems. Not only does figuring the analogies of other writers as “jingling” characterize their verse as simplistic and mechanical, but doing so also reinforces the implication that this approach requires little creative input from the poet; they merely “leave” the existing parallels to “speak” for themselves, the very work that should concern the poet. Extending this metaphor through the passage, Defoe sets his own approach in favourable contrast to these “jingl[es]” by characterizing his poem as “harmon[i]ous.” As harmony is produced by difference rather than identity, the metaphor serves crucially to represent the incongruities the speaker acknowledges as artistic merits, rather than logical faults. His use of the term “steps” reinforces this signification, as it invokes the intervals between notes that produce harmony. The difference between ancient and modern kingship, this passage suggests, is not logical, but musical. This typological theory makes a virtue of what, by conventional standards, would appear a problematic difference between William and David, allowing Defoe to retain a typological perspective.

Neither fully eschewing nor wholly embracing conventional Biblical typology, Defoe shifts the focus of the Davidic narrative, refiguring his accession as a story about the political role of the clergy, rather than the origins of monarchical authority. By underscoring the geographic and historical particulars of David’s accession, Defoe distances the political significance of his authority from “modern” England (41). Recalling the genealogical distinction between Jesse and Saul on which David’s anointment was formulated, Defoe notes that David took “the Regal Divinity at Hebron,” a detail which locates the events in the specific geography of ancient Israel (42). He also highlights a number of clerical artefacts and practices, such as the wearing of the ephod, which firmly locate this aspect of the narrative in the Biblical past (42).
These particulars emphasize that the nature of the anointment and accession, as Defoe indicates, were unique to the situation of ancient Israelites, who had direct contact with Heaven itself (41). But Defoe is not interested in wholly removing William from a Biblical framework. As he turns to the resistance of modern Jacobite clergy the poem becomes increasingly generalized:

Had but the sacred Tribe his steps pursued,
What Years of peace to Israel had ensued?
How had our Flourishing Isle glad Hours enjoy’d,
For calmer Joys, and Nobler actions made?
While their dark Councils now Embroyl the State,
Our Feuds increase, and Vengeance antedate… (42)

The “sacred Tribe,” as Defoe describes modern clergy, is far less historically specific than the “Levites,” the tribe of Levi who were dedicated to religious duties. By representing the loyal comportment of Samuel as “steps,” Defoe effaces the details of his retirement, including his politically ambivalent speech at Gilgal. This generalizing mode facilitates a shift, as subtle as it is significant, from Israel to “our Flourishing Isle,” England. The dual signification on which this transition hinges is not only grammatical, but also political. Israel and England, this transition suggests, share a common political situation: both depend on the support and cooperation of a potentially disruptive clergy. Though Defoe sets the loyalty of Samuel in opposition to the recalcitrance of modern Jacobites, the clergy of both nations are connected by the deliberately vague pronoun “their” (42). The ambiguity is sustained throughout the remainder of the passage, as the poem only clearly links this vaguely “nameless” people with the English clergy sixteen lines later, when Defoe condemns their “Romish Fopperies” (43).

As he is unable to connect William with David directly, Defoe represents William as a Davidic king obliquely throughout *A New Discovery*. Unwilling to abandon Scriptural typology but hindered by the divine origins of David’s power, Defoe figures William as a Davidic type on an alternative basis. Though he acknowledges that David was chosen by “Heavenly Call,” his
emphasis on the political role of the clergy assigns the two kings the same role (42). Like David, the opening narrative implies, William is a potential peace-maker dependent on the cooperation of the clergy. A series of oblique invocations of David, throughout the poem, reinforce this alternative typology. In the opening lines of the Introduction the speaker alludes to Psalm 137, recalling how in ancient times “our widdowed Harps [were not] on Willows hung” (38). The image unavoidably invokes David, who was famed for his harp playing. In fact, in the Septuagint this psalm is dedicated to David. When the speaker explicitly addresses the new reign of “Nassovian Justice,” he connects William with David by comparing his troubled reign with that of Christ, who was widely considered a type of David; “And did King Jesus Reign they’d murmur too” (43). As it conspicuously echoes the resolution of Absalom and Achitophel, the “Conclusion” of A New Discovery further connects William with David, by way of Dryden’s poem. The conclusions to both poems follow the same progression: at first reluctant to punish, the monarch is ultimately compelled to “let law… show her face” (1006). In both conclusions, the “mistaken Power” of the king figures prominently, as the rebels misjudge his mercy for weakness (Intreague SFS I.56; Absalom 29-32). Though Defoe self-consciously disavows “Paralelles from Hebrew times,” the poem is ultimately drawn back into a conventional typological hermeneutic.

“Names and Things directly I proclaim”: The True-Born Englishman

When Defoe encountered this same conflict in The True-Born Englishman, published nearly a decade later, he developed a conception of Scriptural typology that favourably inflected this conflict not only aesthetically, but also politically. While in A New Discovery Defoe sought to justify typological incongruity as an artistic virtue, in The True-Born Englishman he integrates
this incompatibility into his advocacy of contractual monarchy. Defoe’s most successful poem, *The True-Born Englishman* aimed to defend his “darling” William from John Tutchin’s *The Foreigners* (1700) (*True-Born SFS* I.110). Formulating his own Israel/England typology, Tutchin had represented William as a Gibeonite, deploiring the “foreign brood” of his countrymen William had brought to Israel/England. Though Tutchin’s typology underscored racial difference, his poem nonetheless highlighted how incompatible William was with the political values of the Old Testament. Rather than formulate his own imperfect typology, in his response to Tutchin Defoe forcefully rejects the technique altogether. After censuring his countrymen for their ingratitude to their saviour, the speaker dedicates a song of praise to the immortal hero of his poem, William. The ancient figures and stories of Scripture, he asserts, would obscure, rather than illuminate his subject:

> Then seek no Phrase his Titles to conceal,  
> And hide with Words what Actions must reveal.  
> No Parallel from Hebrew Stories take,  
> Of God-like Kings my Similies to make:  
> No borrow’d Names conceal my living Theam;  
> But Names and Things directly I proclaim. (*SFS* I.110)

Defoe retains the aesthetic aspect of this reversal which he had implemented in *A New Discovery*, developing it here as a distinction between concealment and demonstration. Each iteration of this dynamic itself communicates the value of proclaiming “Names and Things directly.” “Phrase[s]” possess far less importance than “Titles,” and the shift from singular to plural suggests that a Scriptural phrase would fail to capture the multiplicity of William’s achievements. The parallel between “phrase[s]” and “word[s]” reinforces the statement of the line that follows, suggesting that as phrases are constituted by words, so titles are the product of actions. The terms with which Defoe describes Biblical models all stress, with increasing intensity, the historical distance between his contemporary topic and “Hebrew Stories.” By
referring to Scriptural types as “borrow’d Names” Defoe not only implies that their significance is temporary and derivative, but also that they communicate only a superficial affinity, one that conceals the reality of his “living Theam.” The emphasis on the present life of his subject, moreover, accentuates the fact that Biblical figures themselves are long dead. The “direct” mode of interpretation Defoe publicly proclaims in the line that follows is set in opposition to this typological hermeneutic, and it serves to situate his viewpoint firmly in the present.

This conception of typology newly figures typological incongruity as a political virtue. Though in A New Discovery Defoe conceived of a way in which incongruities between William and David could be represented as aesthetically proper, the poem still represented the decline of divine-right monarchy as an unfortunate political reality. Monarchs are no longer chosen by divine right, Defoe posited, because unlike ancient Israel, modern England had no direct contact with Heaven (*Intreague SFS* II.41). Even while this view relegated divine right to the ancient past, it represented a contractual model of monarchy as a matter of necessity, rather than as a positive choice. In *The True-Born Englishman*, Defoe accentuates the political aspect of his typological theory, implying that the uniquely meritocratic nature of William’s accession transcends the traditional basis of kingship. He rejects “Hebrew stories” specifically because they concern “God-like Kings” (110). Rather than endeavour to sidestep or apologize for the contractual basis of William’s authority, Defoe presents this disavowal of conventional typology as a logical consequence of his William’s superior character, which surpasses that of all former monarchs:

*By different Steps the high Ascent he gains,*  
And differently that high Ascent maintains.  
*Princes for Pride and Lust of Rule make War,*  
*And struggle for the Name of Conqueror.*  
*Some fight for Fame, and some for Victory.*  
*He fights to Save, and Conquers to set Free.* (110)
This passage engages with the “difference” between Biblical monarchy and modern kingship more directly than any other. The initial couplet formulates a positive inflection of the Glorious Revolution, connecting the unique basis of William’s kingship with his uniquely altruistic policy; the exceptional virtue of his rule, Defoe suggests, is causally linked with the exceptional circumstances of his accession. The sound and meter of the passage accentuates this exceptionality, the initial heaviness of the final line jarring with the regularity and alliteration of the preceding phrases. This emphasis on “ascension” simultaneously emphasizes a broader difference, developed throughout the two preceding passages, in the means by which William has achieved the throne: by “his honest Merit” (110). Anticipated by a series of images of flying and rising, this parallel emphasizes the effort and “toil” attendant on William’s acquisition of the throne (109-110). Against the stasis of the second line, in which the “high Ascent” signifies an elevated spot, the first line privileges the act of ascension itself, emphasizing the “steps” that William must climb and the process of “gaining” the summit. Referring to the prizes of other princes as only “Name[s]” suggests that the conquests they pursue are superficial, as does the alliteration of “Princes” and “Pride.” Sharply defined against the mass of typical princes, in the final line William is presented as a unique monarch, one driven by more altruistic motives. The shift from “fight[ing]” to “conquer[ing]” sets William apart from other monarchs, a difference emphasized not only by the parallel structure of the lines but also by the rhyme, which contrasts mere “Victory” with “Freedom.” Closing the passage with a sharp emphasis on “he,” Defoe emphasizes, above all, that William is “different” from every king that has come before, modern or Biblical.
Surpassing the Hebrew Heroes: The Mock Mourners

Published in the wake of William’s untimely death, The Mock Mourners (1702) marks a turning point in Defoe’s conception of Biblical typology, one which explicitly liberates him from the literary constraints manifest in A New Discovery and The True-Born Englishman. As the title of the poem suggests, The Mock Mourners censured the ungrateful English for their hypocritical grief. “You hate him Living and you Mourn him Dead,” Defoe complained (SFS I.144). The occasion demanded a more exalted portrayal of William than any before, requiring a particularly nuanced employment of Biblical typology. As the opening allusion to Moses suggests, even as Defoe rejected Scriptural types, the Bible continued to offer him the most appropriately elevated narratives through which to celebrate William. The poem pursues the same structure as The True-Born Englishman, following a satirical critique of England with a eulogy of William (sung by Britannia), and Defoe adopts the same unconventional approach to typology. Rather than figure Scriptural types as incompatible with William, however, Defoe crucially premises his rejection of “Hebrew Heroes” on the insufficiency of Biblical types, proclaiming that William has exceeded all the parallels of this “barren world”:

If back to Israel’s Tents I shou’d retire,  
And of the Hebrew Heroes there enquire,  
I find no Hand did Judah’s Scepter wear,  
Comes up to William’s Modern Character.  
Namure’s Gygantick Towers he o’erthrew;  
David did less when he Goliah slew.  
Here’s no Uriah’s for Adult’ry slain,  
Nor Oaths forgot to faithful Jonathan.  
And if to Jesse’s Grandson we ha’ recourse,  
William his Wisdom had without his Whores. (146)

In this conception of Biblical typology, Scriptural types are not simply incongruous with William’s “modern” rule: they are deficient. An array of devices and images, many of them developments of earlier techniques, underscore this deficiency throughout the passage. As in A
New Discovery, the speaker characterizes Biblical typology as a passive artistic technique, figuring it as a “retire[ment]” from his current topic. The act of looking “back” to Israel accentuates the historical distance that a typological hermeneutic elides, as does the attention to the primitive habitations of the Israelites. The speaker sets this ancient world in opposition to “modern” William, an epithet that firmly distinguishes him from the distinctively ancient world of the Bible. This distance is not simply historical, however, but moral. It is William’s “character,” above all, which is prohibitively modern. Selectively emphasizing the moral failings of David and his line allows Defoe to position William within a Davidic tradition of kingship while nonetheless maintaining his exceptionality. The passage figures William as a Davidic king who, paradoxically, outdoes David.

Defoe does not, however, simply abandon Scriptural typology. On the contrary, in the Mock Mourners the Bible becomes a more significant and prominent framework for William’s reign than ever before. This bold rejection of Scriptural parallels sanctions his most developed typology of modern kingship. William is identified with David directly, while the mode of indirect association developed in earlier poems serves only to reinforce this typology; David is invoked in his military, his marital, and his dynastic roles. Scriptural types are insufficient, but they remain nonetheless the most authoritative precedent for William’s achievements. His actions are reiterations of Biblical events, albeit morally and technologically superior. Indeed, the insufficiency of Scripture engenders an inter-generational typology for William, as the speaker is impelled to look beyond David, to Joshua, rather than apologize for the differences between the two monarchs:

Joshua might still ha’ staid on Jordan’s Shore,  
Must he, as William did the Boyne, pass o’er.  
Almighty Power was forc’d to interpose,  
And frighted both the Water and his Foes:
But had my William been to pass that Stream,
God needed not to part the Waves for him.

The passage extends the claim of the preceding stanza, but incorporates a crucial shift in focus: William exceeds not only the morality of Scriptural types, but surpasses the scope of Biblical narratives themselves. Both the figures and the achievements of Scriptural narratives, Defoe variously implies, are dwarfed by William. The passage emphasizes the incongruity between these fateful river crossings by imagining each leader in the narrative of the other, representing Joshua on the shores of the Boyne and William at the river Jordan. Not only is the image of Joshua stranded on the shore immediately pathetic, but Defoe reinterprets God’s intercession, to emphasize this perspective, as a token of weakness, rather than a mark of favour.

As his panegyric progresses, the modern narrative takes increasing precedence over the Biblical original. Rather than conform William to the Scriptural original, Defoe reverses the type and antitype, allowing William to reshape Biblical history itself:

Not Forty Thousand Canaanites cou’d stand,
In spight of Waves or Canaanites he’d land:
Such Streams ne’er stemm’d his Tide of Victory;
No, not the Stream; no, nor the Enemy.

His Bombs and Cannon wou’d ha’ made the Wall,
Without the Help of Jewish Rams-Horns, fall.

When his dear Israel from their Foes had fled,
Because of stoln Spoils by Achan hid:
He’d ne’er, like Joshua, on the Ground ha’ laid,
He’d certainly ha’ fought as well as pray’d. (146-147)

Throughout the passage William exerts increasing control over the Biblical narrative. Though it seems to position William in the present, the attention to his past military record provides the basis for his devastating prowess in ancient Israel. Formally signalled by the metrical emphasis in the fourth line, the narrative shifts most notably when William brings modern weaponry to ancient battles, leading the Israelites to victory far more easily than in the original accounts. In
the line that follows, a subtle shift in pronouns raises him to king of the Israelites. Yet, while in
the preceding scenes William had followed the Biblical original by modern means, in
confronting the “Foes” of Israel, the soldier of Ai, William directly contravenes not only the
Joshua 7:4-5, but, in some degree, God himself, who had ordained the defeat because Achan had
taken spoils from Jericho. Defoe aims to diminish this potentially unfavourable contradiction by
noting that William also prayed, as did Joshua after the Israelites were routed. But the striking
image of William rebuffing not only the men of Ai, but the restraints of the typological
figuration itself, demonstrates Defoe’s willingness to alter his typological hermeneutic to
celebrate William within a Biblical framework.

“Not improperly turn’d in Satyr”: *Jure Divino*

No work demanded a more creative engagement with Scripture than the epic poem Defoe began
the following year, *Jure Divino* (1706). While earlier poems had endorsed contractual kingship
incidentally, as part of a comprehensive defense of William, *Jure Divino* directly grapples with
the theory of kingship itself. Rather than defuse the debate surrounding monarchical power, the
death of William only reignited the controversy, as questions arose surrounding the eventual
succession of the crown. In the opening lines of his preface, Defoe claims he has only published
the poem because “the World seem’d to be going mad a second Time with the Error of *Passive
Obedience* and *Non-Resistance*” (35). This was perhaps the occasion for publishing the poem,
but Defoe had been developing *Jure Divino* for roughly three years, evidently envisioning the
poem as his magnum opus. Consisting of twelve books, comprehending more than 7500 lines,
the poem is undoubtedly the most complete statement of his political philosophy, the core of
which consists of a comprehensive refutation of divine right theory. Contending that the
traditional conception of monarchy was contradicted by both profane and secular history, Defoe argues that monarchical power derives ultimately from the people, not from God. Since the Bible continues to serve as the “High[est] Authorit[y]” for Defoe, he remains intent on appealing to Scriptural history, particularly to Biblical precedents of kingship seemingly at odds with his conception of monarchy. As such, *Jure Divino* depends crucially on the permissive conception of typology which Defoe had justified and developed in his preceding poems. Adapting even passages unrelated to kingship to his cause, Defoe builds his argument on his own “constructively” altered accounts of Biblical narrative and history.

As critics have recently begun to recognize, *Jure Divino* is deeply engaged with contemporary Christian belief. Conventionally, the work has been treated as a primarily secular work, scholars underscoring the philosophical and historiographical aspects of the poem. This approach to *Jure Divino* was largely a product of its alleged association with Locke’s political thought, which many critics have argued served as the foundation of Defoe’s poem. Sutherland claims the poem was “largely derived from Locke and Algernon Sidney,” while Backscheider contends that the “heart of his argument is Lockean” (145, 169-170). In this view, Defoe was only posturing when, eschewing Locke and Sidney, he declared that he was “arguing by [his] own Light, not other Mens; and therefore [his] Notions may be new” (*Review* III.554). Certainly, a reader looking for “Lockean” ideas will find them in *Jure Divino*, as both authors ultimately propose similarly contractual conceptions of political power. As critics now recognize, however, the foundations and development of Defoe’s argument are far less secular than Locke’s theory; his account of divine right and his conception of contractual kingship are informed as much by the Bible as by the *Two Treatises* (1689). Defoe represents every aspect of his political theory in a theological framework. The basic human proclivity for tyranny, he repeatedly emphasizes,
the product of sin, and he traces this impulse back to Original Sin. The theory of divine right itself, Defoe argues, is a deception of Satan (SFS II.69). The solution to this problem is equally engaged with Scripture. The system of laws which restrain and legitimate the power of the monarch flow from Heaven (139). Many of his confutations of divine right are premised on fundamental Christian tenets, such as the proscription of suicide (170). The Biblical typology 

*Jure Divino* professes is uniquely prominent and direct. The opening lines of the poem, addressed “to the author,” figure the contemporary propagation of divine right theory as a reiteration of Biblical idol-worship (69). Within this framework, *Jure Divino* actively participates in Christian history, as it attacks “State-Idolatry,” the contemporary type of religious idolatry recounted in Scripture. The second passage resolves the grammatical tension introduced in the opening line of the poem, positioning the narrator of the poem within a series of Biblical iconoclasts; as Elijah and Gideon opposed the idol-worship among the Israelites, so the narrator endeavours to combat the worship of the modern idol, divine right. “So you,” the speaker addresses the poet, “Like them with Sacred Indignation fir’d, / And almost equally like them inspir’d; / In Truth’s Defence with like Success ingage, / Attack this great Baal-Peor of the Age / Despotick Power; the Idol of the State, / Which Fools establish, and which Knaves create” (69). Defoe sustains this typology throughout the poem, repeatedly associating the theory of divine right with idol worship (183).

To construct a Biblical origin for contractual kingship, *Jure Divino* adapts stories from a far broader range of Scripture, altering parables that have no direct relation to kingship. While in *A New Discovery*, *The True-Born Englishman*, and *The Mock Mourners* Defoe defines kingship almost wholly in relation to models of leadership, primarily the reign of David, in *Jure Divino* the first formulation of his argument pivots on a distinctively unconventional alteration of
Genesis 49:14, a passage unrelated to monarchy: “Issachar is a strong ass couching down between two burdens.” The statement, the prophecy of Jacob concerning his son Issachar, was conventionally thought to signify the complacency of Issachar, who was willing to rest submissively between the other tribes. This was the interpretation propagated by most Christian scholars, including Matthew Poole, whose *Annotations Upon the Holy Bible* (1683) Defoe typically consulted. In political discourse, the parable signified impotence and submissiveness, as it does elsewhere in Defoe’s writing (*Jones 17; Letters* 376). In the opening paragraphs of *Jure Divino*, however, Defoe transforms the metaphor, producing a uniquely hybrid parable found nowhere in Poole, nor in any other contemporary writing. “Like Issachar’s Ass,” he confirms, an oppressed people will “couch down under the Load, but when the Prince taking them at their word, ventures to lay the Burden on their Backs, they rise up and kick him in the Face” (36). The image of the monarch being kicked by an ass is immediately comical, serving not only to desacralize the power of the tyrant, but to enact the reversal of power Defoe repeatedly endorses throughout the poem. Even more significantly, however, this parable naturalizes this popular response, figuring it as an ingenerate reaction to tyranny, one that is both universal and unavoidable. This innate impulse to resist is what Defoe later describes as the “Involuntary Duty,” possessed by even “the meanest Creature[s],” to defend themselves against abuse (135). By representing popular resistance in this way, this narrative removes the response from the moral, theological, and political registers in which it was traditionally condemned. This is not a sinful or disloyal choice, Defoe suggests: this is simply the natural response to oppression.

To assert a Biblical provenance for contractual monarchy, Defoe constructs his own account of Saul’s succession, one built through a series of retellings of 1 Samuel 8-11. Since he is seeking the origins of monarchy, Defoe looks not to David, as he had in *A New Discovery* and
The True-Born Englishman, but to Saul. Since Saul was the first king of Israel, the account of his appointment and accession served as “the most significant proof text of political argument” in the debate over monarchical power, as Schonhorn suggests (112). This new focus demanded more creative adaptation than his earlier poems required, as the accession of Saul served as the central Biblical model for proponents of divine right theory. For advocates of the traditional conception of kingship, Samuel served, at most, as an intermediary in this process (Animadversions 9). Defoe builds his account of 1 Samuel 8-12 on an outward acknowledgment of the traditional interpretation, asserting that in the appointment of Saul God seems to have “Disown’d the Pop’lar Right and fix’d the Choice,” the power residing “in Providence, and not the Peoples Voice” (120). As he did in A New Discovery, Defoe acknowledges that, in Hebrew times at least, the monarch “was King by Heaven’s immediate Hand” (120). While in A New Discovery, however, Defoe accommodated his theory to Biblical parameters, Jure Divino focuses on revising the story to fit with a contractual model of kingship. As Defoe retells it, the account of Saul’s accession demonstrates that “not God, But all the People made him King” (126). The marked confidence with which he presents his version of “Sacred Hist’ry” suggests that he considered his argument or approach distinctly original, or at least unconventional; he claims that, according to his interpretation, the very text divine right “champions boast… shou’d most confirm ‘em, will confound ‘em most” (119).

This interpretive reversal depends on an inventive adaption of the Biblical narrative, one which affirms the power of “the people” while simultaneously denigrating their preference for kingship in 1 Samuel 8-12. While Defoe looks to the narrative twice in Jure Divino, his first engagement with the story demands the most complex treatment, as he aims to maintain two conflicting readings of the Scriptural account. The first introduction of the story, presented as a
response to divine right apologists, serves to underscore the punitive nature of Saul’s accession – that he was sent “in Judgment to afflict the Land” for rejecting God (120). This interpretation was not unprecedented; especially during the Interregnum, republican writers had represented Israel degenerating from a “free-state [who] enjoyd their native liberties” into a state of bondage under monarchical rule (Sprigge 8-9). In Abraham Cowley’s Davideis, which Defoe specifically cites in his preface, Samuel describes the Hebrews as “freeborn men that begg’d for Slavery” (129). Defoe affirms this view in Jure Divino, as well as in A Hymn to the Mob, representing the Israelites as a people, “glutted with the Freedom of their Fate,” who “beg’d for Fetters, Slavery and Chains” (120; Mob SFS I.430). Though this reading partly contradicts 1 Samuel 8:1-5, which notes the corruption of the pre-monarchical judges, it is consistent with verses 7 to 18, which record the afflictions that a king will bring. As such, this perspective on the narrative allows Defoe to authorize himself by grounding his account in Scripture, which he does quite conspicuously. “You’ll find the Doctrine if you find the Text,” he avers, beginning his account with an assertion that “the Text is plain, / Heav’n the Design abhorr’d, / And left his High Dislike upon the Record” (119). Alongside his invocation of the indisputable Scriptural “record,” Defoe connects his reading, with a footnote citation, to 1 Samuel 8:7-8. His accentuation of this aspect of the narrative, however, depends substantially on a dramatic scene, one which deviates considerably from the Biblical original. After the people confirm their desire for a king, God himself speaks; “And is a Tyrant King your early Choice? / Be Kings your Plague, said the Eternal Voice; / And with this Mighty Curse he gave the Crown, / And Saul to Israel’s Terror mounts the Throne” (121). The scene, central to Defoe’s argument, has almost no Biblical

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25 As Eric Nelson demonstrates, this conception of 1 Samuel 8 was rooted in the the Hebrew Revival, specifically in the Midrashic tradition. Though he does not trace the discourse up to Defoe, Nelson observes that Milton, to whom Jure Divino is significantly indebted, draws on this tradition to figure the kingship of Saul as a form of idolatry, rather than as a legitimate choice of government (37-56).
foundation; God never personally speaks with the Israelites, and he certainly does not call Saul a “plague” or “curse.” The image of Saul mounting the throne “to Israel’s Terror” forcefully de-authorizes his rule, but this scene is wholly at odds with the Scriptural original. In fact, in 1 Samuel the people not only “ma[k]e Saul king” themselves, as Defoe later emphasizes, but they “rejoic[e] greatly” (11:15). Rather than refer to a Scriptural passage, the footnote to the scene connects to a narrative Defoe himself has constructed, one situated in the footnotes alongside his account of 1 Samuel 8-12. As the main narrative progresses, it is increasingly premised on the inventive account of Saul’s accession developed in these footnotes.

While elsewhere in *Jure Divino* Defoe’s footnotes are primarily explanatory or philological, his notes to this portion of the poem construct a parallel account of Saul’s accession. Why does Defoe use the paratext in this manner? In the preface, he compares his poem to Cowley’s *Davideis*, arguing that his own numerous notes “are chiefly Historical, and direct and serve to guide the Reader to the Authors which justify the work” (64). Yet, his invocation of Cowley is somewhat misleading; not only are Cowley’s notes provided in their own section at the end of each book, setting them apart from the narrative, but they are exclusively explanatory. Constructing a narrative in the footnotes not only figures it as an authoritative annotation, rather than a “flight” of invention, but it also produces a disconnect from the main text that allows Defoe to foreground a tenet incongruous with the “madness” of the Israelites: the indisputable power of popular choice (*Divino SFS* II.194). Line 627 necessarily denigrates the judgment of the people, as “they’d have a King in spight of Sense or Law,” but the footnoted scene it points to subtly affirms their inviolable right to choose: “This I take not to be improperly turn’d in *Satyr,*” Defoe explains, “and bring in *Samuel* talking to them thus:
God is very much displeased with you, that you have rejected his immediate Government, and chosen a King; and therefore has bid me tell you, if you will have a King, you shall; but he will be so and so: as from v. 10. to 18. (121)

His concerns about propriety, as well as the typography of the dialogue, distinguishes this scene from the explanatory notes Defoe uses elsewhere. The manner in which Defoe presents the dialogue, “bring[ing] in Samuel talking to them thus,” represents the speech as a dramatic scene, one of Defoe’s invention. Though Samuel reiterates God’s displeasure, the passage focuses significantly on the unassailable agency of the people, tracing the incontrovertible force of their will through the past, present, and future; they have chosen a king, they desire a king, and they shall have a king. While in the main text the disadvantages of kingship are most prominent, in this version they are subordinated to the logic and grammar of the popular will. As the choice is presented here, it seems as though even God himself cannot refuse their desire for a king, but can only append conditions to the choice. The note that follows, which recounts the response of the people (as Defoe imagines it), further emphasizes the unassailable agency of the people. In Defoe’s version of the story, the people respond directly to God himself; “Nay, but we will have a King over us,” they respond, “as if they had said; Well, with all our Hearts; let us but have a King, we’ll venture that, we don’t trouble our Heads; let us have him, let him be never so bad, so be but a King, that we may be a Match for our Enemies” (121). Though Defoe represents the choice as a product of emotion, rather than reason, the attention to their shared sentiment nonetheless endorses their authority. In the Biblical context Defoe invokes, the heart/head binary he formulates is no simple Enlightenment hierarchy, as the heart was a locus of sincerity in Scripture (particularly in the New Testament). Crusoe, for example, conceives of the heart in this way, recalling how after he set himself to Biblical study he “found [his] Heart more deeply and sincerely affected with the Wickedness of his past Life” (Crusoe N I.128). In direct contradiction
to the condemnation of the Hebrews prominent in the main text, the final line of this response ascribes a rational motive to the choice; they seek protection from their enemies. This is a significant deviation from the Scriptural original, in which the Israelites arrogantly yearn to simply be “like all the [other] nations” (1 Samuel 8:5). While the term “match” initially suggests they aim simply to imitate their neighbours, the reference to the enemies of Israel accentuates the military signification of the term, implying that the Israelites are willing to accept the drawbacks of monarchy primarily to ensure their survival. As Saul comes to defeat the Ammonites, this alteration represents the decision favourably, as a strategic choice rather than a prideful impulse. These imaginative footnotes, underpinned by Defoe’s intent to endorse the political power of the people, provide the groundwork for his promotion of popular sovereignty.

“Whether Hosanna be, or Crucify”: A Hymn to the Mob

When Defoe returned to the topic of “the PEOPLE” in A Hymn to the Mob (1715), his attitude towards popular sovereignty had been deeply complicated by contemporary politics. The poem was published in 1715, but advertisements for a work on this topic in 1710 issues of the Review (“A History of the Mob” and “A Hymn to the Rabble”) suggest that the poem was “probably partially written in 1710,” as Horsley suggests (347). As these dates indicate, A Hymn to the Mob is crucially informed by two outbursts of popular violence: the Sacheverell Riots of 1710 and the Jacobite Riots of 1715. The former were incited by the prosecution of Henry Sacheverell, a High Church clergyman who had denounced Dissenters as a “brood of vipers” in his inflammatory sermon The Perils of False Brethren. Though Defoe pinned the blame primarily on manipulative High Church politicians, the popular support for Sacheverell was at odds with his advocacy of popular sovereignty (Parties 57-60). The latter set of riots, significantly informed by the same
anti-Dissenting sentiment, saw over thirty Dissenting meeting-houses damaged (Monod 185). Not surprisingly, Defoe disapproved of both riots, denouncing them as “errant… tumults” inconsistent with the legitimate activity of “the Authentick Mob of Great Britain” (Captain Tom’s Remembrance 2). As such, A Hymn to the Mob is a markedly ambivalent poem. Defoe venerates the “General Voice” in theory, as he had in Jure Divino (Mob SFS I.429). But he condemns instances of popular agitation, both ancient and modern, at the same time. While the preface to the poem, in particular, condemns the “abhor’d Practice of MOBBING,” the poem is significantly dedicated to representing “the mob” as the foundation of law and the “Essential Being of a Crown” (SFS I.415, 423). The endeavour to communicate this duality engenders Defoe’s most unconventional adaptations of Biblical types, ones which simultaneously exalt “the mob” while signalling their inherent instability.

Adapted from Genesis, the origin story Defoe imagines for “the mob” is subtly equivocal.

Tracing this “Ancient Gentry” back to the “First-born of all Antiquity,” Defoe represents the first Biblical family as the “True Original” mob:

\[
\begin{align*}
Adam, \text{ indeed, and Eve made up but One,} \\
\text{The same created Flesh and Bone,} \\
\text{Ev’n when they had a } \textit{Son} \text{ they seem’d alone;} \\
\text{When they had } \textit{Two} \text{ it look’d like Progeny,} \\
\text{But ‘twas a MOB when they had } \textit{Three}. \\
\text{Hark! how the Text displays the Ancient Tribe,} \\
\text{And does the First Great Croud describe;} \\
\text{A Few mark’d down for Genealogy,} \\
\text{But } \textit{Sons} \text{ and } \textit{Daughters} \text{ do the rest supply,} \\
\text{That is, the RABBLE of the Family. (418)}
\end{align*}
\]

The most immediately remarkable aspect of the passage is Defoe’s concerted effort to delay the formation of the first “rabble” until the birth of Cain and Abel. While it is consistent with Scripture to treat Adam and Eve as one, his arguments for expanding the “mob” to include three children are markedly arbitrary; Scripture does not indicate that Adam and Eve felt alone with
only a single son, and he provides no reason why two children only “loo[k] like Progeny.”

Including Cain and Abel in the “First Great Croud,” however, introduces a destructive element into the first “rabble,” one that persists throughout the history of “the mob” that Defoe traces. Calling the reader to personally examine “how the Text displays the Ancient Tribe” emphasizes this aspect of the rabble, as it points them to the original account of Cain’s violent nature.

Though Defoe leaves the details of this violence implicit, his reference to the sons that are “mark’d down for Genealogy” strongly echoes the “mark” Cain received in punishment, especially as it is Cain’s genealogy that is recounted first in Genesis 4 (17-22) – immediately following his exile. This signification is accentuated by the line that follows, which recalls the fact that Seth was born to replace Abel. Defoe’s original emphasis on a three-member family, in fact, invokes the violent underpinnings of the “oldest family,” since Seth was born only after the death of Abel. Though in this opening stanza Defoe furnishes a legitimizing Scriptural origin for “the mob,” the Biblical underpinnings of the passage suggest that “the rabble” is inherently adulterated by violence.

Defoe’s adaptation of Genesis 11:1-8, the story of the Tower of Babel, functions in the opposite manner, though to the same effect. While the traditional signification of the allusion itself is unfavourable to “the mob,” Defoe formulates the story in a manner that celebrates the generative power of the people. Conventionally, the parable signified the sinful pride of mankind. Defoe communicates the ambivalent status of “the mob,” however, by giving a positive “turn” to this typically depreciative typology:

*Babel* was the first Triumph of thy Fame,
There *all the World* was Christen’d by thy Name;
From thence *dispers’d* by Heaven’s immediate Hand,
A *MOB* of *Lesser Mobs* o’er-spread the Land,
Over the Universe they roam,
Each MOB had Kings and Emp’rors in its Womb,
Gave *Government* itself a Name,  
And from themselves made Crowns where’er they came.

Defoe transforms the parable, traditionally an etiology of social disorder, into a largely positive origin story of contemporary civilization. Yet the typology sustains both significations, fluctuating between a favourable and unfavourable representation of the “mob.” Though the opening lines, in isolation, might be considered an ironic comment on the failure of Babel, Defoe reverses the signification of the story, ascribing the creation of all modern languages to the construction of the tower. Referring to the dispersal as “christening” not only figures the event as a baptismal moment, but also diminishes the ramifications of the event, as it points to the redemption and reconciliation Christ will bring. The process of dispersal and disintegration is partly negative, and Defoe signals that the original “Mob” is made “lesser” by the change. The scope of the “universe” dwarfs the newly scattered mobs, and the act of “roaming” suggests they are aimless and unsettled. In the line that follows, however, this roaming acquires a positive signification, as it becomes the productive expansion of the human race. This shift in meaning is effected by the natal metaphor, which figures each mob as a generative source. As Defoe figures it, the Biblical narrative becomes a story of edifying propagation, rather than enervating disintegration. In the stanza that follows, Defoe affirms this generative role, positing that “Nimrod himself was born of thee, / Who first invented Monarchy” (419). Defoe maintains this metaphor throughout the poem, representing senates, parliaments, and kings as a “Glorious Birth” sustained by “the PEOPLE” (425). Yet with Nimrod as with Cain, the moral status of this generative force is uncertain. As Defoe notes in the preceding stanza, which introduces his discussion of the Babel story, “No Man can judge of *Good* or *Ill* by thee; / Or ought to pass a Censure from thy Cry, / Whether’rt *Hosanna* be, or *Crucify*” (419).
In his most complex adaptation of Scripture, Defoe employs the story of the Gadarene Demon as a metaphor for “the MOB possess’d with *Party-Spleen*” (434), deprecating partisan mobbing while affirming, nonetheless, the “natural” right of the mob. In the Biblical original, which is recounted in roughly similar versions in Matthew 8:28-34, Mark 5:1-18, and Luke 8:26-39, Jesus comes across a demon-possessed man (or two) while travelling through the country of the Gadarenes. After briefly talking with the man, Jesus casts the demon, named Legion, out of him into a herd of swine, who immediately plunge to their deaths into a nearby lake. The account served, above all, to evince the divinity of Christ, which was demonstrated partly by his ability to cast out demons. Drawing on all three Biblical originals, Defoe adapts the story in a remarkably unconventional manner, inverting the perspective of the narrative. He imagines how “the *Quiet Hogs* fed on their Native Spot, And *Satan’s Neighbourhood disturb’d them not*”:

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The *Passive Herd*, who Nature’s Laws obey’d,
And from their Keepers never stray’d,
Fed Unconcern’d and Undisorder’d by,
Enjoy’d their *Right* and *Property*

But when the *Devil* was *unhous’d*,
*His Tether* lengthen’d, or *his Fetters* loos’d,
From his old human Tenement *expell’d*,
And Sovereign high Restraint *with-held*,
He quickly got Possession of the *Swine*,
*GO*, was the Word that let him in;
*Unchain’d a While*, set free by Heav’n’s high Hand,
He took *Permission* for *Command*.
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Of all Defoe’s inventive “turns,” this is among the most unconventional. He reimagines this miraculous exorcism as an assault on the “natural” rights of the swine, representing Jesus, as much as the Devil, as a disruptive instigator. Though Owens is wrong that “Jesus did not in fact say ‘go’,” it is nonetheless significant that Defoe privileges the unique phrase from the account in Matthew 8:28-34, since doing so amplifies the role played by Jesus; in Mark and Luke he only
permits the demons to enter the swine – a distinction Defoe acknowledges in line 637 (Mob SFS I.435 n.26; 434). Considering the context, we might expect that bestializing the mob serves to signify their irrationality, as contemporaries generally believed that animals lacked the faculty of reason. But Defoe diverges sharply from this discourse, ascribing to the herd “right and property.” Figuring the swine as property-holders connects the status of popular agency to that of property, suggesting that the right to popular representation was as fundamental as the right to property. The entire narrative, in fact, is reframed through this lens. Originally possessing the “Upper Room / Of a poor, raving Wretch among the Tombs,” the Devil is “unhous’d” – “from his old human Tenement expell’d” – at the command (or permission) of Jesus. As Defoe reimagines it, this is a story about property. Defoe clearly connects his debate, concerning the political rights of the mob, to Locke by representing property metonymically as “an Acorn,” as Locke does in his Two Treatises of Government (1689). As a whole, the simile is remarkably odd, especially as it is the last detailed image of the poem; it is with this metaphor that Defoe concludes his story. But employing the story of the Gadarene Demon in this altered, inverted manner allows Defoe to communicate the “destruct[ive]” unruliness of the mob while simultaneously representing their agency as an inviolable “property.”

Paradoxically, it is his unwavering estimation of the Bible that drives Defoe to such novel “turns.” He is firmly committed to a contractual model of kingship, but he is equally unwilling to celebrate William or promote his “modern” rule outside of a Biblical context. The hermeneutic pressure this conflict produces, however, stimulates his reconceptualization of the relationship between “Hebrew times” and the “living Theam[s]” of “modern” life. While Defoe initially struggles to diminish differences between type and antitype, formulating only an aesthetic justification for typological incongruities, his political poetry develops an increasingly
permissive conception of typology, one that allows Defoe to adapt and alter Biblical accounts in increasingly unconventional ways. Published four years after A Hymn to the Mob, Robinson Crusoe represents the culmination of this typology. Engaging with the same incongruity between Scriptural patterns and “modern” circumstances, the novel dramatizes the progressive liberation from Biblical typology that takes form in the poetry of the preceding decades.
Chapter 5

“Making Very Free with the Holy Scriptures”: Robinson Crusoe and the Disruption of Typology

I was earnestly begging of God to give me Repentence, when it happen’d providentially the very Day that reading the Scripture, I came to these Words, *He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance, and to give Remission*: I threw down the Book, and with my Heart as well as my Hands lifted up to Heaven, in a Kind of Extasy of Joy, I cry’d out aloud, *Jesus, thou Son of David, Jesus, thou exalted Prince and Saviour, give me Repentance!*

Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*

Among the numerous criticisms aimed at *Robinson Crusoe* in the years that followed its publication, none were more detailed and developed than Charles Gildon’s *The Life and Strange Surprizing Adventures of Mr. D— De F—* (1719). Published five months after the novel, this critical parody imagines an encounter between Defoe and his “children,” Crusoe and Friday, who lambaste their creator for a host of artistic improprieties and inconsistencies (vi). While Gildon could make light of factual errors and stylistic solecisms, he was seriously critical of what he considered the impious manner in which Crusoe haphazardly invoked the Bible, “every where… mak[ing] very free with the Holy Scriptures” (8). Defoe, he complained, made “a kind of Sortes Virgilianae of the Bible,” invoking whatever passages seemed to fit the current circumstance of his inconstant Crusoe (24). What troubled Gildon, above all, was the irregularity and inconsistency of these allusions: while Defoe presented his narrative as a Christian “parable,” the types and patterns Crusoe invoked did not seem to form a coherent, identifiable Biblical narrative. Many modern critics, most notably Starr and Hunter, disagree with this assessment, seeing in *Robinson Crusoe* a sustained pattern of “punishment-repentance-deliverance” (Starr 74-125; Hunter 20). This perspective is complicated, however, by marked incongruities between Crusoe and the Biblical types he invokes. He twice identifies himself with the “prodigal son,” for
example, but he consciously diverges from the course this typology prefigures, as does the narrative: his father is dead when Crusoe finally returns to England in 1687 (N I.264). A number of critics have found this framework unconvincing, and a few have remarked, more broadly, that while “Defoe mentions many biblical parallels… patterns obviously alluded to are often as obviously incongruous” (Zimmerman 42; Gildon xvi; Foster 182; Maddox 36; Damrosch 188). On the whole, the desire to see Biblical allusions as an unmediated key to a “comprehensive,” “unified” Christian typology has distracted critics from the potentially unconventional or ironic significance of these inconsistencies. In his general progression from disobedience to redemption, Crusoe certainly follows a roughly Christian pattern. But his distinctly unconventional course is built on a sustained disruption of established Biblical types.

Rather than adhere to Biblical models, the narrative of Robinson Crusoe is formulated on an antithesis between the prefigurative Biblical types Crusoe invokes and his own uniquely unconventional, “surprizing” experience (54). The imaginative mode of the novel, with which Defoe had been experimenting in the preceding years, allows Defoe to construct a situation, both cultural and geographic, that puts acute pressure on a typological hermeneutic. Critics often conclude that divergences from Biblical types serve only to denigrate Crusoe, who ostensibly fails to recognize the standards of conduct these models offer (Bertrand 35). But the scope of these incongruities, which extend far beyond Crusoe himself, connects this dynamic with disavowal of “chiming parallels” that developed throughout Defoe’s poetry. In fact, Crusoe’s divergence from typological models of kingship is engendered by the same political conflicts that stimulated a shift in Defoe’s hermeneutic. In a word, it is not Crusoe, but traditional typology itself, that falls short in Robinson Crusoe. The early portion of the narrative, in which the circumstances and impulses that drive him to sea are developed, sets Crusoe in direct
opposition to the Biblical models the narrative invokes. Rather than prescribe or predict his course, the invocations of Proverbs and the Prodigal Son identify models that fail to accommodate the economic, philosophical, and psychological realities of contemporary life. As his religious sensibility takes form, Crusoe attempts to conceive of his situation typologically, representing himself as an Israelite wandering the wilderness. The geographic confinement that defines his unique situation, however, compels him to reconceptualise his “deliverance,” developing an exclusively figurative signification that is inconsistent with the original Biblical narrative he invokes. When Crusoe endeavours to legitimize his political authority through this typology, the incongruities between the Scriptural narrative and his own situation become acutely apparent, as his solitary situation repeatedly prevents him from fulfilling the typologies he introduces. Even when he turns to New Testament models, grounding his authority in a spiritual perspective inspired by Luke 16:19-31 and 1 John 2:15-16, his claims to kingship are prominently undermined. This repudiation of typology fundamentally defines Crusoe’s remarkably unconventional conversion, which is firmly anchored in the time and space of the island itself. From his markedly atypical dream to his tobacco-induced transformation, Crusoe is distanced from Biblical precedents, a process that culminates in his distinctively personal moment of conversion.

“He told me, and I might observe”: The Precepts of Proverbs – by Experience?

For those seeking a coherent Biblical framework for Robinson Crusoe, the introductory scene of filial disobedience furnishes an apt typology for Crusoe’s trajectory. In general, however, critics have misinterpreted the subtext signalled by these scenes of adolescent rebellion. While his perspective echoes Aristotelian philosophy, the Scriptural allusions in which this speech is
couched, as well as the Christian prophecy with which it concludes, firmly position this conception of economic life within a Biblical framework. Those critics who have recognized this framework have often interpreted this rebellion as Crusoe’s “original sin” (Korshin 219), seeing it as a spiritual failing that initiates an archetypal pattern of rebellion, repentance, and salvation. While this scene is indirectly associated with the original disobedience of man, it is not until much later in the narrative that Crusoe assigns this interpretation to his choice, and, as McKeon points out, there are few explicit markers in the opening scene itself to connect his “wandring Inclination” with this spiritual pattern (Ayers 400-401; McKeon 320; Crusoe N 1.58). On the contrary, Defoe conspicuously avoids formulating Crusoe’s rebellion in these terms, instead figuring this impulse variously as a “propension,” an “inclination,” a “fate,” and a “fault” (57-59). The word “sin” does not appear until significantly later in the text, after Crusoe has already returned from his harrowing voyage at sea (67). Moreover, as Gildon observes, the punishment allotted to Crusoe within this framework seems disproportionately harsh, particularly as children were not expected to submit blindly to the authority of their parents (4). Not surprisingly, some modern critics have also found this established interpretation unconvincing, especially as contemporary religious guides were “almost uniformly against… the disobedience of parents theory” (Backscheider, Defoe 421; Bell 84). As Crusoe tells his narrative in retrospect, he is free to interpret this as his “original sin” immediately, but he does not, neither at this time or when, in a number of later moments, he looks back on his “rebellious Behaviour” (122). When he does finally interpret his rebellion according to this typology, more than thirty years later, it reflects his current state much more than it does adolescent disobedience itself (200). This rebellion has undeniable spiritual significance, but it is more specific than critics generally acknowledge.
The language and logic of the opening scene connect Crusoe’s rebellion specifically with the Book of Proverbs, representing his decision as a rejection of established “wisdom,” both parental and divine. This is the most prominent subtext invoked by this scene. Filial obedience is a central theme of the Biblical book, and a constellation of terms and phrases throughout the passage connect the “wise Counsel” of his father with the “wise counsels” of the father portrayed in Proverbs (57:1:5). His father’s endorsement of the “middle way” is premised on a prominent and explicit allusion to Agur, whose wise precepts conclude the Book of Proverbs. Insisting that the “middle State” of life was most desirable, he observes that this “wise man gave his Testimony to this [state of life] as the just Standard of true Felicity, when he prayed to have neither Poverty nor Riches” (58). This appeal to Agur figures the elder Crusoe as a type of the Proverbial father, situating his son’s rebellion in the wisdom/folly binary which defines Proverbs. His father emphasizes this model, confirming his role as the Proverbial wise father, when he urges his son “not to play the young Man” (59), and this subtext becomes particularly pronounced when his father concludes his expostulation by warning Crusoe that “if [he] take[s] this foolish Step, God would not bless [him].” While the term “foolish” possesses a secular signification, the prominent invocation of Agur, as well as the theological context of this admonition, represent Crusoe’s impulse as a manifestation of the “foolishness” proscribed in Proverbs. On the surface, the severity of this admonition seems inconsistent with the “tender[ness]” of his tone and character, and Crusoe notes that his father is literally unable to fully pronounce the warning; at this threat he must break off, “his Heart [being] so full he could say no more.” This severe prediction is visibly inconsistent with his character, but it is consistent with the subtext he has invoked; the Book of Proverbs repeatedly emphasizes the affliction allotted to those who reject wisdom, either parental or divine. The narrative logic this speech
pursues is Biblical, rather than psychological, serving to plot a trajectory that Crusoe is ordained
to follow if he rejects the wisdom his father presents.

Yet the manner in which this wisdom is presented suggests, in an array of ways, that this Biblical framework is out of touch with the economic and philosophical realities of contemporary life. To a modern reader the speech certainly sounds old-fashioned, and many critics have vaguely felt this framework “is too static a model for Crusoe to embrace” (Flint 396; Guilhamet 75). Certainly, the quiescent lifestyle his father recommends is markedly incongruous with Defoe’s own experience and character. Though the position of this perspective seems to be presented as a time-worn standard of wisdom, a range of details, phrases, and terms undermine the authority of this established logic, suggesting that the ancient wisdom of Proverbs fits imperfectly with the economic realities and priorities of the modern world Crusoe inhabits. As the voice of this traditional worldview, his father is far from a relevant authority on contemporary life. While he may be “wise and grave,” his past life and present circumstances significantly distance him from the contemporary world Crusoe inhabits. Beyond the considerable age difference between “young” Crusoe and his “ancient” father, which the opening passages repeatedly emphasize, the fact that his father has retired from business removes him from the realities of modern trade (Crusoe N I.57). The immobility of his father, who is “confined [to his chamber] by the Gout,” considerably undermines the relevance of his advice on work and health (59, 57, 58). The image of an invalid recommending a stationary lifestyle is unavoidably ironic. Moreover, this image of disability negatively inflects his endorsement of economic restraint, as it associates this lifestyle with restriction and impotence rather than freedom. This signification is underscored by the phrasing with which his father first presents this choice, which emphasizes the spatial constraints attendant on the life he recommends; he
asks his son “what Reasons more than a meer wandring Inclination [he has] for leaving [his] Father’s House” (58). The fact that gout was a particularly painful condition, one which typically disrupted sleep, also undermines his glorification of the “ease” and bodily “peace” that attend a life of moderation. In fact, the specific nature of this disability calls into question his moral authority, as gout was strongly associated with intemperance and excess. Though scientists now recognize gout is caused by a range of factors, including lifestyle, during the eighteenth century the condition was primarily ascribed to “dissolute habits,” particularly excessive consumption of alcohol. While age was known to play a role in the development of the disease, to contemporary readers a “gouty” invalid warning against the dangers of intemperance would certainly have raised suspicion, as Bell suggests (82). Certainly, these inconsistencies do not wholly nullify his father’s advice. But this collection of signals imply that he is far from a perfect authority, either practically or morally, on the state of modern life.

Juxtaposed with modern economic activities and details, the Biblical language with which his father expresses this traditional attitude appears distinctly abstract and anachronistic. Though Gildon is aiming to discredit Defoe, he had grounds for dismissing this fatherly “harangue” on the “middle state” as a “tedious… Encomium,” since such maxims were decidedly conventional by 1719. The Biblical imagery his father employs is correspondingly backward-looking. If he remains home, the elder Crusoe promises his son, he will be “under no Necessity of seeking [his] Bread” (59). Against the ease and comfort of the “middle State” his father sets the lives of the poor, who are “sold to the Life of Slavery for daily Bread” (58). The metaphor of “daily bread,” originating primarily in Matthew 6:11 and Luke 11:3, was commonplace in 1719, as it is part of the Lord’s Prayer. It was occasionally used in economic discourse, so this representation of income would not necessarily have appeared old-fashioned.
But alongside references to modern “enterprize” and “trade,” including details about professional training and apprenticeship, this representation of modern economics appears markedly abstract, if not anachronistic. The opening images of the narrative construct an identifiably modern world, one which is comprised of European cities, contemporary migration patterns, and modern wars.

The change of his family name, from Kreutznaer to Crusoe, emphatically cuts young Robinson off from the past, situating him in a national and social present; he is identified by what his companions “now” call him (57). As John Richetti observes, “Defoe is careful from the opening paragraph of the narrative to place Crusoe in exact contemporary circumstances of a mundane sort” (Defoe, 187). His father, however, shifts into an increasingly abstract mode of reasoning as he lectures his son, figuring young Crusoe as a type of the Proverbial fool; to his father, Robinson is simply “play[ing] the young Man” as young men had for centuries. Indeed, his father ascribes the same set role to his oldest son, whose death he blames on his reckless “young Desires” (Crusoe N I.59). This perspective is deliberately out of touch with the political and economic circumstances of contemporary life, which clearly played a decisive part in the death of the young man. Crusoe, in fact, specifically attributes his own rebellious attitude to his ambivalent position in the contemporary socio-economic system. “Being the third Son of the Family,” he explains, “and not bred to any Trade, my Head began to be fill’d very early with rambling Thoughts” (57). These details suggests that, rather than a manifestation of Proverbial “foolishness,” Crusoe’s “fatal… Propensity” is an effect of the contemporary economic arrangement, one for which his “wise” father is partly responsible. Certainly, this does not exculpate Crusoe. But this context indicates that his behaviour is more than a generic expression of the eternal “wildness… of unregenerate man” that Starr sees in this scene (77). This contextualized conception of economic behaviour is consistent with the representations of
waywardness in *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*, in which the behaviour of the titular protagonists is
directly informed by social disabilities engendered by the contemporary socio-economic
arrangement. The phrasing of this introduction underscores this dynamic, as it grammatically
foregrounds the cause of these “rambling thoughts” (57). Against these practical realities of
modern training and employment, the abstract Biblical framework his father invokes appears
significantly out of touch.

The fundamental epistemology of this “wise” diatribe, moreover, is inconsistent with the
empirical conception of knowledge and experience privileged throughout the novel. The details
and phrasing of this discourse repeatedly suggest that the preceptive mode on which the Book of
Proverbs is premised, particularly the first nine chapters which his father echoes, are
epistemologically flawed. His father himself embodies the fundamental problems with this
approach. Even as he expects Crusoe to defer to his superior wisdom and remain home, he marks
the “long experience” through which he has come to properly appreciate the “middle State” (58).
Though his father appeals to conventional precepts, he implicitly emphasizes that this wisdom is
developed, empirically, through the senses themselves. The middle state of his life, he advises
his son, consists of “sensibly tasting the Sweets of living, without the bitter, feeling that [one is]
happy, and learning by every Day’s Experience to know it more sensibly” (59). The repeated
attention to the process of “sens[ing]” the world affirms the necessity, which his father attempts
to conceal, of first-hand experience. The emphasis on taste, in particular, underscores the
empirical foundation of knowledge. Though he pushes these precepts on Crusoe, his father
seems to have come to this appreciation of the “middle life” through a long life of ambition and
enterprise. As Crusoe notes, his father had immigrated to Hull, enriched himself through trade,
and married into “a very good family,” pursuing an upwardly mobile trajectory at odds with the
quiescence he prescribes his son (57). As Leon Guilhamet observes, his retirement to York perhaps suggests he was a particularly shrewd businessman, since contemporaries, including Defoe himself, associated Yorkshire with a “cunning, sharping, [and] biting” approach to trade (73; Gentleman RDW VIII.108). Moreover, considering the low estimation of lawyers among Defoe and his contemporaries,\(^\text{26}\) it is possible that the career for which Crusoe has been set apart is not meant to be an attractive prospect. Alongside these biographical details, his recommendation that Crusoe settle down and slide “silently and smoothly thro’ the World, and [then] comfortably out of it” is particularly unconvincing, especially as it expresses a concern with death far more relevant to an aged invalid than to his eighteen-year-old son. It is clear that the elder Crusoe has acquired this perspective through a long life of experience, but he asks Crusoe to accept this viewpoint deductively, without observing any of the world himself. This tension is repeatedly accentuated by the phrasing of his father’s arguments, which obliquely mark the need for Crusoe to arrive at his own appreciation of the “middle State” through his own experience. “He told me, and I might observe it,” his father explains (58). “He bid me observe it,” he says again, repeating the same phrasing, “and I should always find, that the Calamities of Life were shared among the upper and lower Part of Mankind” (58). Set alongside the preceptive mode his father employs, these references serve to the role of “see[ing]” emphasize the fundamental flaw in this approach: Crusoe has not had the opportunity to “observe” these facts, nor will he if he remains at home. Though it is presented as an encomium of tempered fixity and restrained contentment, the speech that opens the narrative significantly challenges the integrity and relevance of established precepts and patterns.

\(^{26}\) In his Elegy on the Author of the True-Born Englishman (1704), Defoe characterizes lawyers as “tools of state,” describing them as “men whose profession’s to deceive” (37). On this topic, at least, Gildon agreed, arguing that an education in Classical ethics, which Crusoe received, would have “inspire[d] him with Notions abhorrent of a Profession in which there was nothing generous, and I am afraid very little just” (6).
Refusing to Play the Prodigal Son: Crusoe and the Prefigurative Schema of Scripture

Few Biblical patterns have been applied to Robinson Crusoe so improperly as the parable of the Prodigal Son, told by Jesus in Luke 15: 11-32. The story is among the most widely known from Scripture: a young son who leaves his father’s house and squanders his estate is driven home again by a famine, where he is joyously received by his father with gifts and feasting, much to the frustration of his older brother, who has obediently served his father for years. Twice in the early portion of the narrative, Crusoe identifies himself as a type of Prodigal Son. But considering the shape his narrative takes, it is surprising that critics have so readily accepted this parable as a typology for Crusoe (Starr 83; Bertrand 37; Flint 381). Certainly, Crusoe shares with the Prodigal Son one important experience: he leaves his father’s house. But beyond this basic fact, which Crusoe shares with scores of Biblical sons, the two youths are remarkably different. After all, when Crusoe finally does return home, his father is dead, as Crusoe coldly notes; the homecoming crucial to the Biblical narrative is impossible. While Crusoe fits partly with the model of the “foolish” youth delineated in Proverbs, however much this framework is incongruous with the world the novel depicts, his circumstances and experience conspicuously differ from the parable of the Prodigal Son in an array of significant ways. Rather than set the shape of his narrative, the parable of the Prodigal Son serves as a negative model from which the narrative sets Crusoe’s own divergent path.

This dynamic underpins the most significant events in the early portion of Robinson Crusoe. Contrary to the established interpretation, the invocation of Luke 15: 11-32 serves to set

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27 Even this connection, however, is complicated by a significant incongruity. The prodigal son receives his inheritance prematurely; the story is premised on the fact that his father, at his request, gives him his “share of the estate” (12). Crusoe, on the other hand, obstinately refuses to accept any portion of his father’s estate. In this sense, the narrative are driven by antithetical impulses.
Crusoe in opposition to this established Biblical narrative. Terrified by a storm during his first voyage at sea, Crusoe vows to abandon his youthful wandering, resolving “that [he] would, like a true repenting Prodigal, go home to [his] Father” (61). Though critics frequently cite this typology in isolation, the context of this allusion is significant. Rather than portend his adherence to this Biblical pattern, this invocation of Scripture marks his divergence from this type. Immediately following this allusion, Crusoe rapidly abandons his intention, choosing a divergent path that reshapes not only his own fate, but also the development of the narrative itself, which depends on excluding this closed teleology. With a day of clear skies and a night of strong punch, Crusoe quickly “forg[ets] the Vows and Promises [he] made in [his] Distress” (62), choosing instead to continue his life at sea. The oddly duplicate structure of the early narrative, which has puzzled many critics, serves to emphasize how decidedly *Robinson Crusoe* departs from this pattern, as it enables Crusoe to emphatically reject the path, both narrative and physical, which will lead to the homecoming prefigured by the parable. The choice between these two narratives, one anchored in Scripture and the other decidedly unscripted, is dramatized when Crusoe, along with the other surviving sailors, arrives safely at Yarmouth. The location, conspicuously equidistant between Hull and London, is no coincidence; the money the magistrates collect for the survivors is enough to carry Crusoe “either to London or back to Hull, as [he] thought fit” (66). As he immediately acknowledges, this situation presses upon him a choice between two paths, one involving a turn “back,” both temporally and narratively, to an established Biblical pattern of the “true Repenting Prodigal” (61). Crusoe connects the rejection of this path with his earlier repudiation of Proverbial wisdom, indicating that he is reacting against not only this particular pattern, but, more broadly, against the constraints imposed by Biblical precedents. As Merrett suggests, this decision reflects not simply a rejection of the
father, but a “rejection of… patriarchal typology” (133-34). Significantly, the reiteration of this framework retains many of the flaws that undermined it in the opening scenes. Not only is it evident that his disabled father has not “liv’d all his Days” in perfect comfort, as Crusoe imagines, but the claim that he has never suffered a single tempest or trouble is, like his father’s speech itself, conspicuously idealized, especially considering his long involvement in trade. Alongside these distortions, the fact that Crusoe quickly abandons these “wise and sober Thoughts” confirms that, rather than accept the authority of Proverbs, he has merely been parroting the precepts of his father. As the repeated pronouns emphasize, his father’s endorsement of Proverbs is consistent with “his observations” and “his days,” rather than those of the young Crusoe. His choice, as he frames it, suggests that the path set out by the parable simply does not “fit” (66).

While his refusal to play the part of the Prodigal Son reflects partly on Crusoe, his divergence from this type is equally represented as a function of his circumstances themselves. Rather than simply denigrate Crusoe, the ironic invocation of this parable marks the prohibitive distance, both psychological and historical, between his own circumstances and those of the conventional Biblical type. The most prominent incongruity between these two narratives is the motives which drive the two youths. While the son of the Biblical parable is prodigal, “wast[ing] his substance in riotous living… [and] harlots” (13, 30), Crusoe is driven largely by an impulse to increase his wealth, as his words and behaviour demonstrate (67). Beyond his decision to travel as a gentleman, rather than work as a sailor, his conduct identifies him as anything but prodigal (68). On the contrary, his impulse is decidedly capitalistic, situated within the circumstances and technologies of modern trade. The family structure Crusoe inhabits appears similarly incongruous with the familial dynamic on which the parable of the Prodigal Son is
premised. Not only does the death of his father prevent Crusoe from fulfilling this Biblical pattern, but Crusoe has no living siblings. In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the elder brother is crucial to the narrative, as his animosity furnishes the negative example on which the concluding endorsement of forgiveness is premised. The story is, in large part, about the reconstitution of a traditional, coherent family unit. While Crusoe need not fit perfectly with the situation of the Prodigal Son, the details which introduce his story deliberately distance him from the parable.

The absence of his elder brothers is pronounced; one was killed in the Anglo-Spanish War (1654-1660), and the other has mysteriously vanished. The phrasing of these circumstances, moreover, accentuates their absence, as the tense of the verbs suggests, initially, that Crusoe has two living elder brothers. Continuing a description of the current state of the Crusoe family, he explains that he “had two elder Brothers, one of which was Lieutenant Collonel to an English Regiment of Foot in Flanders, formerly commanded by the famous Coll. Lockhart, and was killed at the Battle near Dunkirk against the Spaniards: What became of my second Brother I never knew any more than my Father or Mother did know what was become of me” (57).

Considering the prominence of the parable, this opening would momentarily have primed readers to identify Crusoe with the Prodigal Son, particularly as the title page had anticipated his pursuit of foreign adventures. The sudden shift in tense, however, jarringly precludes the possibility of any direct typology or allegory.

While these practical incongruities figure prominently in the early portion of the narrative, the manner in which Crusoe expresses his intention to pursue the path of the “true repenting Prodigal” suggests that the very nature of Scriptural typology is incompatible with the volatility of human psychology and existence. The inconsistency of his thought, Crusoe demonstrates, is inimical to the fixed parameters Biblical models impose. Driven to an “agony of
mind” by the storm, Crusoe pledges himself to the fixed path of the repenting prodigal; “if it would please God here to spare my Life this one Voyage,” he vows,

if ever I got once my Foot upon dry Land again, I would go directly home to my Father, and never set it into a Ship again while I liv’d; that I would take his Advice, and never run my self into such Miseries as these any more. Now I saw plainly the Goodness of his Observations about the middle Station of Life, how easy, how comfortably he had liv’d all his Days, and never had been expos’d to Tempests at Sea, or Troubles on Shore; and I resolv’d that I would, like a true repenting Prodigal, go home to my Father. (61)

The language and logic of this vow are markedly absolute and fixed. Crusoe sets virtually no conditions on his survival; he will abide by this vow if he “ever” sets foot on dry land again, whether in one day or year, or whether in England or Africa (both significant considerations in the context of the narrative). The restrictions he imposes are equally absolute, spanning his entire existence and leaving no room for exceptions or reservations. In practice, it is unlikely Crusoe would “never” again err, or that he would “never” again set foot in a ship, particularly if he pursued a career in trade. The metonymy on which this vow is premised is correspondingly absolute. Both the condition and the consequence of this unequivocal vow are focused on his foot, myopically reducing Crusoe to a singular, isolated appendage. Again, the emphasis on “Observatio[n]” and “see[ing]” accentuates the disjunct between perception and precept, especially as his portrait of his father is conspicuously idealized; the elder Crusoe has, of course, encountered “troubles” at some point in his life, the rebelliousness of both his sons among them. Rather than denigrate Crusoe and affirm the authority of his father, this impassioned vow only underscores how unsuited the rigid parameters of established narratives are to the uncertainty of life itself.

The Biblical allusion that encapsulates this vow figures the Bible as a locus of fixity and constancy, reinforcing a conception of Scripture that is developed throughout the early portion of
the narrative. As the culmination of his desperate oath, the parable of the Prodigal Son serves as a fixed narrative, one which will restrict Crusoe in the same manner as the practical constraints which the other obligations impose. Against the accidental and impulsive nature of his wanderings, this parable imposes on Crusoe a prescriptive paradigm, one which sets him into a firmly delimited narrative; in accordance with this story, he will return home and live out the rest of his days in his father’s house. Crusoe concludes his oath with this allusion because it fixes his future behaviour even more decisively than the explicit promises. While his other vows primarily restrict him spatially and economically, this allusive oath closes the narrative itself, as he positions himself at the moment that concludes the parable of the Prodigal Son. If he acts the part of the “true Repenting Prodigal,” as he intends, his story is necessarily at an end, as it consummates with the homecoming he must immediately achieve. That the Biblical narrative is unequivocally fixed is emphasized by his appeal to a “true” account of the parable, which implies the existence of a universal, immutable type. This conception of Scripture is consistent with the request of his father that Crusoe “not… play the young Man,” which figures the Biblical type as a fixed role set in Scripture. In Yarmouth, when he is presented with the fateful choice between London and Hull, Crusoe represents the parable of the Prodigal Son as fixed narrative path. “Had I now had the Sense to have gone back to Hull, and have gone home,” he reflects, “I had been happy, and my Father, an Emblem of our Blessed Saviour’s Parable, had even kill’d the fatted Calf for me” (66). The logic of this prediction is conspicuously typological, affixing a distinctly Biblical resolution to Crusoe’s unconventional wanderings. Crusoe, of course, has no way of foreseeing the reaction of his father with such certainty, and, considering his inexorable wanderlust, it is difficult to credit his unequivocal belief that he will be happy at home. That this Biblical script so certainly predetermines the details of this homecoming, however, attests to the
The fixity of Scripture, which supersedes the contingencies of psychology and probability. The imagery with which Crusoe conceives this prescriptive typology emphasizes this dynamic. In taking up his set role as a Biblical type, his father is reduced to an “emblem,” a term which signifies, particularly in this context, “a drawing or picture expressing a moral fable or allegory” (“Emblem”). This conception of the parable, which would have been especially familiar to contemporaries in this context, figures it as a fixed image. But the fervent movement attendant to this homecoming, in which the father runs across the field to greet his son, is at odds with the static mode of the emblematic genre. Indeed, the fact that his father emblematizes the parable in its entirety serves to effectively exclude Crusoe (and the jealous brother) from the imagined scene, which is reduced to a simple image of his father killing a “fatted calf.” The marked anachronism of this image, which Crusoe preserves in its original Biblical form, serves to emphasize the temporal fixity of Scripture; his father surely has no calf prepared, and such an animal, which served as a symbol of luxury and extravagance in Scripture, is certainly out of place in the urban economy Crusoe inhabits (particularly in heavily urbanized Hull). The retention of this image, however, affirms that Scriptural types and parables are detached from such economic changes; they remain unaffected by time and circumstance. Whether Crusoe chafes at the restraint they impose or yearns for the stability they promise, throughout the narrative Biblical types are consistently figured as an immutable locus of fixity.

“But alas! a few Days wore it all off”: Typology and Psychology

When Crusoe eventually sets out to sea, it becomes clear that the fixity of Scripture is incompatible with the instability of “nature” itself as it is represented in Robinson Crusoe (57). Throughout the novel, invocations of Biblical types are premised on the conviction that the
world remains stable; according to typological logic, the part of the Prodigal Son predicts that, if Crusoe returns home, his father will kill the fatted calf upon his return. From the outset of

*Robinson Crusoe*, however, the world the novel represents is unstable and unpredictable. In the opening scene of the narrative, the elder Crusoe appeals to the timeless wisdom of Proverbs, according to which Crusoe, as a disobedient son, will be denied the blessing of God. “If he goes abroad,” his father confidently predicts, “he will be the miserablest Wretch that was ever born” (60). But his prophecies (which turn out ultimately to be false) are situated in an environment of narrative instability and uncertainty. As the details which introduce the narrative immediately make clear, the world is inimical to this prefigurative logic. The alteration of his family name, along with the mysterious disappearance of his brother, situates Crusoe in a distinctly uncertain environment, as Bell suggests (81). Before he recounts the “excellent counsel” he receives from his father, Crusoe pre-emptively repudiates the course his father endorses – twice. Of his second brother, Crusoe remarks, his parents “never knew any more than my Father or Mother did know what was become of me.” Immediately before he turns to his father’s speech, Crusoe looks ahead to “the Life of Misery which was to befal” him. These assertions wholly enervate the framework his father delineates, producing an ironic distance which renders the prefigurative advice of his father quite hollow. In anticipating his disappearance and misery, Crusoe is not identifying an alternate schema for his life. On the contrary, these ominous predictions emphasize the obscurity of his future. Crusoe sets this obscurity against the prefigurative logic his father privileges, making it clear, from the opening lines, that his story will not be predicted by any established pattern. The spontaneous nature of his departure corresponds with this worldview, as Crusoe, “being one Day at Hull, where [he] went casually, and without any Purpose,” happens to meet a
friend, who convinces him to accompany him to sea. The events, the haphazard scene implies, are not typological; this is a moment that occurs on a chance day in a city on the River Humber.

As Crusoe repeatedly emphasizes, this narrative instability is a product of his unstable psyche, which is inimical to fixed models and types. In opposition to the prescriptive schema of Scripture, his own unpredictable course reflects his “rambling Thoughts” (57). As Gildon complained, Crusoe is a remarkably “Rambling, Inconsistent Creature” (6). Crusoe identifies this disruptive “Propension of Nature” as the primary source of his “fat[e],” and the narrative correspondingly focuses on the unsettled thoughts and impulses that animate his erratic choices (Crusoe N I.57). It quickly becomes clear that the timeless precepts and fixed models of Scripture are decidedly unsuited to such a psychology. As Crusoe indicates, he is not unmoved by the precepts of Agur or the parables of Christ. On the contrary, he is “sincerely affected” by his father’s speech, and he “resolv[es] not to think of going abroad anymore, but to settle at home according to [his] Father’s Desire” (59). But the “settle[d]” resolution his father demands is immediately at odds with the psychological framework in which this reaction is couched, as it is based fundamentally on what Crusoe “think[s].” Though Crusoe reflects for a few days, in the passage itself the alteration is immediate, producing a sense that his resolution was inherently unstable. “But alas!,“ Crusoe immediately recounts, “a few Days wore it all off” (59). The scene signals a dynamic that persists throughout the narrative: the fixed paradigms imposed by Scripture are at odds with the nature of his psyche, which is definitively unfixed, since it is intimately tied to the passage of time. The same dynamic governs his identification with the Prodigal Son. While the invocation itself promises Crusoe, as well as the reader, a predetermined resolution to his narrative, it takes form in a disordered mental state – “in [an] Agony of Mind” (61). Again the passage of time dissolves this framework, Crusoe recording that “these wise and
sober Thoughts” only persisted while he remained in this particular state. The functional connection between his current bodily circumstances and his religious perspective is underscored by the fact that his “wise and sober” attitude depends, in large part, on bodily sickness, which makes him “very grave” (61). Furthermore, the untroubled response of his companion, who lightly dismisses the storm as “but a Cap Full of Wind,” emphasizes the subjective basis of Crusoe’s reaction, which is represented as a product not of real danger, but of his inexperienced perception of his situation. However we may judge Crusoe, these marked reversals affirm that Scriptural models are unsuited to the volatility of his psychology.

If we could conclude that his psychology was unique or exceptional, then the inadequacy of these Scriptural models could be ascribed exclusively to Crusoe himself. But *Robinson Crusoe* consistently figures his unstable psyche as a typical specimen of human psychology, suggesting that the narrative fixity of Scriptural typology is itself fundamentally antithetical to human nature – not just to young Crusoe. Though the reader first encounters Crusoe’s erratic character in his youth, his instability cannot be simply ascribed only to his age, nor to his unregenerate spiritual state. Decades later, after his “mind [is] entirely composed by resigning to the Will of God,” a lone footprint in the sand sends him into a wild terror, evoking in his mind a torrent of “strange unaccountable Whimsies” as he scrambles home to his “castle” (157, 170-71). As he admits, the experience, which banishes his religious sentiments in an instant, affirms the inconsistent nature of the human mind; “by what secret differing Springs are the Affections hurry’d about as differing Circumstances present,” he exclaims (172). The scene confirms what Crusoe observes throughout the narrative: that his impulses and thoughts, erratic as they are, are those anyone would experience. Amidst the fateful storm, for example, he feels the same despair as his fellow sailors, which he extends, by comparison, by that felt by a condemned man (89). Even in his
final years on the island, Crusoe’s studied thankfulness is constantly undermined by his unstable “psychological composition,” as Geoffrey Sill observes (166). The violent ecstasy he experiences when he is washed ashore is so typical that it calls to mind a proverb about human psychology, one which Defoe elsewhere cites as a fundamental truth about human nature: “sudden Joys, like Griefs, confound at first” (91; Spy SFS V.115). Throughout the novel, Crusoe suggests that his thoughts and reactions, particularly those which seem especially erratic or irregular, are typical. “Who could be otherwise,” he asks the reader in a range of ways (Crusoe N I.59).

That this psychological instability is fundamentally “natur[al]” is emphasized by its functional connection with the natural world (57). Nowhere is this connection between human nature and physical nature more evident than in the about-face that follows Crusoe’s first storm-repentance. As his psychic disorder is a reflection of meteorological turbulence, his thoughts settle as the storms calms. “I drowned all my Repentance,” he explains, and

as the Sea was returned to its Smoothness of Surface and settled Calmness by the Abatement of the Storm, so the Hurry of my Thoughts being over, my Fears and Apprehensions of being swallow’d up by the Sea being forgotten, and the Current of my former Desires return’d, I entirely forgot the Vows and Promises that I made in my Distress. (62)

The passage conceives of an intimate relationship between the mind and the natural world, one which nullifies the Biblical script he has invoked. The representation of his thoughts as a “current” conflates his mind with the water, implying that his psychology is governed by the same natural dynamic. He elides the boundary between his psychology and the sea, moreover, by representing his repentance as “drowning,” an image which externalizes his thoughts, situating his mind in the same unstable natural world he physically inhabits. In this context, the passage suggests that rather than his body, it is his thoughts which have been “swallow’d up by the Sea.”
This dynamic extends to the sound of the passage itself, which alliteratively reflects the “Smoothness of Surface and settled Calmness” that returns, concurrently, to the sea and his mind. While the types fixed in Scripture may remain unchanged, the human mind, Crusoe suggests, is directly influenced by the current circumstance.

“O happy Desart”: Crusoe Delivered into the Wilderness

Considering the nature of his exile, Crusoe’s progression from affliction to ascendency would have most readily recalled the rise of the Israelites, recounted primarily in Exodus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Both narratives follow a similar trajectory, delineating a period of providentially ordained suffering that, in accordance with a divine covenant, leads to a state of political supremacy in a new land. Moreover, Crusoe repeatedly represents himself as an afflicted wanderer, a role that associates him with the wandering Israelites (Ayers 402). A sustained series of allusions and images connect Crusoe with this typology. Even before he arrives on the island, this pattern is invoked in the representation of the shipwreck itself. The religious significance of this scene is signalled by the emphasis on “deliverance,” a term which elides the distinction between physical and spiritual salvation. Crusoe’s bodily impotence underscores the religious signification of the word, as he acknowledges that the violence of the waves leaves him “helpless, as to [his] own Deliverance” (90); he must depend on God to deliver him. A constellation of metaphors and images connects this scene with Psalm 18, which recounts how God delivered David from his enemies. When Crusoe describes the waves “as a furious Enemy which[he] had no Means or Strength to contend with” he clearly echoes the imagery of the song: “he delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me” (17). The fact that his deliverance is secured by a sturdy rock reinforces this
allusive connection, as the Psalm begins with the declaration that “the lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer” (2) – a rock that, in the Psalm 18, similarly draws the speaker “out of deep waters” (16). In fact, when Crusoe afterwards avers that he was saved “out of the very Grave” (90), he echoes Poole’s interpretation of the threats described in this passage, which he characterizes as dangers “which brought me to the brink of the Grave” (ccc3). Though Crusoe does not immediately recognize the island as the “spacious place” celebrated in the Psalm, this representation of his fateful deliverance represents him as a type of David, prefiguring his divinely ordained rise to dominion over the island.

After he begins to recognize the spiritual significance of his situation, Crusoe formulates this typology more explicitly, figuring his narrative as a type of the deliverance dispensed to wandering Israelites. During his first bout of repentance, Crusoe compares himself with the wandering Jews, who would not believe that God could produce meat in the desert. “I began to say,” Crusoe records, “as the Children of Israel did, when they were promis’d Flesh to eat, Can God spread a Table in the Wilderness” (Crusoe N I.126-27; Psalms 78:17). This allusion not only reinforces the typological connection between the “wilderness” Crusoe inhabits and that wandered by the ancient Israelites, but it also situates him within the broader history of Israel, which Psalm 78 surveys from the covenant with Jacob to the ascension of David. This particular Psalm is well suited to such a typological conception, as Crusoe suggests, since it is identified as a timeless “parable,” one, moreover, specifically concerned with stemming the rebelliousness of a new generation (2, 8). Crusoe consciously reinforces this typology when he returns to this allusion to represent his newly transformed “State of Life.” “I frequently sat down to my Meat with Thankfulness,” he recounts, “and admir’d the Hand of God’s Providence, which had thus spread my Table in the Wilderness” (153). He invokes the same passage, a third time, when he
sits down to a bountiful dinner many years later, acknowledging “what a Table was here spread for [him] in a Wilderness” (166). This sustained typology crucially inflects his deliverance, marking each stage in his journey from an afflictive wilderness to the Promised Land.

But the typology proves unsuitable to Crusoe’s situation, as the unique geographical and political circumstances of his transformation decidedly diverge from this typology. Even as he explicitly affirms the connection between himself and the Israelites, his deployment of this typology actually emphasizes a pivotal difference between their stories: whereas the deliverance of the ancient Israelites is fundamentally geographic, Crusoe’s transformation is definitively fixed in space. Indeed, his unique situation altogether restrains him from conforming to the pattern prefigured by the Israelites. We might overlook this incongruity if Crusoe did not repeatedly accentuate, in a variety of ways, the fact that his geographic condition remains unchanged. Following his first “true” prayer, Crusoe emphatically sets himself against the type of geographic deliverance attained by the Israelites: “the Island was certainly a Prison to me,” he acknowledges, “and that in the worst Sense in the World.” His emphasis on the “true Sense” of his “[im]prison[ment]” underscores that his constraints are real, not simply metaphorical.

Adapting his hermeneutic to his situation, Crusoe eventually comes to the transformative realization that “Deliverance from Sin [is] a much greater Blessing, than Deliverance from Affliction” (129). His reconceptualization of deliverance, which he adapts to fit his geographic situation, is sharply at odds with the mode of “deliverance” prefigured by the typology he has established.

In accordance with this altered conception of deliverance, Crusoe consistently emphasizes that the improvement in his condition is exclusively psychological. Even as he invokes the story of the wandering Israelites, his reiteration of Psalm 78 actually marks his
divergence from the Biblical narrative, since he comes, quite surprisingly, to celebrate his life in the “wilderness” (153). The allusion wholly reverses the signification of the Biblical phrase, which originally serves as a prominent emblem of Israelite ingratitude. The fact that he eats meat at this table confirms his significant departure from the story he invokes, in which the Israelites are struck down by a plague moments before their meal. The tension between the typological signification of the “wilderness” and his perception of his situation is underscored by an allusion to the miraculous preservation of Elijah, who was fed by ravens during a divinely ordained drought. Even as the allusion confirms that Crusoe remains in an afflictive environment, one that clearly echoes the wilderness of the Israelites, the signification of his miraculous preservation acquires a positive inflection, particularly as Elijah receives a double portion of bread and meat (1 Kings 17:6-7). Crusoe suggests, paradoxically, that the wilderness itself is a place of plenty. As he gradually re-orientates his perspective, his growing divergence from the Israelite narrative is signalled by a fundamental inversion of the categories on which the Scriptural typology is premised. Anticipated by his growing estimation of “affliction,” this shift culminates when Crusoe is temporarily driven out to sea during one of his regular coastal tours. Though the island remains essentially unchanged, as he drifts into the open waters Crusoe yearns, paradoxically, to return to the wilderness:

I strecht’d out my Hands to it with eager Wishes. O happy Desart, said I, I shall never see thee more. O miserable Creature, said I, whether am I going: Then I reproach’d my self with my unthankful Temper, and how I had repin’d at my solitary Condition… It is scarce possible to imagine the Consternation I was now in, being driven from my beloved Island (for so it appear’d to me now to be)… (160)

The description and details of this accidental journey figure it as an inverted typology, one in which the island wilderness serves as the Promised Land. His representation of the island as a “desart” clearly identifies this account as typological. By his preceding account, the island is far
from a desert; this descriptor serves to situate this scene in Scripture, rather than geography, figuring his island as a version of the Sinai Desert. Not only does his irregular north-eastwardly trajectory closely follow the route to Canaan recorded in Scripture, but his expedition also begins with a hilltop ascension which, as it marks the beginning of his journey, recalls Moses’ ascension of Mount Sinai. In attributing his situation to his “unthankful Temper,” Crusoe reinforces a typological basis for his nautical drifting, as the Israelites were defined, above all, by ingratitude.

In reality, his motives for this journey are not, as he suggests here, discontent with his “solitary Condition.” His journey is actually inspired by a “composed” acceptance of his isolation, and he is driven by a simple desire to “sai[l] round the Island” (157-158). Yet, these typological signals do not serve to position Crusoe in an established pattern. On the contrary, this scene marks, above all, how much Crusoe has diverged from this typology; he yearns for deliverance into the wilderness, rather than from it.

A King “Without Hands”: Social Isolation and Typologies of Kingship

In an attempt to assert political authority over the island, Crusoe extends this typology to its political apex, figuring himself as a Biblical monarch, variously Saul and Solomon, who has, in fulfillment of the covenant, obtained the Promised Land. Anticipated by the invocation of the triumphant David which attended his arrival on the island, his ascendency to political authority conforms to the story of the ancient Israelites, as it closely follows his metaphorical “deliverance” from the “wilderness” (127-128). Shortly after his spiritual deliverance, Crusoe lays claim to a fertile valley that recalls, in an array of ways, the land of Canaan, specifically the Valley of Eshcol. “The Country appear’d so fresh,” he observes,

So green, so flourishing, every thing being in a constant Verdure, or Flourish of Spring, that it looked like a planted garden. I descended a little on the Side of that
It is tempting to treat this valley as a type of Eden, as many critics have, imagining Crusoe as a version of Adam (Flynn 18; Bertrand 34; Flint 395; Backscheider, Defoe 419; Braverman 15; Richetti, Narratives 46). Beyond the numerous contradictions and inconsistencies that undermine this typology, such as the absence of Eve, the narrative and typological context of this scene connects it more certainly with the Valley of Eschol, the first region of Canaan explored by the Israelites upon their arrival to the Promised Land. Not only does the fruitfulness of this valley recall that of Eschol, a land “flow[ing] with milk and honey,” but the “secre[cy]” with which Crusoe surveys this new “country” echoes the expedition of the Israelites, who send spies to secretly survey the region. The hilly geography of this area resembles that of the “hill country” described in Numbers 13, as does the situation of this fertile region, which is located in the north-east of the island. Considering his interest in numerology, the fact that Crusoe surveys this valley on the seventeenth day of the month may be significant, as the story begins on the seventeenth verse of Numbers 12. These two valleys are most prominently connected, however, by their association with grape gathering, an activity central to both narratives. In Numbers, Moses asks the spies sent into the land to “bring of the fruit of the land,” since it was currently “the time of the firsripe grapes” (20). Accordingly, when the men arrive at the brook of Eschol they gather an exceptionally large cluster of grapes, which serves to evidence the fertility of the region when they return to their brethren. The grapes are so impressive the valley is named Eschol, the Hebrew word for “cluster” (13:17-26). The scene was well known to contemporaries, and it was often represented in sermonic literature and visual arts. The narrative Crusoe tells manifestly echoes this story. Arriving at the brook that demarcates the region, he finds upon the vines “Clusters of Grapes [that] were now in their Prime, very ripe and rich” (130). As in the
Biblical narrative, the grapes become a conspicuous image in this scene of exploration, as Crusoe mentions them repeatedly throughout this short account. His return, like that of the Israelites, is primarily defined by the transportation of these foreign grapes, the corresponding bulk of which demands exceptional labour (130-131). In both narratives, the grapes serve as the physical evidence of the valley’s fruitfulness. The story of Crusoe surveying this fruitful valley and returning with an exceptionally large cluster of grapes would have reinforced the typological connection between his deliverance and that of Israelites, figuring this as a crucial moment in his rise to kingship. In this scene, Crusoe arrives at the land over which God has authorized him to rule.

Yet the claims to political supremacy that attend his arrival to this Promised Land are undermined from the outset, as the typological correspondences he invokes conflict with his unique circumstance as an isolated castaway. As he surveys this new country, he announces his first explicit claim to political authority, taking a “secret Kind of Pleasure” in the fact that “this was all my own, that I was King and Lord of all this Country Indefeasibly, and had a Right of Possession; and if I could convey it, I might have it in Inheritance, as compeately as any Lord of a Mannor in England” (131). This sudden declaration of ownership raises a crucial question: on what grounds does Crusoe assert this right? His invocation of the English legal system strikes this question into particularly sharp relief. According to contemporary theorists, such as Grotius, islands belonged to their first inhabitants. As some critics have remarked, considering its location, the island Crusoe inhabits would almost certainly have already been claimed, either by Spain, Portugal, or the Amerindians (F. Donoghue 3; Hulme 235). Indeed, as Crusoe later discovers the island is used somewhat regularly by the native Caribs. Nor can Crusoe properly appeal to a Lockean theory of property, since he has put no labour into this land. His claim to
political authority is legitimated, exclusively, by the typology he has constructed. By figuring his
deliverance typologically, Defoe figures his rise to “king[ship]” over this new “country” as a
scripted consequence of his deliverance from the wilderness; according to the trajectory he
invokes, he is now arriving at the Promised Land. Though Frank Donoghue is right to
interrogate this scene, Crusoe’s claim is certainly more than an “absolutist reverie” (3). He has a
significant claim to this land, anchored in the typological narrative developed from his arrival on
the island.

Crusoe’s uniquely solitary situation, however, frustrates all his endeavours to fulfill this
typology. The moment Crusoe asserts his rightful claim, the typological correspondence between
the Biblical narrative and his own begins to break down. The abundance of fruit trees, which
appeared “so flourishing” as he approached, bear almost no fruit (131). As in the story recounted
in Numbers, conveying these grapes back to his “tent” is a central component of his story.
Whereas two Israelites are able to share the weight of the enormous grape cluster on a pole
between them, the lonely Crusoe is compelled to split his “great Heap of Grapes” into small
batches, which he intends to convey home in shifts. The plan is notably unsuccessful. Since they
are piled in a basket, rather than hanging from a pole, the first batch is crushed under its own
weight. When Crusoe returns to the valley the following day, he is surprised to find, “when
coming to [his] Heap of Grapes, which were so rich and fine when [he] gather’d them,” that they
are “all spread about, trod to Pieces; and dragg’d about, some here, some there, and Abundance
eaten and devour’d” (131). With significant irony, his claim to kingship over this valley is
immediately disaffirmed by the wildlife. Like the abortive typologies that have preceded this
scene, this sudden disruption of the typological correspondence is a product of his unique
circumstances as an isolated castaway. As he comes to acknowledge, the bulk of the grapes, so
central to the Biblical account, actually prevents him from conveying them home. Since he is a solitary castaway, he must settle for raisins; they may taste decent enough, but they do not fulfill the typology Crusoe has invoked.

The political typology Crusoe formulates is again undermined by his social isolation, later in the narrative, at another politically crucial moment. In his fourth year on the island, Crusoe begins work on a canoe, which he carves from a single, enormous cedar tree; “I question much,” he records, “whether Solomon ever had such a One for the Building of the Temple at Jerusalem” (150; 1 Kings 5-7). The allusion extends the political typology Crusoe has been developing since his arrival on the island, figuring his canoe-building project as a symbol of his new divinely authorized authority over the island. Like the construction of the temple of Solomon, this demanding enterprise is permitted by a period of peace and ease ordained by God, and it thus manifests the divine favour granted to the “anointed” ruler (1 Kings 5:1-5). Crusoe quite clearly grounds his claims to political authority in this project, which provides the central basis for his image; it is “in the middle of this work,” he explains, that he comes to proclaim himself “King… over the whole Country” (152). Beyond Crusoe’s emphasis on the exact dimensions of the tree, which echoes the precise measurements of the temple, a series of details reinforce the typological connection between Crusoe and Solomon. Like the Biblical king, who began the temple in the fourth year of his reign, Crusoe begins his project during his fourth year on the island, as he specifically notes (1 Kings 6:1; 152). The fact that Crusoe chooses a cedar tree is particularly significant, since the temple of Solomon is constructed predominantly of Lebanese cedars. The exceptional cedar trees of Lebanon figure prominently in the Biblical narrative, which begins with a detailed account of their harvest and transportation (5:6-10).
Yet this typology is manifestly disrupted by the “particular Inconveniences” attendant to Crusoe’s situation: “viz. Want of [extra] Hands” (150). Considering this scene underpins his second claim to absolute “king[ship]” (152), it is significant that it follows the same abortive trajectory as his earlier discovery of the “fruitful” valley, which had generated the first explicit statement of his authority. In both narratives, Crusoe figures his dominance over the natural world as a type of divinely ordained Biblical kingship, but is then confounded by the magnitude of the labour upon which his typology crucially depends. Biblically-proportioned grapes and logs prove too heavy for the solitary Crusoe. As with the allusion to the Valley of Eschol, the typology Crusoe deploys here ultimately underscores his distinctive deficiency, both practical and political, as an isolated castaway. His invocation of 1 Kings 5-7 represents this project as a symbol of his political authority, figuring his pronounced failure as a mark of political insufficiency. The specific typology Crusoe formulates makes his unique circumstances especially conspicuous, since the construction of the temple at Jerusalem was a product of extensive political and economic collaboration. It is through his close alliance with King Hiram of Tyre that Solomon acquires the cedars, in exchange for which he sends Hiram wheat and oil. The exchange, in fact, leads to a new treaty between the two kings. The cutting of the trees, so laborious for Crusoe, is performed by the Phoenicians, and the construction of the temple is undertaken not only by the Israelites, but also the Gebalites, natives of Byblos. Alongside these scenes of collaboration, Crusoe appears especially isolated, as he acknowledges; though he complains about his inferior equipment, he ultimately finds “want of hands to move [the canoe], when it was made… a Difficulty much harder for [him] to surmount, than all the Consequences of Want of Tools could be” (150). Again, the Biblical model Crusoe invokes is figured as incompatible with the unique circumstances of Crusoe’s situation. Set against the metonymic
representation of humans as hands, which aligns them with his scarce resources, the admission that his social isolation is far more restrictive than his lack of tools emphasizes how fundamentally this circumstance defines his situation. While it is tempting to treat his allusion to Solomon as a signal of his political authority, this typological signal actually emphasizes how far Crusoe is, both practically and politically, from the Biblical pattern he invokes.

“If I pleas’d, I might call my self King”: A New Notion of Kingship

The conception of political power which Crusoe formulates in the scene that follows promises to offer a resolution to these typological conflicts, one which apparently legitimizes his claims to kingship. Reflecting on his psychological, rather than physical, transformation of his surroundings, Crusoe suggests that the moderation of “world[ly]” desires brought about by his unique situation effectively renders him “King… over the whole Country.” “I look’d now upon the World as a Thing remote,” he alleges, “which I had nothing to do with, no Expectation from, and indeed no Desires about:”

In a Word, I had nothing indeed to do with it, nor was ever like to have; so I thought it look’d as we may perhaps look upon it hereafter, viz. as a Place I had liv’d in, but was come out of it; and well might I say, as Father Abraham to Dives, *Between me and thee is a great Gulph fix’d*. In the first Place, I was remov’d from all the Wickedness of the World here. I had neither the *Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eye, or the Pride of Life*. (152)

Immediately following his monumental failure to match Solomon, Crusoe ingeniously adapts his conception of kingship to fit his solitary circumstances, figuring his social isolation as a source of legitimacy, rather than an obstacle to his political authority. In one sense, the authority this isolation affords is plainly practical; as Crusoe proclaims, alone on the island “there were no Rivals… [and] none to dispute Sovereignty or Command with me” (152). Yet, Crusoe emphasizes the psychological basis of his authority far more significantly than these practical
aspects. He possesses all he desires, he argues, because his desires themselves have been reduced; “I had all,” he claims, “that I was now capable of enjoying” (152). Where before he had sought to master all his surroundings, now, Crusoe argues, he has learned to master himself. The psychological foundation for this new claim to rule is evident in the phrasing, which figures his kingship as a a matter of perception and attitude, rather than material mastery; “if I pleas’d,” he observes, “I might call my self King, or Emperor” (152). The tentative phrasing, as well as the casual shift in his title, figure his political authority as a choice availed to him by his new worldview. Indeed, Crusoe attempts to specifically repudiate his prior inadequacies, announcing that he “had Timber enough to have built a Fleet of Ships… [and] Grapes enough to have made Wine, or to have cur’d into Raisins, to have loaded that Fleet, when they had been built” (152).

His earlier inability to fulfill the typology he had developed, Crusoe now suggests, was only a matter of perspective, rather than ability.

This reconceptualization of political authority is premised on a new typology, one that legitimizes his authority by elevating Crusoe far above “world[ly]” concerns (152). The new “notio[n] of things” he has attained by his spiritual transformation, Crusoe suggests, empowers him to “call [him] self King” (152). Crusoe anchors his new perspective in two specific Biblical narratives, both of which serve to emphasize his decisive disavowal of corporeal existence. The first allusion, to the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, elevates Crusoe above the physical world, situating him, alongside Abraham, in Heaven (Luke 16:19-31). While the Biblical parable focuses primarily on socio-economic difference and spiritual justice, Crusoe accentuates the spatial aspects of the narrative, figuring it as a model for his abstracted perspective of worldly existence. As Crusoe employs the parable, it is about a hierarchy of space and “place” (152). Considering the original narrative focuses predominantly on the dialogue between Abraham and
Dives, which Crusoe awkwardly retains in his phrasing, the absence of a second interlocutor makes it clear that Crusoe is less interested in the conversation itself than in the impassable “gulph” between the two worlds. The allusion that immediately follows, through which Crusoe represents the island as a place removed from earthly temptations, draws on 1 John 2:16, which warns believers that “all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” Suggesting that his confinement from social life represents a liberation from the sinful “world” described by John, Crusoe refigures his confinement as a foundation of his authority, rather than an impediment to his claims to kingship. It is this new perspective, grounded in the New Testament, that permits Crusoe to call himself “King, or Emperor over the whole Country” (152).

While this turn to New Testament types seems to offer a solution to the conflicts which compromised his prior political typology, the narrative discredits this model of authority in many ways. The two allusions by which Crusoe signifies his distance from “the world” are themselves inherently contradictory, as they elide the metaphysical hierarchy which the Biblical passages originally emphasize. As it is told in Luke 16:19-31, the parable of the rich man and Lazarus marks a clear divide between the world of the living and the dead, one underscored by the direct contact between Lazarus and Abraham. While contemporaries debated the exact status of Lazarus in the afterlife, they agreed that the image of him being “carried into Abraham’s bosom” clearly signified his incorporeal transition into Heaven (Poole Z3v). Regardless of how disinterested Crusoe has allegedly become, the Heavenly realm Abraham inhabits, especially as it is conceived in this particular parable, is decidedly unavailable to the living. Indeed, Defoe had specifically repudiated such a notion in his response to John Asgill. Crusoe’s allusion to 1 John 2: 15-16 is equally problematic. While the perspective he newly endorses is consistent with the
injunction to “not love the world or the things in the world” (2:15), his claim that he lives wholly beyond “the Wickedness of the World” is manifestly overstated. Both allusions, as they elevate Crusoe beyond the world of the living, contribute to the lofty rhetoric of the passage. Certainly, it is not surprising that a spiritual transformation would entail a new perspective on life. But the restrictions Crusoe lays out are prohibitively absolute; considering his circumstances, it is impossible to believe that he will never participate in the world, or feel any earthly desires (152). The inordinateness of this claim is emphasized by his repetitive syntax and diction, as Crusoe reiterates that he “had nothing to do with” the World, and that “in a Word, [he] had nothing indeed to do with it” (152).

Were Crusoe a sequestered monk we might perhaps credit this claim, but the context and development of this passage sharply undermine his outward attitude. In the broader context of the narrative, Crusoe repeatedly contradicts the attitude he expresses here. He almost always gathers more resources than he needs, including corn and timber, and his persistent desire to designate himself “Lord of the whole Mannor” betrays a recognizable investment in socio-economic status that is at odds with his alleged disavowal of “the Pride of Life” (152). More specifically, the fact that this new perspective immediately follows his account of his ill-fated canoe makes it difficult to credit. Crusoe claims, moreover, that he adopted this attitude “in the middle of this Work” (152). As the passage progresses, Crusoe’s stoic attitude becomes increasingly uncertain, as he acknowledges his abiding “desire” for “Things which [he] had not.” This unexpected qualification is attended by another disorienting reversal: Crusoe dismisses such things as worthless “trifles,” but then immediately admits they were “indeed of great use” to him (152). No object symbolizes this ambivalent attitude to “the World” more succinctly than the parcel of money Crusoe has recovered – “on second thought” – from the wrecked ship (100). So
when Crusoe recollects his parcel of coins, only moments after he has avowed that “all [he] could make use of, was, All that was valuable” to him, his authority, rhetorical as well as political, begins to crumble. “I had, as I hinted before, a Parcel of Money, as well as Gold and Silver, about thirty six Pounds Sterling,” Crusoe reminds the reader,

Alas! There the nasty sorry useless Stuff lay… [and] As it was, I had not the least Advantage by it, or Benefit from it; but there it lay in a Drawer, and grew mouldy with the Damp of the Cave, in the wet Season; and if I had had the Drawer full of Diamonds, it had been the same Case; and they had been of no manner of Value to me, because of no Use. (152-53)

Crusoe recalls the parcel to assert his disregard for superfluous wealth, but the passage underscores his persistent attachment to the “gold and silver” he ostentatiously rejects. The passage follows the same structure as his original discovery, opening with an ejaculatory disavowal that leads to an ambivalent acceptance of the money. The fact that Crusoe notes the exact value of the coins, calculated here for the first time in the narrative, belies his affected attempt to dismiss the money as indefinite “Stuff.” It is clear not only that he has appraised the money with some care, but that he has assigned it a special place in his stock of possessions. Alongside his emphasis on the continued presence of the money, which remains in the drawer to this moment, his repeated dismissals of this “useless… Stuff” only serve to raise a troubling question: why has Crusoe kept the money if he “had not the least Advantage by it”? The mould on the coins is particularly significant, as it signifies, simultaneously, that the coins remain unused and that Crusoe has kept them for many years. His intent focus on the physical presence of the coins, as they gather mould “there… in a Drawer… [in] the Cave,” imbues his simplistic conclusion with a significant irony. Though he presents it as evidence of his new perspective, the example only betrays the extent to which he is inherently unable to fulfill the new typology on which he premises his authority.
The contradictions inherent in this new abstract “notio[n] of things” become acutely apparent when Crusoe presents his political identity through this perspective. His new attitude begins a portion of the narrative distinctly focused on his stoical contentment, as Crusoe recounts how, his “Mind being entirely composed,” he is able to see his afflictions in a new light (155). When he looks back to the history of the wandering Israelites, as he sits down to a sumptuous dinner, he does so to evidence the alteration in his perspective, rather than his circumstance. “What a table was here spread for me in a Wilderness,” he observes, “where I saw nothing at first but to perish for Hunger” (166). The shift from the definite to the indefinite article, which deviates not only from the Biblical source but also from his earlier formulations of the phrase, distances Crusoe’s environment from that of the ancient Israelites. His emphasis on the localized existence of his table, which is spread “here” with the specific products of his labour on the island, serves the same purpose, as it emphasizes, rather than diminishes, the unique spatial and temporal circumstances of his existence in his “wilderness” (166). The change, his phrasing indicates, is in his perspective; what he once “saw” as a place of affliction he now sees as a land of plenty. As it demonstrates the transformative power of this new perspective, it is fitting that this statement is immediately followed by his attempt to exploit the political potential of this new typology. He has asserted that he might, in accordance with his new attitude, call himself king, and so he does. “It would have made a Stoick smile,” he observes, connecting the scene with his new outlook, “to have seen, me and my little Family sit down to Dinner:”

There was my Majesty the Prince and Lord of the whole Island; I had the Lives of all my Subjects at my absolute Command. I could hang, draw, give Liberty, and take it away and no Rebels among all my Subjects. Then to see how like a King I din’d too all alone, attended by my Servants, Poll, as if he had been my Favourite, was the only Person permitted to talk to me. My Dog who was now grown very old and crazy, and had found no Species to multiply his Kind upon, sat always at my Right Hand, and two Cats, one on one Side the Table, and one on the other, expecting now and then a Bit from my Hand, as a Mark of special Favour. (166)
The scene underscores the incongruity between the disinterest prescribed by the Biblical subtext Crusoe invokes and his inherent attachment to the terms and parameters of worldly political systems. While a stoic might dine among animals with indifference, by awkwardly situating his animal companions in a distinctly human political framework Crusoe produces a comical irony that undermines not only his claim to kingship, but his typological approach itself. It is partly true that Crusoe has the lives of his “subjects” at his command (though they often disobey him), but his invocation of judicial practices is patently bathetic. As Damrosch suggests, “the cruelties that might tempt a despot among men would be absurd among pets” (198). Not only do animals exist outside this system, but they certainly would not recognize the significance of officially sanctioned punishments, such as hanging or imprisonment. This is particularly apparent when Crusoe, in the paragraph that immediately follows, indifferently shoots “a great many” of the cats that have reproduced beyond his control (166). The image of Crusoe hanging his animals, which his emphasis on “see[ing]” encourages the reader to visualize, is deliberately comical, not least because the system of loyalty to which Crusoe appeals is inapplicable to animals; his dogs and cats lack the capacity to identify as “rebels.” The passage consistently sets Crusoe’s “stoic[al]” perception of his “subjects” against the real capacities of the animals, generating an irony that undermines the legitimacy of his new “notio[n] of things” (152). Poll does not recognize himself as a favourite of the “King,” nor do his cats see the crumbs he gives them as “a Mark of special Favour.” Appealing to the authority of his new “stoic” perspective, Crusoe attempts to perceive the animals in a manner that authorizes his rule. But the typology itself, as it prescribes detachment from “the World” (152), proves unsuitable to his situation. In one sense, this failure is another product of his social situation, since his reliance on animals is necessitated by the fact that he dines “all alone.” But while his earlier typology was disrupted by his social
isolation, his appeal to Luke and 1 John is undermined by the limits of the typology itself, which prescribe a detachment that is at odds with the political and judicial systems of “the world.” Quite significantly, after this moment in the narrative Crusoe largely abandons this conception of political power. He situates his power primarily in other frameworks, referring to himself as “governor” and “generalissimo” (255-261). Crusoe never again calls himself king, and his few remaining appeals to this political model are notably self-conscious, perhaps satirically so. “It was a merry reflection,” he later notes, “how like a king I look’d” (235). While this shift away from kingship possesses evident political significance, as critics have noted, it is equally connected to instabilities in the typological hermeneutic Crusoe pursues; Crusoe fails to become “king” of the island because the established types of kingship are prohibitively unsuited to his unique situation.

A Process “Impossible for Words to describe”: Crusoe’s Atypical Conversion

Crusoe’s process of conversion is fundamentally informed by this attitude towards typology. Repudiating typology as a basis for his identity and authority, *Robinson Crusoe* deliberately distances Crusoe from Biblical narratives, underscoring the experiences and circumstances that distinguish his conversion from established models. His persistent emphasis on his psychological and physical existence, which critics have conventionally set in opposition to his religious outlook, is part of this dynamic, as it serves crucially to connect his conversion with the material existence of the island; rather than follow Biblical types, his conversion is stimulated by the objects of the island and the impressions they produce. As it is represented in the narrative, his salvation is a product of his unique situation, which, as I have argued, cannot be wholly accommodated to Biblical types. Rather than diminish the unique circumstances that distance
Crusoe from Biblical models, *Robinson Crusoe* accentuates them. In a word, his conversion is deliberately atypical. The fact that “Crusoe’s typological reading… never… opens up beyond the self” does not serve to depreciate his experience, but rather to evidence the insufficiency of the typological hermeneutic that Defoe had been impelled to disavow in the decades that led up to the novel (Hinojosa 655).

Crusoe’s conversion is initiated by a dream that is conspicuously differentiated from Biblical precedents. Considering the vision he experiences amidst his illness provides the basis for his repentance, it is remarkable that his dream is not linked with Biblical models, such as the visions of Ezekiel or John. Neither Hunter or Starr comment significantly on the content of the dream itself, both quickly skipping ahead, Starr without more than a single sentence of commentary, to the expression of contrition that follows (Hunter 156-57; Starr 107). Though the dream is among the most important steps of his religious transformation, this critical neglect is understandable; not only does Crusoe fail to point to any specific Scriptural model for this crucial experience, but he fails to even identify this “terrible” man, who might be God, an angel, or quite simply a man (*Crusoe N* I.122). Crusoe’s emphasis on the circumstantial origins of his dream obstructs a typological or symbolic interpretation of this scene. As he meticulously records in his journal, the dream originates in the specific meteorological and physiological circumstances of his island existence: occurring on 27 June, 1651, the illness is brought on by the rain (of June 18) and perhaps, as well, by contaminated turtle meat Crusoe had eaten the day prior (121). His illness, the fluctuations of which are described in detail, is aggravated by the deprivations specific to his solitary existence, as Crusoe is unable to find any water. His visionary dream is produced, in part, by his “exceeding thirs[t],” which Crusoe connects directly to the “second Sleep” that produces his “terrible Dream” (121). While the prophetic mode of the
dream is consistent with Biblical types, his vision in anchored in the specific space and history of
his own “strange” experience (54). The events of the vision are quite precisely situated “on the
Ground on the Out-side of [Crusoe’s] Wall, where [he] sat when the Storm blew after the
Earthquake” (122). This setting locates the dream not only in a specific place on the island but in
a particular moment in Crusoe’s recent experience. The vision as a whole, in fact, clearly echoes
recent events, specifically the earthquake that struck the island on 16 April, rather than Biblical
types. This vision is distanced most significantly from Scripture, however, by the weapon the
frightening visitor wields: a spear. The choice is remarkable, considering that in the Bible God’s
violent justice is typically represented by a sword (Deuteronomy 32:41; Leviticus 26:33; Ezekiel
5:2, 21:3-5). The metaphor is particularly prevalent in the Book of Ezekiel, which provides one
of the most significant sources for Crusoe’s vision. The spear, in fact, is almost never associated
with God throughout the Bible, but rather with humans.28 The choice clearly connects the dream
to the island; as Crusoe later discovers, metal swords are foreign to the region. Alongside the
notably local geography of the dream, this significantly unconventional detail makes it difficult
to connect Crusoe’s vision with a Biblical type.

Even more than by the unconventional details of the dream, however, Crusoe’s
experience is distinguished from Biblical precedents by his sustained emphasis on his subjective
experience, which mediates his vision in a manner antithetical to Biblical dream accounts. While
their meaning is sometimes uncertain, the dream visions recounted in Scripture are clearly and
directly perceived. In Genesis 28:12, for example, Jacob “dream[s], and behold a ladder set up
on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and
descending on it.” Whether God speaks directly or through metaphor, the events and objects of
dream visions, even the most unconventional or unnatural, are seen with clarity and certainty.

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28 The metaphor appears only twice, in Psalm 35: 3 and Habakkuk 3:11.
Even when they are presented retrospectively, as are those of Joseph and Daniel, the imagery of the visions is perfectly unmediated by subjectivity. Thus many Biblical accounts of dreams begin with a call to “behold” the events of the vision (Genesis 28:12; Genesis 31:10; Genesis 37:5-9; Judges 7:13-15; Daniel 7:1-28; Matthew 1:20, 2:13, 2:19-20). Crusoe introduces his vision quite differently. “I thought,” he begins. The verb prominently situates the scene in a subjective register, and Crusoe deliberately sustains this perspective throughout the passage, repeatedly disrupting his account with reminders that these events, including the earthquake and fire, existed only in his “thought” and “apprehension” (122). Many critics treat the dream as a “direct revelation,” but the vision is conspicuously mediated by his perception (Baine 28; Hunter 155-57). As Sill suggests, the vision “is entirely subjective, both in its origin and location” (“Cave” 223). Crusoe’s inability to describe the most significant aspects of the vision prominently signal this mediation. The countenance of the terrible figure is “most inexpressibly dreadful,” Crusoe notes; it was “impossible for words to describe.” The sound of the voice, he recounts, is similarly “impossible to express.” The most significant moments of the account are remarkably uncertain. Crusoe only “thought” the figure lifted the spear to kill him, and he is unable to identify the source or even the wording of the message he hears; “he spoke to me,” Crusoe recalls, “or I heard a Voice so terrible, that it was impossible to express the Terror of it; all that I can say, I understood, was this, Seeing all these Things have not brought thee to Repentance, now thou shalt die.” As Crusoe acknowledges, this is not the exact message, but rather the imperfect product of a compounded mediation. The account records “all that [Crusoe] can say” of what he was able to “underst[and]” at a distance; it is not only the perception, but also the expression of the dream that is constrained by his subjectivity. While his dream is undoubtedly religious in nature, it is decidedly unlike Biblical precedents.
The process of conversion to which this dream leads Crusoe is firmly connected to the cultural and geographic circumstances of the island. Remembering that “the Brasilians take no Physick but their Tobacco,” Crusoe decides to stave off his distemper in the traditional Brazilian manner; he eats, drinks, and smokes tobacco. Crucially, it is under the “stupefy[ing]” influence of the drug that Crusoe begins the most important aspect of his conversion: reading the Bible. Indeed, as the reader is led to expect a Bible to be the cure Crusoe seeks, especially at this point in his conversion, the role of the tobacco is particularly prominent. Though this seems an inauspicious foundation for an orthodox Christian conversion, the instrumental role of the tobacco connects this experience to the region Crusoe inhabits, as it is native to the Americas. This is not an experience prefigured by Scripture in any recognizable way. Crusoe makes it clear that this is no coincidence, but rather that the drug is as important, if not more so, than the Bible itself. “Directed by Heaven no doubt,” Crusoe finds in one of his chests “a Cure, both for Soul and Body.” “I open’d the Chest,” he recounts,

and found what I look’d for, viz. the Tobacco; and as a the few Books, I had sav’d, lay there too, I took out one of the Bibles which I mention’d before, and which to this Time I had not found Leisure, or so much as Inclination to look into; I say, I took it out, and brought both that and the Tobacco with me to the Table.

(126)

The entire experience is distinctively anchored in the material reality of the island. Crusoe focuses insistently on the specific location of the Bible, carefully noting its position and movement. The table to which he brings it, along with the tobacco, is a unique product of his “time and necessity” on the island, as he has recorded in his journal (110). The chest, as well, is of a distinctively unique provenance – one of the few Crusoe has salvaged from the wreck. The circumstances that lead Crusoe to the Bible are themselves contingent on his unique situation.

His illness, brought on by the unfavourable environment, drives Crusoe to seek a cure, and the
The unconventional organization of his possessions, specifically the “few Books” he has salvaged, auspiciously pairs the two objects. As Crusoe makes clear, it is this coincidence alone that brings him to read the Bible.

The engagement with Scripture this experience engenders, moreover, underscores the interpretive distance between Crusoe and the ancient Israelites. Opening “the Book” randomly, Crusoe comes across a line from Psalm 50:15: “And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.” Though in retrospect Crusoe recognizes that “the Words were very apt to [his] Case,” his understanding of them is hampered by the significant difference between himself and the Israelites. “As for being deliver’d,” he explains, “the Word had no Sound, as I may say, to me” (126). While we might attribute his insufficiency partly to his current state, both spiritual and physiological, the course of his conversion suggests that it is his typological hermeneutic that obstructs his understanding; Crusoe cannot conceive of how the deliverance of the Israelites, so “remote” from his situation, relates to his particular set of afflictions. Crusoe’s claim that “the Word [deliverance] had no Sound” suggests that the concept itself, as it is formulated in the psalm, cannot take form in his present situation. The sensory metaphor accentuates the historical and circumstantial distance, moreover, as sound is limited by time and space. Crusoe’s reaction, which anticipates his successful engagement with the Bible, is consistent with this conception of Scriptural typology; he voices aloud, within the time and space of the island, his own version of Scripture. At first, he “began to say as the Children of Israel did, when they were promis’d Flesh to eat, Can God spread a Table in the Wilderness.” But after this experience, Crusoe explains, he “began to say, Can God himself deliver me from this Place?” (127). As the former prayer emphasizes the unique circumstances of the Israelites, the latter is distinctly figured in terms of Crusoe’s existence; it is anchored in “me” and “this place.”
The Bible is undoubtedly central to this part of his conversion, but his interpretive difficulties suggest that Crusoe must disavow a directly typological hermeneutic, as his situation is simply too “remote” to accommodate such an approach.

The culmination of Crusoe’s conversion is defined by this approach to Scripture, as his repentance is wholly independent of precise Biblical models or circumstances. The scene is distinctly situated in the circumstances of Crusoe’s unique experience. Recoded in his journal, the event is dated to the morning of July 4, on which Crusoe begins his practice of daily Bible reading. The quotidian nature of his project connects it to the other labours necessitated by his situation, as does the fact that his exertions are determined by his bodily endurance; he proceeds “not tying [him] self to the Number of Chapters, but as long as [his] Thoughts shou’d engage [him]” (128). This conception of the Bible is consistent with the narrative as a whole, throughout which Crusoe aligns it with his other tools and resources, suggesting that his spiritual work is anchored in the soil of the island as much as his physical labour. This “work,” as Crusoe calls it, initiates a process that is firmly connected to his experience on the island. The impression of his strange dream being revived by his reading, Crusoe “was earnestly begging of God to give [him] Repentance, when it happen’d providentially the very Day that reading the Scripture, I came to these Words, *He is exalted a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance, and to give Remission*” (128). The present participle mode Crusoe employs firmly situates this experience in the present moment, as does his emphasis on the specific details of the event, which occurred “on the very Day” while “reading the Scripture.” What distinguishes this scene most from Biblical models, however, is the fact the phrase Crusoe comes across does not, in fact, appear in Scripture. Owens points to Acts 5:31, which is somewhat similar: “Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (128 n.299). The
phrase Crusoe finds differs quite significantly from this. While paraphrasing Scripture was commonplace, his emphasis on coming across “the Words” themselves accentuates his divergence from the Biblical parameters. These words are not literally the words Crusoe sees; as the typography of the passage emphasizes, Crusoe is describing the words as they “sound” to him, reading them alone, on an island in the West Indies, on the morning of 4 July, 1660. As such, his most significant omission is the reference to Israel, which anchored the original passage in the past. His bodily reaction to the reading symbolizes a forceful disavowal; he “threw down the Book,” he records, “and with [his] Heart as well as [his] Hands lifted up to Heaven, in a Kind of Extasy of Joy, [he] cry’d out aloud, Jesus, thou Son of David, Jesus, thou exalted Prince and Saviour, give me Repentance!” (128). Set against the “up[ward]” nature of his reaction, the act of throwing “down” the book signifies a rejection not of the Bible itself, but of the typological hermeneutic that, as Crusoe demonstrates, is unsuited to his situation. His prayer, the first “true” one he has ever made, is connected far more significantly with his body than with the details of words. In fact, his prayer has no clear model. Owens points to Mark 10:47, in which the blind man Bartimaeus begs Jesus to restore his sight: “Jesus, thou son of David, have mercy on me,” he asks (Mark 10:47). However, the only term that firmly connects Crusoe with this passage – “Son of David” – appears numerous times throughout the Bible. The passage is equally connected to Acts 5:31, but also to Matthew 9:27, among other phrases. We need not go searching for sources; this is a prayer rooted in an isolated island in the Caribbean, not the outskirts of Jericho. Whereas Bartimaeus asked for Jesus to “have mercy,” Crusoe forms a prayer more suited to the acquisitional mode his survival demands; he asks Jesus to “give [him] repentance.” In fact, nobody, throughout all of Scripture, says “give me repentance”; this is a phrase, like all of Crusoe’s constructions on the island, cobbled together from what he
accumulated. Certainly, Crusoe’s daily “work” with the Bible provides the foundation for this unique experience. But it is ultimately on this handcrafted phrase, shouted aloud on an isolated island in the Caribbean on a July morning, that Crusoe’s salvation pivots.

It is no coincidence that the typological signals critics have often noted in *Robinson Crusoe* are focused predominantly in the first portion of the narrative. Though we might expect Crusoe to connect himself more frequently and clearly with Biblical models after his conversion, the novel traces the disintegration, rather than the fulfillment, of a typological hermeneutic. As the “plain” words of Scripture provided a refuge, for Crusoe as for Defoe, from the divisive “disputes” that “Practical Religion” eschewed, Crusoe’s conversion pivots on his diligent “work” with the Bible. But while the opening scenes of the novel invoke established Biblical patterns, they serve not to prefigure Crusoe’s path but to accentuate his necessary divergence from these scripts. Initially marked by epistemological and psychological incongruities, when Crusoe arrives on the island the prohibitive distance between type and antitype accrues a political facet, as his failed attempts to assert his “kingship” distance him from Biblical types. This is not to say that *Robinson Crusoe* repudiates the Bible. On the contrary, Crusoe’s salvation depends fundamentally on his Biblical labour. Rather, the novel imagines a set of circumstances that impel Crusoe, like Defoe, to abandon a typological hermeneutic and give his own unique “turn” to the text.
Conclusion

In many ways, the study of Defoe’s religious thought has been significantly limited by historiographic assumptions about the role and status of religion in eighteenth-century England. While it would no longer be plausible to agree unreservedly with Watt, most of the scholarship on Defoe and the novel remains underpinned by the broad “narrative of secularization” that Watt posits (Kaufmann 607). Michael McKeon, for example, argues that “as the Weber thesis suggests, in the historically transitional territory of early modern Protestantism, spiritual and secular motives are not only ‘compatible’; they are inseparable, if ultimately contradictory, parts of a complex intellectual and behavioural system” (319). While McKeon treats the secular/religious binary, more thoughtfully, as a complex dialectic, he nonetheless represents the eighteenth century as a “transitional” period in which the traditional meaning and role of religion diminishes. However accurate or inaccurate this conception of the period may be, it has contributed to a comparative neglect of the religious aspects of the English novel, as Michael Kauffman observes (607-27). As McKeon’s argument suggests, this conception of the eighteenth century is intimately connected to the narrative of “ascetic Puritanism” developed by Weber and Tawney, which offers a theoretical framework that persuasively accounts for the “transitional” nature of the age. Certainly, situating Defoe within this perspective helps explain some aspects of his writing, such as his abiding interest and involvement in trade. But this framework offers little insight into many aspects of his thought, such as his devotional poetry or his abiding hostility to atheism and deism. Even more significantly, this perspective demands that the religious aspects of his writing be de-emphasized, if not dismissed as vestigial or insincere. Through this lens, his persistent preference for “Practical Religion” reflects the shallowness of his religious sentiment,
and his unconventional engagement with Scripture demonstrates only his disregard for Biblical authority.

This dissertation is set against the conventional narrative of secularization, in both its historiographic and literary forms. As the alleged affinity between Nonconformity and trade fundamentally underpins not only our perception of Defoe but also of eighteenth-century thought more broadly, it is here that any study aiming to develop a more nuanced understanding of the period must begin. Indeed, it is remarkable how many accounts of eighteenth-century social and cultural history take the theories of Weber and Tawney for granted. Over the course of a century the connection between Nonconformity and trade has ossified into fact. Critical analysis of this theory has been substantially impeded by disciplinary boundaries. Beyond contextualizing the writing of Milton and Bunyan, the debates surrounding toleration, religious identity, and Nonconformity have rarely been studied at length by literary scholars. On the whole, the religious discourse of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been left primarily to historians.  

Historical studies of Nonconformity have been numerous and detailed, especially during the last three decades, throughout which the picture of post-Restoration Dissent has become, at once, both sharper and more complicated. Yet this research has almost wholly neglected the rhetorical aspects of contemporary accounts, a deficiency accentuated by the disjunction between demographic and textual records. In this sense, literary scholars can provide a valuable alternative perspective on post-Restoration Dissent, particularly on the debates surrounding toleration, an area of study on which Jeffrey Collins observes “disciplinary particularity has... blunted [our] critical capacities” (636). The first chapter of this dissertation elucidates some of the rhetorical facets of contemporary accounts, but the approach it develops

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29 The most notable and successful exception to this trend is Keeble. His fundamental contention, in fact, is that Nonconformist literature has been unjustly neglected by literary scholarship.
could be productively applied far more widely and thoroughly. Sermons and conduct guides, for example, were crucial in reshaping the reputation of Nonconformists, but there is little research on how they served to construct a positive image of Dissenters. A full-length study on the rhetorical aspects of demographic and economic claims about Nonconformity would help produce a more rigorous and sophisticated understanding of exactly how Dissenters built a reputation as a “sober, industrious, trading” people.

Such research would also help enhance our knowledge of Defoe, as it is through this perspective of post-Restoration Dissent that his conception of religion can be most accurately understood. While critics have regularly acknowledged Defoe’s Dissenting background, this dissertation provides the most detailed and thorough examination of not only his biographical connections with Nonconformity, but also of his methods of constructing his image as the pre-eminent Dissenting apologist. His distinctively “practical” approach to religion is intimately connected to the broader endeavour to rebuild the image of Nonconformity, a central aspect of which was the self-conscious promotion of “Practical Religion.” Indeed, the discourse of “Practical Religion” that Defoe inherits from writes like Baxter and Annesley can only be properly understood through this perspective, as appeals to practicality were crucially inflected by the reactionary impulse to repudiate the unfavourable reputation of Nonconformity.

Considering contemporaries recognized “Practical Religion” as a distinct mode, one with evident rhetorical appeal, there is surprisingly little scholarship on the discourse, especially as it is possibly connected to the development of Methodism. Research on the development of this discourse might not only trace it in more detail, but could also examine less explicit appeals to practicality, such as the economic metaphors so prevalent in Nonconformist sermons and guides. To what extent did commercial images and analogies suggest to readers that Dissenters were
more concerned with national trade than with divisive scruples? While this dissertation investigates Defoe’s connection to the discourse of “Practical Religion,” the depth of his commitment to Nonconformity suggests that this relationship may have far broader implications.

The aversion to “doubtfull disputation” that Defoe acquires from this discourse underpins his remarkably unconventional engagement with Biblical typology. In his conscious endeavour to privilege practice and application over theory and abstraction, the indisputably “plain” words of Scripture regularly provide Defoe a means of precluding “difficulties” and “cavils.” While generic signals and conscious disavowals serve an important role in his religious discourse, appeals to the “plainness” of the Bible are his most frequent and vital technique. As such, for Defoe the Bible is essential not only epistemologically, but also rhetorically. This is, in large part, why his representation of William and the Revolution, a decidedly controversial topic, is firmly anchored in Scripture. Asserting a Biblical typology for William’s uncertain authority is fundamentally important. Yet the decidedly “modern” nature of his kingship puts unique pressure on the typological hermeneutic Defoe employs, leading to a process of conflict, adaptation, and invention that is evident in a series of his poems between 1691 and 1715. Pitting his politics against his hermeneutics, this situation fundamentally transforms how Defoe conceives of the relationship between Biblical types and modern life. Too often, particularly in scholarship on Defoe, typology has been treated as a static, stable mode of thought. It is only quite recently that scholars, most notably Robert Merrett, have begun to investigate the “creative flexibility” of Defoe’s typological techniques, and this dissertation is the first to connect this impulse with his political thought (120). As the existing scholarship on seventeenth- and eighteenth-century typology offers little insight on Defoe, much research could certainly be done on how his employment of typology fits with contemporary conceptions of the hermeneutic,
setting his religious thought in dialogue with, for example, Benjamin Keach’s *Tropologia: A Key to Open Scripture Metaphors* (1682), a work to which readings of Defoe occasionally gesture.

The qualifications and hesitations that surround some of Defoe’s most notable typological “turns” suggest that he was pushing the boundaries of contemporary conventions.

Such research would certainly contribute to a more nuanced interpretation of *Robinson Crusoe*, a text that, I have argued, is defined a sustained repudiation of established typology. Critics have long sensed that the narrative is somehow conflicted, but analysis of this conflict has been compromised by the crude binaries, variations of the religious/secular divide, that prevail throughout most of the scholarship on Defoe. Damrosch, for example, observes the disruption of the typological hermeneutic, but his analysis is subsumed into a crudely defined “realist” impulse: “*Robinson Crusoe* contains plenty of scriptural allusions, but now they are only allusions… Here is where the “realism” of Crusoe telling his own story conflicts with the impulse to interpret, and the story tends to roll onwards with a momentum of its own rather than successfully embodying the pattern to which it aspires” (210). In this framework, Crusoe’s deviations from typological patterns, particularly his initial divergence from Proverbs and the Prodigal Son, generally evidence inexorable “secular” impulses, whether capitalistic, generic, or psychological. The myth of Defoe’s authorial incompetence is a product of this limited perspective, as critics have often assumed that Crusoe’s deviations from convention reflect the uncertainties of Defoe himself. But it is not Crusoe or Defoe that fails in *Robinson Crusoe*: it is typology itself. Indeed, the novel is the culmination of Defoe’s growing opposition to the “chiming parallels” of typology, serving to dramatize the hermeneutic disavowal featured in his earlier poetry. The chapter on *Robinson Crusoe* closely studies the most significant typological disruptions, particularly the political typologies with which Defoe himself struggled, but the
tendency it traces should be investigated more broadly. Defoe’s repudiation of typology is most pronounced in Robinson Crusoe, perhaps in part because the novel subsequently was criticized for its irreverently “free” treatment of Scripture (Gildon 14). The fact that the Serious Reflections aimed to project a hermeneutic consistency onto the first instalment affirms Defoe’s desire to mute typological inconsistencies. Yet many of Defoe’s novels could be profitably situated within this broader impulse, as they all engage quite unconventionally with Biblical typology. Roxana’s course, for example, is marked by a number of parallels to that of the Israelites, and A Journal of the Plague Year invokes an array of complex, often ambivalent typological links with Scriptural narratives. For example, the narrator H. F. refuses to accept the typological perspective recommended by his brother, who advises him to flee London based on “three Words… given in another Case quite different… Master save thy self” (N VII.31). The narrative acknowledges the “differen[ce]” between Biblical circumstances and contemporary life at the same time as it reaffirms the immediate relevance of Scriptural authority.

Critical interest in the religious facets of eighteenth-century thought and culture has been growing throughout recent decades, and though Defoe is still often considered an essentially secular writer, there are signs that critics are treating his religious thought more attentively. Two of the articles in Positioning Defoe’s Non-Fiction (2011) investigate the religious aspects of his writing, and Robert Merrett examines a range of Defoe’s theological “contraries” in his recently published Daniel Defoe: Contrarian (2013). An upcoming meeting of the Defoe Society will include a panel on “Defoe and Sermonic Literature,” a topic on which there is still remarkably little scholarship. As we move beyond the need justify the study of Defoe’s religious thought, more sophisticated analysis of his engagement with Christian discourse will not only enhance
our understanding of Defoe himself, but will also contribute to a more nuanced account of
eighteenth-century culture and history more broadly.
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