

RELIGION, POLITICS, PRINT AND PUBLIC DISCOURSE  
IN MID-SEVENTEENTH CENTURY ENGLAND  
AND NEW ENGLAND: TWO STUDIES

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
Chapter	
I. <i>NEW-ENGLANDS JONAS VS. NEW-ENGLANDS SALAMANDER:</i>	
DEPLOYING PRINT TO HARNESS PUBLIC OPINION IN	
ENGLAND AND NEW ENGLAND, CIRCA 1646 . . . . .	1
<i>The Remonstrance</i> . . . . .	1
Public Discourse in the 1640s . . . . .	7
<i>Courting Public Opinion in New-Englands Jonas and New-Englands</i>	
<i>Salamander</i> . . . . .	9
Child's Remonstrance and the Control of Information . . . . .	16
II.    "THIS SEPARATIONS SEPARATION HAS A SEPARATION":	
JOHN HUMFREY'S PURSUIT OF UNITY IN THE CONTROVERSY	
OVER OPEN ADMISSION TO COMMUNION IN ENGLAND,	
CIRCA 1650 . . . . .	20
Seeking Parish Unity through Open Admission to Communion . . . . .	20
Promoting Unity in the Arena of Public Religious Discourse . . . . .	37
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	48

## CHAPTER I

### *NEW-ENGLANDS JONAS VS. NEW-ENGLANDS SALAMANDER:* DEPLOYING PRINT TO HARNESS PUBLIC OPINION IN ENGLAND AND NEW ENGLAND, CIRCA 1646

#### *The Remonstrance*

In 1646, Dr. Robert Child, a highly educated and well-traveled English entrepreneur, found himself imprisoned in New England, facing heavy fines and charges of sedition. Child was recognized to be the leading figure among a group of seven New Englanders who had signed a *Remonstrance and Humble Petition* and submitted it to the Massachusetts government. (The other signers also faced governmental censure and fines, though to varying degrees based on their involvement with the ensuing events.) Child had a broad background in the sciences and has been categorized as one of “the best educated men among the early settlers of New England.”<sup>1</sup> Along with investor John Winthrop, Jr., he had become involved in the colony with ironworks and metallurgy both as an investor and as an involved leader. His expertise combined with New England's resources had begun to promise much economic growth. Yet Child's satisfaction with the New England resources and business opportunities was tempered by his concerns over the ecclesiastical and governmental structures of the colony.

He had become quite disillusioned with the way that membership in Congregationalist churches was central to both the political and religious structure of the

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<sup>1</sup> Samuel Eliot Morison, quoted in David Jaffee, *People of the Wachusett: Greater New England in History and Memory, 1630-1860* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999), 33.

community and, conversely, that non-membership excluded him and others from important parts of religious and political life. Describing this in a letter, amid glowing descriptions of the New England countryside, Child wrote:

Truly, I suppose, all things would prosper in this place, if they would give liberty of conscience, otherwise I expect nothing to thrive... The non-members who are most in numbers, as rich and valiant [as] other thinke themselves enslaved here, not having liberty to bear office, or give a vote, in choosing either minister or magistrate, neither are they permitted to have ministers, as they thinke fitting, to have their children baptized or receive the sacrament, though many have lived here many yeares and pay taxes...<sup>2</sup>

Believing that such exclusivity was wrong, Child ultimately decided to join with six others individuals who felt similarly, or at least were willing to sign a petition saying so, and submitted it to the Massachusetts General Court in May, 1646.<sup>3</sup>

The petition described the great economic hardships, diseases, and troubles that they faced in New England and suggested that these were due to God's turning his face from the colonies. It then explained the reasons that God would do so. These included, first, that the laws in New England enacted under the charter of the Massachusetts Bay Company were not in accordance with the legal rights given to all English citizens; these should be changed. Second, they complained that there were many in New England who, by refusing to agree to the covenants required for membership in Congregationalist Churches, had all of the colonists' political responsibilities but none of their rights. The Remonstrants asked that all English citizens enjoy the same rights and responsibilities in the colony, regardless of religious affiliation.

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<sup>2</sup> Robert Child, letter to Samuel Hartlib, reprinted in G. H. Turnbull, "Robert Child" *Publications of The Colonial Society of Massachusetts* Vol. XXXVII (Boston: The Colonial Society of Massachusetts, 1959), 52.

<sup>3</sup> In 1919, George Lyman Kittredge argued that only Child and one other Remonstrant fully comprehended and agreed with its ultimate goals, particularly in terms of religion. Cf. G. L. Kittredge, "Dr. Robert Child, The Remonstrant," *The Publications of the Colonial Society of Massachusetts* 21 (1919): 1-146, 28-30.

Third, they filed a complaint that many in New England who followed God and lived as Christians were denied the sacraments because they did not believe in covenanting with a Congregationalist church. Again, they asserted that it was unfair that though they were required to fulfill the responsibilities of church attendance and even tithing, they were excluded from the Lord's Supper, and their children were denied baptism. They asked either to be allowed to be included in the full worship of these Congregational churches, or if not, to be allowed to set up their own Presbyterian form of worship. Importantly, it ended by stating that if necessary, the signatories would go over the heads of the Massachusetts General Council and appeal directly to the English Parliament—a bold move with significant political, religious and social implications that the colonial government wished to avoid. The Massachusetts authorities would have hated to see England, in response to the petition, alter or restrict any of the freedoms they, as Congregationalists, currently enjoyed in the colony.<sup>4</sup>

Though the petition had some effect, the Massachusetts government did not accept its demands.<sup>5</sup> Thus, Robert Child prepared to petition the English Parliament. Soon, however, he and most of his co-signatories were distressed to find that they faced questions, fines, and potential criminal charges in Massachusetts.<sup>6</sup> The Remonstrants were found guilty of “defamation of the government, slander of the churches, and

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<sup>4</sup> John Child, *New-Englands Jonas Cast up at London: Or, A relation of the Proceedings of the Court at Boston in New England against divers honest and godly persons, for Petitioning for Government in the Common-wealth, according to the Lawes of England, and for admittance of themselves and children to the Sacraments in their Churches; and in case that should not be granted, for leave to have Ministers and Church-government according to the best Reformation of England and Scotland. Together with a Confutation of some Reports of a fained Miracle upon the foresaid Petition, being thrown over-board at Sea; As also a breif [sic] Answer to some passages in a late Book (entituled Hypocrite unmasked) set out by Mr. Winslowe, concerning the Independent Churches holding communion with the Reformed Churches* (London, 1646), 6-9 (error for 15).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Philip F. Gura, *A Glimpse of Zion's Glory: Puritan Radicalism in New England, 1620-1660* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1984), 197-198.

<sup>6</sup> John Child, 9 (error for 17).

weakening of the laws by encouraging sedition.”<sup>7</sup> Child was fined £50, which he refused to pay; this refusal led to his detainment before he could depart for England. After additional charges (of sedition against the Massachusetts government, because upon his detainment he was found to be in possession of seditious papers) and fines, Child was finally able to leave the colony later in 1647; he never returned.<sup>8</sup>

During the time that Child was in detainment with an unclear future, the petition made its way to England, barely avoiding being jettisoned from a storm-tossed ship. This was due in large part to New England minister John Cotton, who was opposed to the petition’s requests. Cotton had suggested to passengers about to embark on that same journey to England that that bad weather could be a sign that God wanted them to rid their ship of something, such as a petition, in much the same way as the sailors in the Bible had thrown the prophet Jonah overboard—and that if they did so, God might cause the storm to relent. When such a storm did occur, some of the passengers accordingly procured a petition that was on board the storm-tossed ship, and it was sent overboard to the murky depths.

After the ship arrived in England, as seems inevitable in such situations, the story of the incident began to spread by word of mouth. The Remonstrants’ petition was reported to have been the possible cause of the storm and to have been thrown overboard. Yet the jettisoned document had actually been a copy of a different petition; thus, the Remonstrants’ petition survived. In England, it came into the hands of Robert Child’s brother, Major John Child, who published a copy of it, along with other information and polemical matter to support the Remonstrants’ cause, in a work cleverly entitled *New-*

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<sup>7</sup> Carol Sue Humphrey, "Child, Robert" *American National Biography Online* (Oxford University Press, 2000), accessed April 29, 2010. <http://www.anb.org/>.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

*Englands Jonas [i.e., Jonah] Cast up at London.*<sup>9</sup> In addition to explaining why the petition was good and could not have been the cause of a divinely-ordained storm, the pamphlet also more fully defended the position of the Remonstrants, particularly Robert Child.<sup>10</sup>

Quickly following the publication of *New-Englands Jonas*, Edward Winslow, who had originally sailed to New England on the Mayflower and was a loyal member of the colony, published his own version of events, reflecting the position of the Massachusetts authorities. He called this work *New-Englands Salamander*.<sup>11</sup> The word “Salamander” in the title referred to the author of John Child’s pamphlet (who, incidentally, Winslow believed was not Child himself but another opponent of the New England government, William Vassal). Clearly an uncomplimentary moniker, the term is actually more insidious than a modern reader might realize: salamanders were traditionally associated with fire and, by extension, hellfire.<sup>12</sup> Thus, Winslow began his pamphlet with a rhetorical flourish as well. Winslow argued that the Remonstrants’ work was of malicious intent, and that, moreover, the petition itself had truly been like a Jonah: as it sailed to England, God had sent the storm to make the passengers throw it overboard, and ultimately, the storm did abate. Indeed, each section of Winslow’s work

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<sup>9</sup> The contents of the book are nicely summed up in the long form of the work’s title; see footnote 4, above.

<sup>10</sup> It has been plausibly suggested, both in the seventeenth century and in contemporary scholarship, that both the petition itself and *New-Englands Jonas* were largely due to the work of William Vassall, who had already been involved in similar disputes. Cf. Alison Games, *Migration and the Origins of the English Atlantic World* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 151-153.

<sup>11</sup> Edward Winslow, *New-Englands salamander, discovered by an irreligious and scornfull pamphlet, called New-Englands Jonas cast up at London, &c. Owned by Major Iohn Childe, but not probable to be written by him. Or, A satisfactory answer to many aspersions cast upon New-England therein. Wherein our government there is shewed to bee legall and not arbitrary, being as neere the law of England as our condition will permit. Together with a briefe reply to what is written in answer to certaine passages in a late booke called Hypocrisie unmasked* (London, 1647).

<sup>12</sup> “Salamander,” *Oxford English Dictionary Online* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), accessed April 29, 2010, <http://www.oed.com/>.

addresses and refutes the arguments or implications of a corresponding section in *New-Englands Jonas*.

Historians considering this series of events have typically addressed one or more aspects of the unwieldy and inextricably interwoven compilation of theological, political, economic and social concerns that are related to the incident. Many have focused on the ideas and motivations of the petitioners—particularly Robert Child—or discussed the political and ecclesiastical ramifications of a petition to alter the structure of the Massachusetts government.<sup>13</sup> Yet it is equally crucial to consider this episode in light of the two polemical works it produced—*New-Englands Jonas* and *New-Englands Salamander*.

Interestingly, these works address neither the English Parliament nor the Massachusetts General Council (although they do reprint copies of works sent to these bodies). Rather, they address a wider readership. As such, they demonstrate the importance of public involvement in polemical debates during the 1640s. Although both parties certainly saw the importance of approaching the appropriate authorities within established (private) channels, these pamphlets demonstrate that both also recognized a need to justify their actions and to gain support within a wider (public) arena.

In examining this phenomenon, it is useful first to consider typical uses of print in the 1640s and their relationship to the arena of public opinion or a nascent “public sphere.” Subsequently, it is important to consider the ways in which these specific works

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<sup>13</sup> A number of historical works in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries addressed the Remonstrance; more recent works typically address it only as part of a larger topic. Notable recent publications that mention the incident include Gura, *A Glimpse of Sion's Glory*; Carla Pestana, *The English Atlantic in an Age of Revolution, 1640-1661* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2004); William R. Newman, *Gehennical Fire: The Lives of George Starkey, an American Alchemist in the Scientific Revolution* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); Margaret E. Newell, “Robert Child and the Entrepreneurial Vision: Economy and Ideology in Early New England” *The New England Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (1995): 223-256.



demonstrate that they are, indeed, attempting to navigate this public discourse. This, in turn, allows one to view the event as a whole through a new lens. In particular, it highlights that New Englanders saw the issue of information control or dispersion in England as a central factor in the preservation or alteration of their colonial situation.

### Public Discourse in the 1640s

It has been many years since Jürgen Habermas first suggested the idea of the “public sphere” as an influential political and social body. Although he originally grounded the public sphere in the events of a period slightly later than the one at hand, his conceptions of social interaction within the public sphere have become prevalent in many histories of political and social phenomena within earlier periods as well. Reflecting on this trend, Peter Lake and Steve Pincus argued in 2006 for the usefulness of a “modified” conception of the public sphere in early modern England.<sup>14</sup> More recently, Conal Condren has agreed that such an idea has some utility, though he urges caution in employing the theoretical concept to history.<sup>15</sup>

There is thus some historiographical agreement that the idea of the public sphere, with certain caveats, can be appropriate in describing important developments within early modern England. Yet because the politico-social milieu of this time is different than that first envisioned by Habermas, perhaps it is better when referring to this earlier period

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<sup>14</sup> Peter Lake and Steve Pincus, “Rethinking the Public Sphere in Early Modern England” *Journal of British Studies* 45 (2006): 270-292. Cf. Lake and Pincus, *The Politics of the Public Sphere in Early Modern England* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007). Although Jason Peacey has disagreed with the notion of an emerging public sphere this early, he has acknowledged the presence of many of the elements of a public sphere in the 1640s and 1650s. Cf. Peacey, *Politicians and Pamphleteers: Propaganda During the English Civil Wars and Interregnum* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2004), 313-332.

<sup>15</sup> Conal Condren, “Public, Private and the Idea of the ‘Public Sphere’ in Early-Modern England” *Intellectual History Review* 19 (1) 2009: 15-28.

to employ terms, such as “public opinion” or “public discourse,” which have fewer semantic and ideological implications than the oft-discussed notion of the public sphere.

Regardless of terminology, the momentous events of the 1640s in England—certainly known and felt in New England, as well—had a profound effect on the deployment of print materials and on the development and widening of a common, public awareness of and discourse about political, social and religious issues. As Lake and Pincus explain, the events of the 1640s and 1650s in England

...reinforced the sustained market for news and comment. The new situation became virtually self-sustaining, as individual actors might now enter the public sphere for narrow political advantage, economic self-interest, or desire to achieve ideological hegemony.

...Grandees and their often more radical supporters and clients struggled for control of the political or ideological agenda; players strategically released private correspondence and circulated scandalous libel and rumor. All these had been present [earlier], but by the 1650s they were happening in public and in print at a rate and intensity that was completely unprecedented.<sup>16</sup>

More and more, in fact, public opinion was not simply a factor to consider when dealing with public issues; rather, it began to have a real effect on actual legal processes. The mobilization of print, therefore, even when it was not directed specifically at the government, could be a useful tool to effect political change through the ‘middlemen’ who participated in public discourse:

Legal proceedings were, however, not restricted to the courtroom, as politicians, legislators, persecutors, and defendants increasingly realized... Printed speeches, trial accounts, and pamphlets and satires of the period confirmed that judgments were also made by those on the outside. Writers, interpretive communities, and readers thus became coparticipants in the exercise of authority.

...Correspondingly, readers were accorded an increasingly authoritative role in cultural, religious, and political circles.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Lake and Pincus, “Rethinking the Public Sphere,” 280.

<sup>17</sup> Elizabeth Sauer, *Paper-contestations’ and Textual Communities in England, 1640-1675* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2005), 15.

For these reasons, it is important to consider print works of the 1640s, including *New-Englands Jonas* and *New-Englands Salamander*, as being part of this boom of information disseminated among members of the public. Further, one must ask whether—and if so, in what ways—the construction and contents of these publications intentionally courted public opinion in order to achieve certain goals.

#### Courting Public Opinion in *New-Englands Jonas* and *New-Englands Salamander*

Upon consideration, it seems that both of these pamphlets did, indeed, seek to engage with and gain public opinion. This is clear when one considers, first, that the authors chose to deploy their ideas within a public print format at all, second, that they structured their pamphlets in a way that would make their ideas easily accessible to the reading public, and third, that they used rhetorical devices that would appeal to a wide audience. By exploring these three courses of action, one can better understand how these works fit within the larger body of seventeenth century print culture and, more specifically, how the authors desired that their works would be received.

Perhaps the most obvious way that the authors of the pamphlets courted public opinion was by having the works published in the first place. By involving the public in early modern printed disputes, authors acknowledged that the public held some amount of social authority as it considered information and exercised reason in order to draw conclusions.<sup>18</sup> Thus, simply by publishing information in a widely-available way, Child and Winslow both assented to the public's interaction with their portrayal of the dispute and implicitly affirmed that public opinion did, indeed, hold some power. As David

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<sup>18</sup> Cf. David Zaret, "Religion, Science, and Printing in the Public Spheres in Seventeenth-Century England," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 226ff.

Zaret has argued, the publication of petitions was particularly significant in representing an author's interest in courting and appropriating public opinion, especially in the period after 1640. He explains that:

For petitions, this development violated traditional rules that limited the expression of grievance to apolitical flows of information from the periphery to the political center of the nation... The very act of printing signals their promoters' intent to increase the scope of communication in petitions. Printed petitions openly appealed to public opinion, unlike the traditional petition that conveyed grievance as a privileged form of communication from the periphery to the political center.<sup>19</sup>

Child's publication of the Remonstrance follows this outline well. Though the Remonstrants did follow the "traditional" form of communication by petitioning to Parliament, Child also utilized print on the behalf of the Remonstrants. By mobilizing print to persuade a public audience about the validity of the Remonstrants' cause, Child clearly hoped that public opinion could positively affect the reception of the petitioners' ideas among officials. Moreover, because his brother Robert was involved in business, there was an extra impetus to seek favorable public opinion: many who heard of this issue would have been potential business associates, so to provide a favorable interpretation of events to this audience was important to Robert Child's future economic prospects.

Although Winslow was obviously not distributing a petition within the public arena, he had long courted public opinion for New England; indeed, on several occasions he seemed to act as its public relations officer. For instance, in 1624 he had authored *Good Newes from New-England* to make English people aware of the colony's

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<sup>19</sup> David Zaret, *Origins of Democratic Culture: Printing, Petitions, and the Public Sphere in Early-Modern England* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), 240.

progress.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, it is clear that he was attentive to a public audience because of his interaction with Child's pamphlet, which clearly addressed the public.

The structure of the works themselves also caters specifically to a public readership. New England's Jonas begins with a Preface addressed to the "Courteous Reader" that begins by explaining the situation in which Robert Child had found himself:

The occasion of Printing this following Relation, are the sufferings that not only my Brother Robert Child...with some Gentlemen and others have suffered in New-England in their persons and estates by Fines and imprisonments there, but here in England in their repute by false reports and fained Miracles invented and spread on purpose by some lately come from thence, and fomented by some others here to colour their unjust proceedings.<sup>21</sup>

Child follows this with a list of the rumors that have spread about the Remonstrants and then an outline of the contents of the pamphlet that follow. In just two brief pages, Child brings readers quickly up to date on the issues. Moreover, he provides not only his "side" of the story but also supplementary materials to support his claims in hopes that this information will assist them as they think through the issue. While Winslow does not address his readers directly in a preface, he does mention his readers a few times and make an appeal to the "good reader."<sup>22</sup> Moreover, he follows Child's pamphlet, addressing each portion of it point-for-point. In this way, a reader familiar with Child's work could gain easy entrée into the flow of Winslow's argument. Thus, both authors clearly acknowledged the presence of multiple readers otherwise uninvolved with the situation at hand.

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<sup>20</sup> Michael G. Dittmore, "Winslow, Edward (1595-1655)," in *Puritans and Puritanism in Europe and America: A Comprehensive Encyclopedia*, eds. Francis J. Bremer and Tom Webster (Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2006), 278.

<sup>21</sup> Child, 1.

<sup>22</sup> Winslow, 26, passim.

The structure of the pamphlet also reflects the phenomenon in seventeenth century printed polemic which Zaret identifies as an “imposition of dialogic order on political conflict.” By providing references to “other printed materials, such as speeches, declarations, ordinances, and laws” print media facilitated popular political criticism.<sup>23</sup> Both of these texts sought to do just that.

For instance, *New-Englands Jonas* contains a variety of materials for reference as the reader evaluates the situation. The first set of reference materials involves a 1646 case in Hingham, Massachusetts, in which the colonial government appears to limit the freedoms of certain inhabitants who wished to exercise the rights due to them as English citizens. Child prints copies of three official documents to allow the reader to become familiar with a situation similar to the Remonstrants’. Next, Child moves to the situation at hand, providing a copy of the “Remonstrance and humble Petition” that Child and his supporters submitted to the Massachusetts General Court, followed by a list of the laws establishing capital crimes within Massachusetts. This is relevant because the last entry identifies sedition—the crime with which Robert Child had been charged—as a capital crime. Such a move would lend urgency and seriousness to the account of Child’s arrest.

Child further expands the materials available for popular consideration to include the oath of a freeman in the colony, Child’s account of the “Jonah” voyage, and a postscript which mentions many related issues of church and state, situating his work amidst a variety of other issues, publications and ideas related to colonial freedoms. Interestingly, he specifically calls out Edward Winslow for “a deep and subtle Plot against the Lawes of England, and Liberties of English Subjects...” for ideas Winslow

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<sup>23</sup> Zaret, *Origins*, 252. Here, Zaret refers specifically to petitions, but it is clear that such methods are at play in other polemical works, such as Winslow's, as well.

had recently spread in his pamphlet entitled *Hypocrisie Unmasked*.<sup>24</sup> This pamphlet of Winslow's had, in turn, been in response to a 1646 pamphlet authored by Samuel Gorton, another opponent of colonial policy. Child assembled a diverse collection of works, carefully interspersing his polemical and opinion-based narratives with unaltered source documents that supported his arguments. In this way, the structure of Child's work clearly invites English readers to enter the intellectual world of colonial Massachusetts and to draw conclusions about it.

Echoing Child's format, Winslow addresses each portion of his argument and supporting evidence, offering a quite opposite interpretation of them than the ones proffered in *New-Englands Jonas*. Yet Winslow also adds to the dialogue by supplying additional information for the reader's perusal. For instance, he records a more full summary of Cotton's "Jonah" sermon, placing the curious exhortation to throw a petition overboard in a more complete context (and one that is more favorable to Winslow's argument).<sup>25</sup>

Like Child, at the end of his work Winslow also addresses the situation of his pamphlet within a forum containing other, similar publications. In particular, Winslow presents his thoughts on the recent print dialogue involving himself and Samuel Gorton—the same print interchange that Child had chastised Winslow for in *New-Englands Jonas*.

In *New-Englands Salamander*, therefore, Winslow felt that he must defend his words against the anti-colonial attacks of Gorton. Winslow justified himself by

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<sup>24</sup> Child, 13 (error for 19); Edward Winslow, *Hypocrisie unmasked: by a true relation of the proceedings of the Governour and company of the Massachusetts against Samuel Gorton (and his accomplices) a notorious disturber of the peace and quiet of the severall governments wherein he lived ...* (London, 1647); Cf. Samuel Gorton, *Simplicities defence against seven-headed policy. Or, innocency vindicated, being unjustly accused, and sorely censured by that seven-headed church-government united in New-England...* (London, 1646).

<sup>25</sup> Winslow, 14-18.

explaining the false and deceitful methods that Gorton had employed. Moreover, his words once again call to mind the importance that Winslow placed on reaching and gaining the favorable opinion of a diverse public audience:

...when I came over, I found that *Gorton* had enlarged his complaints by publishing a booke called *Simplicities defence against Seven-headed Policy, &c.* which being full of manifold slaunders, and abominable falsehoods; I tooke my selfe bound in duty to answer it, as I did by that Treatise he mentioneth, called *Hypocrisie Unmasked*, which was but an answer to *Gorton* as this is to him, being necessitated thereunto in Vindication of the Country, whose Agent I am, though unworthy. And yet our *Salamander* [i.e., the author of *New Englands Jonas*, whom Winslow identified as Vassal] would blinde the ignorant, and make them beleeve wee tooke occasion to write such a thing to make the Parliament have a good opinion of us, as it none of all this had preceded.<sup>26</sup>

Both Child and Winslow were aware of public opinion as they composed their material about New England's policies, and they desired to respond to and interact with members of the public in a carefully structured, dialogic format through print. They did so by presenting full intellectual arguments, complete with supporting materials, and by interspersing these with carefully crafted polemic. Moreover, both authors attempted to situate their works within a larger debate about the colonial government, a strategy that certainly would have drawn in members of the public who were familiar with other aspects of this issue.

The above passage in which Winslow refers to Samuel Gorton's work also illustrates a third way that these two pamphlets interact with the arena of public discourse. Although the Habermasian public sphere assumes an intelligent and educated public readership, it is interesting to note that, here, Winslow does not necessarily do so. Rather, he mentions that some of those who participate in public discourse are ignorant—perhaps in general, and at least in respect to this event. It seems that Winslow is making

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<sup>26</sup> Winslow, 22.



a careful move designed to persuade readers who do not wish think of themselves as ignorant (and which reader would?) to approach Child's publication with extra caution.

In other words, these works contain not only impartial appeals to the sort of information that might be allowed in a court of law, but also thoughtfully selected words that would appeal to the emotions as well as the intellect of readers within a wide audience. Of course, rhetorical devices are used in private correspondence and even in official dialogue, so their use does not prove that these authors were addressing a public audience. On the other hand, having established (as above) that these authors were aware of and were interacting within the arena of public discourse, examining their strategies in this light reveals how the authors expected to play off of the assumptions, emotions and cares of a public audience in addition to approaching them with intellectual arguments.

Perhaps most obviously to a casual observer, both works make emotional appeals through their cleverly-chosen titles. John Child chose the title *New-Englands Jonas Cast up at London* as a tongue-in-cheek reference to the fact that reports of the petitions' destruction at sea could not have been correct, because it had indeed come to him in England. Winslow, on the other hand, used an *ad-hominem* attack when he referred to the author of the other pamphlet as a "salamander."

In addition, one notices an appeal to the emotion through Child's preface, as he begins by evoking the "sufferings that not only my Brother *Robert Child* Doctor of Physick, with some Gentlemen and others have suffered... in their persons and estates...[and] here in *England* in their repute by false reports..."<sup>27</sup> In setting up his pamphlet this way, Child would hope that readers would be inclined to think well of a pamphlet written to vindicate the reputation and alleviate the sufferings of a brother—a

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<sup>27</sup> Child, 1.

noble task. Beyond that, he reminds readers of the respectable social positions (a doctor and gentlemen) of the parties he is defending. Again, the social capital implicit in mentioning such individuals might incline readers to take the part of the Remonstrants as they considered the provided evidence.

Winslow also employs a strategy that could garner favorable public opinion while simultaneously deflecting any criticism that his answers to Child were insufficient. He first casts aspersions on Child's work, explaining that his pamphlet was designed to be a cheaply-made, "two penny jeering Gigge, penned rather to please the fancy of common understandings, then to satisfie any solid judgements."<sup>28</sup> He then utilizes this jibe against Child to persuade the reader to excuse any of his own pamphlet's deficiencies. He feels that his own work must also be cheap enough to circulate with the same breadth as Child's; yet in being brief, Winslow may not answer all questions to satisfaction and asks the reader to excuse him on these grounds.

By choosing to have their works printed and by structuring both the format and rhetoric of the pamphlets in ways that would have easily drawn in and appealed to a wide readership, both Child and Winslow demonstrate willingness to involve the public in their discourse as well as skill in doing so. Moreover, their work in doing this solidly situates both pamphlets within the realm of public political debate that was seeing unprecedented growth in 1640's English culture.

### Child's Remonstrance and the Control of Information

It is important to consider power structures—including those in colonial New England—as being part of a constantly-evolving balance between those who are in

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<sup>28</sup> Winslow, 4.

charge and those who are not. James F. Cooper, Jr. has noted that several twentieth-century historians of New England church government have characterized Congregationalist government as initially lay-controlled until “unpleasant New World experiences...motivated ministers to draw in the reins of authority and assume a more aristocratic control of church affairs...”<sup>29</sup> Yet Cooper suggests this interpretation overstates the situation in Massachusetts. In fact, he argues, one must recall that “Congregationalism, like Puritanism in general, placed an extraordinary emphasis upon the role of the laity” and can therefore be better understood as a system of “lay-clerical *interchange*.”<sup>30</sup>

Certainly, the inextricably-linked religious and political arenas in mid-seventeenth-century New England saw implicit and explicit dialogue between parties regarding authority versus autonomy. In some cases, individual autonomy and even democratic ideals certainly held their own. Nevertheless, in the case of the Remonstrance it is clear that issues of control became central, and the Massachusetts government did attempt to retain and exercise as much power as possible.

Colonial religious and civil authorities recognized in the Remonstrants’ words and actions a great threat to the way of life they had struggled so long to achieve. They felt that they must avoid any chance that any outside opinions—either popular or Parliamentary—would turn against them and alter their way of life. In order to protect their governmental and ecclesiastical structures, therefore, Massachusetts authorities deployed all available means to control information that might ultimately harm their society.

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<sup>29</sup> James F. Cooper, Jr., *Tenacious of Their Liberties: The Congregationalists in Colonial Massachusetts* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 4.

<sup>30</sup> Cooper, Jr., 6-7; italics in the original.

For minister John Cotton, this involved exhorting parishioners to consider throwing the petition overboard.<sup>31</sup> For the Massachusetts governmental officials, it meant rejecting the Remonstrants' initial petition to them and also detaining, questioning and fining the Remonstrants themselves. Moreover, it meant sending Edward Winslow to England for the specific purpose of pursuing public relations on behalf of Massachusetts. Winslow's job was to quickly discover and discredit in print any negative information about the colony, particularly anything that was related to the Remonstrance or similar attacks on Congregationalist authority.<sup>32</sup>

It is clear that the Congregationalists' first order of business was to prevent disparaging information about Massachusetts from reaching England at all. Rather, they wished to control information in such a way as to keep colonial disputes contained within their own jurisdiction. Their preference was to avoid allowing the public to engage with any colonial controversies, but if they could not prevent this—as was the case with John Child's publication—they were also prepared to address the public. Yet the colonial government always sought to do so in such a way that they would regain control; here, they attempted to control the public perceptions about the colony by publishing their own version of events and attacking their opponents' narratives. For the colonial government, control of information was key to control of the colony. If no one knew about the problems within the colony or, barring that, if everyone understood the actions of the colonial officials in dealing with the problems, then, presumably, no one would

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<sup>31</sup> This was not necessarily a maliciously manipulative action; rather, Cotton saw this as a suggestion which could help preserve the liberties of his Congregationalist parishioners. Moreover, although unusual, the direction could fit within the scope of orthodox Providentialist theology.

<sup>32</sup> Likewise, as mentioned earlier, Winslow was occasionally assigned to distribute specific positive information, as in *Good Newes from New-England*.

question the autonomy of the colony, and the Massachusetts government would be able to continue governing the colony as it believed best.

Control was also key for the Child brothers and other opponents of the colonial government such as William Vassal. Unlike the Massachusetts government, they wanted to make information about the colony and their situation public as soon as possible. Admittedly, whenever something is published, one loses some degree of control over public perception of oneself; however, because the Remonstrants were already in a situation that emphasized their loss of power, this trade-off was minimal. Rather, they stood with much to gain by publicizing information about their situation. Fined, charged with sedition, and fed up with trying to pursue economic opportunities in such a restrictive environment, Robert Child in particular had little to lose by putting his ideas and situation not only to the English Parliament but to the “court” of public opinion via print media. In doing so, he attempted to wrest power from the authorities and to give it to a potentially more favorable public whose opinion might ultimately lead to some official change in colonial policy.

Unfortunately for Robert Child, public opinion in this case did not take his side in a large enough way to affect any change. Rather, upon his return to England, he soon resigned himself to business opportunities that did not require his presence in the colony. Winslow returned home to New England—although his public relations work continued.<sup>33</sup> Due to the timely emphasis that both parties placed on publication in this situation, one can clearly see the effects of the emerging public discourse in England on the colonial religious and political situation. The potential importance of this English public influence must not be forgotten within the narratives of colonial New England.

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<sup>33</sup> Ditmore, 278.

## CHAPTER II

“THIS SEPARATIONS SEPARATION HAS A SEPARATION”:

### JOHN HUMFREY’S PURSUIT OF UNITY IN THE CONTROVERSY OVER OPEN ADMISSION TO COMMUNION IN ENGLAND, CIRCA 1650

#### Seeking Parish Unity through Open Admission to Communion

Seventeenth century England saw many changes in the theology and practice of the sacrament of communion, which was frequently called the ‘Lord’s Supper’ in Puritan circles.<sup>34</sup> Among these, as William Lamont and Paul Lim have noted, the debate over admission to communion was a particularly central one to Puritanism in the Commonwealth period.<sup>35</sup> Debate surfaced in the early 1650s when John Humfrey, minister (later vicar) of Frome Selwood in Somerset, published a pamphlet entitled *An humble Vindication Of a Free Admission Unto the Lords-Supper*.<sup>36</sup> Containing two of Humfrey’s sermons regarding the sacrament, this pamphlet argued for a much broader admittance to the Lord’s Supper than was currently typical within many English churches.

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<sup>34</sup> These changes included the position of recipients (sitting or kneeling), the type of materials used, the placement of the table, and more. Cf. Kenneth Fincham and Nicholas Tyacke, *Altars Restored* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); and Christopher Haigh, “‘A Matter of Much Contention in the Realm’: Parish Controversies over Communion Bread in Post-Reformation England” *History* 88 (2003): 393-404.

<sup>35</sup> William Lamont, *Richard Baxter and the Millennium* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1979), 157 ff.; Paul Chang-Ha Lim, *In Pursuit of Purity, Unity, and Liberty: Richard Baxter’s Puritan Ecclesiology in its Seventeenth-Century Context* (Boston: Brill, 2004), 89.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. John Humfrey, *An humble Vindication of a Free Admission Unto the Lords-Supper...* (London: Printed for E. Blackmore, 1652). There is a nearly identical 1651 version with the same author, title, and publication information; the 1652 version adds two pages of Scripture references and questions to the end of the work.

Upon publication of his position, Humfrey quickly heard from opponents who published against him. The foremost criticisms came from doctor-turned-minister Roger Drake, and soon a number of individuals from both clerical and lay backgrounds jumped into the documentary fray on both sides of the conflict with some authors, including both Drake and Humfrey, publishing multiple times.<sup>37</sup> Humfrey's ideas garnered a significant contemporary readership, and current scholarship continues to reference his work as an important benchmark within the sacramental theology of mid-seventeenth-century Britain. More particularly, Humfrey has been associated with an Erastian view of the sacrament as supporting political unity through ecclesiastical unity, and he has also been cited within the historiography of the Puritan Lord's Supper as championing the use of the Supper as a "converting" ordinance through which non-Christians might gain salvation.<sup>38</sup>

These characterizations of Humfrey's thought are clearly significant within the larger issues at play in seventeenth century English religion. Yet a close examination of his work indicates that, in Humfrey's mind, the primary issue of importance lies elsewhere. Humphrey's main concern is to encourage church unity and stem the divisions that he believes harm the health of the church body. In particular, he advocates inclusion of most members of the "visible" church—that is, all those who participate in

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<sup>37</sup> Humfrey was neither the first nor the last to suggest the practice of open communion within Puritan circles. For instance, William Prynne had brought up the issue for debate in the 1640s (it was never widely accepted). Later and more famously, American Puritan minister Solomon Stoddard did implement the practice (though his nephew, Jonathan Edwards, ultimately reversed the practice in Stoddard's congregation). Cf. Thomas M. Davis and Virginia L. Davis, *Edward Taylor vs. Solomon Stoddard: The Nature of the Lord's Supper* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1981). E. Brooks Holifield, "The Intellectual Sources of Stoddardeanism" *The New England Quarterly*, 45 (1972): 373-392. E. Brooks Holifield: *The Covenant Sealed: The Development of Puritan Sacramental Theology in Old and New England, 1570-1720* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 1974).

<sup>38</sup> Erastianism was based on the religious and political thought of Thomas Erastus. Cf. J. Neville Figgis, "Erastus and Erastianism" *The Journal of Theological Studies* 2 (1901): 66-101.

the life of the church—rather than the increasingly common practice of admitting only a small percentage (or none) of a parish’s members to communion. Although the ministers who adopted this exclusionary system believed it to be best because it preserved the purity of the sacrament and kept erring Christians from partaking in an unworthy manner, Humfrey strongly disagreed; he felt that this exclusion would critically damage the church.

In his first sermon, Humfrey explains six reasons that English churches should allow a broader admission to communion. These include Judas’ participation at the institution of the sacrament, a believer’s necessary obedience to Christ’s command to partake, the nature of the sacrament as a “visible gospel” and more.<sup>39</sup> Interestingly, each reason somehow incorporates the issue of separation versus unity within the Church, focusing on the relationship between believers and the centrality of ecclesiastical unity.

In his first reason, he explains that “the Gospell is a peaceable Gospell, an Embassy of Peace” and asks how peace can remain if divisions continue at the sacrament of communion.<sup>40</sup> His second reason references the idea of the visible church, and argues that although not all may truly be saints, all are called to be saints and should all participate together in the church’s “essential notes” including the Lord’s Supper.<sup>41</sup> Here, he suggests that—as in the biblical parable—the visible church should allow the wheat and the tares to remain together until the Lord comes to sort them out; he argues that any attempts to pre-sort among professing members of the visible church and allow only true believers to partake of communion are futile and unscriptural.

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<sup>39</sup> Humfrey, *An humble Vindication*, 11.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.



In reason three, Humfrey warns that overuse of exclusion within churches had led to fissures within the church that would only get worse over time. He argues that the current practice, in which certain Church members—usually a minister with perhaps a few elders—reviewed parishioners’ spiritual condition before a Communion service, was against

...the nature of Christian Communion, and Church-fellowship, which ought to be in Charity, in humility, without judging every one, esteeming others better than themselves, with the like in many places; especially in the Minister... And how impossible is this, if we must go to censuring of mens worthiness & unworthiness, preferring our selves, rejecting others?<sup>42</sup>

Throughout the pamphlet, Humfrey provides Scripture references to support his position; here, he mentions the parable from Luke 18 of the Pharisee and the Publican as well as two other examples from the gospels of Christ honoring those known socially as “sinners.”

Following this, Humfrey’s fourth, fifth and sixth arguments for open communion incorporate other issues while retaining a certain focus on unity. His fourth reason is that it is impossible for one church member to accurately judge another; he mentions that, if this practice continues, it will necessarily focus only on outward appearances. While this could lead to an outwardly—though not inwardly—pure Church, Humfrey says, it would come with a high cost: division. He explains,

But now if men stand here upon a formall purity...they go to separating againe, and never leave separating and separating (as we have quite dayly Testimony) till they are quite separated one from another; Even as in the peeling of an Onion, where you may peelee and peelee, till you have brought all to nothing, unlesse to a few tears perchance, with which the eyes of a good man must needs runne over in the doing.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 20.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 23.

Humfrey's fifth reason involves the unity of believers in all other forms of worship; he asks why there should be a special exclusion based only on the sacrament. Sixthly, he suggests that an open admission to communion allows humility, because he as a sinner himself does not believe he has power to turn away any, and the practice allows him to "hope the best, of all."<sup>44</sup>

The second portion of the first pamphlet deals largely with anticipated objections to open admission, most of which do not deal particularly with Church unity.<sup>45</sup> This suggests that Humfrey knew his critics would not oppose the ideal of unity directly. Rather, he anticipated that they would balk at the idea of changing sacramental practice at the expense of certain other theological positions regarding the spiritual state of those who were able to receive communion.

Importantly, it is in this section that Humfrey also addresses the issue of the Lord's Supper as a "converting ordinance," a facet of this debate that has featured prominently in recent historiography. In fact, in his important work on Puritan sacramental practice, E. Brooks Holifield writes that Humfrey, "more than any other man injected into one stream of Puritan piety the idea that the Lord's Supper could be an instrument of conversion." Holifield points out that Humfrey's ideas regarding communion as a converting ordinance influenced later Puritan sacramental practice—particularly in New England.<sup>46</sup> Paul Lim has also recently addressed Humfrey's sacramental position in relation to that of Richard Baxter, with whom Humfrey began a

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>45</sup> An important exception is his tenth and final Objection, which argues that Christians can rightly join with "sinners" in worship while eschewing their practice of sin. Humfrey agrees with this only in so far as a Christian must separate from a wicked person "in regard of their sinnes" but not "in regard of their persons." Thus he believes that unless certain individuals have been formally excommunicated, "no Scripture commands our separation from them in the Sacrament." Humfrey, *An humble Vindication*, 82-87.

<sup>46</sup> Holifield, *The Covenant Sealed*, 118.

correspondence around this issue. Although Humfrey sought Baxter's ideas on the sacrament, Lim points out that Baxter himself aligned more closely with Drake's theology.<sup>47</sup>

Because of this issue's importance to Humfrey's contemporaries and its treatment within current scholarship, it deserves careful attention. Within Christianity, doctrines of soteriology are of central importance; thus, beliefs regarding when and how God may choose to bring individuals to salvation reveal much about an individual's theological position. Humfrey's pamphlets argued that congregations should allow a large body of individuals—which would include most of the community—to partake of the sacrament. In this scheme, those who are already Christians would benefit from partaking, while those who had not yet truly converted would benefit from seeing and learning as they participated in the sacrament, and might during the act of partaking actually experience conversion to true Christianity.<sup>48</sup> In this regard, it is understandable that Humfrey's position on whether the sacrament can be considered a converting ordinance should have received such attention.

Yet Humfrey himself is hardly polemical regarding this issue. Because, in this work, his focus is not on soteriology but ecclesiology, he in fact treats the question only as it is necessary to support his other goals, and when he does he tries to avoid any major

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<sup>47</sup> Lim, 92. Baxter would not accept Humfrey's position that the sacrament could be a converting ordinance, a theological issue discussed below. The second section of this chapter will more fully address the Humfrey-Baxter relationship.

<sup>48</sup> Holifield points out Drake's important distinction that although it was possible that someone could be converted *at* the sacrament, no one could be converted *by* the sacrament; he would have attributed such conversion with "the preaching and prayers associated with the sacrament." *The Covenant Sealed*, 121. Yet Humfrey stated that he was willing to yield at this point, because he saw no matter whether one might be converted *at* or *by* the sacrament so long as all members of the visible church were admitted (or, that is, all those who could mentally comprehend their actions and fulfill the biblical directions to examine oneself and discern the Lord's body; i.e., Humfrey would exclude infants and "distracted persons" who could not do this). Humfrey, *An humble vindication*, 58.

redefinition of the sacrament's purpose. For instance, he writes that the sacrament is "usually" confirming and only "seldome" converting.<sup>49</sup> Moreover, his argument seeks only to argue that God, if He so chose, *could* convert someone at the sacrament. He in no way suggests that the sacrament's main purpose is conversion. When responding to criticisms of this idea in later pamphlets, he maintains his stance that someone could be converted while partaking, but this is not his focus.

While the question of communion as converting or confirming was clearly of importance to many people, it was not Humfrey's main concern. Rather, he suggests only as a minor point that beyond the primary goal of Christian duty and church unity achieved by a practice of open communion, an additional benefit could be that some people might be converted while partaking. In other words, the idea that one can be converted through participation is a potential outcome of this practice, but is not a foundational goal of his argument.<sup>50</sup>

Humfrey has also been associated—again, both by his contemporaries and in later history—with Erastian beliefs. Thomas Erastus was a Swiss thinker who is largely associated with his desire for state control of the church. It is sensible to bring his thought into an examination of Humfrey's beliefs because, like Humfrey, Erastus desired

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<sup>49</sup> Humfrey, *An humble Vindication*, 54-55.

<sup>50</sup> In *An humble Vindication* Humfrey's wording remains rhetorically mild throughout, and he makes conversion only one aspect of a much larger argument. He addresses the issue of communion as a converting ordinance more fully and more strongly in his second pamphlet, a reply to Drake's criticism. In this he remains firm that the sacrament could convert members of the visible church, and in reply to a challenge of Drake, even produces a testimony from another minister, Richard Fairclough, that one of his parishioners professed to have been converted at the Lord's Supper. John Humfrey, *A Rejoynder to Mr. Drake, or a Reply...* (London: Printed by F. L. for E. Blackmore, 1654), 206-240; Cf. Roger Drake, *A Boundary to the Holy Mount, Or, A Barre against Free Admission to the Lords Supper...* (London: Printed by Abraham Miller, 1653), 154ff. Humfrey's third pamphlet, in which he summarizes his argument in a more organized and coherent way, spends comparatively little space on this issue, although he does refer the reader to his *Rejoynder* for a more complete discussion. Here, he particularly highlights that it is not a converting ordinance to all people, but only to those within the visible church who are unconverted. John Humfrey, *A Second Vindication Of a Disciplinary, Anti-Erastian, Orthodox Free-admission to the Lords-Supper...* (London: Printed by F.L. for E. Blackmore, 1656), 56-63.

open admission to the sacrament of communion as well as ecclesiastical unity.

Moreover, previous English proponents of open admission such as William Prynne had been Erastians. Yet Erastus advocated ecclesiastical unity in the context of specific political goals, while politics do not similarly enter into Humfrey's discussion.<sup>51</sup>

Indeed, more than a simple omission of political discussion or of identification with Erastus, Humfrey is self-consciously un- and even anti-Erastian. After being attacked by opponents as having Erastian views, Humfrey responds in his third pamphlet by explaining that when authoring his first and second pamphlets, he had been completely unfamiliar with Erastus, and upon examination, he does not identify with him.<sup>52</sup> Moreover, he so strongly eschewed the designation that he placed the term "Anti-Erastian" in the title. One could hardly be more explicit. Of course, to say that Humfrey avoided association with Erastianism does not necessarily mean that his beliefs are incompatible with those of Erastus himself or of Erastians in England. However, Humfrey's self-identification as anti-Erastian and his professed ignorance about Erastianism when initially composing his ideas should cause one to focus on other influences on Humfrey's work, including his high view of the church and his distress about the continuance of divisions within it. As Holifield writes,

Humfrey's interest in sacramental practice was not a by-product of any involvement in ecclesiastical politics. He was neither an Erastian nor was he indifferent to purity within the Church; he revered the 'pantings and breathings' of his Puritan contemporaries "after a fellowship of the Saints on Earth, as neer as may be to the Church in Heaven." Humfrey's support for "an Anti-Erastian free admission" was mainly due to his biblical scholarship and his sense of pastoral responsibility...<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> William M. Lamont identifies Humfrey, along with Prynne and others, as an Erastian; see *Godly Rule: Politics and Religion, 1603-60* (New York: Macmillan St. Martin's Press, 1969), 151-152. Later scholars such as Holifield disagree with this categorization of Humfrey; see *The Covenant Sealed*, 118.

<sup>52</sup> Humfrey, "The Epistle to the Reader," in *A Second Vindication*, n.p.

<sup>53</sup> Holifield, 118.

Thus, rather than redefining the purpose of the sacrament as “converting” or as unifying the Church under an Erastian government for political means, Humfrey makes intra-ecclesiastical unity his primary concern. This is even more obvious when one considers the way he chooses to close his first pamphlet. He concludes with four “wishes,” each of which omits any discussion of conversion or secular government—and, importantly, omits any mention of the sacrament of communion, as well.

Humfrey’s four concluding “wishes” are for a biblical church government (not to be confused with political government of the church), for a more loving practice of “Fraternall correption” among Christians, for more judging of self and less judging of others among Christians, and an avoidance of causing separations within the visible church.<sup>54</sup> Clearly, the ideas he hoped to leave with his readers were about the avoidance of hostile, intra-ecclesiastical division. Indeed, he ends this first pamphlet with a doleful characterization of the current situation within churches, saying, “Rise up Daughter, goe to thy Daughter, for thy Daughters Daughter has a Daughter; for this separations separation has a separation.”<sup>55</sup>

Interestingly, this last bit of the pamphlet—Humfrey’s four wishes—saw publication in a broadside format in 1653. This type of one-page, cheap print publication would likely have reached a wider and more diverse audience than his pamphlets. Thus, while it is clear in each of Humfrey’s three pamphlets that he has a strong concern for unity, it is even more revealing to consider that this broadside publication—presumably,

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<sup>54</sup> Humfrey, *An humble Vindication*, 87.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* Note the implication of Humfrey's words here. His pamphlet was largely addressed to those within the mainstream church, particularly Presbyterians, who would have seen unity as desirable and who condemned other groups as having hurtful, separatist tendencies. Yet Humfrey suggests that they, too, are actually causing harmful separations within the church by their sacramental policies.

his most widely-published and widely-read work—speaks solely about unity. It seems that Humfrey believed that unity was the most important issue for the greatest number of people to understand.

At this point, it is worthwhile to examine certain other events of the early and mid-seventeenth century, as they are quite relevant to Humfrey's thought. The great political and ideological upheaval which came of age with the English Civil War in the 1640s had culminated with the execution of Charles in 1649 and the establishment of the Commonwealth government. In addition to political uncertainty, this period saw poor harvests, high food prices, high taxes, disruption of longstanding societal relationships, and various types of hostilities, including those between classes.<sup>56</sup>

During and after this time, religious doctrine and practice in England were also diversifying rapidly—a phenomenon that alarmed many individuals. The church saw a great proliferation of radical groups, including Levellers, Seekers, Ranters, Quakers, Familists, and more. These groups were religiously based, although their ideas tended to have key social, economic and/or political aspects, as well. Because of the innovative nature of these groups' beliefs, members often encountered resistance and fear from non-members. Concurrently, England also saw a proliferation and divergence of religious doctrine and practice even within mainstream religious groups such as Anglicans, Presbyterians, and Congregationalists. Moreover, as Christopher Hill explains, the divisions between these groups often blurred, and it was possible to move between various groups with some ease.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside-Down: Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books Ltd., 1987), 107, passim.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

English religion, which had been moderately contained and coherent before the war, thus began to divide into many disparate groups. Attempting to counter this trend, many orthodox ministers worked to warn their congregations about the insidious threat of heresy—a threat that, because of the current political and religious situation, they believed loomed on many sides: in the message of un-ordained sectarian preachers; in the words of unorthodox publications; and in people’s behavior in public gathering areas, such as ale-houses, belying loose morals and corrupt doctrine. In order to counteract and pre-empt these influences on their congregations, ministers preached, taught, and published orthodox doctrine and stringently warned parishioners of the harm in various heresies.<sup>58</sup> They highlighted the urgent danger of corruption from heretical groups whose teaching would compromise the purity of the church, and therefore attempted to keep those who followed heretical practices from participating in or influencing the life of the church. Yet on the other hand, they explained that the trend of ecclesiastical divisions would compromise the unity of the church. Thus, the mid-seventeenth-century saw the publication of a large number of titles addressing—that is, condemning—both division and heresy in the church.<sup>59</sup>

The fight for unity and purity became a balance. Both were desirable, but to simultaneously attain both was an elusive ideal. For this reason, preachers and authors tended to focus their polemic on the issue they felt was most at risk at that time, but

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<sup>58</sup> An interesting example of such warnings is the anonymous broadside publication *A Catalogue of the severall Sects and Opinions in England and other Nations* (Printed by R.A., 1646).

<sup>59</sup> A brief survey of works published in England between 1645 and 1655—the decade surrounding Humfrey’s publication of *An humble Vindication*—indicates that approximately fifty publications contain the word “unity” in the title and clearly address this issue. This number may not seem highly significant amidst the corpus of more than fifteen thousand works published in this period. Yet when one adds to it the many titles addressing church unity which do not happen to use that particular word in the title, as well as the many more works which mention ecclesiastical unity within a discussion of other issues, it is clear that this topic was a significant part of public religious debate and discussion.



might change their emphasis later in another situation. For instance, minister John Brinsley at one point published in favor of ecclesiastical unity, speaking against those who broke communion with the established church. Yet Brinsley had previously published works condemning heresies, and he clearly also desired doctrinal purity within the church.<sup>60</sup>

Brinsley's 1646 publication of a long explication of 1 Corinthians 1:10 explained many aspects of the dangers of schism and division and promoted the ideal of unity. Within this, he spends a good deal of time addressing sacramental unity and the importance of communion with other believers, even those with whom one has some differences.<sup>61</sup> Referencing the eleventh chapter of First Corinthians, he writes of the danger of separated communion:

*So Paul there tells them in down right words, in the Verse foregoing. When ye come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lords Supper. What then? Their own Supper. Of su[c]h dangerous consequence is it to celebrate this Ordinance of God, the Sacrament of the Lords Supper, in a separated way. If Pauls judgement may be taken in the case, it is not onely a corrupting, but a perverting of the Ordinance. A celebrating not of the Lords Supper, but of our own Supper.*

*Which who so do, what do they therein but despise and contemn the Church of God? viz. That Church from which they so separate. Now this, if it be a true Church, can be no small evil.*<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Richard Cust, "Brinsley, John (1600–1665)," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), accessed April 17, 2010, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>. Brinsley was also involved with Thomas Edwards' *Gangraena*, a work notorious for its polemically vitriolic condemnation of heretics. Cust further notes that Brinsley's work toward unity only went so far: he condemned certain groups, but attempted to unite with others who were closer in doctrine. For instance, he worked out an agreement with Independent William Bridge so that both would hold services simultaneously in different parts of the same church.

<sup>61</sup> Again, however, this is only in the case of certain differences; Brinsley in no way advocates a wholesale unity of any and all churches.

<sup>62</sup> John Brinsley, *The araiment of the present schism of new separation in old England. Together vvith a serious recommendation of church-unity and uniformity...* (London: Printed by John Field for Ralph Smith, 1646), 20.

Not long after this call to unity, however, Brinsley again felt it necessary to focus on the issue of purity, publishing *An antidote against the poysonous vveeds of heretical blasphemies* in 1650.<sup>63</sup> Clearly, a balance between doctrinal purity and ecclesiastical unity in the practice of communion as well as in the church more generally was proving difficult to attain.

Another example of a publication demonstrating concern over unity and purity appeared in 1651, nearer Humfrey's own date of publication. Thomas Hall's work, *The pulpit guarded*, opposed the preaching ministry of laymen, a practice that indicated a lack of institutional oversight and ecclesiastical conformity.<sup>64</sup> Within this work, Hall describes two types of people who "have not the Spirit." One such type are the "Separatists, dividing and separating themselves from the true Church of Christ, renouncing their Communion, forsaking their Assemblies like Apostates, and so cast off publick Ordinances."<sup>65</sup> Here, again, a concern over purity in doctrine and practice extends to includes concern for ecclesiastical unity and—moreover—a concern for unity in communion and public ordinances.

Individuals throughout England were concerned about purity and unity. In practice, many ministers sought to arrive at something resembling ecclesiastical purity by limiting participation in communion to those parishioners who truly believed in right Christian doctrine. However, this practice, too, had its problems. In seventeenth century

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<sup>63</sup> John Brinsley, *An antidote against the poysonous vveeds of heretical blasphemies, which during the deplorable interval of church-government have grown up in the reforming Church of England...* (London: Printed by T. R. and E. M. for Ralph Smith, 1650).

<sup>64</sup> It is significant that each of these authors comes from a different geographical part of England and, further, that their work was traveling in and out of London. This debate was not in any way centralized; rather, it was of general concern.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas Hall, *The pulpit guarded with XVII arguments proving the unlawfulness, sinfulness and danger of suffering private persons to take upon them publike preaching...* (London: Printed by I. Cottrel for E. Blackmore, 1651), 17.

Puritan understanding, the “visible” church was composed of all who professed to be Christians and participated in a local church body, while the “invisible” church was comprised of all true believers from all places and times.<sup>66</sup> For this reason, a Protestant had good reason to assume that a number of individuals with whom he or she attended church—not to mention others in the community—were actually not true believers and thus not part of the body of Christ. Indeed, believers were encouraged to regularly examine themselves to determine whether or not they were truly members of the invisible church—and thus were truly Christians. Yet since salvation was a heart matter, church leaders often found it difficult to determine which parishioners to admit to the sacrament. Because of a warning in the New Testament that those who unworthily partake will gain a harsher judgment, and with the insidious threat of heresy fully in mind, many church leaders adopted a sort of ‘better safe than sorry’ practice in which they excluded many individuals from communion—even many who said they believed in Christ as Savior and who participated in the public life of the church body. Within certain Puritan communities, in fact, exclusion became something of an epidemic; some pastors such as Ralph Josselin even ceased performing the sacrament at all for some time: in effect excluding an entire congregation.<sup>67</sup>

Exclusion from communion was not simply an intra-parish phenomenon. Rather, as divisions between different groups appeared, certain congregations or denominations

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1963), 2-3. The doctrines of the visible and invisible church were traced back to Augustine.

<sup>67</sup> John Walter, “Josselin, Ralph (1617-1683),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), accessed May 5, 2008, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/>. By way of comparison, although Humfrey would not have wanted to give false assurance of salvation to unsaved members of his congregation, he did differ strongly from Josselin and others on this issue. He believed that ministers (or any other member of church, for that matter) should not attempt to stand in judgment of the spiritual state of parishioners; such a practice could only harm the unity of the body of Christ. Rather, he attempted to preserve unity in the church while trusting that God would convict parishioners of any sin and lead people to salvation.

excluded members of others. For instance, Presbyterians excluded Congregationalists (and vice versa). In addition, some individuals chose to exclude themselves for a variety of reasons. Such social and religious divisions made it difficult for anyone to determine who was, and who was not, a brother or sister in Christ.

Compounding this sense of disunity, particularly disunity around the sacrament, was the lingering shadow of earlier sacramental unity that had once existed, to a large degree, within English communities. Before the English Reformation, participation in the sacrament of communion, then known more widely as the Eucharist, had actually been a strongly communal experience. Indeed, it had involved both “individual and...corporate renewal and unity...”<sup>68</sup> In fact, Eamon Duffy has suggested that in pre-Reformation England, the Host—the bread that, when consecrated, was believed to contain the real presence of the body of Christ—became “the source of human community.”<sup>69</sup> Thus, the sacrament of communion in general, and the adoration of the body of Christ in the Host in particular, became central to medieval communities.<sup>70</sup> Further, medieval theology taught that the body of Christ was not only present in the consecrated Host but also took its form from the Church itself, the collective body of which Christ was the head and each believer a member. Both these manifestations of Christ’s body were prominent in medieval religion, and both were united within the sacrament of communion.

The English Reformation brought a definite change to this social and communal order. Among its foundational theological changes were the denial of

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<sup>68</sup> Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c.1400 - c.1580* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 92.

<sup>69</sup> Duffy, 93.

<sup>70</sup> The body of Christ was further commemorated by Corpus Christi celebrations and guilds. Cf. Miri Rubin, *Corpus Christi: The Eucharist in Late Medieval Culture* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

transubstantiation, or the doctrine of the “real presence” of Christ in the sacrament of communion, as well as the attention to the distinction between the visible and invisible church. Both of these had a key effect on the understanding of the body of Christ within post-Reformation Christianity. By denying transubstantiation, Protestants adopted a fundamentally different understanding of the purpose of the sacrament. Though they still believed communion to be an important part of Christian practice, they did not believe that the sacrament was a sacrifice of the body of Christ itself; thus, communion became only one of the church’s functions—the most important of which was the preaching of the Word. Further, because of the development of the doctrine of the visible and invisible church, many Christians came to believe that not all who participated in the church community were part of the spiritual body of Christ.<sup>71</sup> Thus, Protestant faith and practice seems to have been moving toward a much less central view of the sacrament within the community of the faithful.

Nevertheless, old ideas of sacramental centrality were slow to depart. The continuing importance of the sacrament of communion within Puritanism—as well as the social importance that individuals continued to place upon participation—has been noted by scholars such as Christopher Haigh and Arnold Hunt. Haigh explains that even within sixteenth century England, exclusion and participation in communion still “mattered” to parishioners.<sup>72</sup> Hunt, writing about the early seventeenth century, notes that the

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<sup>71</sup> See also Natalie Zemon Davis’s useful comparison of French Catholic and Protestant understandings of the body of Christ and their relationship to communion in “The Sacred and the Body Social in Sixteenth-Century Lyon,” *Past & Present* 90 (1981): 40-70, 60-67.

<sup>72</sup> Christopher Haigh, “Communion and Community: Exclusion from Communion in Post-Reformation England,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 51 (2000): 721-740, 740.

“importance of the communion service as a symbol of parochial unity and the social stigma attached to non-participation” were central for many individuals.<sup>73</sup>

Moreover, Hunt suggests that even into the seventeenth century, “the parish communion service might still have possessed some of the characteristics of a popular festival, an occasion when the bonds of community and sociability could be reinforced” and even Puritans continued to retain the “charitable and communal dimensions of the communion service.”<sup>74</sup> Since communion had traditionally been a time for affirmation of communal unity and the minister had traditionally taken the lead in these reconciliations, the ministerial role naturally flowed into one that desired to reconcile the divisions caused by exclusion—something Humfrey certainly believed.<sup>75</sup> By emphasizing unity around the sacrament, Humfrey was in essence advocating a return to earlier sacramental policies that had not involved widespread exclusion. Although he desired that all believers pursue inward purity through self-examination and devotion, he did not believe that such behavior should be enforced by the “godly” on entire congregations.

Yet—as Brinsley, Hall, Humfrey, Drake, Baxter and countless others were asking—how should one reconcile a desire for church unity with a desire for doctrinal purity? In a period of so many theological divisions, the ideal of a community that could unite around the celebration of a shared faith seemed more and more elusive, and suppressing matters of doctrine in the pursuit of unity was not a theological option. Thus, many ministers felt compelled to try, by exclusion, to unite those that truly believed—to create small communities in which the elect could experience sacramental unity with fellow believers.

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<sup>73</sup> Arnold Hunt, “The Lord’s Supper in Early Modern England,” *Past & Present* 161 (1998): 39-83, 51.

<sup>74</sup> Hunt, 62.

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Hunt, 63.

Thus far, it is clear that Humfrey's work addresses the same concern over separation and schism that many others throughout England were facing. It is critical to read his work with this broader context in mind. As his most widely distributed work, the broadside of "wishes," indicates, he feared that church members were beginning to stand in unlawful judgment of others and experience an insidious divisiveness within the church body. Like many other writers, he closely associated sacramental unity with more general ecclesiastical unity. Therefore, while his work addressed various points of sacramental doctrine, it must be understood in its fuller seventeenth century framework of unity and division.

#### Promoting Unity in the Arena of Public Religious Discourse

Yet Humfrey's emphasis on unity went beyond sacramental practice in individual parish communities. Indeed, Humfrey demonstrated a clear concern for another type of unity altogether. Not only his publications but also his actions throughout the time of the controversy show that he had an overwhelming concern for unity within the entirety of the large, and at that time largely divided, English religious community.

Humfrey was able to influence this group because so many of its members were engaged, through print media and interpersonal discussions, in an arena of public religious discourse. His concern for the members of this larger body directed his actions as he navigated the controversy over open admission. For this reason, throughout the controversy, Humfrey saw his role in the arena of public religious discourse as a minister suggesting doctrinal changes to support church unity (i.e. his pamphlets on open admission) but also—and more importantly—as a fellow-believer among Christians who

must behave in humility to promote the unity of all those engaged with the arena of public religious discourse.

I use the term “public religious discourse” to indicate the phenomenon of sizable public involvement in religious interchanges in early modern England. Indeed, it was through this public arena that Humfrey was able to interact with the larger English religious community. In some ways, the term reflects the Habermasian conception of social interaction within a political public sphere. Many recent scholars have agreed that the idea of the public sphere, with certain caveats, can describe certain important developments within the politico-social milieu of early modern England. Yet the concept has also become useful outside the political realm altogether. David Zaret has suggested that “popular developments in Protestantism created a public sphere in religion that cultivated nearly the same critical, rational habits of thought that Habermas locates in the public spheres of politics and letters.”<sup>76</sup> Zaret further points out that the religious reforms in this period were highly public events and that, moreover, the lay initiative within Protestantism “created the first body of public opinion, the public sphere of religion, whose participants saw it in terms of ‘critical reflections of a public competent to form its own judgments’—to use Habermas’s description of the political sphere that appeared in the next century.”<sup>77</sup> Yet because the Habermasian terminology of the “public sphere” is so closely linked with other theoretical underpinnings that are not necessarily at work among Humfrey’s religious audience in the 1650s, a more general terminology—say, public religious discourse—may be more appropriate in this case.

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<sup>76</sup> Zaret, “Religion, Science, and Printing,” 221.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 223.



Regardless of the term used, Humfrey's writings indicate that he was aware that much of the English religious community was involved in or affected by a public discourse about religious ideas, and it seems that Humfrey conceived of his preaching, his publishing, and to some degree even his actions within the controversy over open admission as being affected by this wider audience. Thus, evaluating Humfrey's behavior and his ideas in the context of an ongoing public religious discourse regarding open communion and ecclesiastical unity allows for a more complete understanding of both his theology and his methodology. Moreover, it highlights the significance that public religious discourse could hold, and it demonstrates the important ways that this arena could affect an individual. In this context, it is useful to consider the idea of a public religious discourse in a broad sense, as the growing group of those who joined religious discussion and debate by reading, considering, participating in and/or publishing about religious issues in a public, dialogic format—here, specifically regarding Humfrey and his ideas.<sup>78</sup>

Within the debate over open communion, Humfrey's three publications reflect a variety of approaches to this discourse, representing a growing apprehension on his part of the way that he as an author should prepare works to address this arena. His first pamphlet was fairly simple: in essence, two sermons preached in his parish and modified only slightly for consumption by a wider audience. His second publication was a close reading and response to his critic Drake's work; Humfrey seems to have learned to more carefully measure his words, to better anticipate critiques, and not to assume that all readers would give him the benefit of the doubt. The third publication was a more fully

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<sup>78</sup> Zaret has suggested that the structure of certain seventeenth century publications created an "imposition of dialogic order" to conflicts within the public sphere. Though he discusses this in regard to petitions and political rhetoric, I see certain aspects of that dialogic order in play here, as well. Cf. Zaret, *Origins*, 252.

“digested” and more carefully theological pamphlet that presented most of his initial arguments, but in a more precise form. It has moved from the defensive stance he had adopted against Drake in his second pamphlet to an offensive one, carefully laying out his own argument. In each of these three pamphlets, the epistle to the reader, which prefaces the work itself, anticipates a broad audience and gives information that indicates the expectation for the book’s reception within the public arena.

The first pamphlet, again, represents Humfrey’s initial presentation of his topic and his first time addressing a public audience. In the epistle to the reader in this first pamphlet, not Humfrey himself but another individual (identified by the initials I. C.) prefaces the work. I.C. anticipates that, as is “the common fate of the best works” Humfrey’s ideas will receive “severall censures.” Yet he expresses an expectation that readers will seriously examine all parts of the pamphlet and then will “not suffer thy selfe to be swayed from judgeing according to the truth.”<sup>79</sup>

Not only I.C. but also Humfrey himself certainly had some conception of the number of potential readers and hearers of his work and, beyond that, of the size of the arena of public religious discourse which could have become aware of his work. For Humfrey, this awareness of the public audience likely came from his occupations as a reader and minister and also due to conversations with his bookseller, E. Blackmore. Unfortunately, it is difficult to know exactly what that audience was or to determine Humfrey’s specific ideas regarding it. Yet we do know something of the dissemination of his work and the various responses it received. Looking at these across the time period of his publications about open admission—approximately 1651 to 1656—can further indicate his appeal to the arena of public religious discourse.

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<sup>79</sup> I.C., “To the Reader,” in Humfrey, *An humble Vindication*, n.p.

Humfrey's original work appeared in 1651, and a few years afterward the broadside expressing four "wishes" for church unity was also published.<sup>80</sup> The broadside suggests an even more widespread audience than that of the larger pamphlet. Although only a portion of the population was literate, a broadside could indicate a substantial interest within a growing religious discourse for Humfrey's ideas. Further, it is possible that the abbreviated nature of this shorter publication might make verbal transmission of his ideas easier and more accurate, as a reader would have less information to sum up and repeat in a conversational setting, thus involving a wider range of people in discourse about ecclesiastical unity. Later, the pamphlet went through three or four printings and led to two additional works by Humfrey, as well as several by other writers, and it gained attention from those in a variety of geographical and vocational positions.<sup>81</sup> Humfrey's ideas likely also spread due to his connection with other ministers who in turn could have informed parishioners about them verbally and mentioned them in published or unpublished documents to others. Again, specific information is elusive, but Humfrey's references to relationships with various ministers in his pamphlets are suggestive of other, similar connections that could have existed.

Thus, one can construct a rough framework that suggests considerable interest in Humfrey's work reaching across multiple years to individuals from varying occupations through both pamphlets and a broadside. Moreover, several authors deemed Humfrey's ideas important or influential enough to spend significant amounts of time composing detailed replies, explanations, or refutations. It seems that Humfrey was largely aware of the arena of public religious discourse as he wrote his first pamphlet: indeed, his purpose

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. John Humfrey, *The Foure Wishes of Mr. John Humphrey...* ([London, 1654]).

<sup>81</sup> For instance, John Timson was a husbandman by vocation; see N. H. Keeble and Geoffrey F. Nuttall, *Calendar of the Correspondence of Richard Baxter* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 138.

was to speak into that arena with his ideas. Yet he seems to have been somewhat taken aback by the actual experience of participation in this arena, as is clear in the epistle to the reader in his second pamphlet.

In Humfrey's second pamphlet entitled *A Rejoynder to Mr. Drake, or a Reply...*, Humfrey himself addresses the reader in the prefatory remarks. Here, he emphasizes his knowledge of a wide readership that includes laypeople—though he expects that only certain readers will question his work as “judges” against it.<sup>82</sup> He mentions, too, that when he read Drake's reply to his first work, “His sharpness of spirit, and sore language; His words are very spears and swords. I must confess they often wound me to my heart, and make me think sometimes what profit is there in my wounds? If it will do him any good, he may take the blood of them.”<sup>83</sup> Yet Humfrey also asserts that he believes that Drake himself, in doing so, was well-meaning and, moreover, that he finds Presbyterians (Drake was a Presbyterian) to be among the most moderate and pious of all religious groups in England at that time. He desires unity among members of each group and, clearly, was hurt that Drake not only disagreed with his pamphlet, but did so in a harsh and divisive manner. At least in this regard, Humfrey seems to have been somewhat unprepared at the outset of the controversy for strongly polemical, negative responses to his plea for unity. Indeed, his emphasis on unity prepares him much more for amiable disagreement united around a shared belief in Christ than for heated and divisive polemic.<sup>84</sup> After his second pamphlet, he seems to have had increasing concern

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<sup>82</sup> Humfrey, *Rejoynder*, n.p.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid.

<sup>84</sup> He further writes, “There are some have thought the World was made by a concurse of Atomes, I think, if ever the multiform opinions of men, which like those Atomes, fly up and down, about Church Government, do concur in one, they must have their confluence and coagulation at this Ordinance. ...There are four principles amongst us, Episcopacy, Presbytery, Independency, Erastianism. Some are for Martin, and some are for Luther; But is Christ divided? ...We know the perfect temperament of natural

regarding his actions in the controversy—so much that he began to reconsider the best way to proceed.

Humfrey states in the epistle to the reader of his third pamphlet that he has written again because his bookseller, E. Blackmore, had received so many requests for further copies of Humfrey's first work that he (i.e. Blackmore) was determined to print it again for economic reasons. As Humfrey put it, his "Book-Seller, that many doe call upon him for more copies of my first little book...there being now 3. Or 4. Impressions out of it already, and notwithstanding my advice to the contrary, he is resolved to make his advantage..."<sup>85</sup> This again indicates a significant audience and further demonstrates that Humfrey, Blackmore, and the public were all aware of the important place for Humfrey's work within the textual and verbal discourse of the day. However, it is interesting that Humfrey offered Blackmore "advice to the contrary" against publishing his work again. This seems to reflect his growing apprehension that although he may have had an eager audience, his work was causing a sort of public disunity that Humfrey found quite problematic.

Because of his opponents and also to clarify his ideas for this eager audience for whom his bookseller was determined to publish, Humfrey decided that rather than allowing a reprint of the first publication, he would rework his original ideas into a more thorough format. This, he hoped, would limit the ways in which opponents could attack him and would allow their criticisms of his work, if any, to remain on-topic. Again, this concern was legitimate, as Roger Drake's responses to Humfrey had included not only

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bodies is of the four Elements; and it may be in our Government, if the prime qualities of either of these were well disputed and allayed, they might unite, and enduce a form of the richest extract for our mixt Churches." Humfrey, *Rejoynder*, n.p.

<sup>85</sup> Humfrey, *A Second Vindication*, n.p.

theological but also personal and petty criticisms of his work. The bookseller Blackmore, clearly assuming that he would profit from either version of Humfrey's work, agreed to this plan.

Interestingly, Blackmore had also published Thomas Hall's aforementioned work dealing with unity in 1651, just before Humfrey's first work. Indeed, it appears that although the works Blackmore contracted to be published focused on various political and religious issues, he seems to have favored many which featured the topic of unity.<sup>86</sup> One can imagine that he may have chosen these works to some degree based on personal interest; yet it is clear that a significant portion of his selection criteria was economic and, therefore, also reflects the interests of purchasers. This further indicates Humfrey's awareness of and interactions with the interests and potential reactions of the reading public; yet he was hesitant to reenter the controversy.

Because of this hesitancy, it seems, sometime before publishing his third pamphlet Humfrey also sought advice from the well-known Puritan minister Richard Baxter. He initiated a correspondence with Baxter in 1654, asking him for opinions regarding the issue; Baxter responded, and the two kept up a correspondence long past the time of this controversy.<sup>87</sup> Since Baxter actually fell closer to Drake than Humfrey on the issue of open admission, he may at first seem to have been an odd choice of ally.<sup>88</sup> Yet there were many potential benefits to Humfrey's seeking a dialogue with Baxter. First, as did most ministers, both desired unity and purity even though they disagreed about how to achieve these ends; yet they could meet as equals and fellow-believers to

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<sup>86</sup> This suggestion is based on a brief survey of works indexed in Early English Books Online that list E. Blackmore as the individual for whom they were printed.

<sup>87</sup> Keeble and Nuttall, 138-139. It is unclear when Humfrey's conversation with Blackmore occurred, but it seems likely that it happened before Humfrey initiated the correspondence with Baxter.

<sup>88</sup> For an analysis of Baxter's perspective on this debate, see Lim, 84-114.

encourage one another regarding them.<sup>89</sup> Second, although the epistolary exchange was private, Humfrey's seeking the help and, potentially, the favor of an influential figure such as Baxter certainly held potential public benefit for Humfrey.

Baxter himself was no stranger to public controversy; in this way, it seems that Humfrey sought him out as an advisor and model for navigating this arena. In addition to merely asking his advice, Humfrey attempted to fill Baxter in on some additional details of the controversy. Moreover, Humfrey addressed a separate controversy over one of Baxter's books. Although he acknowledged some theological differences with Baxter, he seems to have been attempting to connect himself with the group of conservative Puritan divines of which Baxter was a recognized leader. Importantly, Humfrey consulted Baxter's advice on the ramifications of his entering into the public religious discourse. Having attempted to take Drake's criticisms with humility, Humfrey retained his original goal of the good of the church. He expressed this concern to Baxter, saying "...my heart is much afraid doing any hurt to the church of God."<sup>90</sup>

Baxter responded within the month; he advised Humfrey to step out of the controversy after writing a final, brief pamphlet and also to vindicate himself, if possible, against personal criticisms that had begun to circulate about him. Baxter wrote that, as Humfrey desired to keep his public image clean during this controversy, he should "be sure to associate with your brethren of the ministry, & be with them in all their meetings; & if they have received any offence against you, give them all just satisfaction, & be sure to keep in unity with them."<sup>91</sup> In some sense, Baxter was accepting Humfrey's overtures to be taken as part of the conservative Puritan group, and he advises Humfrey that, if he

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<sup>89</sup> Regarding Baxter's desires for unity and purity, see Lim, *passim*.

<sup>90</sup> Humfrey, quoted in Lim, 91.

<sup>91</sup> Keeble and Nuttall, 143-144.

wants to be seen as such, he should follow a certain course of action—a course which included unified participation with fellow-ministers.

Humfrey's third publication, in 1656, reflects this correspondence with Baxter. In the epistle to the reader in this work, Humfrey employs specific turns of phrase from Baxter's letter—which would have signaled to Baxter that he had accepted his advice.<sup>92</sup> He also follows Baxter's counsel by indicating his desire, for the sake of unity, to withdraw from the controversy after the publication of this last pamphlet. Finally, he heeds Baxter by attempting to vindicate himself of any charges of personal laxity in behavior: Humfrey offers the names of seven ministers who can personally vouch for his godly character, indicating his desire to be known as an orthodox minister who pursued the good of the church.<sup>93</sup>

It seems that between 1652 and 1656 Humfrey came to realize many of the potential pitfalls of publishing within the arena of public religious discourse. By connecting with Baxter, he could get advice from one who was known for navigating the arena of public religious discourse, and perhaps gain an influential ally. By presenting his final pamphlet material in “digested” format, he attempted to mitigate the types of criticism he had earlier opened himself up to receive. And, as Baxter suggested, by offering character references he attempted to quell the rumors that had begun circulating about him.

Let us return briefly to Humfrey's letter to Baxter which stated “...my heart is much afraid doing any hurt to the church of God.”<sup>94</sup> This phrase is a key window into Humfrey's thoughts and actions in this controversy. Each of his pamphlets, as well as his

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<sup>92</sup> Cf. “draw the saw” in Humfrey, *A Second Vindication* and Baxter's letter in Keeble and Nuttall, 144.

<sup>93</sup> Humfrey, *A Second Vindication*, n.p.

<sup>94</sup> Humfrey, quoted in Lim, 91.



broadside, demonstrates his clear desire for unity within churches. For Humfrey, much disunity stemmed from the current exclusionary sacramental practices; for this reason, he argued for an open communion. Yet he was also concerned for unity amongst all believers; thus, his actions in the controversy demonstrate a desire for unity in the universal church—which took its visible form in England within the arena of public religious discourse.

For this reason, Humfrey was greatly concerned with the possibility that he had done or could do harm to the church by his publications. Indeed, it would be doleful to him if his pamphlets on unity within churches led to disunity within the larger body of Christ. Rather, he advocates—and adopts—the course of humility in both cases. Within churches, he calls for a humility that does not allow one church member to stand in judgment of another’s worthiness to partake. In the arena of public religious discourse, he pursues a humility that allows him to accept criticism, to pursue assistance even from one who disagrees with him, and to step down from a controversy even when he believes he is right in order to keep unity within the body of Christ. Indeed, he preferred to be a unifying force more than to be proven doctrinally correct (at least in a matter which he believed was not central to the gospel). For these reasons, John Humfrey stands as a useful study not only of one who took a particular stance on sacramental issues but of one who was in the vanguard of discussion and debate regarding the path of Christianity in the Commonwealth and beyond.

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