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La Réforme du futur : dater le début de la Réforme anglaise après la Restauration

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The Reformation of the Future: Dating English Protestantism in the Late Stuart Era

*La Réforme du futur : dater le début de la Réforme anglaise après la
Restauration*

Tony Claydon

- 1 In 1707 Laurence Echard, an Anglican minister and tireless writer for the press, published his huge and old-fashioned – but nevertheless surprisingly popular – chronicle of English history. Arranged year by year from Julius Caesar’s conquest, it generally stuck to events in Britain, but it ventured onto the continental mainland when this was important for the British story. For 1517 it staged a major, paragraph-long, excursion across the North Sea. It said that this year saw “the beginnings of a [...] remarkable commotion in Germany, which [...] affected all England and the greater part of Christendom”. The commotion, of course, was Luther’s campaign against the papal sale of indulgences, a crusade that eventually “brought about that mighty work of the REFORMATION”.¹ This passage left no doubt about the significance of the change. “REFORMATION” was the only word to be capitalised in this way in the whole thousand-page work. And the dating was very precise. Echard suggested the Reformation had been a long-term process (the ignorance and lewd lives of the medieval clergy provoked earlier protests, and it had taken a while for Luther’s ideas to spread), but the structure of his work placed true spiritual renewal at a very specific point in time. It had begun in 1517. Echard had not mentioned reform before he got to Luther’s revolt; and as soon as he had covered that German monk’s actions in that year, the historian advanced to 1518 and swung back to domestic English politics.
- 2 Other works familiarised people of the late Stuart era with 1517. These ranged from scholarship, such as Edmund Bohun’s 1689 translation of John Sleidan’s history of German religious reform – a volume that started (rather abruptly) with Luther’s first protest;² through theological controversy, that often took Luther’s career as the definitive destruction of Roman error;³ to apocalyptic writing (which – as will be explored later –

hung on to 1517 as a fixed point from which to calculate Christ's second coming).⁴ The date was also popularised by almanacs, those diary-cum-reference books published as guides to the year ahead, which were one of the most widely-used print genres of period. Although the bulk of these concentrated on astronomical, agricultural, legal, and market events, they frequently opened with brief summaries of world history to situate the year with which they dealt. These chronologies often noted exactly how many years it had been since the Pope's power had first been challenged by Luther's Ninety Five Theses.⁵

- 3 Yet whilst there was awareness of 1517 as a turning point in history, it was not widely marked in the late Stuart period. Although England had a strong identity as a Protestant nation, and although the European origins of her faith were widely recognised, the date of Luther's first protests were not energetically celebrated in popular, or even elite, culture. A series of complications prevented the English thinking that they were participating in a movement that had started at a precise point in the sixteenth century. These confused the moment when English Protestantism had been founded, they directed attention to the Stuart, rather than the Tudor age and they reconceptualised the Reformation as something still to occur. Ultimately these complications refashioned Reformation as an unfolding process, rather than as a discreet event and so affected what it meant to be a Protestant in late Stuart England.

Dating Confusions

- 4 The first complication sprang from the simple facts of history. In England, the "Reformation" had been two rather different processes, the links between which had been tenuous, and the dating of which could be disputed. The first was the spread of Lutheran doctrines. The second was the crown's juridical rejection of the pope's authority, and its political shaping of a national church. These two processes had been protracted (and had both suffered reverses in the reign of the Catholic Mary I, 1553-1558); they had proceeded at different paces; and they had not always been dependent on each other (for example, Henry VIII established an independent English church, but suppressed Lutheranism within it). All this meant there were numerous possible dates for the origins of English Protestantism, aside from 1517. One might celebrate the first arrival of Luther's ideas in the 1520s; Henry's destruction of the Pope's power in the 1530s; the promotion of full-blooded Protestantism under Edward VI (1547-1553); the re-establishment of a Protestant church at the start of Elizabeth's reign in 1558; or the gradual bedding down of the establishment over the next decades.
- 5 These ambiguities were fully recognised by late Stuart historians. The most widely accepted authority on Tudor religion, Gilbert Burnet's *History of the Reformation*, whose first volume was published in 1679, started by telling the story of Henry's break with Rome. Then, however, it doubled back to narrate the progress of what the author saw as the true Reformation – namely popular rejection of Roman doctrine.⁶ His second volume, appearing in 1681, took the story through the Edwardian reforms to Elizabeth's settlement. It stated that it was only in 1558 that the process was "complete"; but then stretched the time line even further by alluding to decades of debate about the final shape of the ecclesiastical establishment that lasted into the seventeenth century, and so blurred any sense that Elizabeth's first decrees had been the definitive foundation of English Protestantism.⁷ This dating confusion extended beyond academic work, into the popular press. For example, during the Exclusion Crisis of 1679 to 1683, demands to bar

the Catholic Duke of York from the English succession inspired a large number of anti-popish publications, many of which covered sixteenth-century history. Pamphlets celebrated the first defeat of Rome, or chronicled the wicked plots of papists to extinguish Protestantism – yet despite this common purpose, authors could not agree when the Reformation had occurred. Some dated it from Henry VIII's reign,⁸ but some wanted more explicitly-Protestant doctrine than Henry's church had offered, and so celebrated the advances of the next reign. One writer, for example, wrote a *Remembrancer* to bring audiences' attention to Catholic excesses down to "the reformation in the reign of King Edw. 6".⁹ Others, however, seemed drawn to the Elizabethan settlement – perhaps seeking the origins of a Protestant church that had had reasonable institutional continuity into their own age. One commentator produced another reminder of popish "plots, conspiracies and hellish attempts", from the Reformation – but saw that as happening at the beginning of Elizabeth's rule; whilst Samuel Clarke attributed the Reformation to Elizabeth in his hagiographical account of her reign.¹⁰

- 6 The sixteenth century thus threw up plenty of dating difficulties – but these were compounded by English Protestants' tendency to see the first sparks of the Reformation even before the Tudor age. This was partly in response to Catholic accusations of innovation. Denying that Protestantism was something new and invented, its adherents insisted it was, in fact, a survival of true worship from the days of early Christianity – a survival that had been made possible by small numbers of godly people who had resisted popish corruption in the middle ages.¹¹ Within this general answer to the question "where was your church before Luther?" patriotism encouraged interest in John Wycliffe, the late fourteenth-century English heretic. Since many of Wycliffe's teachings seemed to foreshadow Luther's, it became a point of national pride to present him as a strong precursor to the Reformation: perhaps even as the first reformer himself. Again the Exclusion Crisis provided examples. One 1680 publication offered an account of "the rise and growth of the reformation", but started the story with Wycliffe.¹² Henry Care, one of the most active pro-exclusion propagandists offered a serialised account of popish corruption that gave extensive coverage to Wycliffe's movement. Gregory Hascard, explicitly meeting the challenge to find a true church before Luther, placed much emphasis on Wycliffe's protest against the evils of Rome.¹³ The early 1680s also saw a new edition of John Foxe's *Book of Martyrs*, which – whilst famous for its descriptions of the sufferings of Protestants under Mary Tudor – pushed the story of heroic suffering back to the persecutions of Wycliffe's "Lollard" followers.¹⁴ All this acknowledged that Reformation might have deep roots in late medieval religion – but by suggesting that it was a long drawn out process, made its starting point unclear.
- 7 The confused origins of the English Reformation thus prevented any clarity in its dating: but other, related, factors further discouraged the celebration of sixteenth-century religious history. The first was the monarchy's hijacking of spiritual memorialisation. A special feature of England's religious reform had been the sacralisation of kingship. From Henry VIII's reign, the ruler had been given a high legal authority over spiritual institutions, and had claimed a providential function as the guardian of true faith in England.¹⁵ Such roles had had a deep impact on popular memory, because moments in monarchical history became the points around which Protestant identity was constructed. The foundation, advance, and protection, of English faith were so bound up with the fortunes of English dynasties that it came to be events in royal, not purely ecclesiastical, history that were elevated as signs of God's benign care for the English

Reformation. Thus in Elizabeth's reign, the chief annual festival to celebrate divine protection of England's faith did not mark a spiritual event, but a political one: namely the queen's own accession day on 17 November, 1558.¹⁶ After 1605, this was augmented by an annual thanksgiving for the salvation of James I's Protestant regime from the popish Gunpowder Plot; and by the later Stuart period, the yearly cycle had been rounded out with further solemnities. There was a fast every 30 January to atone for the martyrdom of Charles I in 1649 (portrayed as a hero of the church), and a celebration every 29 May for the miraculous restoration of Charles II and England's religious establishment in 1660. Finally, from 1689, the meaning of the 5 November thanksgiving was altered to encompass a fresh providential – but also deeply political – deliverance from popery. Exploiting the fact that William III had landed in England on the date in 1688, Gunpowder Day now also lauded England's rescue from the Catholic regime of James II, and its replacement by the safely reformed government of his son-in-law.¹⁷

- 8 As several other scholars have shown, these anniversaries constituted a national and Protestant calendar that cemented popular conceptions of a godly England. They produced a regular round of festival and solemnity which involved wide sections of the population. On fasts and thanksgivings, economic activity was supposed to cease by law, providing time for everyone to attend special religious services. All of the liturgies, and many of the sermons, for these were published, allowing reflection on the message of the day through some of the most popular print media of the Stuart period. Some of the events, particularly the thanksgivings, also elicited less official celebration. Gunpowder Day, in particular, encouraged public performance of Protestantism, as people found ways to express relief at their nation's escape from the power of popery. The lighting of bonfires, often to burn the Pope in effigy; drinking damnation to the forces of Rome; setting off fireworks; and ringing church bells were all regular parts of these festivities.¹⁸ 29 May, Oak Apple Day, also had a vigorous popular dimension, at least under Charles II, as people expressed thankfulness for the survival of the Stuart regime, and the associated divine protection of the national church, on the anniversary of the monarchy's return.¹⁹
- 9 All this annual festival certainly constructed a sense of England's special relationship with a Protestant God. But it downgraded memorialisation of the early sixteenth century. First, as is already obvious, its political focus on monarchical history distracted attention from the arrival of the Protestant faith in England. Second, it pulled the moments that were celebrated forward into the Stuart period. As the festivities were officially sponsored (even though they also took on lives of their own among a wider citizenry), they had a large propaganda dimension. They therefore marked events important for current – rather than past – regimes, and so had a bias towards more recent history. The early Stuarts promoted memory of the Gunpowder Plot in 1605 to stress God would thwart rebellion against them; the later Stuarts remembered the 1660 Restoration to the same purpose; and William III celebrated 1689 as the very origin of his government. Finally, the annual round of fasting and thanksgiving worked to construct a story of continuing perseverance by England's Protestant monarchy in the face of ceaseless popish threat. Preachers in particular linked instances of God's mercy together, including some, such as the 1588 defeat of the Armada that had not resulted in official annual celebration. As a result, the events marked became synecdoches of the endless (and so, in a sense, timeless) re-iteration of divine care for the faithful, rather than emphasising a point in Tudor history. For example, in 1689, on the first occasion 5 November memorialised the Glorious Revolution, as well as the Gunpowder Plot, Gilbert Burnet ran

through a standard list of Protestant highlights as he preached to the House of Lords. He demonstrated the hand of God protecting England in the preservation of Elizabeth and her glorious reign, the defeat of the Armada, and the 1660 Restoration, as well as the occurrences of 1605 and 1688.²⁰ Many others strung together repeated deliverances of Protestant monarchy: the co-incidence that William III's arrival had occurred on the same day as the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, and a hundred years after the destruction of the Armada, was widely used to prove a calculated pattern in divine action.²¹ Such an approach certainly used history to bolster a Reformation identity, but it distracted from the importance of any specific event in the early sixteenth century.

Dating Controversies

- 10 The second reason for the muddying of the Tudor past under the later Stuarts was that it had become controversial. Again the reasons for this lay in the sixteenth century itself. A Reformation with multiple origins had not bred a united community of faith. From the first, the nature of English Protestantism had been hotly debated. The ideal structure of church government (particularly if bishops were an acceptable part of ecclesiastical governance); the exact process of salvation; the degree of ceremony that should be used in worship; and the extent of clerical power over the laity had divided those who rejected Rome. Royal headship of the church had deepened division. It frequently pitted the monarch against the more zealous adherents of the Reformation, and itself became a matter of contention. After battles for Henry VIII's ear between religious radicals and conservatives, and "puritan" criticism of Elizabeth and James I's spiritual policies, such tensions bred crises in the later seventeenth century. A civil war fed by intra-Protestant hatreds left a legacy of division after 1660. A large body of "Dissenters" refused to join the crown-led church as re-established under Charles II; those who remained within the establishment themselves disagreed over the approach to this schism.²² These later Stuart debates had their roots in Reformation-era controversies: as a result it was impossible to pick moments in the Tudor decades that all would agree were suitable to mark.
- 11 The tensions were evident whenever late Stuart English Protestants appealed to their past. However, they were perhaps clearest in the substantial works of Reformation history that were published in the years after 1660. In many ways the story of Restoration scholarly writing on the Tudor age can be told as a series of partisan justifications of late Stuart positions in religious controversies. In particular, it can be seen as a series of reactions to the work of Peter Heylyn, who presented a strongly argued view of ecclesiastical history in the immediate aftermath of Charles II's return to the throne. As one might expect of a cleric who had been close to Archbishop William Laud in the 1630s, Heylyn defended the style of the re-established church – a body whose government by bishops and ceremonial liturgy alienated the Dissenters, who interpreted these as unacceptable Catholic remnants – and did so by denouncing moments and movements in the sixteenth century. So vehement was his criticism of some Tudor reformers, that his work would encourage extensive rebuttal well into the eighteenth century.²³
- 12 In brief summary, Heylyn's account of the Tudor Reformation was of a movement that had been perverted. In the early days, under Henry VIII, Heylyn thought the process of reform had proceeded with admirable moderation. The Pope's usurpations had been ended; the excesses of medieval superstition and clerical corruption had been curbed; and mild Lutheran doctrines had softened a theology of salvation that was not wholly

mistaken, but had become stuck in an endless round of atoning for sin. The Henrician reformers, however, had never doubted that the structures and much of the ceremony of the medieval church had been sound. So, like Heylyn himself in the Stuart age, they had preached the virtues of episcopacy, and of traditional rituals that brought the worshipper nearer to God. This golden moment, however, had been short-lived. Almost as soon as the English church had corrected its errors, and emerged in purity, it had been assaulted by fanatics. Men inspired by the more radical Reformations of Switzerland, Southern Germany, and France, had tried to push the English in the direction of those foreign movements, and had taken aim at bishops and traditional elements of liturgy. In particular, two points in English Protestant history had been disastrous. Edward VI's enthusiasm for reform had led him to promote radicals such as Bishop Hooper, and ministers returning from the Marian exile had lobbied for a more "continental" settlement at the start of Elizabeth's reign. Such radicals coalesced into the "puritan" movement, which had carped endlessly at the true English church, and had eventually brought about the chaos of the English civil war.²⁴

- 13 Heylyn's Reformation thus had a clear dating. The English church had been perfected in the late 1540s, with Elizabeth confirming that moment at the start of her reign as she rejected the more radical changes that had occurred in the later part of Edward's rule. The establishment had then had to defend its achievement from wreckers. But this interpretation was obviously controversial. Whilst it received some later support from "high" church historians, such as Jeremy Collier, it had been constructed to denounce the puritans and Dissenters of Heylyn's own lifetime, who continued to question episcopacy and ceremony.²⁵ It also alienated those churchmen who were attempting to restore Protestant unity by reaching out to puritan Dissent, or who valued the more "Protestant" features of their establishment introduced in the second half of the sixteenth century. Heylyn's account therefore came under attack. Other historians, from other ecclesiastical traditions, took a more positive view of the contributions of Edwardian reformers and Elizabethan puritans, and so re-dated the Reformation. For moderate Anglican writers such as Gilbert Burnet, John Strype, and Laurence Echard – and later for Dissenting scholars such as John Oldmixon and Daniel Neal – the English church was not being led astray by foreign-influenced subversives after 1550.²⁶ Rather it was still struggling to improve. The contrast can be seen in assessments of individual Tudor churchmen. Take for example, Edmund Grindal, Elizabeth I's second archbishop of Canterbury. For Heylyn (and indeed for Henry Sacheverell in a hugely controversial 1709 rallying cry for the high church, *The Perils of False Brethren*) Grindal had been a poisonous puritan interloper. The queen had rightly suspended this Geneva-bred viper as she realised the danger that he posed to her church.²⁷ But Burnet was more sympathetic to Grindal in his *History of the Reformation*; and John Strype, writing the archbishop's biography, suggested the suspension had been a misunderstanding. The queen had thought that Grindal's encouragement to ordinary ministers to meet in assemblies to discuss preaching and parish pastoralism was undermining episcopacy by by-passing bishops – but Grindal had only intended the meetings to improve the quality of the clergy in the existing episcopal church.²⁸ In the view of those correcting Heylyn, therefore, the Reformation was later and longer than he had supposed. It was still unfolding in the 1570s and beyond. Disputes about the legacies of Tudor reform (whether to value its preservation of some Catholic features, or its challenges to them) thus polarised views of exactly when it had happened.

- 14 So, the dating of the Reformation was not only confused because of the actual history of religious change in Tudor England, and obscured by the role of the monarchy in these changes; it was controversial, because different points in its story had supporters in the late Stuart age. This led to considerable chronological vagueness. Commentators often avoided placing the Reformation at an exact time, because they knew this might make them enemies. The result was some very broad rhetorical formulae to describe when the deliverance from popery had come. For instance, those celebrating the 1689 Revolution provided no clear start for the Protestantism that had just been saved; almost certainly to preserve the broad alliance of Protestants that had coalesced against James II. The liturgy composed for the official thanksgiving on 30 January, 1689, spoke only of “the blessed Reformation of this Church, in the days of our forefathers”.²⁹ Sermons preached on the occasion talked of frequent divine blessings, but were imprecise about when they had started: “since our glorious Reformation”, “from the beginning of our Reformation”, “since our first Reformation”, “ever since the Reformation, which is the Glory of our Land, first dawn’d and shone upon us”, were typical phrases.³⁰ Even Gilbert Burnet, the great historian of Tudor religion, was vague in his remarks. Preaching in 1690, he thanked his new monarchs for their role in saving a Europe-wide Protestantism, and he set this in a rich historical context by outlining a series of crises the movement had survived: in the 1550s, the 1570s, the 1620s, and so on. But there was no such detail about the Reformation itself. The early sixteenth century was handled fairly briefly in comparison to later events, and there was no mention of Luther. Burnet did speak of “first opening of the Reformation”, but was not clear about what he took that to be.³¹

Incomplete Reformation

- 15 Ecclesiastical controversy thus bred considerable vagueness (both real, and strategic) about the dating of the Reformation in the late Stuart period: but this was compounded by a leading, and increasingly powerful response to such controversy. Across a surprisingly broad spectrum of opinion, people began to take what might anachronistically be called an “ecumenical” approach to religious dispute. Appalled by the excesses of the British and Irish civil wars in the mid Stuart era – wars that were certainly fuelled by intransigent attitudes to spiritual disagreement – and concerned that Protestant disunity was aiding the increasingly worrying advance of the Counter-Reformation across Europe; many commentators began to call for a broad vision of Christianity that could relegate recent disputes to the status of minor trivia. Manifestations included calls for a united pastoral front from ministers of different doctrinal or ecclesiological persuasions – such as the arrangements the puritan minister Richard Baxter made in Worcestershire in the 1650s; the reconceptualization of Protestantism from the late 1670s which saw the movement as a complex interweaving of different strands of the truth that would unravel if one were promoted over the others; and – most importantly for the analysis here – the emergence of a “latitudinarian” group within the Anglican clergy, who were to become increasingly influential.³²
- 16 The precise nature of “latitudinarianism” has been debated by scholars, but the people involved probably worked closely enough together, and shared enough of a characteristic set of attitudes, to be recognised as a coherent movement.³³ Centred on figures such John Tillotson, Edward Stillingfleet, Simon Patrick, and Gilbert Burnet (whom we have already met), this movement emerged after 1660 and advocated moderation to cure the religious

tensions of the age. In particular, latitudinarians suggested that the rift between Anglicans and Dissenters could be healed if everyone recognised that the core of Christian doctrine that believers needed for salvation was basic and uncontroversial, and that it was possible to disagree about other matters. Having advanced schemes of compromise under Charles II, these men helped in drafting the “toleration act” of 1689 that granted Dissenters freedom of worship; and they were promoted by William III in the 1690s, since their vision matched his broad view of Protestantism (an approach he needed as a Presbyterian Calvinist who was coming to rule a majority Anglican nation, and who wished all English people to unite in a war with France).

- 17 This “ecumenical” movement blurred the dating of the Reformation in England, because it was wary of history itself. This is not to say it was ignorant of the past. Indeed, leading “latitudinarians” were formidable historians. Gilbert Burnet is usually classed as a latitudinarian, and his work on the Reformation was joined by his friend Edward Stillingfleet’s close investigation of the late Roman and early Anglo-Saxon periods, and by a wealth of reference to the past in latitudinarian preaching, scholarship, and other commentary.³⁴ What this historical interest seemed to teach, however, was that Christians had fallen out, frequently violently, over minor matters; and that oversensitivity to past positions, errors, and grievances, merely fed such rancour. Burnet’s historical work was infused by regret that sixteenth-century Englishmen had so often run to extreme positions – an ideological purity that still bred fear and resentment over a hundred years later; and Stillingfleet’s account of the first centuries of English history told of a simple faith besieged by intolerant assertions of particular theological positions – particularly emanating from Rome.³⁵ Beyond scholarly volumes, latitudinarians provided versions of history to underline the problems caused by bigoted attachment to obscure points of doctrine. For example, Simon Patrick, preaching to William III in January 1689, just after the future king had arrived in England, and just as Patrick was helping to prepare the terms of the toleration act, told of the corruption of early Christianity. After a brief period of ideal charity, the faithful had fallen into quarrels as they had imposed new doctrinal articles upon each other, and had corrupted their religion through “over-zealous espousal of such opinions as are no essential part of it”.³⁶ Thus for such thinkers, the past set bad examples. It was good to document these, but a mistake to re-live them.
- 18 Among latitudinarians, and other elements of the ecumenical movements of the later Stuart age, avoiding the traps of history bred particular attitudes to the sixteenth-century Reformation. It could be praised as the start of a religious renewal, but it could not be memorialised as a moment of definitive spiritual truth, because – as has been shown – choosing any definitive moment caused rancour. Too many different groups were promoting too many points in Tudor history as their ecclesiastical utopia. To avoid history causing yet further dispute, people re-orientated attention away from the sixteenth-century past, and towards the present and the future. Rather than sanctifying a moment in history, they presented the Reformation as an evolving process: one that certainly started over a century ago, but one that was, crucially, continuing to unfold in their current day. This rendered the perfect state of the Protestant church fluid and negotiable. It was not something once achieved, and that now needed zealous defence against factional enemies. It was something to be realised in years to come; and so something for which people from a broad spectrum of opinion might work.

- 19 The most obvious way to put the ideal Reformation in the future, was to suggest that the sixteenth-century version, whilst having done great work, had been incomplete. The most systematic and precise statements of this case came, again, from Gilbert Burnet: but often in works that had had considerable input from other latitudinarian clergymen. Burnet's *History of the Reformation* acknowledged Stillingfleet's help, and also contributions from John Tillotson (the London cleric, whose promotion to the Archbishopric of Canterbury in 1689 was seen by many as a sign of a latitudinarian triumph in the church after the Glorious Revolution), and from William Lloyd, the bishop of St Asaphs, who was also at the heart of this group.³⁷ Two 1690s works by Burnet also thanked Tillotson and Stillingfleet. The first was the 1692 *Discourse of the Pastoral Care* – a practical handbook for ministry after the toleration act; the second was the 1699 *Exposition of the Thirty Nine Articles* – an attempt to heal doctrinal divisions by encouraging disputants to recognise the logic of their opponent's case.³⁸
- 20 All these works put the final culmination of the Reformation in the future. They did celebrate the sixteenth century: not least in their dedications to the monarchs reigning when they were published. Charles II, Mary II, and William III, were told that they were continuing a defence of true religion that had been the role of the English monarchy since Tudor times.³⁹ But whilst Burnet was clear that much had been achieved under Henry VIII, Edward VI and Elizabeth, he was as clear that in one absolutely crucial area, the Reformation had not made much progress. "Our wise and worthy progenitors reformed our Doctrine and Worship", Burnet asserted in the preface to the second volume of his *History*, "but we have not reformed our Lives and Manners". The reformed churches had "rested satisfied with having reformed the Doctrine and Worship", claimed the preface to the *Discourse of the Pastoral Care*, "but did not study to reform the Lives and Manners of the People". The dedication to the *Exposition of the Thirty Nine Articles* told William he had one last task to fulfil his providential role and saviour of the Reformation, and that was to effect "a suitable Reformation of Lives and Manners".
- 21 Burnet thus insisted that English Protestants had believed and worshipped as true Christians since the sixteenth century, but had not lived as such: and he offered two main explanations of what had gone wrong. First, the process of purging the excessive wealth and luxury of the medieval church had ended up impoverishing its reformed successor, and this had meant it had not had enough resources to afford the sort high quality clergy who could lead their parishioners to virtue.⁴⁰ More importantly, the sixteenth-century church had missed the opportunity to restore the moral discipline of early Christianity. Burnet explained that when the first Christians had sinned, especially against their neighbours, they had been excluded by ministers from communion until they had done public penance. He believed only the restoration of such discipline would fully reform people's behaviour: but he lamented this had been given a low priority in the Tudor epoch – and attempts to revive it had been met with lay hostility.⁴¹
- 22 This insistence on the partial nature of the sixteenth-century Reformation was explicitly linked to concern about division between Protestants. Arguments within the faith, Burnet claimed, had distracted reformed Christians from the vital work of imposing godly discipline. As the second volume of his *History* asserted, the real chance had been lost at the Elizabethan settlement. At that point, Protestant exiles from Mary I's persecution had returned to England with too close an attachment to the exact ecclesiastical forms of the churches that had given them asylum on the continent. They therefore insisted that proper discipline could only be imposed without bishops, and with the co-operation of lay

elders in each parish. This picked needless arguments with English opponents of Presbyterianism and Calvin's church structures (not least Elizabeth herself), missing the point that it was the fact of discipline that mattered, not precisely how it was managed. These arguments did compound damage. First they "begat such heat" that they "took men off" from the core design of reforming manners and establishing clerical leadership of communities. Second, this distraction left the church's pastoral care so weak that it re-enforced the objections of those who lost the argument about structures. When bishops were retained, and lay elders denied, the puritan supporters of these expedients claimed that these decisions had undermined the church's leadership of its flock (even though the cause was partly the dispute these men had themselves launched). The result had been the decades of religious discontent that had led to the civil war, and to the Dissenting schism at the Restoration.⁴²

- 23 For Burnet, and his latitudinarian allies, the divisions in English Protestantism could be solved, but only by casting the Reformation into the future. If everyone recognised the mis-steps of the past, and now co-operated in providing the pastoral inspiration and moral regeneration that was needed, the deficiencies of Tudor reform could be made good, and the factions that these failures had bred could be reconciled. This was why Burnet listed Protestant unity and renewal of men's virtue as the tasks facing Charles II when dedicating the first volume of his *History* to his monarch. The king's agenda, according to the historian, should be to bring the church of England closer to its Protestant sisters on the continent, to heal divisions between English Protestants, and "above all things" to raise "the power and efficacy of this religion, by a suitable Reformation of our Lives and Manners".⁴³ It was a connection Burnet continued to make through his life. Thirty six years after dedicating the first volume of his history to Charles, the author dedicated a supplemental third volume to the newly arrived George I, and set him exactly the same agenda. George was told he was an instrument of God to complete the Reformation. This meant healing divisions between English Protestants, and between the English and foreign reformed churches, even if these groups could not agree to the "same opinions and rituals [...] in all points"; and it meant leading reformed Christians to moral regeneration – "living more suitably to our profession", as Burnet put it.⁴⁴

Future Reformation: Pastoral Care and Reformation of Manners

- 24 The strategy of declaring a crusade for a future Reformation as a means to heal Protestant divisions had a practical as well as a rhetorical dimension. The later Stuart period was marked by initiatives to bring English people to the true godliness that fulfilment of Luther's movement required, and that were explicitly designed to heal rifts in reformed Christendom. Two of the most important were the efforts by latitudinarian clergy within the church of England to renew and alter the establishment's approach to its pastoral challenges; and a wider movement, led by lay people to tackle what they saw as the overwhelming vice of their times.
- 25 The latitudinarian strategy first emerged clearly in the diocese of London in the 1670s and early 1680s. Led by the local bishop, Henry Compton, many of the clergy who were emerging as leading latitudinarian figures, worked on a project of intense pastoral care

that the historian Gordon Rupp has labelled the “small awakening”.⁴⁵ This involved regular meetings of ministers to support each other in their parish work; letters from Compton to the clergy of his diocese urging zeal in their ministerial work; and campaigns to provide frequent public worship, high quality preaching, catechising for the youth of the community, parochial schools and libraries, and religious societies in which laymen could explore and deepen their spirituality. The stress within the campaign was on moral renewal. This would strengthen English Protestants against the temptations of popery, and impress Dissenters so that they might soften their prejudice against the church. The effort involved a pretty standard list of latitudinarian names. Compton worked closely with John Tillotson, preacher at Lincoln’s Inn and canon as St Paul’s; Edward Stillingfleet, archdeacon of London; Edward Folwer, rector of St Giles, Cripplegate; Simon Patrick, rector of St Paul’s Covent Garden; and Richard Kidder, minister at St Martin Outwich.⁴⁶ John Sharp, rector of St. Giles in the Fields was also central to the effort, though his tough writings against Dissent, and his drift towards the Tories after 1689, have meant he has not been seen as a typical latitudinarian.⁴⁷ Despite these caveats of categorisation, Sharp’s pastoral energies in London aligned closely with the group, and he had intimate friendships with several of them: so his summary of his efforts when he left his parish at the start of William III’s reign can be read as a retrospective manifesto for the “small awakening”. In a valedictory sermon, Sharp encouraged his congregation to continue efforts of live a deeper spiritual life, and described a Reformation that lay ahead. Whilst the English already enjoyed a church of pristine doctrine and worship, their lives still needed to be renewed. An age of luxury and debauchery must be banished through processes of “Repentance and Reformation” – the one time the latter word was deployed in the address: here clearly used to set an agenda for years to come, not to describe something that had happened last century.⁴⁸

- 26 These pastoral initiatives in the capital were given a far wider canvas after the Revolution of 1689. In his first months in power, William had the opportunity to appoint a large number of bishops to the episcopal bench. This was partly because of an unfortunate series of deaths in the last period of James II’s reign, and partly because several senior clerics refused to swear loyalty to the new regime, and had to be replaced. In making these appointments, the king, as was mentioned, favoured the latitudinarians. His wife, Mary, was personally close to a number of them; Burnet was one of his chief advisors, and recommended his allies; and the latitudinarians’ message of religious unity and forbearance chimed with both William’s personal attitudes, and the political imperative to settle religious disputes in England as the country headed for war.⁴⁹ As a result, this group came to dominate the highest offices of the church. Tillotson was appointed to the primacy of Canterbury. Burnet was rewarded for his role as a propagandist in the Revolution with the bishopric of Salisbury. Showering latitudinarians on other dioceses, William sent Edward Fowler to Gloucester, Richard Kidder to Bath and Wells, Simon Patrick to Chichester and then Ely, and Edward Stillingfleet to Worcester. John Sharp was also advanced, with some reluctance on his part, to the other archiepiscopal seat at York.
- 27 Once these clergy were in place, they embarked on a sustained campaign to reform the church under their control, and make it an engine of moral renewal. The initial manifesto for this effort came in a letter the king wrote to Compton in February 1690 (at this point, Compton was the acting chief cleric of the church, given that the Archbishop of Canterbury had been suspended for not taking the oaths – but had not yet been replaced; and that York was still vacant). This was almost certainly inspired by William’s close

contacts with the latitudinarians through his wife, and through the Earl of Nottingham, his most important minister at the end of his first year in power.⁵⁰ Foreshadowing themes that would be repeated constantly through the 1690s, the letter stressed that bishops must prioritise pastoral care in the government of their dioceses – in particular vetting future clergy closely, and imposing a strict regime on parishes, to consist of preaching, catechising, providing frequent communion, preparing young people for confirmation, visiting the sick, and reproving sinners. Most importantly, the letter suggested that this campaign would complete the religious movement that had begun in the sixteenth century. Echoing Burnet's assertion that Tudor church reforms had never properly tackled sin, and couching its call for renewal in the language of the earlier religious reform, the document called for "a General Reformation of the Lives and Manners of all our Subjects".⁵¹

- 28 Once latitudinarian clergy were in charge of dioceses, the king's letter was put into practical effect. Burnet, Tillotson, and their allies proved conscientious bishops, spending considerable time among their clergy and making efforts to improve pastoral provision. Key to their efforts were careful examinations of candidates for the clergy before ordaining them to office, and a series of "visitations" in which every parish was asked about the quality of its minister and the spiritual state of the community. From 1692, they were guided by Burnet's *Discourse of the Pastoral Care*, which underlined the themes of William's 1690 letter, with substantial sections on issues such as preaching, catechising, visiting the sick, and so on. When this effort went beyond practical implementation to explain its underlying philosophy, it made two points very clearly. First, the campaign should be seen as the fulfilment of an unfinished Reformation; and second that improvements in the church were the most effective (indeed the only legitimate) way to re-unify Protestants in England.
- 29 We have already seen how the *Pastoral Care* presented Reformation as something for the present and future, as much as – if not more than – an event in the past. Its section on how to deal with Dissent matched this with the argument that the non-conformists had gained a following because of their godly zeal, and that winning people back to the church would mean out-competing rivals in their dedication to the spiritual wellbeing of parishioners.⁵² Visitation charges – those sermons preached by the bishops on launching their parish by parish investigations – echoed these themes. Edwards Stillingfleet told the clergy of Worcester that diligence in pastoral care was the way to defeat Dissent; and suggested that this diligence would complete the English Reformation. For instance, he called for frequent provision of communion – something that had been instituted by the reformed churches on the continent in the sixteenth century, but which had stalled in England because of "unreasonable scruples [...] misapprehensions, and a general coldness and indifference".⁵³ Richard Kidder implied the church needed further reform as he launched a campaign for preaching, catechising, visiting of the sick and frequent communion in Bath and Wells, and stated that failure to achieve this had bred Dissenters and produced "open enemies to our order, function, and constitution".⁵⁴ Borrowing one another's language, Simon Patrick at Chichester, and Burnet in Salisbury, wrote letters to their clergy telling them they should follow the king's injunctions, both because it would silence the church's rivals, and because being a reformed church meant lives must be renewed as well as worship and doctrine.⁵⁵
- 30 Perhaps the clearest statement of these ideas came from a cleric who had not been a typical latitudinarian under Charles II (his statements from that era identify him as a

Tory, intolerant of Dissent), but who had come to work closely with the group in the face of James II's Catholicism. John Scott had called for moral regeneration to defend English Protestantism from royal popery; and after the Revolution appears to have been considered for elevation to the episcopal bench alongside Burnet, Tillotson, and the rest. Unfortunately, memories of Scott's Tory past seemed to have blocked such a promotion, but he was involved in the advance of the latitudinarian clergy when he preached at the ceremony to consecrate Simon Patrick to his Chichester diocese, and Edward Stillingfleet to Worcester, in October 1689. A section of this address dealt with Dissent, and took Burnet's line that improving the quality of Anglican ministers could re-unite English Protestantism. Scott told the new bishops that supporting dedicated ministers would reconcile communities, soothe divisions, and set a moral example to attract people back into the church.⁵⁶ But this strategy was set within the shining vision of a future Reformation that opened the sermon. It was clear from Scripture, Scott claimed, that in a "time to come", and as prelude to Christ's final victory on earth, there would be a sudden wave of "Pastors and Teachers, eminent in learning and wisdom, piety and virtue". They would purge the Christian community of the superstition, idolatry, schism, heresy, irreligion and immorality, that had grown up over the centuries, and so effect a total "Reformation of the Christian world".⁵⁷

- 31 Another movement aimed at religious unity that threw Reformation into the future, had its origins outside church structures. In the years after William III's arrival, groups of laymen in London, and a little later elsewhere, began to campaign against the vice of their day. In what Dudley Bahlmann labelled a "moral revolution" of the 1690s (which matched the political one of 1689), people campaigned to enforce the existing laws against sins such as Sunday trading, excessive drinking, profane swearing, and prostitution.⁵⁸ As Craig Rose and other scholars have pointed out, at least some of the energy behind the movement came from ecumenism.⁵⁹ Public statements promoted moral policing as an activity that could unite Anglicans and Dissenters (since they all agreed what sin was, whatever their position on ceremonies or episcopacy), and some activities were deliberately structured to stress this joint participation.⁶⁰ From 1697, for example, the societies that had been set up in London to suppress vice in the city hosted a series of sermons to bolster the cause. These were delivered to mixed congregations, the venue alternating between the Anglican church of St Mary le Bow, and the Dissenting meeting place in Salter's Hall. The denomination of the preachers alternated with these venues, and several stressed the broad range of ecclesiological opinion that was involved.
- 32 This movement has been examined quite closely by historians, but too little attention has been given to what it called itself – and this neglect is important here because it affected attitudes to the sixteenth century. In its propaganda, and in the names of the societies established to promote it, the campaign proclaimed itself to be one for a "*Reformation of Manners*" (my emphasis). It has been easy to overlook the implications of this for the conceptual dating of Protestant reform, because, in this context, "reformation" could simply mean a transformative change for the better. Usage of the word in the period allowed a simple sense of improvement, without reference to the Protestant Reformation; and in fact many of the spokesmen for the reformation of manners campaign appeared to try to keep religious controversy out of their appeals by stressing that sin was a scandal to the faith in general.⁶¹ They said it was a rebuke to Christian, not specifically Protestant, society. Thus, much of their rhetoric urged campaigners to pursue their goals in a Christian manner; and one spokesman even urged action against vice because its

prevalence was an embarrassment to the religion in comparison to Islam.⁶² Nevertheless, using the word Reformation would have had a Protestant resonance for audiences, and many features of the rhetoric implied that moral renewal was necessary to cement and complete the achievements of the sixteenth century. For example, tracts and sermons argued that a drive against corruption was needed because the English had angered God by continuing to sin in the face of the blessings heaven had showered upon the nation in establishing and protecting the England's church. Particular attention was directed to the reign of Charles II, when the people had fallen into general lewdness, despite their rescue from the horrors of republicanism and civil war.⁶³ Similarly, the movement was explicitly promoted as a response to the Protestant miracle of 1689. It was essential to show proper gratitude to heaven for the deliverance, and it had been inspired by the virtuous new monarchs God had brought in (the official account of the history of the societies for the reformation of manners opened with royal proclamations and letters that had been issued by William and Mary to support the cause).⁶⁴

- 33 More specifically, some of the sermons that were preached echoed Burnet's model of a sixteenth-century Reformation of doctrine and worship which now needed to be completed by a Reformation of lives (though Burnet's own contribution to the series, delivered in 1700 was – for him – uncharacteristically anodyne).⁶⁵ This was a least implicit in those several lectures that used biblical texts from the period after the Babylonian captivity. This moment in Jewish history was significant because the prophets quoted were addressing a people who had returned to Jerusalem and had re-built their Temple (a common Protestant trope for re-establishing a pure church), but who had not matched this restoration of true worship with virtuous conduct. Thus John Woodhouse talked of a situation in which the Persian emperor Cyrus had given leave to rebuild the physical house of God, but it was the prophets' role to "purge out corruptions and make a general reformation"; whilst Samuel Bradford analysed the role of Ezra, who had been sent to supply what was amiss in manners after the returning exiles had rebuilt the House of God.⁶⁶ Some sermons used Burnet's formula of unfinished Reformation more explicitly, stating that the current movement for moral renewal was a completion of sixteenth-century religious reforms. For example, the Anglican clergyman John Russell argued that virtue must be promoted because the English had not become fully godly in the earlier spiritual movement. "Tis not our being protestant that can screen us [from God's coming wrath]", he said, "if we are reform'd only in our Doctrines, but not in our lives".⁶⁷ Similarly, though from the other side of the denominational divide, the Presbyterian Daniel Williams, told his audience that no Christian community "called Reformed, as to their faith, may wear the reproach of neglecting a reformation of their lives".⁶⁸ This same message was repeated outside London. John Ellis told the society set up in Nottingham to mirror the efforts of the capital, that he wished the church was as close to the shining example of the first Christians "in its Manners, as it is in its Doctrine". Casting the task ahead as a completion of a process begun under the Tudors, he went on to hope "that by One Reformation we brought out Faith, so by a Second, we could bring our Practice to the Primitive Standard".⁶⁹ A preacher (who abbreviated his name to his initials in the published version of his sermon) made the same point in Lyme Regis, Dorset. "J. E." suggested God set particular tasks for particular generations. Whilst "forefathers" had fulfilled their "special duty" (by which he meant the correction of corrupted popish doctrine), "the present duty of this generation, and which God in his providence calls to us, seems to be the Reformation of Manners".⁷⁰

Future Reformation: Apocalypticism

- 34 So some of the most energetic religious movements of the late Stuart decades centred on the duty to complete, rather than to celebrate, the Reformation. These movements insisted that, while the people of Luther's age may have done great work, nobody could rest satisfied with this. Protestants had an urgent mission to bring their behaviour up to their doctrinal standards, both to fulfil the promise of their movement, and to reconcile its fractured factions. Indeed, the sense that the Reformation was about to reach its final flowering and unity could tip over into eschatology. Particularly in the aftermath of the 1689 Revolution (which appeared to be a providential salvation of the Protestant cause, and perhaps one which presaged still greater divine blessings), some commentators hinted that a coming perfection of the true faith might usher in the final triumph of Christ, as foretold in the biblical Apocalypse. Such expectations directed attention away from the sixteenth century in the most radical manner. Tudor forefathers may have begun a process of reform: but its true meaning lay ahead, once it had progressed to a perfection that would usher in Christ's final rule on earth.
- 35 The actual prevalence of apocalypticism in the later Stuart era has been debated. Traditionally, it was thought to have declined from its peak in the first half of the seventeenth century, particularly in reaction to the chaos of the civil wars, which many interpreted as having been caused by an excess of eschatological zeal. Scholars such as Christopher Hill and William Lamont suggested that the willingness to overturn established orders of state, church, and society, in preparation for Christ's coming, which marked the revolutionary movements of the 1640s and 1650s, had bred a backlash.⁷¹ People grew suspicious of millenarianism because of its potential to cause disorder, and hesitated before deploying, or paying attention, to prophecy. More recently historians have challenged this picture and unearthed rich seams of apocalyptic thinking after 1660. Scholars including Warren Johnston and Lionel Laborie have found many instances where writers in the late Stuart era used concepts and imagery from Revelation to make sense of their world, even to predict the course of events into the future: and not all of these examples were tucked away in radical sects.⁷²
- 36 There is evidence for both views. It is true that after the Restoration millennial expectation never again played the sort of role shaping national politics that it had at points in the mid-seventeenth century. On the other hand, there were overt millenarians in the late Stuart world; and political events could encourage energetic expressions of their point of view. In particular, the crisis of James II's Catholic kingship, and the miraculous deliverance from this in 1688/9, gave rise to a good deal of eschatological speculation – and much of this interpreted future events as the completion of the Reformation. Echoing trends this article has already observed, this process involved perfecting Protestant lives, and restoring the unity of reformed Christians. These processes were seen as essential to the final triumph of true, Protestant faith, as it overthrew the popish Antichrist.
- 37 The clearest elucidation of the future Reformation within eschatological thought came from the Congregational writer, Thomas Beverley. Analysing the mystical metaphors of the last book of the Bible, this prolific commentator convinced himself that Christ's rule on earth would begin in 1697; and did so using Luther's first protests against the papacy as a crux of his calculations. His first step was to read the three and a half days that the

witnesses of the eleventh chapter of *Revelation* would lie dead in the streets, as the period of time popery would obscure true religion; and he asserted that this period ran concurrently with the 1260 years the true church would spend in the wilderness (*Revelation* 12:6 – following the standard assumption that the days mentioned in this passage were actually years). Next, Beverley suggested that the birth of Protestantism in 1517 marked the end of the full three days, since that date fell six sevenths of the way through a 1260 year era that had begun with the Second Nicene Council in 787, which the author thought had marked the start of the Roman Antichrist's dominion. At the end of the three full days, Beverley explained, there had been a partial revival of the gospel; but a full resurrection of the faith would have to wait for the whole of the wilderness period to elapse, and this would take another 180 years. Beverley thus concluded that Christ's rule would begin in 1697; and he saw the 1689 Revolution – with its local defeat of popery, and advance of a godly monarch with European ambitions – as a presage of that great event. The importance of all this here, of course, is that it cast the most important stage of the Reformation into the future. What had happened in the early sixteenth century was merely a partial prefiguring of a Christian triumph that would only be complete in days to come. This point was graphically (almost comically) underlined by the title of one of Beverley's immediate post-revolution tracts: *The prophetic history of the reformation, or the reformation to be reformed in that great re-reformation* (1689).⁷³

- 38 It is clear from what Beverley chose to call this work that he thought Protestantism would be transformed as it was fulfilled. In the near future, the Reformation would not only defeat and reform popery, but would itself be reformed. The nature of this change has to be distilled from prose that was mostly concerned to prove the dating scheme, but there were strong indications that it involved the familiar themes of more completely godly lives, and unity. Beverley stated that Protestantism would be “perfected” in his crucial year, 1697, giving strong hints that it would be purged of those who simply adopted the name, but were dead to the faith itself; and he was even more clear that errors that would cease included persecution of fellow Protestants, and churches being enclosed in on themselves (he cited the 1689 toleration act as major step in the right direction, preparing the English church for Christ's return).⁷⁴
- 39 These ideas were echoed in other apocalyptic responses to the Revolution. The Baptist minister, Benjamin Woodroffe, had a warning for those who were content merely to be called Protestants but were not “what that name speaks”. They would be judged as Antichrist himself would be judged when Christ returned to earth.⁷⁵ The Cambridgeshire clergyman, Drue Cressener, praised William III as an agent of the coming millennium (preparations for which had begun in 1517), and highlighted the king's efforts to unite European Protestants against their popish foe.⁷⁶ The French Protestant, Pierre Jurieu, whose works were popular and influential in their English translations, called for international Protestant renewal and unity in preparation for an apocalyptic struggle with Louis XIV's Antichrist, and wove William's triumph in England into this worldview.⁷⁷ Perhaps most significantly, such overt eschatology (though restricted to a relatively small number of writers) found echoes in the mainstream reactions to 1689 that we have already surveyed. In particular, the latitudinarian clergy who promoted unifying pastoralism in the 1690s, and were active in the ecumenical campaign for reformation of manners, could use at least the rhetoric of *Revelation* to express their excitement at the opportunities opened by the Revolution. In the first few months after William III's arrival, Burnet spoke of a new heavens and a new earth; Tillotson talked about deliverance from

the tyranny of Antichrist; and Patrick predicted a coming millennial age of “peace and concord”.⁷⁸

- 40 It is not absolutely clear how seriously such people took the apocalyptic language they used. For example, none of those who served as William’s bishops were very precise about where they thought the world had reached in the Bible’s prophecy; nor did they make firm predictions about what exactly would happen next, or when. Analysed closely, some of their words turn out to have been simile or metaphor, rather than literal applications of eschatology. For instance, Gilbert Burnet, preaching at William’s coronation, suggested that the example of truly virtuous kings might so reform nations that the New Jerusalem might “come down from heaven to settle among us”.⁷⁹ However, he did not make it clear whether he was making a clear prediction for the near future, or a merely embellishing a general philosophical point about the good influence of good rulers, the context of the passage rather suggested the latter. Similarly his forecast of a new heavens and new earth was, he admitted “in the prophetic style”, suggesting that he was borrowing a rhetorical trope for emphasis, and – read in context – Patrick and Tillotson’s assertions also seem less immediately apocalyptic. Tillotson only said that God was starting his final deliverance, without risking predictions about how long it would take; Patrick’s startling image of a returned paradise faded into moralising waffle about God’s blessing of the virtuous.⁸⁰ Such caution in identifying eschatology is sensible, but the main point about the dating of the Reformation stands. Talking of a millennium to come, even in metaphorical terms, suggested God had only begun his work to reform the world in the sixteenth century. Luther might have preached the true faith, but it would not reach its culmination until it shaped all people’s lives, and brought them together in perfect charity. That moment had not yet arrived.

Conclusions

- 41 This article has shown that late seventeenth century Protestants did not see the Reformation as a simple event. The history of Tudor reform, and the enduring controversies generated by it, meant it could not be dated precisely; and one important response to this problem was to place the culmination of the movement in the future. All of this created a sense that Reformation was a process, not a moment, and a process that had still some distance to run. What are the consequences of these perceptions on our understanding of England towards the end of the Stuart era?
- 42 First, and most immediately, a future Reformation may suggest routes out of the disputes about the importance of apocalypticism after the civil war that were seen above. As has been stressed, there are disagreements between scholars, with some citing the undeniable persistence of millenarianism, whilst others suggest this set of assumptions had become the preserve of a radical, uncharacteristic, or just-possibly-deranged, minority. But if there was a widespread sense that the most important religious renewal was still to come, then the boundaries between apocalyptic and non-apocalyptic thought might be softened in ways that make it less important how much thoroughgoing eschatology there was. Even if only a few people believed Christ’s second coming was imminent, or that they could date it precisely, the much more widely shared sense that the final fulfilment of the Reformation lay in the future (perhaps even a close future) meant many more Protestants shared much of the expectation of hard-core millenarians. As we saw, some mainstream and powerful figures could hover on the borders of

apocalyptic thought. They could do so by promoting a vision of imminent Reformation, without having to decide if this was exactly the same thing as the coming of a literal New Jerusalem.

- 43 Second, and on wider canvas, the approaches to dating that have been revealed lend considerable support to the idea of a “long” Reformation in early modern England. Over the past few decades, a number of historians have suggested that English culture and politics were shaped by problems and challenges that first emerged in the religious changes of the Tudor age, until well into the eighteenth century, if not beyond.⁸¹ It was not simply that doctrinal, ecclesiological, and liturgical disputes survived (though they certainly did), but that committed Protestants continued to feel as the very first reformers had: that the truly godly were a minority in a corrupted world, and that – for all the nominal adherence of the kingdom to the true faith – the work of converting the population had barely started. This set of assumptions has been recognised behind the puritans of the Elizabethan and early Stuart age.⁸² However, it has been increasingly documented among the clergy as a whole in those periods; it has been charted within the church of the Restoration and Georgian eras; and has been detected behind the storm of initiatives of that later era that aimed to improve the religious knowledge, piety, and behaviour of society generally.⁸³ Understanding that many of the people involved in these schemes believed that real religious renewal lay in the future provides a conceptual and ideological underpinning for this “long Reformation” and a context for the spiritual energy of the age. People of the late eighteenth century were tied to those of the early sixteenth century by their sense that their work had only just begun.
- 44 Finally, a Reformation in the future may shed light on the complex relationship between England’s Protestant, and her national, identities. Some analysis of this interconnection has suggested English faith re-enforced nationality. England’s Protestants assumed they enjoyed unique benefits as an “elect nation”, chosen by God as a successor to the Jews; they also saw an evil catholic “other” abroad, which gave them a strong sense of foreignness against which to define themselves.⁸⁴ Yet other scholarship has challenged these interpretations. English Protestants, it was claimed, had stronger empathy with reformed Christians in other lands than with ungodly inhabitants of their own country – and they had a strong sense that those sinners meant the land fell far short of the spiritual ideal. In this analysis, the true church – the believers’ real home – existed above and beyond nationality, and did not even come close to embracing all Englishmen.⁸⁵ The problem with these two views is that there is so much evidence for both in the late Stuart world (as for all periods of England’s post-Reformation history). People expressed pride in God’s blessings on their Protestant nation – and exhibited a xenophobic anti-popery; but they also had huge sympathy with foreign reformed churches, and expressed horror that England had proved so unworthy of its divine favour. Placing the Reformation in the future, however, can resolve the tension. In the worldview this article has explored, a godly England had not yet been achieved, but, if everyone responded to God’s special call, it could be in the years to come. England might thus be at once a special field of God’s care and action; and a sinful nation still embroiled in the filth of Antichrist.⁸⁶
- 45 What all these conclusions point towards is the huge sense of mission and urgency in late Stuart English Protestantism. If the Reformation had been seen as something already achieved, it might have bred a social and religious conservatism. As scholars, we might have advanced a model of a successful sixteenth-century confessionnalisation, in which state policy, ecclesiastical authority, and cultural practices, had constructed a solid

Protestant identity, which was then defended against all-comers. But late seventeenth-century English people did not view their world in this way. Their Reformation was a work in progress. This bred a radical and restless dissatisfaction, a pressing sense of calling to reform of lives, which explains the enormous spiritual energy of the age.

NOTES

1. Laurence Echard, *The history of England from the first entrance of Julius Caesar to the end of the reign of James I*, London, 1707, p. 636.
2. John Sleidan, *The general history of the reformation of the church from the errors and corruptions of the church of Rome*, trans. Edmund Bohun, London, 1689.
3. For examples of theological controversy, see John Owen, *A short and plain answer to two questions: I. Where was your religion before Luther? II. How know you the Scriptures to be the word of God?*, London, 1682; Francis Atterbury, *An answer to some considerations on the spirit of Martin Luther and the original of the Reformation*, London, 1687.
4. For apocalyptic thought see below – but Luther’s own prophecy was also publicised: for example *The signs of Christs coming, and of the last day being the substance of a very choice and excellent sermon, preached by [...] Martin Luther*, London, 1661; *The prophecies of the incomparable Dr. Martin Luther concerning the downfall of the Pope of Rome*, London, 1664; *Dr. Martin Luther's prophecies of the destruction of Rome and the downfall of the Romish religion*, London, 1679.
5. See, for example, William Winstanley’s, *Protestant almanack* – published annually through the 1680s and 1690s; or Vincent Prince, *A protestant almanac for the year 1691*, London, 1691.
6. Gilbert Burnet, *The history of the reformation [...] first part*, London, 1679: the doubling back occurs at the start of “book 3”, p. 179.
7. G. Burnet, *The history of the reformation [...] second part*, London, 1681, unpaginated preface.
8. For example, David Williams, *The increase of popery in England since the reformation made by King Henry VIII*, London, 1681; *The history of the life and victorious reign of K. Henry VIII*, London, 1682; *A model for the French king; or the memorable actions of Henry the Eighth*, London, 1682.
9. *England’s remembrancer setting forth the beginning of papal tyrannies*, London, 1682, subtitle.
10. Samuel Clarke, *The history of the glorious life, reign and death of the illustrious Queen Elizabeth*, London, 1681; *An account of the several plots, conspiracies and hellish attempts of the bloody-minded papists*, London, 1679.
11. See Tony Claydon, *Europe and the Making of England*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2007, p.101-102. See also in this volume, Susan Royal, “English Evangelical Historians on the Origins of the Reformation”, *Études Épistémè*, 30, 2017.
12. *A true account of the rise and growth of the reformation*, London, 1680.
13. Henry Care, *A history of popery*, London, 1681; Gregory Hascard, *A discourse about the charge of novelty*, London, 1683.
14. John Foxe, *Acts and monuments of matters most special and memorable*, London, 1684.
15. These became central features of the monarchy’s projected image, as stressed in Kevin Sharpe, *Selling the Tudor Monarchy: Authority and Image in Sixteenth-Century England*, New Haven, Yale, 2009.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 443-444.

17. David Cressy, *Bonfires and Bells: National Memory and the Protestant Calendar in Elizabethan and Stuart England*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1989.
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63. For example, John Hancocke, *A sermon preach'd at the church of St Mary le Bow to the Societies for Reformation of Manners, December 26, 1698*, London, 1699, p. 11-12.
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65. G. Burnet, *Charitable reproof*, London, 1700.
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75. Benjamin Woodroffe, *The fall of Babylon: or seasonable reflections on the novelties of Rome*, London, 1690, epistle dedicatory.

76. Drue Cressener, *The judgements of God upon the Roman-catholick church*, London, 1689, unpaginated epistle dedicatory preface.

77. Pierre Jurieu, *The accomplishment of scripture prophecies*, London, 1687; P. Jurieu, *The pastoral letters of the incomparable Jurieu*, London, 1689.

78. G. Burnet, *A sermon preached in the chapel of St James*, London, 1689, p. 21; J. Tillotson, *A sermon preached at Lincoln's Inn Chappel on 31st January, 1688*, London, 1689, p. 33; S. Patrick, *A sermon preached at St Paul's Covent Garden on 21 January, 1688*, London, 1689, p. 34.

79. G. Burnet, *A sermon preached at the coronation of William III*, London, 1689, p. 20

80. J. Tillotson, *Sermon preached at Lincoln's Inn*, *op. cit.*, p. 22-23. S. Patrick, *A sermon preached at St Paul's Covent Garden*, *op. cit.*, p. 30-36.

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84. See for example, William Haller, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and the Elect Nation*, London, Cape, 1963; Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation, 1707-1837*, New Haven, Yale, 1992.

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86. Elements of this argument are prefigured in T. Claydon and I. McBride, "The trials of the chosen peoples", in *Protestantism and National identity*, ed. T. Claydon and I. McBride, *op. cit.*, p. 3-32.

ABSTRACTS

In late Stuart England, print genres such as histories and almanacs were happy to put a precise date on the Reformation, but 1517 was not widely memorialised. This was partly because the complex history of English Protestantism meant that different dates for its founding could be canvassed (the arrival of Luther's ideas in the 1520s, Henry VIII's 1532 break with Rome, the reforms of Edward VI's reign (1547-1553) and Elizabeth's ecclesiastical settlement (1558-1559); and because this ambiguous past was used as a weapon in contemporary religious battles. While Anglicans tended to point to the settlements under Henry and Elizabeth as their ideal moment in the past, Dissenters and the more radical wing of the church celebrated the reforms of Edward's rule and efforts by the Elizabethan puritan movement to perfect worship in England from the 1560s. These disputes first prevented a dating consensus emerging, and then convinced those trying to unite English Protestantism that it was counter-productive to be too precise about Tudor history. Particularly after the 1689 Revolution, commentators tried to resolve the issue by placing the Reformation in the future. The idea that reform still had to be completed provided an unfinished objective to unite different strands of opinion. This enshrined the notion of a long Reformation, that was a process – not an event; and helps explain the great spiritual energy of late Stuart Protestantism.

Au cours de la seconde moitié du XVII^e siècle, dans les histoires et les almanachs, 1517 était souvent évoquée comme la date du début de la Réforme, mais en dehors de ces références, cette date n'était pas particulièrement célébrée. Pour marquer le début de la Réforme en Angleterre, plusieurs dates pouvaient être choisies : l'arrivée des idées de Luther dans les années 1520, la rupture avec Rome d'Henri VIII en 1532, les réformes du règne d'Édouard VI (1547-1553) ou encore les lois ecclésiastiques du début du règne d'Élisabeth I^{ère} (1558-1559). Cette diversité reflète la complexité de l'histoire du Protestantisme anglais et l'usage polémique qui pouvait être fait de ces ambiguïtés. Les Anglicans idéalisaient les règnes d'Henri VIII et d'Elizabeth I^{ère}, tandis que les dissidents (*Dissenters*) et l'aile plus radicale de l'Église louaient les réformes d'Édouard VI et les efforts de purification de la liturgie menés par les Puritains à partir des années 1560.

En raison de ces dissensions, il n'y eut pas de consensus sur la date du début de la Réforme et de plus, il apparut à ceux qui cherchaient à unir les Protestants anglais qu'il valait mieux éviter le sujet. Après la Révolution de 1689 en particulier, on a essayé de résoudre le problème en évoquant la Réforme comme un processus encore à venir. Cette idée permettait de créer un objectif commun en mesure d'unir ceux dont les opinions divergeaient. Cela institua l'idée que la Réforme était un processus au long cours et non un événement et cela nous permet de mieux expliquer la vigueur spirituelle du Protestantisme sous les derniers Stuarts.

INDEX

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