

The Quakers and the politics of the army in the crisis of 1659.¹

In October 1659, a Quaker from Lancashire, William Caton, found himself ‘moved of the Lord’ to travel to Leith and Edinburgh.² While he was there he reported ‘good service, sometimes Among the souldiers, sometimes among the Scots and often among friendes’, and he hoped that his ministry had done some good in this ‘time of tryall.’³ Caton’s visit to Edinburgh was undertaken at a moment of high political drama, as General George Monck was preparing to march his troops to London in the final unravelling of the British republic. Caton noted the significance of these events, commenting that the Lord was ‘ariseing in his almighty power, to breake his enemies to peeces like a potters vessel.’ But this apocalyptic vision was underpinned by a more worldly assessment of the political crisis, which, as Caton stated, was ‘not the Lords doing.’⁴ Caton’s letter, indeed, epitomised a remarkable commitment to human political intervention. Since his arrival in Edinburgh, Caton had ‘endeavoured to speake’ on a number of occasions with General Monck, but because he ‘could not have accesse’ to him, had spoken instead to his secretary, William Clarke, who promised to pass on Caton’s concerns, not only to Monck, but also to his officers. Caton was so encouraged by William Clarke and his colleagues, whom he found ‘prettie moderate and civill towards mee’, that he arranged to have his address to Monck printed in Newcastle for

¹ Early versions of this article were presented to a day conference on 1659 at the History of Parliament (which prompted the initial research), the early modern seminar at Keele University, and the Cambridge Early Modern British and Irish History seminar; I am grateful to participants for their suggestions. I am also very grateful to Mark Goldie, Ann Hughes, Alex Walsham and Andy Wood for their comments on various drafts. David Smith helped with the footnotes, and Joel Halcomb very generously shared references with me. The article was completed during a period of research leave, and I would like to thank colleagues at Murray Edwards College, especially David Jarvis, for enabling this.

² Friends’ House Library, William Caton to George Fox, 23 October 1659, Swarthmore Transcripts 1: 392 (hereafter Sw. TRS). Unless otherwise stated, all manuscripts cited in this article are held at Friends’ House Library, London.

³ William Caton to Thomas Willan, 14 November 1659, Sw. TRS 1: 394.

⁴ Caton to Willan, Sw. TRS 1: 395.

wider distribution among officers and soldiers. Yet despite the apparent cordiality of William Clarke, Caton knew that these were dangerous times, and recommended a fuller account should be had verbally from the bearer of his letter, George Collison: ‘many thinges I might write of but not knowing in whose handes this may come I shall therefore be spareing.’⁵

Caton’s letter describes an intense and surprisingly cordial relationship between Quakers and members of the army. The association of early Quakers with the New Model Army, although well known, has attracted little analysis, other than as a rather counter-intuitive prelude to the Quaker peace testimony of 1661.⁶ For the most part, Quaker presence in the army has been considered in the context of the movement’s denominational identity and its subsequent pacifism: the army, it has been argued, was primarily a recruiting ground for early Quakers, who were purged from it in 1657 because their rejection of worldly hierarchy and violence was anathema to military discipline.⁷ The focus on the movement’s denominational trajectory has obscured the Quakers’ more immediate political purposes. As the Aberdeen-based officer, Colonel William Daniel, wrote in a letter to Monck in 1657, Quaker officers were of ‘the Levellers strayne’; their principles of ‘liberty with equality’ - so hard to refute, Daniel worried, without being ‘censured as ... a disturber of liberty’ - would tear the army apart.⁸ Caton’s letter, and the fact that Colonel Daniel was ready both to challenge Quaker principles, and to be rebuked for doing so, suggest an engaged, and essentially dialogic, relationship between Quakers and the army, and one that was informed by the politics of the revolution.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ M. E. Hirst, *The Quakers in peace and war* (London, 1923); Christopher Hill, *The world turned upside down. Radical ideas during the English revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1975), esp. 240-7; Christopher Hill, *The experience of defeat* (Harmondsworth, 1985), 129-69; Barry Reay, *The Quakers and the English revolution* (New York, 1985), esp. 18-19, 41, 82-4; Hugh Barbour, ‘The “Lamb’s War and the Origins of the Quaker peace testimony’, in Harvey L. Dyck (ed.), *The Pacifist impulse in historical perspective* (London, 1996).

⁷ Reay, *Quakers and the English Revolution*, 49-51; William Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1955), 228-31.

⁸ C. H. Firth (ed.), *Scotland and the Protectorate. Letters and papers relating to the military government of Scotland from January 1654 to June 1659* (Edinburgh, 1899), 362.

The early Quaker movement is widely held to be divorced from politics, challenging to contemporaries because of its religious enthusiasm and concomitant social egalitarianism, but with no interest in political or constitutional change. For Barry Reay, Quakers were ‘devoid of any coherent and identifiable political philosophy’; for Jonathan Scott they represent ‘the turning of radical expectation decisively inward, away from “carnal” agencies altogether.’⁹ Yet in this analysis, the moment of Quaker mobilisation around the Good Old Cause in 1659 is problematic. When the Commonwealth was restored in May 1659, Quakers sprang, perhaps literally, to arms in its service, seeking office as magistrates and in the militia, and petitioning parliament for the abolition of tithes.¹⁰ For Barry Reay and Alan Cole this was an aberration: Quakers threw off the ‘deep political isolation’ they had borne under the Protectorate, and acted briefly as a ‘united political force’ with a ‘clear political agenda.’¹¹ Crucially for Reay, the Quakers’ mobilisation in 1659 was significant mainly for the reactionary response it engendered: the widespread ‘Quaker Fear’ helped to propel the gentry and the political nation to seek a return to monarchical order.¹² The outcome for the Quakers was devastating, as the harsh persecution they endured after the Restoration forced them to reject their religious enthusiasm, denounce violence, and turn, famously, from enthusiastic sect to quietist denomination. 1659 is thus seen as a pivotal year for the Quakers, a fatal moment of aberration from which political defeat and denominational introspection were the inevitable conclusion.

⁹ Reay, *Quakers*, 40; Jonathan Scott, *England's Troubles. Seventeenth-century English political instability in European context* (Cambridge, 2000), 241; Andrew Bradstock, *Radical religion in Cromwell's England. A concise history from the English Civil War to the end of the Commonwealth* (London, 2011), 106.

¹⁰ Barry Reay, ‘The Quakers, 1659, and the Restoration’ *History* 63 (1978); Alan Cole, ‘The Quakers and the English Revolution’, *Past and Present* 10 (1956); J. F. Maclear, ‘Quakerism and the end of the interregnum: a chapter in the domestication of radical Puritanism’, *Church History* 19 (1950); Rosemary Moore, *The light in their consciences. Early Quakers in Britain, 1646-1666* (Pennsylvania, 2001), esp. 167-79.

¹¹ Cole, ‘Quakers and the English Revolution’, 46.

¹² Reay, ‘The Quakers, 1659, and the Restoration’.

This enduring account of political disengagement and defeat combines twin historiographical legacies, as well as a strong denominational tradition that has emphasised Quaker pacifism and quietism. Christopher Hill and Barry Reay emphasised the social, rather than the religious, radicalism of Quakers in order to underline their shared origins with Levellers and the radical politics of the English revolution. The emergence of the deeply spiritual Quakers in the 1650s was indicative, for Hill, of the disillusionment following the Levellers' constitutional defeat in 1647-9, as well as the continued existence of a social radicalism thereafter.¹³ In turn, revisionist accounts intensified the separation of religious from political radicalism. The sectaries' explicit subordination to God's will, and their rejection of formal worship or an institutional church, Colin Davis argued, were incompatible with secular arguments for political, constitutionally defined, liberty.¹⁴ Glen Burgess has also argued for a 'marked difference' between 'the politics of consent' of the Levellers, and the world of religious radicals, who believed 'that nothing people built was likely to serve well the purposes of God.'¹⁵ Religious radicalism (of which the Quakers form a part) has thus been depoliticised, understood as a mystical and essentially passive body of opinion that sought divine rather than worldly political intervention, and was explicitly incompatible with the constitutional and civic concerns of Levellers or republicans.¹⁶ At the same time, Reay's argument that the Quakers' main significance lay in the reactionary response they engendered has fed into a wider narrative of moral panic: religious sects, from *Gangraena* to the Ranters and Quakers, were exaggerated in the press by contemporaries, feeding anxiety about

¹³ Hill, *World turned upside down*, 240; Reay, *Quakers and the English Revolution*, 37.

¹⁴ J. C. Davis, 'Religion and the struggle for freedom in the English revolution', *Historical Journal*, 35: 3 (1992), 507-30; J. C. Davis, 'Against formality: one aspect of the English revolution', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 6th ser. 3 (1993); J. C. Davis, 'Living with the Living God: radical religion and the English Revolution', in Christopher Durston and Judith Maltby (eds.), *Religion in revolutionary England* (Manchester, 2006).

¹⁵ Glenn Burgess, 'Radicalism and the English revolution', in Glenn Burgess and Matthew Festenstein (eds.), *English radicalism 1550-1850*, (Cambridge, 2007), 80-1.

¹⁶ Burgess and Feinstein (eds.), *English radicalism*, 12, 75-81.

religious toleration as well as misleading a generation of historians.¹⁷ In this analysis, it is claimed, Quakers and other radical sectaries have been blown out of proportion, both numerically and historiographically; as a consequence, much recent scholarship has considered them as marginal eccentrics, constrained by their intense spirituality, and defined either in terms of political defeat and irrelevance, or by the process of Quaker identity formation.¹⁸

This scholarly relegation of the Quakers to the margins of political competence has largely removed them from political analysis of the English revolution, to the detriment of both. This essay seeks to integrate the Quakers more firmly within the political cultures that defined them, and will argue that they acted more cogently than has been allowed. Two recent strands of scholarship in particular invite a reassessment of the Quakers' political engagement in the English revolution. The first is work by social historians on the conduct of popular politics. This has posited a broader and more participatory model, rooted in the politics of social relations, in which people deployed a variety of strategies to negotiate social hierarchies and unequal power relationships. In this analysis, the articulation of grievances through lobbying, petitioning or even riot, was often tactically framed within public assertions of shared principles, and a public acknowledgement (not necessarily sincere) of the

¹⁷ Reay, 'Quakers, 1659, and restoration'; Ronald Hutton, *The Restoration: a political and religious history of England and Wales, 1658-1667* (Oxford, 1985), 71; J. C. Davis, *Fear Myth and History* (Cambridge, 1986), esp. 76-125; for the ensuing debate on the significance of the Ranters, see 'Fear, myth and furore: reappraising the Ranters', *Past and Present*, 140 (1993). A more recent and much more nuanced account of the press mobilisation of Presbyterians around religious radicalism is Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2004); see also David Lemmings and Claire Walker (eds.), *Moral panics, the media and the law in early modern England* (Basingstoke, 2009), 1-21.

¹⁸ Conal Condren, 'Will all the radicals please lie down, we can't see the seventeenth-century', in Condren, *The Language of politics in seventeenth-century England* (Basingstoke, 1994); Ariel Hessayon and David Finnegan (eds.), *Varieties of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century radicalism in context* (Farnham, 2011); Hilary Hinds, *George Fox and early Quaker culture* (Manchester, 2011); Tom Webster, 'On shaky ground: Quakers, puritans, possession and high spirits', in Michael Braddick and David L. Smith (eds.), *The Experience of revolution in Stuart Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2011).

legitimacy of those in power.¹⁹ This analysis emphasises a broader sense of political agency, involving familiarity with issues such as legitimacy, commonwealth and justice, and rooted, as Andy Wood has recently demonstrated, in the articulation of popular memories that asserted customary and other rights.²⁰ In this analysis, politics was negotiative, involving varied and contested notions of legitimacy and historic rights, rather than requiring the articulation of a coherent ideology that sought political or social transformation, by which rather rigid criteria revisionists dismissed much of the radicalism of the English revolution.²¹ Importantly, this approach enables a re-integration of social and political history that is particularly apt for Quakers: their provocative use of gesture and speech, and the ambiguous conclusions of Quaker social histories, suggest that they were well integrated, socially competent members of their communities, as well as politically challenging.²²

A second historiographical strand has emphasised a new 'public politics' associated with print. This had its roots in the religious and dynastic turbulence of the Elizabethan reformation, entailing a new mobilization of public opinion in what Peter Lake and Steve Pincus termed the 'post-reformation public sphere'. Printed government appeals to mobilise

¹⁹ John Walter, 'Public transcripts, popular agency and the politics of subsistence in early modern England', in Michael Braddick and John Walter (eds.), *Negotiating power in early modern society: order, hierarchy and subordination in Britain and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2001), esp. 128, 137; see also the editors' introduction. Key to models of negotiation is the work of James C. Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance: hidden transcripts* (London, 1990) and Scott, *Weapons of the weak: everyday forms of peasant resistance* (London, 1985); for useful accounts of the impact of Scott's work on the history of early modern popular politics, see Andy Wood, *Riot, rebellion and popular politics in early modern England* (Basingstoke, 2002), and Wood, 'Subordination, solidarity and the limits of popular agency in a Yorkshire valley, c. 1596-1615', *Past and Present*, 193 (2006).

²⁰ Andy Wood, *The Memory of the people: custom and popular senses of the past in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2013).

²¹ J. C. Davis, 'Radicalism in a traditional society: the evaluation of radical thought in the English Commonwealth', *History of Political Thought*, 3: 2 (1982); Davis, 'Re-assessing radicalism in a traditional society: two questions', in Burgess and Feinstein (eds.), *English radicalism*; Burgess, 'Radicalism and the English revolution'; Hessayon and Finnegan (eds.), *Varieties of seventeenth- and eighteenth century English radicalism*, 1-25.

²² John Walter, "'Gesturing at authority": deciphering the gestural code of early modern in England', *Past and Present*, 203 (2009), supplement 4, esp. 119; Adrian Davies, *The Quakers in English society 1655-1725* (Oxford, 2000); Bill Stevenson, 'The social integration of post-Restoration rural dissenters' in Margaret Spufford (ed.), *The rural world of dissenters, 1520-1725* (Cambridge, 1994); John Miller, "'A suffering people": English Quakers and their neighbours, c. 1650-1700', *Past and Present*, 188 (2005).

the 'people' or the protestant nation sought legitimacy through languages of commonwealth and godly magistracy, as well as of true (or false) religion.²³ The explosion of print in the 1640s, including novel formats such as domestic news and petitions, introduced new languages of political accountability, as well as extensive discussions of the religious implications, and principles at stake, in the civil wars. In this analysis, print was at the heart of a participatory and accountable political culture, and was crucial to political mobilisation in the 1640s; the Quakers' sophisticated use of the press after 1652 underlines how far they were the product of this culture.²⁴

These scholarly endeavours have done much to enhance our understanding of early modern political participation. Broadly speaking, they have formed part of a scholarship that emphasises the importance of negotiation and agency in the process of reformation, and has challenged grand narratives of modernisation, secularisation or success often associated with protestant reformation, emphasising instead the ambiguities and continuities that underpinned religious change.²⁵ They have also contributed to a growing recognition of the inextricable links between religious and constitutional politics in the post-reformation period.²⁶ Yet Quakers, and other radical religious sects of the English revolution, remain largely outside this analysis. This essay posits that these broader accounts of participation provide useful

²³ Jason Peacey, *Print and public politics in the English revolution* (Cambridge, 2013); Peter Lake and Steve Pincus (eds.), *The Politics of the public sphere in early modern England* (Manchester, 2008), esp. p. 5.

²⁴ Peacey, *Print and public politics*; Peacey, *Politicians and pamphleteers: propaganda during the English Civil Wars and interregnum* (Aldershot, 2004); Joad Raymond, *Pamphlets and pamphleteering in early modern Britain* (Cambridge, 2003), esp. 226-9; Lake and Pincus (eds.), *Politics of the public sphere*, esp. the editors' introduction; David Zaret, *Origins of democratic culture: printing, petitions, and the public sphere in early modern England* (Princeton, 2000); Hughes, *Gangraena*; Kate Peters, *Print culture and the early Quakers* (Cambridge, 2005).

²⁵ The literature is extensive, but best articulated by Alexandra Walsham, 'The reformation and "the disenchantment of the world" reassessed', *Historical Journal*, 51: 2 (2008); Walsham, 'History, memory and the English reformation', *Historical Journal*, 55: 4 (2012); Ethan Shagan, *Popular politics and the English reformation* (Cambridge, 2002).

²⁶ A recent attempt to state this is Charles Prior and Glenn Burgess (eds.), *England's wars of religion, revisited* (Farnham, 2011), esp. 23-5; Rachel Foxley, *The Levellers: radical political thought in the English revolution* (Manchester, 2013) has usefully explored the importance of religious liberty of conscience to the Levellers.

tools with which to re-assess Quaker political engagement. By examining the substance and the manner of the Quakers' dialogue with the army in 1659, I will argue that the Quakers' capacity for political engagement was a consequence of, and not despite, their profound commitment to religious liberty of conscience; and that the efficacy of their engagement sprang from their shrewd familiarity with the political cultures of which they were a product.

I

The nature of the Quakers' dialogue with the army is illustrated in a visit made to the British-held port of Dunkirk in May 1659 by two well-known Quakers: Edward Burrough, a celebrated preacher and prolific author who had been expelled from Ireland by Henry Cromwell for preaching to the army, and Samuel Fisher, an erudite former General Baptist, and previously a chaplain to Sir Arthur Hesilrige.²⁷ Burrough and Fisher left for Dunkirk on 6 May 1659, as the Rump Parliament was preparing to sit again in London.²⁸ Despite the heightened political context, the primary purpose of the visit, according to Burrough's pamphlet account, was to preach to the 'Jesuits and Friars and papists' in Dunkirk, and 'to discover to them the errors of their ways.'²⁹ The visit was thus part of the Quakers' well-established international preaching campaign, proclaiming the need to overthrow the unrighteous Church of Rome, 'that the earth may be set at liberty, and all Europ made free from the cruelties and tyrannies of Antichrist.'³⁰

²⁷ Catie Gill, 'Burrough, Edward (1633–1663)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004; online edn, Jan 2008 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/4103>, accessed 9 Jan 2014]; Stefano Villani, 'Fisher, Samuel (ba 1604, d. 1665)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/9507>, accessed 9 Jan 2014].

²⁸ For narratives of this complex period, see Austin Woolrych, *Britain in revolution 1625-1660* (Oxford, 2002); Ronald Hutton, *The Restoration. A political and religious history of England and Wales 1658-1667* (Oxford, 1985); Ruth Mayers, *1659: the crisis of the Commonwealth* (London, 2004).

²⁹ Edward Burrough, *A Visitation and warning proclaimed and an alarm sounded in the popes borders* (London, 1659), 6.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 26-27; Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 401-33.

Burrough's pamphlet made a strong polemical link between the English army and on-going reformation, recalling the army's god-given victories, and urging soldiers to return to their former glories by aggressive pursuit of international reformation: 'no more looking back by you for rest and ease in the flesh ... till you have visited Rome and ... avenge the blood of the guiltless through all the Dominions of the Pope.'³¹ Burrough's manuscript account of the trip, written on his return to Dover in late May, and circulated among Quaker meetings across England, reveals the intense discussions that took place between the Quakers and the English army in Dunkirk.³² On arrival, Burrough wrote, they were examined 'in much soberness & wisdom' by the deputy governor, Colonel Roger Alsop. Alsop was worried that the Quakers' presence would lead to 'divideing the armie', and asked them to leave. Fisher and Burrough refused. A number of officers visited them in their rooms - significantly, those who knew them from elsewhere, and 'were kinde towards us' - and the following Sunday a 'very large meeting of divers officers and soldiers' took place. While Burrough described increasingly successful meetings (one lieutenant offered them the use of his house), he also noted the heated arguments sparked by their presence: 'in all this a great division grewe in the Garrison, amonge the officers ... many wee had to plead for us in bouldness, and others to speake against us.'³³

This division, in Burrough's account, was epitomised in the conflicted response of the Governor, General William Lockhart, who returned from Paris to deal with the Quakers. Like his deputy, Lockhart appeared to take the Quakers seriously, and held a series of formal meetings with them and around twenty of his officers, in which they discussed principles of religion. In Burrough's account, Lockhart was reluctant to order them to leave: '[he said] wee

³¹ Burrough, *Visitation and warning*, 29-30.

³² Edward Burrough to Gerrard Roberts, 29 May 1659, Portfolio 1: 107; for its circulation see William Caton to Margaret Fell, 22 June 1659, Sw. TRS 1: 388.

³³ Burrough to Roberts, Portfolio 1: 107.

should bee wellcome, for hee had nothing against us, save that a greate division was in the armie about us;' he was also 'alltogether unwilling to use any maner of violence against us.' Burrough's letter suggests strong mutual respect: at the end of the meeting, 'they parted with us in great love, and Respect to us, and the Generall sent his man with us to our owne Lodging, being its dangerous passing the streets, within night.'³⁴ Burrough's account emphasised, and perhaps idealised, the friendliness of the exchanges with the English army officers, contrasting their affectation of tolerance with the 'burger masters, towne officers [and] Civill magistrates' who 'grew violant in seekeing against us'. The army officers remained peaceful and 'moderate' (in the sense of commanding authority, in Ethan Shagan's analysis), while the rest of the town was in a frenzy, the English clergymen refusing to meet with them for fear the 'whole armie should bee seduced.'³⁵ To this extent, Lockhart and Alsop were almost ideal civil magistrates, protecting the Quakers from violence, and confirming the view that the army championed religious liberty.

Yet it is clear nevertheless that the Quaker ministers forced a confrontation with the officers about liberty of conscience, and in so doing revisited a fundamental stumbling block of England's revolution. As Burrough described it, Alsop and Lockhart 'used many words to us, to persuade us to goe away,' but Fisher and Burrough were implacable, refusing worldly persuasion in the name of conscience. They could not leave, 'for in the will of god wee stood, and not in mans will': they had broken no laws by coming to Dunkirk. As the Quakers continued to insist that the officers had no authority to act against their conscience, Lockhart combined with the town authorities and forcibly expelled them.³⁶ Their expulsion epitomised

³⁴ Portfolio 1: 107v.

³⁵ Ethan Shagan, *The rule of moderation: violence, religion and the politics of restraint in early modern England* (Cambridge, 2012); Shagan, 'Rethinking moderation in the English Revolution', in Stephen Taylor and Grant Tapsell (eds.), *The nature of the English revolution revisited: essays in honour of John Morrill* (Woodbridge, 2013), 27-51; Burrough, Portfolio 1: 107v.

³⁶ Portfolio 1: 107v.

the precise issue of whether the magistrate should exercise power over matters of conscience that had been of such significance to the politics of the army in 1647-1649. The question of magisterial powers over matters of religion, and their place within the second *Agreement of the People*, had been the focus of the Whitehall Debates in December 1648; failure to agree had been the catalyst to the rift between Leveller and army leaders.³⁷ Hence the fears of Lockhart and his officers that the Quakers were reopening old divisions within the army were well founded: as Burrough put it, 'they fell close upon the old matter, viz of the greate division, and of the greate danger thereof.'³⁸

Recent scholarship on the politics of the army during the revolution of 1647-49 has stressed once again the openness of the army to civilian debates, and the fluidity of relations between army leaders, Levellers, and civilians. Elliot Vernon and Philip Baker have described a culture of collaboration between civilians and army members in the months preceding the appearance of the first *Agreement of the People* in 1647. Jason Peacey has similarly described the complex process of petitioning, lobbying and rallying that accompanied the publication and circulation of the *Agreements of the People*, both within and beyond the army, in 1647-49.³⁹ It is contended here that the Quakers were revisiting both these same debates, and debating strategies, over the course of 1659, and that they looked to the army as a political body expected to fulfil its early promises on freedom of conscience.

³⁷ Carolyn Polizzotto, 'Liberty of conscience and the Whitehall Debates of 1648-9', *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 26 (1975); Barbara Taft, 'The Council of Officers' Agreement of the People, 1648-9', *The Historical Journal*, 28: 1 (1985); Taft, 'From Reading to Whitehall: Henry Ireton's journey', in Michael Mendle (ed.), *The Putney Debates of 1647: the army, the Levellers, and the English state* (Cambridge, 2001); Rachel Foxley, 'Freedom of Conscience and the *Agreements of the People*', in Philip Baker and Elliot Vernon (eds.), *The Agreements of the People, the Levellers and the Constitutional Crisis of the English Revolution* (Basingstoke, 2012); Polizzotto, 'What really happened at the Whitehall Debates? A new source', *Historical Journal*, 57: 1 (2014).

³⁸ Burrough to Roberts, Portfolio 1: 107v.

³⁹ Elliot Vernon and Philip Baker, 'What was the First *Agreement of the People*?' *Historical Journal*, 53: 1 (2010), esp. 46-7; Jason Peacey, 'The People of the *Agreements*: the Levellers, Civil War Radicalism and political participation', in Baker and Vernon (eds.), *Agreements of the People*; Ian Gentles, 'The New Model Army and the constitutional crisis of the late 1640s', in *ibid.*

II

A significant element of the Quakers' debate with the army occurred in print. Quaker pamphlets appeared in larger numbers than ever before in the years 1659-60, jumping from around 86 titles in 1658 to 192 titles in 1659, and 240 in 1660.⁴⁰ In the years before 1659, fewer than 4% of Quaker title-pages included addresses to Parliament, and 2.5% included addresses to the army; in 1659, these figures rose to 16% and 8% respectively (by comparison 12% of all Quaker titles from 1660 included addresses to the king, 1% to the army and 5% to Parliament).⁴¹ Thus a small but significant tranche of Quaker tracts published in 1659 were direct addresses to Parliament and army. Through them, Quaker authors presented a careful articulation of the legitimacy of both army and parliament, which they used to frame their own expectations and frustrations.

A key principle around which Quaker tracts developed a critique of the legitimacy of both army and Parliament was the Self-Denying Ordinance of 1645. Writing in May 1659, the Quaker goldsmith Humphrey Bache welcomed the newly restored Rump Parliament, and recalled its former glory, when 'Gods powerful presence appeared for your protection and preservation.'⁴² For Bache, the clearest evidence of God's providential workings in Parliament was the Self-Denying Ordinance. This had set in place the principle that no MP should hold military office, and thus suffer a conflict of interest between their civilian and military duties; it also stated that public office should benefit 'publique uses' only, and that

⁴⁰ Figures based on a search of titles cited in Joseph Smith's *A descriptive catalogue of Friends' Books*, 2 vols., (London, 1867), taken from the on-line ESTC: <http://estc.bl.uk>. See also Hugh Barbour and Arthur Roberts (eds.), *Early Quaker writings, 1650-1700* (Grand Rapids, 1973), 568-9. Rosemary Moore's estimated figures are lower because she did not include second and further editions in her study: Moore, *Light in their Consciences*, 241-2.

⁴¹ Approximate figures, based on a search of titles in the ESTC; I have discounted figurative references, for example to Quakers as members of the 'Lamb's Army'.

⁴² Humphrey Bache, *A few words in true love written to the old long sitting parliament* (London, 1659), sig. Ar.

office holders ‘shall have no profit out of such Office, other then a competent salary.’⁴³ In Bache’s account the Ordinance had manifested that ‘your hearts were upright and not self-seeking ... and I remember it did refresh me to hear it, and it reached the hearts ... of thousands.’ Bache went on to argue that Parliament had subsequently failed to live up to its own principles of self-denial: ‘But alas friends! when your straits were over ... you looked to the temptation, & joined to self & went out from the presence of God.’ The profiteering of MPs and employees of the Commonwealth from royalist estates had undermined principles of self-denial and commonwealth: ‘When I heard that you had given gifts to one another, of that which was the Kings, which was the peoples right, which in your Ordinance you had denied; I was sadded at my heart.’⁴⁴

The army, too, was held to account by the principles of the Self-Denying Ordinance. George Fox the younger, asserting his unity as a fellow soldier, noted approvingly that the army’s ‘honest principles’ were initially ‘freely given up to do your Nation service;’ but that after victory, ‘the greatness of your pay, and the spoile of your enemies ... began to be more delightful to many of you, then the liberty you once declared for.’⁴⁵ Humphrey Bache complained of ‘poor soldiers defrauded of their right’ as they were forced to sell off their military debentures, issued as a means of settling arrears of pay after 1649, too cheaply - ‘for what the wood was worth upon the ground.’⁴⁶ The Quaker Richard Crane, a London distiller who claimed he had been ‘conversant’ with army officers since 1645, also deplored the iniquities which underpinned the market in military debentures: ‘many Officers who could not procure money’ to buy royalist estates (including, he confessed, himself), ‘made means to

⁴³ C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (eds.), *Acts and ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642-1660*, 3 vols. (London, 1911), i, 664; A. N. B. Cotton, ‘Cromwell and the Self-Denying Ordinance’, *History*, 62 (1977), 211-31; Mark Kishlansky, *The rise of the New Model Army* (Cambridge, 1979), esp. 28-35; Ian Gentles, *The New Model Army in England, Ireland and Scotland, 1645-1653* (Oxford, 1992), 6-27.

⁴⁴ Bache, *A few words in true love*, 2-3.

⁴⁵ George Fox (the younger), *Honest, upright, faithful and plain dealing with thee o army* (London, 1659), 1-2.

⁴⁶ Bache, *A few words in true love*, 11.

buy Souldiers debentures' cheaply: 'here the inferior Officers found out a way to Merchandize', when 'the publick debts should have been paid.'⁴⁷ Resentment over the sales of debentures was widely voiced in 1659: this was not a 'Quaker' issue, but one that resonated deeply with army politics, and which, for the authors cited here, betrayed the principles of the Self-Denying Ordinance.⁴⁸ Self-denial was also used to criticise the political aggrandizement of army officers, an issue that underpinned the constitutional disagreements of 1659. George Fox, probably writing after the army's expulsion of the Rump in October 1659, urged the Council of Officers to 'seek after the good of all men, and deny your selves', reminding them of the principles of the New Model Army and the republic's foundation: 'What a dirty, nasty thing it would have been to have heard talk of a House of Lords among them! oh how is the sincerity choaked, smothered & quenched by the fatness of the earth.'⁴⁹

For literary scholars like Nigel Smith, Quaker discussion of self-denial has been understood as an expression of their spiritual unity with God, but it is clear from the writings presented here that there was also an important political context to self-denial, rooted explicitly in the principles of the Self-Denying Ordinance, and the articulation of commonwealth principles of public interest.⁵⁰ Better adherence to principles of self-denial was also presented as a pre-requisite for future political success, and by extension incorporated into more prophetic warnings to both army and Parliament. George Fox the younger warned members of the army to return to the spirit of God, so that 'self-denial will be manifested in you ... and they that called you a mercenary Army, then should be

⁴⁷ Richard Crane, *A few plain words to the officers of the army* (London, 1659), 4-5; Ian Gentles, 'The sales of crown lands during the English revolution,' *Economic History Review*, 26 (1973), 614-35; Mark Kishlansky, 'The sales of crown lands and the spirit of the Revolution', *Economic History Review*, 29: 1 (1976), 125-130; see Ian Gentles' reply in the same issue, 131-35.

⁴⁸ Henry Reece, *The army in Cromwellian England, 1649-1660* (Oxford, 2013), 191.

⁴⁹ George Fox, *To the council of officers of the armie, and the heads of the nation* [London, 1659], 1, 7.

⁵⁰ Nigel Smith, *Perfection proclaimed* (Oxford, 1989), esp. 66-72; see also Phyllis Mack, *Visionary women. Ecstatic prophecy in seventeenth-century England* (Berkeley, 1992), 236-261; Jonathan Scott, 'What were Commonwealth principles?' *Historical Journal*, 47: 3 (2004), esp. 596.

ashamed': 'then ye might truly be called the Common wealths-men.' However, he continued: 'if ye carry a sword, and expect ... to make a trade of [that], then I know you will not utterly bring down oppressors ... least your trade should fail.'⁵¹ Other Quakers warned of divine intervention if self-denial were not maintained. 'Do what [the Lord] requires of you,' Edward Burrough warned the 'rulers of England' after the dissolution of October 1659: 'deny yourselves, and not seek your own honours, nor any earthly advantage to your selves ... then My Lord will shew Mercie to you, and you shall not suddenly fall before your enemies.'⁵²

Although the apocalyptic language of Quaker polemic has been understood as indicative of their passive withdrawal from worldly politics, warnings such as these, issued to rulers who had ignored principles of commonwealth, suggest a more canny strategy of political engagement, and one that resonates with our understanding of the conduct of early modern popular politics. In his influential study of the art of popular political resistance, the anthropologist James Scott suggested that threats of providential violence could be tactically effective when criticising rulers, partly because the threatened violence would not come from those issuing the warning, and partly because such providential language was broadly shared.⁵³ In this context, Quaker warnings of apocalyptic political overthrow, grounded as we have seen in declarations of shared political principle, were an integral part of their negotiating strategy with ruling powers. References to the providential parameters of political power were not, therefore, a trope of political disengagement, but served as an effective, and probably broadly understood, means of framing political legitimacy, and issuing political criticism.

⁵¹ George Fox (the younger), *This is for you who are called the common-wealth-men both in the army and parliament* (London, 1659), 7.

⁵² Edward Burrough, *A message to the present rulers of England* (London, 1659), 10.

⁵³ Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance*, 5; Alexandra Walsham, *Providence in early modern England* (Oxford, 1999).

A second principle by which Quaker authors both acknowledged and criticised the army's legitimacy in 1659 was the army's undertaking to abolish tithes. Objection to the legal compulsion to pay tithes for a ministry whose doctrines they rejected was central to the Quakers' argument for liberty of conscience: as the Quaker petitioners, it was fundamentally wrong to 'compel men to maintain a Minister' whom they knew to be 'in error.'⁵⁴ The army had first proposed the abolition of tithes in August 1647 in *The Heads of the Proposals*, and reiterated it in *The Case of the Army Truly Stated*, although notoriously no parliamentary or army regimes actually realised it.⁵⁵ Quaker authors in 1659 recalled not these crucial texts, however, but their shared experience in military service, specifically a promise allegedly made by Cromwell to his troops before the Battle of Dunbar in September 1650, '*that if the Lord would but deliver him that time, he would take away that great oppression of Tithes.*' In recalling this promise, the former army officer Richard Hubberthorne reflected how Cromwell had, instead, 'tollerated the wicked spirit of persecution' and suffered 'Laws to be made for Tithes ... so building again that which he had destroyed.'⁵⁶ Edward Billing, who like Hubberthorne had fought at Dunbar, charged his fellow soldiers in 1659 with collective responsibility for Cromwell's apostasy: 'if ye did not promise to the Lord before the battle at Dunbar, that ... Tythes should be taken off, if the Lord delivered ye that day, then say I am a lyar; the Lord hath performed, but ye have failed.'⁵⁷ Quakers, like Fifth Monarchist authors, thus invoked their shared military memories of Dunbar to legitimate their criticisms of the

⁵⁴ Mary Forster, *These several papers was sent to the Parliament* (London, 1659), 63-64; see also Anthony Pearson, *The great case of tythes truly stated* (London, 1657); Barry Reay, 'Quaker opposition to tithes 1652-1660', *Past and Present*, 86 (1980).

⁵⁵ Ian Gentles, 'New Model Army and the constitutional crisis', esp.143, 145.

⁵⁶ Richard Hubberthorne, *A word of widsom and counsel to the officers and soldiers of the Army* (London, 1659).

⁵⁷ Edward Billing, *A word of reproof and advice to my late fellow-souldiers* (London, 1659), 10; Catie Gill, 'Hubberthorne, Richard (ba 1628, d. 1662)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/14018>, accessed 22 Sept 2013].

army.⁵⁸ Quaker tracts in 1659 constituted a well-informed holding of the army to account, a plea to uphold the principles of self-denial and liberty of conscience that, for the Quakers, were at the heart of the revolutionary endeavours.

III

The argument that the army had undertaken, and then failed to ensure, liberty of conscience was presented most comprehensively in a tract by the Quaker George Bishop, entitled *Mene Tekel*. This was written in response to the Council of Officers' *Humble Petition and Adresse* of 12 May 1659, in which the Council of Officers presented its own constitutional proposals to the newly restored Rump Parliament.⁵⁹ *Mene Tekel* took its title from the Book of Daniel (5: 25), referring to the writing which appeared mysteriously on the wall at the feast of King Belshazzar, and was interpreted to mean 'God has numbered the days of your kingdom; you have been weighed in the balances and found wanting.' Bishop's tract was a similarly stark warning to the army.

George Bishop was a successful Bristol merchant (he had reportedly supplied beer to the English army in Ireland in 1649-50) who was well connected, both politically and militarily. Like many of the Quaker authors of 1659, Bishop had served in the New Model Army, in his case from the Battle of Naseby until around the time of Dunbar. He had spoken at the Putney Debates in 1647, when his first intervention reminded those debating of the godly purpose of the meeting, and he read out a letter from the preacher John Saltmarsh, warning the army not to mismanage 'that glorious principle of Christian liberty'. His second

⁵⁸ On the specific charge that Cromwell had broken a promise to abolish tithes made at the same time as Dunbar, see the argument between Cromwell and the Fifth Monarchist John Rogers in *The faithfull narrative of the late testimony and demand made to Oliver Cromwell* ([London], 1654, i.e. 1655), sig. E2v [mispag. 36]; see also Christopher Feake, *A beam of light shining* (London, 1659), 29-31. I am grateful to Joel Halcomb for sharing this reference with me and discussion on this point.

⁵⁹ George Bishop, *Mene Tekel: or, the council of officers of the army* (London, 1659); *The humble petition and adresse of the officers of the army* (London, 1659); Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, 651-60; 698-700.

intervention, more famously, referred to Charles Stuart as ‘that man of blood’ and identified him with tyrannical principles that would destroy the kingdom.⁶⁰ He had served the Commonwealth as secretary to the Committee for Examinations from 1649-1653, where he worked closely with the republican MP, Thomas Scot.⁶¹ Bishop had continued an active connection with the Leveller John Wildman in the 1650s, and was part of the army-based challenge to the constitutional legitimacy of the Protectorate in September 1654, advising Wildman on a draft of the *Petition of Several Colonels*, described as ‘the last of the Army-Leveller manifestoes’ and an early articulation of the Good Old Cause.⁶² From his conviction in 1654, Bishop was a prolific and sophisticated Quaker pamphleteer. His political experience on the Committee of Examinations was evident in his very careful management of the documentary evidence relating to James Nayler’s arrest and trial for blasphemy in 1656, and he was behind some key publications questioning the legitimacy of Parliament to intervene in matters of religion.⁶³ Bishop was thus among the most politically engaged and experienced of early Quakers, and represents one of the strongest links between army-Leveller radicalism and the Quaker movement.

Bishop’s tract, *Mene Tekel*, opened with the observation that in submitting their *Humble Petition and Adresse*, the Officers had altered their cause ‘from a good Old one, to a

⁶⁰ C. H. Firth (ed.), *The Clarke Papers* (London, Royal Historical Society, 1992), 340 and 383; on the contents of John Saltmarsh’s letter see Roger Pooley, ‘Saltmarsh, John (d. 1647)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24578>, accessed 7 Oct 2013].

⁶¹ G. E. Aylmer, *The State’s servants. The civil service of the English republic* (London, 1973), 272-3; Maryann Feola, *George Bishop: seventeenth-century soldier turned Quaker* (York, 1996); C. H. Firth, ‘Scott, Thomas (d. 1660)’, rev. Sean Kelsey, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/24917>, accessed 4 Oct 2013].

⁶² Barbara Taft, ‘The Humble Petition of Several Colonels of the Army’, *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 42: 1 (1978), 20, 15; Braithwaite, *Beginnings of Quakerism*, 113; Thomas Saunders, John Okey and Matthew Alured, *To his Highness the Lord Protector, &c., and our general. The humble petition of several colonels of the army* [London, 1654]. Like *Mene Tekel*, this text drew on Ireton’s *Remonstrance*.

⁶³ Peters, *Print culture*, 249-51; George Bishop, *The throne of truth exalted over the powers of darkness* (London, 1657).

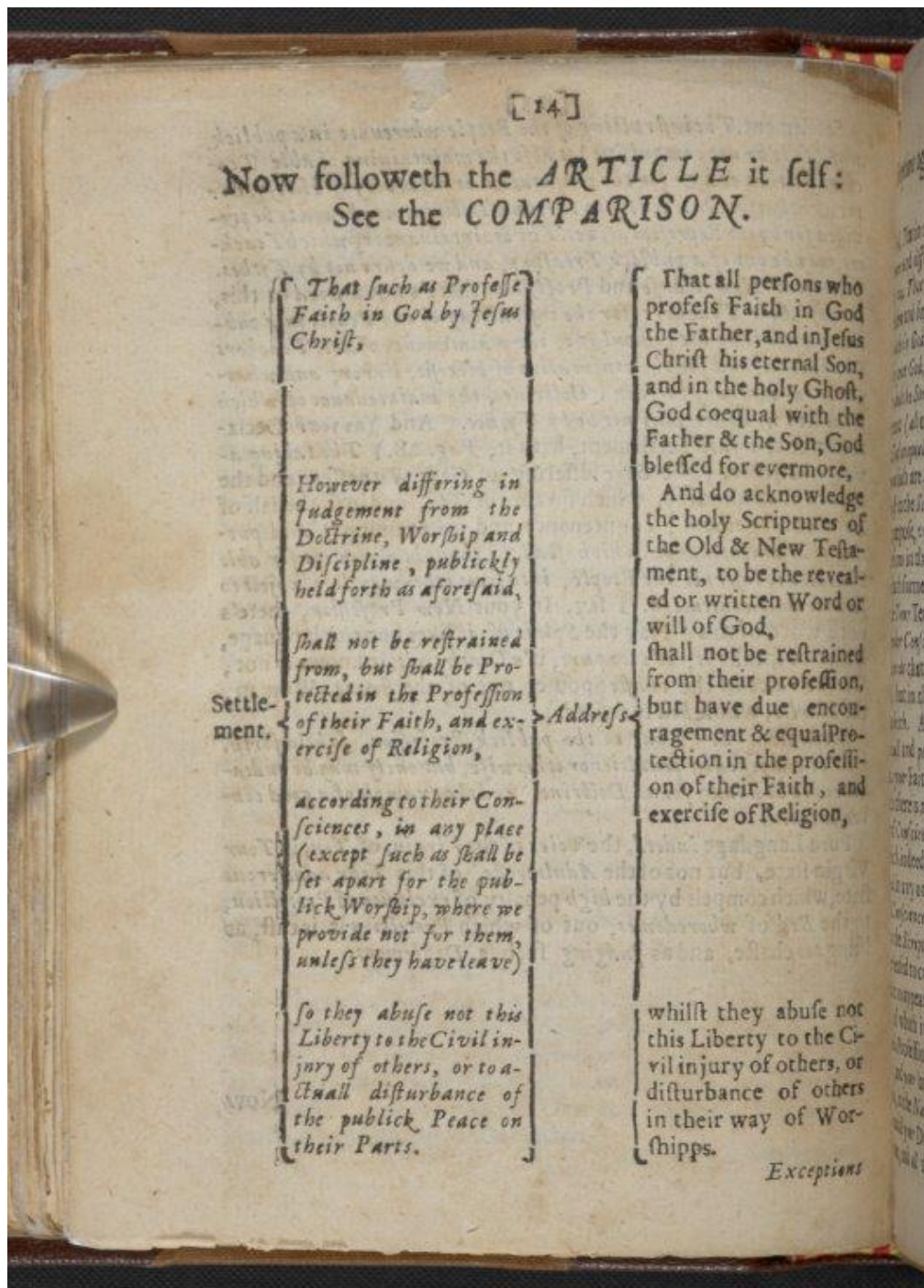
bad New one.’⁶⁴ Although there were fifteen clauses in *Humble Petition and Adresse*, Bishop focused exclusively on Article VI, concerning religion, and which he subjected to a minute textual comparison with two key army declarations from 1648-49: *A Remonstrance*, written by Henry Ireton and issued by the General Council of Officers from St Albans on 16 November 1648; and the Officers’ *Agreement of the People*, of 20 January 1649.⁶⁵ Bishop found much of Article VI of the *Humble Petition* hard to countenance, not least that the army was now asking Parliament to determine the form of public worship, against the very premise of earlier army proposals that stipulated a firm separation of religious and civil powers. Bishop presented his lengthy critique of the wording of the sixth article with a tabular comparison of the *Humble Petition* and the Officers’ *Agreement*, which graphically illustrated the exclusions and qualifications in the new clause on religion. (See Plate 1.) ‘There is not a word of Conscience in this your new Cause and profession of Religion,’ Bishop noted darkly: the army had ‘murdered’ it.⁶⁶

⁶⁴ George Bishop, *Mene Tekel: or, the council of officers of the army* (London, 1659), frontispiece and 5; *The humble petition and adresse of the officers of the army* (London, 1659).

⁶⁵ *The humble petition and adresse*, 6-7; *A remonstrance of his Excellency Thomas Lord Fairfax ... and of the General Council of Officers held at St Albans the 16 November 1648* (London, 1648); and *A petition from his Excellency Thomas Lord Fairfax and the General Council of Officers of the Army ... concerning the draught of an Agreement of the People* (London, 1649). See G. E. Aylmer (ed.), *The Levellers in the English revolution* (London, 1975), 40-1, and Gentles, *New Model Army*, 272-76.

⁶⁶ Bishop, *Mene Tekel*, 15-16; 18; 25-6; compare with *Humble petition and adresse*, 6.

Plate 1. George Bishop, *Mene Tekel* (London, 1659), p. 14, comparing the wording of the Officers' *Agreement of the People* of 1649 ('Settlement') with the *Humble Petition and Adresse* of 1659. The gap in the right-hand column illustrates the omission of conscience from the latter. [By permission of the British Library, T. 377(8), p. 14.]



Yet while Bishop deplored that the army looked to Parliament to *define* matters ‘Evangelical or Spiritual’, he also argued strongly that the duty of civil government was to *protect* the profession of faith according to conscience. For Bishop, a key element of Parliament’s conflict with the King (here he drew on Ireton’s discussion in the *Remonstrance* of November 1648), had been over the need ‘to protect and countenance religious men, and godliness’: this was in the ‘Publick Interest’, which Charles I ‘had all along opposed’, seeking ‘to set up his, and his posterities Will and Power.’⁶⁷ The king’s betrayal of the public interest by neglecting to protect men of religion had formed part of Ireton’s argument in the *Remonstrance* that Charles I should be put on trial, and was a key plank of the justification of the regicide. It was transmuted, in the Officers’ *Agreement of the People*, and subsequently constitutionally in the Instrument of Government (1653), into the recognition that those who refrained from the public profession, yet who nevertheless professed faith in God by Jesus Christ, ‘shall be protected in the profession of their Faith and exercise of Religion according to their Consciences.’⁶⁸ Historians usually emphasise the preceding clause, that none should be ‘compelled by penalties’ to follow the public profession, and the absence of compulsion is understood to form the linchpin of the religious toleration of the 1650s.⁶⁹ The duty of the civil magistrate to *protect* liberty of conscience has received far less attention from scholars, especially those who stress the incompatibility of religious and civil liberty.⁷⁰ The broader implications of Bishop’s argument are crucial to our understanding of the Quakers’ capacity

⁶⁷ Bishop, *Mene Tekel*, 6; compare with *A remonstrance*, 19-20.

⁶⁸ Gentles, *New Model Army*, 274-76; *A petition ... concerning the draught of an Agreement of the People*, 27; compare with Article XXXVII of the Instrument of Government in S. R. Gardiner (ed.), *The constitutional documents of the Puritan Revolution 1625-1660* (Oxford, 1906, 1979 imprint), 416; Ann Hughes, ‘The national church in Interregnum England’, in C. Durston and J. Maltby (ed.), *Religion in revolutionary England* (Manchester, 2006), 96; David Smith, ‘The *Agreements of the People* and the constitutions of the interregnum governments’ in Baker and Vernon (eds.), *The Agreements of the People*.

⁶⁹ Alexandra Walsham, *Charitable hatred: tolerance and intolerance in England, 1500-1700* (Manchester, 2006), 257; Hughes, ‘The national church in Interregnum England’, 96; John Coffey, ‘The toleration controversy during the English revolution’, in Durston and Maltby (eds.), *Religion in revolutionary England*.

⁷⁰ J. C. Davis, ‘Religion and the struggle for freedom in the English revolution’, *Historical Journal*, 35: 3 (1992), 507-30; Davis’s distinction between civil and religious freedom is challenged in Mayers, *Crisis of the Commonwealth*, 211.

for political engagement: secular powers were required to intervene in (although not to determine) matters of religion; failure to protect religious liberty of conscience constituted an abnegation of the public interest, as the fate of Charles I had demonstrated. Reminding magistrates of their duty to protect them from religious persecution was at the heart of many of Quaker confrontations throughout the 1650s and after the Restoration: it was the very basis upon which Quakers challenged their authority.⁷¹ Moreover it had profound constitutional significance: ‘for where Conscience thus suffers, the person or outward man is not free,’ and, Bishop elaborated: ‘the right of freedom of conscience, is a civil Right ... and where this Liberty is abridged by a State, that State is not free.’⁷² The Quakers did therefore have very clear constitutional concerns, rooted in the provision for liberty of conscience, informed by justifications of the regicide offered by Ireton and the army, and, crucially, necessitating a relationship between religion and magistracy.

Bishop dated his warning to the Council of Officers on 23 May 1659, ten days after the publication of the *Humble Petition and Adresse*, and around the same time that Burrough was pursuing very similar arguments with Roger Alsop and others in Dunkirk. Significantly, however, the bookseller George Thomason appears not to have obtained his copy of *Mene Tekel* until 29 September 1659. By this time, relations between the Rump Parliament and army officers had significantly deteriorated. Army officers’ resentment over the Rump’s insistence on controlling commissions to the new militia had combined over the summer with on-going military frustrations over issues of indemnity and arrears of pay. This culminated on 22 September in the explosive presentation of a petition, emanating from John Lambert’s troops in Derby, which called on Parliament to fulfil the Army’s *Humble Petition and Adresse* of 13 May. Ultimately the Derby Petition fuelled the fissure between Rump and

⁷¹ Disputes between magistrates and Quakers are discussed in Peters, *Print culture*, ch. 7; Craid W. Horle, *The Quakers and the English legal system, 1660-1688* (Philadelphia, 1988).

⁷² Bishop, *Mene Tekel*, 24-6, 30.

Army on 13 October: on 23 September the Rump, ominously recalling events of 1647, voted the army's petition 'dangerous to the Commonwealth'; the petition was submitted nevertheless on 5 October; and on 12 October the Rump voted to cashier the signatories, leading to the enforced closure of the Rump by John Lambert and other officers the following day.⁷³ The army itself was deeply divided over the constitutional issues raised by the Derby Petition, and key officers expressed dismay at the actions of John Lambert. Some of these dissenting officers (including John Okey and Thomas Saunders) were acquaintances of George Bishop and the Quakers; other key army figures who would subsequently stand against the army's Committee for Safety included Colonels Nathaniel Rich, Moss and Ashfield, all of whom, as we will see, were in touch with Quaker leaders.⁷⁴ The public circulation of *Mene Tekel* on 29 September underlines that Quaker leaders, revisiting key army debates from 1648-9, were deeply involved in the fissures and debates within the Council of Officers and the army in the early autumn. That Bishop may have delayed its publication by four months is strongly suggestive of a tactical move, as he moved publicly in late September to challenge *Humble Petition and Adresse* in the light of the Derby Petition.

IV

The tactical alacrity demonstrated by George Bishop, as well as his clear articulation that the enactment of liberty of conscience was a matter for the state, undermines the argument that the Quakers rejected 'carnal agencies altogether' and in fact suggests a debate that was pursued by the Quakers with characteristic sophistication. The revisiting in print by Quakers of key army principles was accompanied by public meetings and private audiences, as well as the circulation of detailed military intelligence, all of which suggest an urgent

⁷³ Derek Massarella, 'The politics of the army 1647-1660' (University of York D. Phil thesis, 1977), 604-8; Mayers, *Crisis of the Commonwealth*, 236-39; Woolrych, *Britain in revolution*, 738-41.

⁷⁴ Massarella, 'Politics of the army', 609. Thomas Saunders, John Okey and Matthew Alured were the three colonels who, with John Wildman and George Bishop, had mounted the *Humble Petition of Several Colonels of the Army* (London 1654); see Taft, 'The Humble Petition'.

lobbying campaign to keep liberty of conscience on the agenda of the army and the faltering commonwealth. On 1 October, as the Derby Petition was circulating among regiments, Richard Hubberthorne reported a 'sarvicable meeting' with soldiers in Liverpool and another 'large meetinge' in Manchester town hall (for which, he stressed, keys were obtained from the officers), where 'there was divers souldiers and friends ... and many of the towne Came in ... and the truth was delivered.'⁷⁵ George Bishop wrote privately to the Council of Officers on 16 October, urging them to purge themselves of 'the Spirit of the Sixth Article of your late Address to the Parliament.'⁷⁶ Over the course of October and early November, William Caton held meetings in Leith and Edinburgh with officers and soldiers, as well as seeking an audience with General Monck. Caton's address to Monck was printed in Newcastle in late November, where it was dispersed specifically 'among the souldery' (mainly Lambert's forces, who were stationed in Newcastle), who 'were pretty respective and Courteous.'⁷⁷ Most strikingly of all, two hundred copies of a 'paper' by Margaret Fell were taken from the press on 3 December for distribution 'amongst the officers' in London.⁷⁸ This was surely in anticipation of the meeting of officers of the General Council of the Army and Navy, convened for 6 December to discuss a constitutional settlement, and at which, as with the General Council debates at Putney in 1647, officer representatives from the regiments were to be present: clear evidence that Quakers made a co-ordinated contribution to formal army debates on the constitution, as well as meeting with rank and file soldiers.⁷⁹ But pamphlets such as Fell's were not distributed exclusively to the army. On 20 November the Quaker John

⁷⁵ Richard Hubberthorne to George Fox, 1 October 1659, FHL MS 150: 8.

⁷⁶ British Library, Add. MS 22546, fo. 223.

⁷⁷ Caton to Willan, 14 November 1659, Sw. TRS 1: 394.

⁷⁸ Margaret Fell junior to Margaret Fell, 3 December 1659, FHL MS 378: 65.

⁷⁹ For the calling of the General Council of the Army and Navy, at which each regiment was to be represented in ways reminiscent of the 1647 General Council, see Massarella, 'Politics of the Army', 639-643 and Woolrych, *Britain in Revolution*, 745-6. Henry Reece maintains that this was a meeting of the General Council of the Officers, but concurs that it included officer representatives from the regiments; Reece, *Army in Cromwellian England*, 212.

Whitehead (also a former soldier) felt compelled to write an address to the Committee of Safety ('if it bee yett sitting') and, in addition to its circulation among the Committee, asked for one hundred printed copies to be sent up to Lincoln.⁸⁰ By mid-December, William Caton was heading south from Edinburgh towards Liverpool, South Lancashire and Cheshire 'for a flatness I have seen in those parts where the mountains are a little levelled, and therefore are they the better to run over.'⁸¹ Quakers were co-ordinating debates both within, and about, the army and its principles of engagement in the autumn of 1659.

More private exchanges with army members, and the clandestine circulation of detailed intelligence, suggest that some discussions included more pragmatic assessments of the army's power and the risks of political engagement. Edward Burrough claimed in his meeting with Lockhart in Dunkirk that 'maney other things passed betweene us at that time, which is not Convenient to write.'⁸² William Caton was similarly reluctant to record his conversation with William Clarke in Edinburgh in case it was intercepted.⁸³ The bearer of Caton's letter, George Collison, later wrote a dramatic account of his own journey which confirms that Quakers were passing intelligence between regiments, as well as to each other. Clearly relieved to have escaped from Scotland with his life, Collison explained that he had been stopped by two troopers in Carlisle asking for letters, and, 'knowing that they were for our Common good,' Collison agreed to talk to them and to the Governor of Carlisle. (The Carlisle garrison had publicly opposed Monck's mobilisation on 31 October.⁸⁴) In addition to noting Monck's levying of baggage horses and troops in Edinburgh, and the levels of pay among his troops, Collison reported to the garrison that resistance to John Lambert's forces

⁸⁰ John Whitehead to George Fox, 20 November 1659, Sw. TRS 3-861.

⁸¹ William Caton to George Fox, 20 December 1659, Sw. TRS 1: 400.

⁸² Burrough, Portfolio 1: 107v.

⁸³ Caton to Willan, Sw. TRS. 1: 395.

⁸⁴ Massarella, 'Politics of the army', 631-32; Hutton, *The Restoration*, 73.

could be slight: many of Monck's 'ould' soldiers had refused to follow Monck, and those who remained 'say they will not fight against Lambart and his forces but they will fight against the scots if they doe rise....'⁸⁵

This information, directed to 'friends at Kendal', would certainly have reached Margaret Fell at Swarthmore Hall, who was simultaneously in close touch with events in London. Indeed, the reach and sophistication of the Quaker communication network, in combination with the distribution of army regiments, reinforces the possibility of rapid and widespread communication between Quakers and army.⁸⁶ The following day, 21 November, Richard Hubberthorne sent Margaret Fell a detailed letter from London, describing his frequent meetings with army officers (Colonels Rich, Moss, and Ashfield, as well as Sir Henry Vane), and informing her that Vane, increasingly distrusted by the Committee of Safety because his regiment was 'all sectaryes', was preparing to split from it and move north; 'and some expects that Lambert will joyne with Vane and ye best party'.⁸⁷ The strong associations of some of these officers with Quakers is well known, and John Lambert's regiment in particular was reportedly rife with Quakers.⁸⁸ As we have noted, the presence of Quakers in the army in 1659 fuelled a reactionary fear of violent insurrection, which in turn hastened the restoration of the monarchy; in Barry Reay's assessment: 'what became important was not what was happening but what people thought was happening'.⁸⁹ Yet stress on the 'Quaker Terror' has given emphasis to the fanatic reputation of the Quakers, and thus obscures the more interesting scenario that Quakers were busy organising and holding discussions with

⁸⁵ George Collison to Friends in Kendal, Sw. TRS. 1: 396; see Massarella, 'Politics of the army', 629-30; Frances Dow, *Cromwellian Scotland 1651-1660* (Edinburgh, 1979), 249-257; Reece, *Army in Cromwellian England*, 206-9.

⁸⁶ Peters, *Print culture*, esp. ch. 2.

⁸⁷ Richard Hubberthorne to Margaret Fell, 21 November 1659, Caton Mss 3: 402-403.

⁸⁸ David Farr, 'The Quakers and the religious identity of Major-General John Lambert', *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society*, 59: 1 (2000), 19-39.

⁸⁹ Reay, 'The Quakers, 1659', 213.

what they still considered to be a citizen's army, and challenging it to honour its political principles articulated in key documents like the *Remonstrance* and the Officers' *Agreement of the People*.⁹⁰

Hubberthorne's letter of 21 November 1659 reveals his mounting frustration with the officers: 'they bring little forth that is good unto any perfection, they talke and ... debate of thinges, but that is the most they doe.'⁹¹ He dismissed the leaders of the army as 'deceiptfull in pride and Ambition,' but remarked more hopefully that 'some of the Inferiors have honest Intents if they could bring them to passe'; he commended their openness to counsel and their advocacy of liberty conscience. But while recognising their good intentions, Hubberthorne was pragmatically realistic about their political impotence. Because 'the Inferiour Officers would have Lyberty and honest things', 'the chief heades Among them dare not bring any thing to vote', and were therefore operating improperly, for 'those that are now head, doe not get the consent of the good people to them.' Hubberthorne's analysis was thus framed by a language of political consent; ultimately, he argued, army leaders had lost both their political legitimacy and their efficacy.⁹²

Hubberthorne's familiarity with republican discourses of consent is suggestive of his broader engagement with constitutional politics, but, as George Bishop had reminded the Council of Officers, 'the Good Old Cause was (chiefly) Liberty of Conscience'; the 'liberties of the nation' were 'bound up' with liberty of conscience 'as two lovely twins that cannot be divided'.⁹³ Constitutional settlement for the Quakers was a means to achieve 'perfect liberty and freedom'. For the Quakers, the political enactment of freedom of conscience, and

⁹⁰ Gentles, 'New Model Army and the Constitutional Crisis', 139-158. Gentles describes the Officers' *Agreement* as 'the most radical constitutional position that the New Model Army officers would ever take,' 156.

⁹¹ Richard Hubberthorne to ?Margaret Fell, 21 November 1659, Caton MS 3: 400-04.

⁹² Hubberthorne, Caton MS 3: 402-403; for a useful discussion of the complexities of consent in Leveller thought, see Foxley, *The Levellers*, 20-45.

⁹³ Bishop, *Mene Tekel*, p.4.

reminding civil magistrates of their obligation to uphold it, was at the heart of their campaigning. The growing alienation of the Quakers from the army, and indeed from the constitutional debates of republicans, was based on their carefully articulated argument that the founding principle of the revolutionary endeavour, liberty of conscience, had been abandoned in favour of secular power alone.

Hubberthorne's letter is important because it allows a detailed consideration of the Quakers as political agents. As we have seen, Quakers held the army and others to account both in print, and in private and public meetings. The circulation of information about the intentions of the army also reminds us, ultimately, of the strategic focus of Quaker campaigning. Quakers were by no means passive or mystical observers of the political landscape, but were organising a sophisticated and multifaceted campaign, which required a range of well-informed negotiative strategies and a pragmatic, often clandestine, analysis of the actual power of those in charge. In this regard, as I have argued, models of popular politics which deployed different tactics of negotiation with those in power are more helpful to our understanding of the Quakers in the 1650s than historical interpretations which prioritise the articulation of coherent ideologies, broad political programmes, or the delineation of denominational identity. One of the key defining purposes of Quakers before 1689 was to achieve, and exercise, the legal right to worship according to conscience, and in order to do this, they were obliged to negotiate for it from those in power.

V

In this context, the Quakers' self-presentation as aloof from worldly politics, understood by many as indicative of their mystical withdrawal or disillusion with interregnum governments, may be understood as a rhetorical stance, and a tactic of negotiation. Certainly many Quakers, like Grace Barwick, who outlined her own credentials as 'wife of Robert Barwick once a Cornit under Generall Lambert', expressed profound irritation with 'men

[who] have thought to carry on by pollicy, and each to be more politticke then others, and to prevaile thereby,' and warned: 'It is not the changings of Governments into new titles and names ... that will satisfie the hungring people' - they would benefit only from 'perfect freedome'.⁹⁴ In a tract circulated on 20 December, Edward Burrough dismissed those who 'trifled away many precious houres in vaine contentions about Gouvernement ... while no good thing hath been effected by them,' echoing Hubberthorne's private observation that the Committee of Safety had done nothing for liberty of conscience.⁹⁵ Statements such as these were an extension of Bishop's argument that secular powers had an obligation to 'defend and deliver' liberty of conscience, and that failure to do so would justify criticism. But there was also increasing tactical value for Quakers to emphasise their specific lack of endorsement with any particular 'party' or government, by which Quaker authors stressed their willingness to co-operate with any legitimate government. Thus Edward Burrough reminded the 'distracted' people of England: 'hitherto we have bin silent and not meddling with this party or the other ... and it cannot be charged upon us, that we have sided with one or another, for we have beheld all hitherto out of the right way as we have said.'⁹⁶

Such assertions of impartiality were, nevertheless, politically informed and tactically sophisticated. In January 1660, London Baptists published a *Declaration* in which they denied any allegiance with the Quakers. Implying that Quakers were the enemy of political order, the Baptists asserted their own belief that magistracy was 'an Ordinance of God ... to be obeyed in all lawful things'. In response, Hubberthorne accused the Baptists of appeasing the royalists. He particularly objected to their professed obedience 'to any power or Magistracy ... without any limitation or qualification.' Magistracy, for Hubberthorne, derived

⁹⁴ Grace Barwick, *To all present rulers* ([London], 1659), 2, 3-4.

⁹⁵ Edward Burrough, *A declaration from the people called Quakers to the present distracted nation of England* (London, 1659), 3.

⁹⁶ Burrough, *Declaration from the people called Quakers*, 14.

from the authority of the people, not God: 'if Charles Stuart come, or another, and establish popery, and govern by Tyranny, you have begged pardon by promising willingly to submit under it as the ordinance of God.'⁹⁷ At the same time, Hubberthorne pointed out, the Baptists themselves had overthrown governments by 'illegal Opposition and perfect Tyrannie'; they had 'taken [military] Commission from the late Parliament', and then 'risen in opposition to them, turning them out of Doors.' 'None of the Quakers,' Hubberthorne added, 'were so instrumental by illegal opposition, for the turning out of Parliaments and changing the Government of this Nation.'⁹⁸

Significantly, this tactic of claiming political abstinence proved highly adaptable at the Restoration. Indeed the Quakers' successful negotiation of the Restoration is a point obscured by works which emphasised 1659 as a last gasp of radical actions before the 'failure' of the Restoration, as well as revisionist historians who continue to stress the failure of the radicals.⁹⁹ The continuity and effectiveness of Quaker tactics over the course of the Restoration, facilitating their ultimate inclusion in the Toleration' Act of 1689, is a salient point in considering Quakers as an integral element in the legislative achievement of toleration, rather than a sect on its way to quietist denomination.¹⁰⁰ Just as we have seen much evidence of Quaker leaders lobbying Parliament, army officers and political leaders during the 1650s, so this strategy held true for them at the Restoration.

Although Hubberthorne, in his dispute with the London Baptists, was unenthusiastic about the putative restoration of Charles Stuart, he and Margaret Fell were among the first Quakers to seek an audience with the king in June 1660; and they used familiar arguments to

⁹⁷ Hubberthorne, *Answer to a declaration*, 4.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 13-14.

⁹⁹ See the editors' introduction in Hessayon and Finnegan (ed.), *Varieties of seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century English radicalism* for an account of 'radicalism' which is structured around a narrative of failure.

¹⁰⁰ For a useful narrative of changing expectations of participation within and without the national church see Martin Ingram, 'From reformation to toleration: popular religious cultures in England, 1540-1690' in Tim Harris (ed.), *Popular culture in England, c. 1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 1995).

suggest both their loyalty, and to remind him of the limits of his power. Margaret Fell's published declaration to the king presented the Quakers as a 'suffering people' who had been, demonstrably, persecuted by all the regimes of the past twelve years. She restated that all governments equally had been warned 'not to uphold these Priests contrary to Peoples Consciences', but, despite the warnings, had continued persecuting 'until the Lord by his mighty Power overturned them.' Like Hubberthorne, Fell emphasised the fickle nature of the puritan ministry of the 1650s, based on their readiness to serve under any regime: 'those Priests turned to every Power, and every Government... and made Petitions, and Addresses, and Acknowledgements to every Change of Government, and Conformed to every Power, and shewed much Love and Zeal to every present Power for their own ends, though many of them were Instruments to throw others out.' In Fell's argument, the Quakers' own consistent espousal of liberty of conscience, and hence impartiality to secular powers, allowed them now to treat with the king. Fell reassured the king and his new parliament that the Quakers' intentions were peaceable and 'that we do Love, Own, and Honour the King and these present Governours'; but in an important proviso, Fell outlined the limits of the king's power:

so far as they do rule for God and his Truth, and do not impose any thing upon Peoples Consciences ... And if they grant liberty of Conscience ... then we know that God will blesse them: For want of which hath been the overthrow of all that went before them: We do not desire any liberty that may ... offend any ones Conscience, but the Liberty we do desire is, that we may keep our Consciences clear ... and that we may enjoy our civil Rights and Liberties of Subjects, as freeborn English men.¹⁰¹

¹⁰¹ Margaret Fell, *A declaration and an information from us the people of God called Quakers* (London, 1660), 2, 6.

If Fell's declaration to the king contained a relatively gentle warning of divine retribution, as well as a reiteration of the 'lovely twins' of civil and religious liberty, Edward Burrough's *Declaration* to the king was more overtly threatening. He repeated the observation that God 'hath overturned and changed Powers and authorities ... in these Nations of late years'; and that 'he hath given unto many a day and a time' but 'they have all proved ... ambitious and self-ended.' Burrough stressed the precariousness of the king's position: 'Consider, that you are now set in the Throne, and are raised up out of your suffereing condition ... and unto you, a day and time is given.' He warned the king not to assume that his rule was assured: 'but rather consider that there is a secret and an eternal hand, that can remove your mountain, and overcome all your might and power, and subdue your number.'¹⁰²

In contrast to the providential threats in these printed Quaker addresses to the king, more direct meetings between Quakers and the newly restored king deployed a more pragmatic and worldly language of negotiation. In his unpublished account of a personal audience with Charles II in December 1660, the Quaker Thomas Moore presented a more direct plea to the king to intervene to protect liberty of conscience. Moore told the king that Quaker meetings were broken up 'by the wills of evill Rullers and rude people' and that this was 'Countenanced' by magistrates acting 'Contrary to the law, and thy Declaration, sent from Breda ... in which thou didst promise we should not be disturbed nor called in question for things pertaining to our Consciences.'¹⁰³ When the king assured Moore 'that you should Enjoy your meettings peaceably, and be protected,' Moore pressed the point, casting doubt on the willingness of magistrates to carry out the king's wishes: 'what thou speakest heare within these walls may not releive [sic] us, for ... the Magistrates in the Kingdome may not take

¹⁰² Edward Burrough, *A presentation of wholesome informations unto the King of England* (London, 1660), sig. A4r.

¹⁰³ Thomas Moore, 'Pasages between Thomas Moore and the King', 14 December 1660, Sw. TRS 2: 755.

notice ... Except thy pleasure be signified to the Kingdome by proclamation or Declaration.¹⁰⁴

Thomas Moore's unpublished account of his audience with Charles II indicates that Moore deployed, albeit with extraordinary directness, some familiar tropes of negotiation with early modern governors: deflecting blame onto untrustworthy magistrates, and reminding the king of his earlier declarations and promises. The meeting itself came after much lobbying, and followed the appointment of a committee to examine the Quakers' case, during which Moore and his colleagues 'waited and solicited those members who were chosen to heare our businesse', receiving 'many promises from them that wee should be heard'.¹⁰⁵ Moore was a gentleman and a justice of the peace, who clearly knew how to do business with a king, but who was still, essentially, reiterating to him the premise of the *Officers' Agreement of the People*, that people should be protected in the exercise of their conscience.

The Quakers were skilled political players, who deployed a range of tactics to argue for, and ultimately obtain, liberty of conscience. To dismiss them as politically incoherent, or disconnected from worldly politics, is to misrepresent the very basis of their political interventions, and ultimately ignores their tactical efficiency. Like many of their contemporaries, Quakers sought to lobby successive authorities within a framework of legitimate power. Many of the Quakers' ideas about political legitimacy were grounded in the constitutional framework developed around the New Model Army: the Self-Denying Ordinance and the *Heads of Proposals*, Ireton's *Remonstrance* and the *Officers' Agreement of the People*. These were themselves the product of discussions and debates between army members and civilians (and it is worth remembering that the first recorded reference to

¹⁰⁴ Moore, 'Pasages', Sw. TRS 2: 756.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*.

'Quakers' was to a group of women outside the Putney Debates in October 1647), were available in print, and by 1659 were clearly ingrained in political memories of the civil wars.¹⁰⁶ The New Model Army was still, for the Quakers in 1659, a citizens' army, expected to play a part in the achievement of liberty of conscience and commonwealth principles, and with whom Quakers continued to seek dialogue and debate. Accounts of the army in 1659 have stressed its divisions, but attribute them, and its ultimate collapse, largely to the military failings of its leaders.¹⁰⁷ The evidence presented here depicts an ideological and politicised context to the divisions, captured and probably intensified by the interventions of the Quakers, and which were rooted in shared memories of army politics in 1647-49. The tactical resonances of the Quaker campaign with the conduct of popular politics are an important reminder of the potential for a broader and more sustained participation at the restoration crisis than is often allowed, and one which was not restricted to parliamentary or republican constitutionalism. Indeed the ideological focus and tactical breadth of the Quaker campaign, in the context of its organisational links with the army, suggest that the fear they inspired in the political nation may have been more real than Barry Reay and others have allowed.

At the same time, political legitimacy for the Quakers was powerfully expressed in a providential language: although the army was understood to be God's instrument (for the time being), the ultimate arbiter was God, and, crucially, conscience. At base, Quakers were sceptical of secular power as an end in itself. It was not true, George Fox the younger wrote, 'that if the people lose the enjoying of Parliaments, that then they shall lose their birthright and their liberty.' Parliaments were flawed: 'the soberest and honestest men' could be outvoted by the disaffected, who were 'stirred up by their Priests' to vote for men who 'would act

¹⁰⁶ An early reference to Quakers was made by Secretary Nicholas in 1647: Peters, *Print culture and the early Quakers*, 93-4, n. 13.

¹⁰⁷ Massarella, 'Politics of the army', 665-6; Reece, *Army in Cromwellian England*, 211-15.

for their covetous, oppressing self-interest'.¹⁰⁸ For Fox it was obvious that a Parliament chosen by 'the most voyces of the outwardly rich people, were not like to act righteously ... and we see that people have been in great blindness, in contending for Parliaments so chosen; so let this wisdom be learned and lived in.'¹⁰⁹ For secular power to act righteously, Quakers repeated time and again, it must be subject to conscience, and principles of self-denial. But liberty of conscience could only be enacted, and protected, by secular powers. The Quakers' urgent and apocalyptic lobbying of the army (and other powers) over the course of 1659 was informed by their insistence on the interdependency of secular and religious liberty in the constitutional politics of the English revolution. Recognising this broadens, rather than restricts, our understanding of their capacity for coherent political engagement, both before and after 1659, and allows us to reintegrate religious radicalism into the political history of the English revolution.

¹⁰⁸ George Fox (the younger), *A few plain words to be considered by those of the army* (London, 1659), 1-2.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.