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### **The Theology of John Tillotson (1630-1694) and Latitudinarianism in England**

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The Theology of John Tillotson (1630-1694) and  
Latitudinarianism in England

Euidon Joo

# The Theology of John Tillotson (1630-1694) and Latitudinarianism in England

## Abstract

Early academic writings on John Tillotson (1630-1694), a clergyman of the Church of England, and Archbishop of Canterbury, tended to argue that he was a rationalist who undermined the influence of traditional religious views and that Tillotson shared his secularising ideas with a group of clergy called Latitudinarians. Some more recent historians, on the other hand, have described him as a defender of orthodox Protestantism. The present study was stimulated by seeing these divergent opinions about Tillotson, so one of the main questions is the relationship between reason and religion in Tillotson's theology. What did Tillotson mean by the word 'reason'? How important was the role of reason in his theology?

This thesis seeks to shed a new light on Tillotson's theology through a deep analysis of his sermons. It will be shown that though Tillotson employed his own 'rational' methodology, his 'rational' strategy was used to defend supernatural elements of traditional Christianity. Thus, one of the arguments of this study is that it may be misleading to see Tillotson's rationalism as undermining the mysterious aspects of revealed religion, which were beyond human comprehension. More importantly, however, this study shows that Tillotson endeavoured to promote the practice of Christian love, rather than a 'rational' defence of traditional doctrines.

Tillotson's stress on behaviour was revealed in his theology in general. The practice of charity was central in constructing his soteriology and ecclesiology: both centred on encouraging benevolent virtue and condemning religious persecution, and crucially shaped attitudes to Catholics and Protestant Dissenters. Tillotson's political theology also served these ends: a belief in providential and *de facto* authority supported insistence on a public peace which could promote charity and moral reform, but concern that Catholicism undermined these objectives permitted some forms of resistance to government in particular circumstances. This study argues that Tillotson's charity-based politics and ecclesiology, which have received little scholarly attention, was an important part of his theology and it also may have been a common feature shared by his fellow Latitudinarian clergy. Tillotson and Latitudinarians, by promoting virtuous and tolerant Christian behaviour, may have contributed to making British society more polite and benevolent, and have contributed to the culture and religion of the eighteenth century in under-appreciated ways.

## Declaration

Yr wyf drwy hyn yn datgan mai canlyniad fy ymchwil fy hun yw'r thesis hwn, ac eithrio lle nodir yn wahanol. Caiff ffynonellau eraill eu cydnabod gan droednodiadau yn rhoi cyfeiriadau eglur. Nid yw sylwedd y gwaith hwn wedi cael ei dderbyn o'r blaen ar gyfer unrhyw radd, ac nid yw'n cael ei gyflwyno ar yr un pryd mewn ymgeisiaeth am unrhyw radd oni bai ei fod, fel y cytunwyd gan y Brifysgol, am gymwysterau deuol cymeradwy.

I hereby declare that this thesis is the results of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. All other sources are acknowledged by bibliographic references. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree unless, as agreed by the University, for approved dual awards.

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# The Theology of John Tillotson (1630-1694) and Latitudinarianism in England

## Introduction

### The debate on John Tillotson

John Tillotson (1630-1694), a late seventeenth-century clergyman of the Church of England, was active as preacher at Lincoln's Inn and St Lawrence Jewry, became dean of Canterbury, and archbishop of Canterbury. While he was one of the major figures of his period, he has been a relatively neglected figure in terms of scholarly interest. Only a few articles have seriously focused on Tillotson as a theologian. More frequently, he has been studied in the context of a group of Anglican clergy of the late seventeenth century called Latitudinarians, being described as a typical example. This thesis aims to fill up the deficiency of detailed studies on Tillotson's theology and, in doing so, seeks to provide a more accurate picture of Latitudinarians of the seventeenth century, the group to which he belonged.

Among Tillotson's fellow Latitudinarians of the century were John Wilkins, Joseph Glanvill, Simon Patrick, Edward Fowler, Edward Stillingfleet, Gilbert Burnet, Thomas Tenison, William Lloyd, and Robert Grove. According to the traditional view, the characteristics of Latitudinarians include an advocacy of reason in religion, theological minimalism, an emphasis on practical morality above theological speculation, rejection of obstinacy on questions of ceremonial and ecclesiastical details, tolerance towards Dissenters, and connections with natural science. In this view, the Latitudinarians have been considered the precursors of deistic and secularised view of the world, which hollowed out the mystery and revelation in religion, reduced Christianity to mere moralism based on the positive view of human nature, and left direction of the universe to ordinary causal pattern rather than special providential intervention.

This influential view on a thread of late seventeenth-century Anglican theology was set forth as early as the nineteenth century by Leslie Stephen. He said that the prominent Protestant divines of the seventeenth century were rationalists in principle, though they might receive the scriptures or the early fathers as the ultimate authority. They, opposing the authority of the Roman Catholic Church, appealed to the authority of the Bible upon which all Christians agreed. In the case where the Bible could not be the judge, for example where the scripture itself was the subject of the question, it should be determined by natural reason. According to

Stephen, 'the Protestant writers against Rome were forging the weapons which were soon to be used against themselves.'<sup>1</sup> He cited Tillotson's words, 'nothing ought to be received as a revelation from God which plainly contradicts the principle of natural religion. And nothing ought to be received as a divine doctrine or revelation without good proof that it is so.'<sup>2</sup> This unambiguous assertion of the rationalist principle was frequently used by the deists, and this was only one example of a general tendency. For Stephen, it was not without reason that Anthony Collins, a proponent of deism, spoke of Tillotson as one 'whom all English free-thinkers own as their head.' Therefore, Stephen suggested that the emphasis on rational grounds for religion among Protestant divines became a stepping stone to deism.<sup>3</sup>

This point of view lasted into the twentieth century, but the comments began to carry a negative tone. Sketching the period, Norman Sykes said that 'reason degenerated into common sense; personal religious experience into homespun morality; the venture of faith into a prudential calculation of profit and loss. Archbishop Tillotson, who set a new style of preaching as well as a new content of sermons, was typical of this tendency to reduce the Divine Benevolence into an easy good nature.'<sup>4</sup> Gerald R. Cragg observed that reason did not undermine revelation from the outset, but over time the temper of the age became inclined towards reason, and the Latitudinarians were pivotal in this direction. He said that the preference for clarity tempted the Latitudinarians to 'oversimplify all profound questions. The terms in which they defined reason, together with their active interest in practical problems, persuaded them that essential beliefs were few and simple.' Cragg also related the popularity of Tillotson's sermons to the increasing vogue of deism in England.<sup>5</sup> Irène Simon, though mainly concerned with the style of Tillotson's sermons, commented that 'he gave encouragement to the view that moral virtues made up the sum of religion'<sup>6</sup> and his sermons heralded a new age in which 'the divines had less to say than the *philosophes* and in which the values of civilized living were prized more highly than religious zeal.'<sup>7</sup>

However, the harshest commentator was probably Horton Davies. Examining different styles of preaching in the seventeenth century, he said that Anglican preachers of the early

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<sup>1</sup> Leslie Stephen, *History of English thought in the eighteenth century*, 2d ed, 2 vols. (London, 1881), p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at Whitehall, April the 4th, 1679* (London, 1679), p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen, *History of English thought*, pp. 77-79.

<sup>4</sup> Norman Sykes, *The English Religious Tradition; Sketches of Its Influence on Church, State, and Society* (London, 1953), pp. 52-56.

<sup>5</sup> Gerald R. Cragg, *The church and the age of reason, 1648-1789* (Harmondsworth, 1960), pp. 65-80.

<sup>6</sup> Irène Simon, *Three restoration divines: Barrow, South, Tillotson*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1967), vol. 1, p. 139.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* vol. 1, p. 298.

seventeenth century and Puritan preachers, though they had their own distinctive style, had commonly made ‘a determined effort to change their listeners into ardent partisans’ and maintained orthodox Christian teaching. On the contrary, Tillotson and his Latitudinarian friends in the late seventeenth century were ‘much more detached and less enthusiastic in outlook; less reliant upon tradition (whether Scriptural or Patristic), and more on reason and common sense.’<sup>8</sup> According to Davies, although the lucidity and naturalness of the new Tillotsonian style might be admirable and popular, the content of his sermons ‘reduced Christianity to rationalism and moralism, the former diluting faith and the latter abandoning grace.’ To illuminate these characteristics, he cited Tillotson’s sermon on the text, ‘His commandments are not grievous.’ Tillotson tried to show ‘that the laws of God are reasonable, suited to our nature, and advantageous to our interest... Two things make any course of life easy; present pleasure and the assurance of future reward.’ Davies commented, ‘Here is an unequalled combination of eudaemonism, utilitarianism and Pelagianism, masquerading as authentic Christianity.’ The Latitudinarians conceived of ‘a contradiction, Christian discipleship without the taking up of a cross.’<sup>9</sup>

Several recent studies followed this traditional line of argument. Isabel Rivers said that for the Latitudinarians, true religion should be reasonable and their interpretation of Christian doctrine was essentially moral. They made Christianity ‘as unchristian as possible in order to bring it closer to natural religion.’<sup>10</sup> Man was by nature ‘disposed to act well’ and vice or sin was ‘very much within human control.’<sup>11</sup> According to Rivers, Tillotson and his colleagues emphasised the easiness of Christianity and thought that the religious life was profitable and advantageous in this world; Rivers claimed that by the turn of the century, the Freethinkers merely pushed ‘latitudinarian ideas to their logical extremes.’<sup>12</sup> Martin Griffin’s argument was rather stronger. For him, though the Latitudinarians remained orthodox, their ‘moral theology could merge with the heterodoxies of the eighteenth century, and indeed, even contributed to them.’<sup>13</sup> Griffin thought that the Latitudinarians understood that reason and faith were the same thing as a process of assent to evidence. ‘They accorded to the facts of the Christian revelation an epistemological status which, in the final analysis, is not much different from that which

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<sup>8</sup> Horton Davies, *Worship and theology in England from Andrewes to Baxter and Foxe, 1603-1690* (Princeton, 1975), pp. 133-137.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 181-184.

<sup>10</sup> Isabel Rivers, *Reason, grace, and sentiment: a study of the language of religion and ethics in England, 1660-1780, volume I, Whichcote to Wesley* (New York, 1992), p. 68.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 67, 79.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 67, 84-85.

<sup>13</sup> Martin Griffin, *Latitudinarianism in the seventeenth-century Church of England* (Leiden, 1992) p. 135.



they accorded to the contents of any reliable historical account of the past.’<sup>14</sup> In this interpretation, the supernatural factors in the religion of the Latitudinarians were highly weakened. Griffin went on to say that their theological minimalism led Christianity into being ‘virtually no more than a system of morality’ which ‘could produce Arianism, Socinianism, or deism,’ depending on the way it was applied.<sup>15</sup>

Yet some scholars have questioned this general orientation to the thinking of the Latitudinarians. William Spellman criticised the attempt to define Latitudinarian movement, a late seventeenth century phenomenon, in terms of the development of the less mystical and more human-centred worldview during the course of the eighteenth century. He insisted that one should examine the movement in its original seventeenth-century setting, exploring its independent developments influenced by ‘the Civil War experience, particularly its violent sectarian component; the threat by a resurgent Catholicism; the development and attraction of the new science; and the danger of Cartesian mechanism and of Hobbesian materialism.’ In this context, Spellman showed that the Latitudinarians were mainstream Protestants and had an orthodox Christian viewpoint of human nature and soteriology, in which God’s grace is indispensable for salvation.<sup>16</sup>

Particularly regarding Tillotson, Spellman insisted that the image as a mere moral preacher, who was not interested in the great mysteries of the faith such as ‘the fall and corruption of man, redemption through Christ’s sacrifice, and the special influence of divine grace,’ was far from the picture revealed by a close study of his 254 published sermons. According to Spellman, Tillotson adhered to a view of man where works had no merit in the process of salvation and the forgiveness of sin was given through faith in Christ alone. For Tillotson, genuine faith included both belief and practice, so he claimed that ‘though we be justified at first by faith without works preceding, yet faith without good works following it will not finally justify and save us.’<sup>17</sup> However, due to the corrupt nature of humankind caused by the stain of Adam’s sin which infected and disabled every person, being faithful to Christian duty was despairingly difficult for the believers in such a ‘miserable’ state. Therefore every worthwhile virtue could be achieved only with the supernatural assistance of God’s grace.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid. p. 83.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. p. 133.

<sup>16</sup> William Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England, 1660-1700* (London, 1993), pp. 3-5.

<sup>17</sup> John Tillotson, *Of the necessity of good works in Fifteen sermons on several subjects... the eleventh volume* (London, 1702), p. 161; William Spellman, “Archbishop John Tillotson and the meaning of moralism,” *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 56.4 (1987), p. 418.

Bitter doctrinal disputes over nonessentials, which were never helpful to achieve the goodness and virtue of Christian religion, should be avoided. Asserting that Tillotson's theology was rooted in 'a rational Christian faith based on the Bible,' Spellman concluded that the moralism of Tillotson meant 'a living, not a speculative, quarrelsome faith' and exhorting a nature 'distorted from its original rectitude and innocence' to 're-assume humanity.'<sup>18</sup>

Further revision has been suggested. Richard Ashcraft questioned the supposed 'moderation' and 'toleration' of the Latitudinarians. In his view, they tried to avoid quarrels among Protestants on the inessential elements and formulate a consensus on the essentials of religious doctrine. However, the real problem was not the making of an abstract consensus of beliefs, but 'how this consensus could be practically implemented.' The Latitudinarians, with other Anglican divines, wanted to incorporate dissenting Protestants to the Church of England through comprehension, defending the civil authority to enforce compliance with the law. 'What comprehension most often meant was simply conformity to the existing practices of the Anglican Church; that is, the abandonment of religious dissent.' Ashcraft further said that 'notwithstanding their doctrinal pleas for moderation and reasonableness, Latitudinarians, by stirring up animosities and hatred with their epithets and invectives directed against Dissenters, often served as the shock troops of persecution in the war against nonconformity.'<sup>19</sup> John Spurr also said that the qualities traditionally attributed to the Latitudinarians, such as their connection with natural science and the toleration of dissent were not commonly shared by them. What could tie them was, if anything, the opposition to Puritan 'enthusiasm' and theology, especially the Calvinist doctrine of salvation. However, anti-Puritanism was also shared by other Anglican divines, and this, together with the interest in encouraging their church members to a pious life and private devotion, made the Latitudinarians hardly distinguishable among the Restoration churchmen. Thus, Spurr denied the existence of the latitudinarians as a coherent and separate group.<sup>20</sup>

Some middle-way approaches have also been proposed. Gerard Reedy pointed out that most discussions of Tillotson as a rationalist rested on only a few sermons, and that a balanced examination showed that reason for Tillotson was different from that of the rationalist philosophy of his century. While philosophers such as Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz tried to 'generalize the mathematical mode of reasoning, and to apply it without restriction to all

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<sup>18</sup> Spellman, "Archbishop John Tillotson and the meaning of moralism," pp. 404-422.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Ashcraft, "Latitudinarianism and toleration," in Richard Kroll, Richard Ashcraft, and Perez Zagorin, eds, *Philosophy, science and religion in England, 1640-1770* (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 151-77.

<sup>20</sup> John Spurr, "Latitudinarianism and the Restoration church," *The Historical Journal*, 31.4 (1998), pp. 61-82.

problems of philosophy and science,' Tillotson and his friends made clear that they did not seek mathematical clarity and certainty in religion. Tillotson claimed that for religious matters, mathematical certainty could not be attained nor was relevant, but moral certainty was sufficient assurance. This is especially clear when he talked about the truth of the Bible which involved the historicity of traditional authorship. The certainty of the authorship was not mathematical, but involved free assent of prudent people throughout history. Reedy asserted that Tillotson's contemporaries recognised that Tillotson held 'Eternal Word and Reason' against the 'Reason' of rationalists.<sup>21</sup> Reedy also noted that Tillotson did not compel his audience to choose between reason and revelation, but reason and revelation worked in an interdependent fashion in Tillotson's theological methodology. 'His object of inquiry, revelation, modified reason, his inquiring instrument.' With this 'baptized reason' Tillotson fought with his enemies such as Socinians. He maintained that there was no internal contradiction in the Trinity, nor was anything against reason in the scriptural doctrine of Jesus's expiation for sin. The fundamental tenets of the Socinian theory - subordination of the role and nature of Jesus to the Father's uniqueness - brought about 'more incongruities of reason' than did the traditional belief. In these ways, reason moulded Tillotson's arguments where revealed truths were vindicated. According to Reedy, Tillotson warned that 'rational method, uninformed by scripture and the early history of the church, would destroy Christianity.'<sup>22</sup> Harvey Hill's study also tried to keep a balance between the traditional view and revisionism on Tillotson and the Latitudinarians. In Hill's view, on the one hand, Tillotson depended heavily on rational and moral appeals and 'viewed contemporary Christianity as essentially the same as natural religion.'<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, he supported the revealed truth declaring the degenerated state of human nature and asserted 'the necessity of grace for entering and persevering in the Christian life.'<sup>24</sup> According to Hill, scholars have stressed one of these two points, but for Tillotson 'they went together as part of the drama of human existence.'<sup>25</sup>

As seen above, there has been a range of interpretations of Tillotson and Latitudinarians - a tension has emerged between secularisation and traditionalism, and also attempts have been made to moderate the two views. These attempts at moderation have important insights, but they are not completely satisfactory, not least because of insufficient analysis of the meaning

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<sup>21</sup> Gerard Reedy, "Interpreting Tillotson," *The Harvard Theological Review*, 86.1 (1993), pp. 84-85, 89-91.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. pp. 84-85, 91-92.

<sup>23</sup> Harvey Hill, "The law of nature revived: Christianity and natural religion in the sermons of John Tillotson," *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 70.2 (2001), p. 179.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 188.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 188.

of reason for Tillotson. This study will clarify and modify what has been discussed in the middle position, analysing the concept of reason Tillotson used. However, it will also suggest that at the heart of Tillotson's thought was not so much rationalism as his stress on charity and his unifying ecclesiology. Tillotson believed that behaviour inspired by altruistic love was the most important principle of the Christian religion. Based on the principle of charity, he developed an ecclesiology in which he argued that Christians should achieve unity by practicing their primary duty of love and by tolerating differences in minor matters.

### Tillotson and Latitudinarians

It may be useful to see how Tillotson was associated with a group of people considered latitude-men in a traditional sense, so it becomes clear that the study of Tillotson's life and theology can help us to understand the characters of the group. This section tries to describe, without prejudging what beliefs they actually held, their common career and the way they were viewed by contemporary observers.

After the restoration of the English monarchy in 1660, the episcopal Church of England, too, was restored, and was dominated by churchmen having strong affection for episcopacy and the ritualistic parts of worship. These mainstream churchmen, who had suffered in the Interregnum, condemned a group of divines as time-servers. These opportunists had conformed to the church of the Interregnum, but now chose to serve the restored Church of England, arguing that they had always been true to the fundamental tenets of Christianity though they might compromise on non-essentials. The pejorative label for such clergy given by their critics was 'Latitude-men' or 'Latitudinarians,' which was, according to Glanvill who belonged to the group, 'a word [that] signifies compass or largeness, because their opposition to the narrow stingy Temper then called Orthodoxness; and their opinion of the lawfulness of Compliance with the Rites and Ceremonies of the Church.'<sup>26</sup>

Many of the group studied at Cambridge during the Interregnum under the influence of the Cambridge Platonists, such as Ralph Cudworth and Henry More, to whom they were indebted theologically. The Cambridge Platonists believed that the truth of Christianity partook of universal truth, so they had a preference for a religion made up of a few broad truths. They thought there were transcendent moral principles which even God could not change, and that

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<sup>26</sup> Jackson Cope, "The Cupri-Cosmits: Glanvill on latitudinarian anti-enthusiasm," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 17.3 (1954), p. 273.

following these was the path to salvation of souls. Their irenicism made them indifferent to the particular creeds and ceremonies that were being disputed by English Protestants. They ‘hated sectarianism, creed making, heresy hunting, and the petty insistence that this or that form of ceremonial or church polity was *jure divino* – by divine right.’<sup>27</sup> While Cudworth and More were too firmly rooted in Cambridge to move, the Cambridge Platonists’ younger admirers who found post-Restoration Cambridge unfriendly to their temper sought advancement in London.<sup>28</sup> Most of this younger generation - including Tillotson, Patrick, Stillingfleet, and Tenison - left Cambridge and became active as preachers in the capital rather than university academics. Though the two groups - the Cambridge Platonists and the Latitudinarians - shared basic epistemology and the flexible attitude towards the doctrines and ceremonies, the younger group of London clergy was characterised by ‘the common-sense appeal to the experience of their congregations’ quite different from the Cambridge Platonists’ ‘mystical and metaphysical theology.’<sup>29</sup> Tillotson, while serving as preacher at Lincoln’s Inn and St Lawrence Jewry in London, set a prominent example of a distinctive sermon style characterised by what his contemporaries referred to as ‘a simplicity of Words’<sup>30</sup> and ‘the solidity and Plainness’ which was shared by his fellow Latitudinarians.<sup>31</sup> And his sermons typically put more emphasis on practical morality than doctrinal details. The final stage of the Latitudinarians’ career came after the 1688 revolution. They supported the revolution and the post-revolution government of William III. Non-jurors, who refused to take an oath to the new monarch, lost their offices, and the Latitudinarians ascended to the high clerical positions that were vacated by Non-jurors. Gilbert Burnet, who joined the London clergy in the early 1670s and became close to William since settling at his court in Holland in 1686, was behind the promotion of them under the new regime. In a memorandum he wrote to William, Burnet recommended ‘the Clergy of London that deserve more particular regard from your Highness.’<sup>32</sup> A number of bishoprics were given to the leading moderate clergy: Stillingfleet to Worcester, Burnet to Salisbury, Patrick to Chichester, Fowler to Gloucester, and most importantly Tillotson to the archbishopric of Canterbury.

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<sup>27</sup> Mark Goldie, “Cambridge Platonists (act. 1630s–1680s),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/theme/94274>, accessed 10 July 2018]

<sup>28</sup> John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the age of the enlightenment: science, religion and politics from the Restoration to the French revolution* (Cambridge, 1988), pp. 41-2.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* p. 42.

<sup>30</sup> Cope, “The Cupri-Cosmits,” p. 284.

<sup>31</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *A sermon preached at the funeral of the most reverend father in God, John... Archbishop of Canterbury* (London, 1694), p. 9.

<sup>32</sup> R. W. Blencowe, ed., *Diary of the times of Charles the second by the honourable Henry Sidney*, 2 vols. (London, 1843), vol. 2, p. 281.

The Latitudinarians felt the need to spell out their ‘moderate’ position which they argued was the middle way between ‘enthusiastic’ Puritanism and rigid ritualism championed by those churchmen who would be called ‘high churchmen’ by the end of the century. In 1662 a pamphlet titled *A brief account of the new sect of Latitude-men* was published. The cover page styled its author ‘S. P. of Cambridge,’ probably Simon Patrick. The author complained about the situation in which the conformity of the Latitudinarians was unfairly criticised by some churchmen. ‘It seems very strange that any son of the Church should be displeased to see the number of her children to increase beyond expectation,’ though he noted the number of ‘some few unquiet spirits that make all this noise and stirr’ was ‘very small.’<sup>33</sup> The author tried to dissociate the Latitudinarians from Puritanism, describing them as faithful to the practices of the re-established church: they disdained Puritan-style *extempore* prayers which was ‘the pretence of being familiar with God Almighty’ but believed ‘there ought by all means to be a settled Liturgy’; they ‘abhor both the Usurpation of Scottish Presbytery, and the confusion of Independent Anarchy’ but had ‘a deep veneration of her Government, which they steadfastly believe to be in it self the best, and the same that was practiced in the times of the Apostles’; and in terms of the doctrine of the Church of England, they ‘do cordially adhere to it, as doth sufficiently appear by their willingness to subscribe to the thirty nine Articles,’ rejecting the Calvinist doctrine of ‘absolute reprobation.’<sup>34</sup>

S. P. also sought to rescue the Latitudinarians from the criticism that they excessively esteemed reason and lacked respect for the ceremonies of the church. He argued, ‘let no man accuse them of hearkening too much to their own reason, since their reason steers by so excellent a compass, the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church. For Reason is that faculty whereby a man must judge of every thing, nor can a man beleve any thing except he have some reason for it.’<sup>35</sup> Regarding ceremonies, ‘they presume no man would have them to think the whole weight of Religion lies in externals, or that they are of greater accompt [account] than the eternal and indispensable Laws of good and evil, but that Ecclesiastical laws are... an hedge about the laws of God; these ought stiffly to be observed, and therefore the other not to be neglected.’<sup>36</sup> The Latitudinarians were accused of yet ‘another crime which cannot be denied, that they have introduced a new Philosophy; Aristotle and the Schoolemen are out of request

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<sup>33</sup> S[imon] P[atrack], *A brief account of the new sect of latitude-men* (London, 1662), p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. pp. 8-9.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p. 13.

with them.<sup>37</sup> In reply to this accusation, the author maintained, ‘the Theater of nature is much enlarged since Aristotles time’ by recent scientific discoveries ‘not agreeable with Aristotles doctrine,’ so ‘there is no part of the world wherein there must needs be of great accompt in natural Philosophy.’<sup>38</sup> He believed, ‘true Philosophy can never hurt sound Divinity,’ and encouraged the Church of England to ‘let her old loving Nurse the Platonick Philosophy be admitted again into her family.’<sup>39</sup> It would not be possible ‘to free Religion from scorn and contempt, if her Priests be not as well skilled in nature as the people, and her Champions furnished with as good Artillery as her enemies.’<sup>40</sup> So, according to the vindication, there was nothing to worry about the new sect rather they were beneficial to the Church of England.

And now having taken an impartial view of this so much exagitated company of men, we find them so far from being any ways dangerous to the Church, or fit to be disowned by her, that they seem to be the very Chariots and Horsemen thereof; for by their sober and unblameable conversation, they conciliate respect and honour to her; by their Learning and industry they defend her; by their moderation they are most likely to win upon the minds of Dissenters, who are too many to be contemned; by their accommodating themselves to the people, who... are possessed for the most part by the Presbyterians, they may in time bring them over to the Church.<sup>41</sup>

Another Latitudinarian apologetic work was published by Edward Fowler. In the preface of his *The principles and practices of certain moderate divines of the Church of England*, Fowler said his book would not ‘exasperate any one of the contesting Parties,’ i.e. Conformists and Nonconformists, ‘but only (and much alike too) the high and fierce men of each Party.’<sup>42</sup> He observed that a Latitudinarian was being vilified as ‘a Gentleman of a wide swallow,’ but he argued that ‘an impartial representation of them’ was that ‘they are persons of great Moderation.’<sup>43</sup> Some Nonconformists maintained, ‘the grand fault’ of Anglican churchmen including the Latitudinarians was ‘their Conformity to the present Ecclesiastical Laws; which enjoin some Rites in the Worship of God, which there is no express warrant from the Scriptures for.’<sup>44</sup> Fowler retorted that conformity to the present rites which were not

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 20.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 24.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 24.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p. 12.

<sup>42</sup> [Edward Fowler], *The principles and practices of certain moderate divines of the Church of England* (London, 1670), p. v.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid. p. 10.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

plainly opposed to scripture was not only lawful but also required as long as civil magistrates ‘think it fit to impose them.’<sup>45</sup> Some Anglicans accused the Latitudinarians of being ‘turncoats’ who changed sides after 1660, but Fowler explained,

under the late Usurpers, they did so behave themselves, as that some of them were great Sufferers for his Majestie and the Church; and the rest of those I was acquainted with, though they were so prudent as to keep as much as they could out of harms way, and not to expose themselves to needless sufferings, and such of which there could come no good; yet were they no less consciencious, and had a care to preserve themselves unspotted from the guilt of the then wilde extravagances.<sup>46</sup>

In short, they prudently evaded unnecessary sufferings in the Interregnum, but kept their integrity, distancing themselves from the guilt of the period. In addition, Fowler argued the Latitudinarians valued episcopal church government. Though they were moderate enough not to ‘unchurch those Churches that will not admit of this Government,’ it did not mean they were inconsistent, because ‘they cannot but look upon it as very desirable, that those few Churches that refuse it, would receive it, upon more accounts than that of its great Antiquity.’<sup>47</sup>

The fact that a group of divines labelled Latitudinarians were distinguishable was backed by the description of them by Richard Baxter. When the leading Presbyterian minister discussed those who conformed to the Act of Uniformity of 1662 in his autobiography, he differentiated three broad categories. There were ‘some of the old Ministers called Presbyterians formerly’ who mostly conformed out of need or with casuistic interpretations of the words of the subscription. Next there were ‘those called Latitudinarians, who were mostly Cambridge-men, Platonists or Cartesians, and many of them Arminians.’ They were ‘ingenious Men and Scholars, and of Universal Principles and free; abhorring at first the Imposition of these little things, but thinking them not great enough to stick at when Imposed.’ And then there were ‘those that were heartily such throughout... zealous for the Diocesan Party and the Cause.’ They were ‘supposed to be the high and swaying Party.’<sup>48</sup> In a later part of the book, he again wrote that the Latitudinarians ‘were much for new and free Philosophy... and not at

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid. p. 25.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. pp. 324-5.

<sup>48</sup> Richard Baxter, *Reliquiae Baxterianae, or, Mr. Baxter's narrative of the most memorable passages of his life and times* (London, 1696), part 2, pp. 386-7.



all for any thing Ceremonious: But being not so strict in their Theology or way of piety as some others, they thought that Conformity was too small a matter to keep them out of the Ministry.’<sup>49</sup>

Thus far we have seen that, Latitudinarians had similar careers, identified themselves as a group, and were attacked as a group by their enemies. Added to this, the group was characterised by the participation in the same activities and their common practical and political stances in many issues. To begin with, they were all interested in moral reform of English society. They worked together for a revival of manners in London, which Gordon Rupp called the ‘small awakening.’ Henry Compton, bishop of the capital since 1675, was instrumental in the awakening. He called the London clergy in a series of conferences to discuss subject of pastoral interest.<sup>50</sup> These meetings probably kept the churchmen alive to their responsibilities. Rupp described the London clergy as ‘a group of exceptional men, splendid preachers, devoted in pastoral care, pioneers in some of the most impressive educational and philanthropic projects of the time’<sup>51</sup> who sought ‘a renewal of the Church in piety and edification, which they made centre of their own arduous and devoted pastoral care.’<sup>52</sup> Latitudinarians were continually concerned with moral campaigns, devoting themselves to pastoral work and, by the end of the century, supporting the efforts of voluntary associations like the Societies for the Reformation of Manners. For example Stillingfleet persuaded Queen Mary to support the campaign of the societies in Middlesex. Fowler sought to have the reformation societies widely endorsed, by having a paper praising their work signed by fellow bishops.<sup>53</sup>

Latitudinarians also shared a flexible attitude towards precise forms of worship or church government and stressed the simple virtue of the faith over complex doctrinal knowledge. This led them to participate in the effort to create a more inclusive national church comprehending moderate Dissenters in the late seventeenth century, though all the attempts were unsuccessful in the end. During the period, the moderate Anglicans were in regular communication with nonconforming leaders, and there were several major contacts between them to debate the conditions on which Dissenters would return to the established church. For example, John Wilkins had a series of meetings with Baxter and a few other Presbyterian ministers in 1668 to discuss the way to comprehend Presbyterians. Tillotson and Stillingfleet met them in 1675 for the same reason. In January 1689, Tillotson, Stillingfleet, Lloyd, Patrick,

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid. part iii, p. 20.

<sup>50</sup> Edward Carpenter, *The protestant bishop: being a life of Henry Compton* (London, 1956), pp. 61-6.

<sup>51</sup> Gordon Rupp, *Religion in England, 1688-1791* (Oxford, 1986), p. 41.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p. 52.

<sup>53</sup> Tony Claydon, *William III and the godly revolution* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 115-6.

and Tenison, all considered to be the Latitudinarians, began discussion of comprehension again, debating possible concessions to Dissenters in terms of church rituals. As a result, two bills were introduced into Parliament: one for comprehension and the other to give toleration to the intransigent Dissenters who would remain outside. However, while the toleration bill was passed in Parliament, the comprehension bill was dropped. And the resulting situation where all the Protestant Dissenters enjoyed expanded toleration made further attempts at comprehension ineffective.<sup>54</sup>

An anti-Catholic disposition also bound Latitudinarians together. Under the Catholic rule of James II, they became a core of Anglican resistance. Through their sermons and pamphlets, they appealed to Englishmen not to be swayed by Catholic aggrandisement and to remain loyal to the Church of England. The anti-Catholic campaign offended James and he once complained to William Sancroft, archbishop of Canterbury about ‘the ministers of London, who preached too much against Popery,’ particularly naming Patrick, Stillingfleet, and Tillotson.<sup>55</sup> In addition, they participated in the seven bishops’ petition in May 1688, which expressed clerical opposition to James’s pro-Catholic policies. James issued the declaration of indulgence, which allowed Catholics and Dissenters to worship freely against parliamentary legislation, and ordered it to be read by Anglican clergy throughout the country. The London clergy, through a number of meetings, decided not to read it and organised a petition asking for the cancellation of his order. There were some who were hesitant, but during the discussion, ‘the initiative seems to have passed to the moderate men as we might call them, the anti-popery men, the men most likely to wish for an accord with the Dissenters.’<sup>56</sup> Latitudinarian clergy, such as Tillotson, Stillingfleet, Fowler, Patrick, and Lloyd, were actively involved and they made clear that the petition was not due to ‘any want of due tenderness to Dissenters.’<sup>57</sup> The petition, which was presented to the king by seven bishops on behalf of the London clergy, was a blow to James’s strategy to promote his religion.

Latitudinarians were all willing to serve a variety of political regimes in the late seventeenth century. They did not refuse to serve under the Cromwellian republic and, after 1660, they were ready to conform to the restored monarchy of Charles II. Latitudinarians kept

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<sup>54</sup> Roger Thomas, “Comprehension and indulgence,” in Geoffrey Nuttall and Owen Chadwick ed., *From uniformity to unity: 1662-1962* (London, 1962), pp. 189-253.

<sup>55</sup> Simon Patrick, *The auto-biography of Symon Patrick* (Oxford, 1839), p. 122.

<sup>56</sup> Roger Thomas, “The seven bishops and their petition, 18 May 1688,” *The journal of ecclesiastical history*, 12.1 (1961), p. 61.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* p. 64.

their posts under James II and welcomed the revolutionary government of William III and Mary II. A few of them who outlived the house of Stuart supported and served under George I who came to the throne in 1714. Burnet preached before the new king, ten days after his coronation.<sup>58</sup> Tenison and Lloyd continued to serve the archbishopric of Canterbury and the bishopric of Worcester respectively, which they had held since the reign of William.<sup>59</sup> Their flexibility in politics, as their pliability in religion, led to some of the most serious charges against them: their opponents condemned them as unprincipled opportunists.

During their ministry, Latitudinarians took part in publishing projects, which centred on Burnet as author, but were the result of a collaborative reviewing and commenting of emerging volumes. Burnet's *The history of the Reformation*, an account of the Church of England's break with Rome, which was published in two volumes in 1679 and 1681, might have had a function of justifying their loyalty to Charles II. Not only did the *History* describe medieval popery as cruel and corrupt, but also it represented the English monarchs who carried out the Protestant reformation as godly rulers. Its epistle dedicatory to Charles praised the achievements of the reforming rulers in the past, and encouraged him to take the example of his predecessors in promoting Protestantism.<sup>60</sup> After the 1688 revolution, Burnet's *A discourse of the pastoral care* (1692) and *An exposition of the thirty nine articles* (1699) were published as a part of the moral and ecclesiastical reform endorsed by the court.<sup>61</sup> Detailed discussion of the nature or intention of the publications is not intended here, but it is worth noting that in all the three works Burnet acknowledged the contribution of his colleagues, naming only a few important helpers, such as Tillotson, Stillingfleet, and Lloyd.<sup>62</sup>

Latitudinarianism continued to be influential in the eighteenth century, but with a slightly different face. According to scholars, those labelled Latitudinarians in the century tended to seek more radical faith, sometimes going beyond the limits of orthodoxy Christianity as it had been understood through history, and not only did they demand radical reform of the

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<sup>58</sup> Martin Greig, "Burnet, Gilbert," *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) [https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/4061, accessed 26 December 2018].

<sup>59</sup> Michael Mullett, "Lloyd, William," *ODNB* [https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/16860, accessed 26 December 2018]; William Marshall, "Tenison, Thomas," *ODNB* [https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27130, accessed 26 December 2018].

<sup>60</sup> Claydon, *William III*, pp. 44-6.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 175-7.

<sup>62</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *The history of the Reformation of the Church of England, the first part* (London, 1679), preface; Gilbert Burnet, *The history of the Reformation of the Church of England, the second part* (London, 1681), preface; Gilbert Burnet, *A discourse of the pastoral care* (London, 1692), p. 250; Gilbert Burnet, *An exposition of the thirty nine articles of the Church of England* (London, 1699), pp. i-ii.

established church, but their radicalism extended to the political realm.<sup>63</sup> The investigation into the eighteenth-century Latitudinarianism is crucial to the understanding of modern intellectual development spanning centuries and it will be addressed where relevant, but the primary concerns of this thesis will be Tillotson's theology and the late seventeenth-century Latitudinarianism.<sup>64</sup>

The career of Tillotson was a typical example of the Latitudinarian clergyman. As we are about to see, he shared Latitudinarians' broad pattern of work and promotion and their attitudes towards key issues of the time: for example, insistence on the simplicity and comprehensiveness of Christianity and stress on virtue as the heart of the religion, which led to an adaptable attitude towards the external forms of religion, and a friendliness to Dissenters. The contemporaries of Tillotson, whether friendly or hostile to him, considered him to be an archetypal Latitudinarian. Glanvill, discussing the Latitudinarians of his day characterised by 'the disposition of their Spirits, which was Catholic and general, not Topical or confined to opinions and Sects,'<sup>65</sup> introduced Tillotson as 'a Person of a very Clear Head, and Excellent Judgment, and Close Reason' and 'a Famed Preacher... esteem'd greatly for the solidity and Plainness of his Discourses.'<sup>66</sup> Burnet wrote Latitudinarians 'allowed a great freedom both in philosophy and in divinity: From whence they were called men of Latitude.'<sup>67</sup> He continued that the most prominent of the young generation of moderate churchmen were Tillotson, Stillingfleet, and Patrick. Particularly Tillotson was 'a man of a clear head, and a sweet temper' who 'had the brightest thought, and the most correct style of all our divines; and was esteemed the best preacher of the age.'<sup>68</sup> Non-juror Charles Leslie, who condemned Latitudinarians as political opportunists, wrote about Tillotson that 'his Politicks are Leviathan, and his Religion is Latitudinarian, which is none; that is, nothing that is positive, but against every thing that is

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<sup>63</sup> Griffin, *Latitudinarianism in the seventeenth-century Church of England*, ch. 8; John Gascoigne, "Anglican Latitudinarianism and political radicalism in the late eighteenth century," *History*, 71.231 (1986).

<sup>64</sup> For the eighteenth century Latitudinarianism, see Griffin, *Latitudinarianism in the Seventeenth-Century Church of England*, ch. 8; Thomas Pfizenmaier, *The Trinitarian theology of Dr Samuel Clarke (1675-1729): context, sources, and controversy* (Leiden, 1997), ch. 1; John Gascoigne, "Anglican Latitudinarianism and political radicalism in the late eighteenth century," *History*, 71.231 (1986); John Gascoigne, *Cambridge in the age of enlightenment* (Cambridge, 1989); Martin Fitzpatrick, "Latitudinarianism at the parting of the ways: a suggestion," in John Walsh, Colin Haydon and Stephen Taylor eds., *The Church of England c. 1689-c. 1833: from toleration to tractarianism* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 209-27; Andrew Starkie, *The Church of England and the Bangorian controversy, 1716-1721* (Woodbridge, 2007), ch. 6; Susan Rutherford, "Reformation principles: the religious and political ideas of Benjamin Hoadly (1676-1761)," PhD dissertation, University of Northumbria (2000).

<sup>65</sup> Jackson Cope, "The cupris-comits: Glanvill on latitudinarian anti-enthusiasm," *Huntington Library Quarterly*, 17.3 (1954), p. 271.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.* p. 284.

<sup>67</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *Bishop Burnet's history of his own time, vol. I* (London, 1724), p. 188.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.* p. 189.

positive in other Religions,’ and that ‘in this School Dr. T. has these many years, held the First Form, and now diffuses his Poyson from a high Station’ which meant the see of Canterbury.<sup>69</sup> Tillotson continued to be remembered in the following centuries for tolerant attitude, again whether it was considered good or bad. William Cole, an eighteenth-century Tory, complained about ‘a restless generation who will never be contented till they have overturned the Constitution in Church and State.’ This movement was, he thought, a part of plan to bring in Dissenters to undermine the Church of England, a plot which had been endorsed by ‘Tillotson and a thousand other moderate and Latitudinarian Clergy.’<sup>70</sup> In the early nineteenth-century, Christopher Wyvill, who sought the enactment of religious toleration, argued not only that his movement stood in the tradition of the eighteenth century Latitudinarian forerunners such as Benjamin Hoadly and Samuel Clarke, but also that ‘to complete the great work of Tillotson, the test-laws and some other intolerant statutes remain to be repealed.’<sup>71</sup>

Thus, we see a group of people who were criticised for the same reasons and participated in the same activities, and among them Tillotson was one of the prominent figures. The main focus of this study is Tillotson rather than the Latitudinarian group, but it would, by exploring the theology of Tillotson, try to contribute to more informed understanding of the group. A brief biography that describes the major parts of Tillotson’s life will serve as a background for the discussion on his thoughts in the following chapters.

### The life of Tillotson

Tillotson was born at Sowerby, in the parish of Halifax, Yorkshire in 1630. His father was a successful clothier and a determined Calvinist, who was a member of the congregational church gathered at Sowerby. Tillotson started a grammar-school education at Colne in Lancashire and moved to Heath grammar school in Halifax. In 1647 he entered Clare Hall, Cambridge. His tutor was a Puritan divine David Clarkson. The master of Clare was Ralph Cudworth, known as one of the Cambridge Platonists. At the university, the intellectual keenness of the Calvinist theologians such as Thomas Hill and William Twisse impressed him.

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<sup>69</sup> [Charles Leslie], *The charge of Socinianism against Dr Tillotson considered* (Edinburgh, 1695) p. 13.

<sup>70</sup> British Library, Cole MSS, Add. MS 5873, fol. 49 in John Gascoigne, “Anglican latitudinarianism and political radicalism in the late eighteenth century,” *History*, 71.231 (1986), p. 37.

<sup>71</sup> Christopher Wyvill, *Intolerance the disgrace of Christians not the fault of their religion* (London, 1808), p. 81.

He was elected a fellow of his college in 1651.<sup>72</sup> His first pupil was John Beardmore who later wrote in his memorials that Tillotson spoke Latin exceedingly well, was very good at extemporary prayer, and had a strong appetite for sermons, hearing four every Sunday and one each Wednesday. He was ‘a very good scholar, an acute logician and philosopher, a quick disputant, of a solid judgment.’<sup>73</sup>

At the end of 1656 or beginning of 1657 he went to London to become tutor to the only son of Sir Edmund Prideaux, Oliver Cromwell’s attorney-general, to whom he acted as chaplain. Tillotson was in London at the time of Cromwell’s death in 1658. In the following week, he was present at Whitehall where the deceased Protector’s chaplains Thomas Goodwin and Peter Sterry used “fanatical expressions” in prayer: an incident which may have shifted Tillotson’s religious views.<sup>74</sup> According to Burnet, Tillotson told him about the event. The description of Burnet is as follows.

God was in a manner reproach’d with the deceas’d Protector’s services, and challeng’d for taking him away so soon. Dr. Goodwin, who had pretended to assure them in a prayer, a very few minutes before he expir’d, that he was not to die, had now the confidence to say to God, “Thou hast deceived us, and we were deceived.” And Mr. Sterry, praying for Richard, us’d these indecent words, next to blasphemy, “Make him the brightness of the father’s glory, and the express image of his person.”<sup>75</sup>

Burnet commented that it was ‘a great deal of strange stuff, enough to disgust a man for ever of that enthusiastick boldness.’<sup>76</sup> In addition to this occasion, Burnet, in his funeral sermon for Tillotson, identified an important intellectual influence which weaned him from Puritan ‘prejudices.’ It was William Chillingworth’s book *The religion of Protestants a safe way to salvation* (1638) that Tillotson read at the university.

His first Education and Impressions were among those who were then called Puritans; but of best sort. Yet even before his mind was opened to clearer thoughts, he felt somewhat within him that disposed him to larger Notions, and a better Temper. The

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<sup>72</sup> Thomas Birch, ed., *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition* (London, 1753), pp. 1-6; Alexander Gordon, “Tillotson, John,” *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 56 (London, 1898), pp. 392-3; Isabel Rivers, “Tillotson, John,” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004) <https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/27449>, accessed 13 June 2019].

<sup>73</sup> John Beardmore, *Some memorials of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson*, in Thomas Birch, ed., *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, (London, 1753), p. 382.

<sup>74</sup> Gordon, “Tillotson,” *DNB*, vol. 56, p. 393.

<sup>75</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *Bishop Burnet’s history of his own time*, vol. I (London, 1724), pp. 82-3.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.* p. 82.

books which were put in the hands of the Youth of that time, were generally heavy... he happily fell on Chillingworth's Book, which gave his mind the ply that it held ever after, and put him on a true scent. He was soon freed from his first Prejudices, or rather he was never mastered by them.<sup>77</sup>

Tillotson himself expressed in a sermon his admiration for Chillingworth, 'the glory of this age and nation' who sought 'to make the christian religion reasonable, and to discover those firm and solid foundations upon which our faith is built.'<sup>78</sup> It is hard to know the exact time Tillotson distanced himself from the Puritanism that he inherited from his parents, but Beardmore said that he 'got out of the prejudices of his education, when but a very young man in Cambridge, divers years before the Restoration in 1660, or any prospect of it.'<sup>79</sup> Interestingly, Burnet, just after saying Tillotson was 'freed from his first prejudices,' added that the Puritan education had some positive influences on him.

yet he still stuck to the strictness of life to which he was bred, and retained a just value, and a due tenderness for the men of that Perswasion; and by the strength of his Reason, together with the clearness of his Principles, he brought over more serious Persons from their Scruples to the Communion of the Church, and fixed more in it, than any man I ever knew.<sup>80</sup>

The remark of Burnet, though it was eulogistic praise, shows it is possible that Tillotson's Puritan background might be important in explaining some of his attitudes, particularly a sympathetic opinion about Protestant Dissenters.

After the restoration of the English monarchy, Tillotson was present as an observer on nonconforming side at the Savoy Conference in 1661 between Anglican bishops and nonconforming ministers which was held to discuss the revision of the liturgy of the Church of England. Richard Baxter specified Tillotson among 'two or three scholars and laymen, that is Auditors came in with us.'<sup>81</sup> It seems that Tillotson was ordained about this time. The date of his ordination by 'the old Scottish Bishop of Galloway,' Thomas Sydserf was conjectured by his biographer Thomas Birch to have been probably in the latter end of 1660 or beginning of

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<sup>77</sup> Burnet, *A sermon preached at funeral of the most reverend father in God, John... archbishop of Canterbury*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>78</sup> John Tillotson, *The efficacy, usefulness, and reasonableness of divine faith in Fifteen sermons on various subjects... the twelfth volume* (London, 1703), p. 167.

<sup>79</sup> Beardmore, *Some memorials*, p. 398.

<sup>80</sup> Burnet, *A sermon preached at the funeral of... John... Archbishop of Canterbury*, p. 8.

<sup>81</sup> Richard Baxter, *Reliquae Baxterianae, or, Mr. Baxter's narrative of the most memorable passages of his life and times* (London, 1696), part 2, p. 337.

1661.<sup>82</sup> If this conjecture is right, it shows that Tillotson had been ready to accept episcopacy before the Act of Uniformity was enforced in 1662. The reason he decided to be ordained was unknown, but if we follow the storyline of Burnet and Beardmore, probably his being ‘freed from’ Puritanism must have influenced his decision. Whatever the reason, in view of the large number of ministers who found themselves unable to abide by the Act of Uniformity, his decision to conform to the Church of England, and accept its rigid ceremonies as they were, was not a small commitment. Birch wrote, ‘though the alterations, which he might have wished for, in the public service of the Church, were not carried in that [Savoy] Conference, he immediately submitted to the Act of Uniformity, which commenc’d on St. Bartholomew’s Day, 1662.’<sup>83</sup>

The first printed sermon of Tillotson was preached in the morning exercise at St Giles Cripplegate in September 1661. Without the name of the preacher, the sermon was included in *The morning-exercise at Cripple-Gate* published in the same year. Sometime in 1661 Tillotson was made curate to Thomas Hacket, vicar of Cheshunt, Hertfordshire. In 1663 he succeeded Samuel Fairclough, the ejected rector of Kedington, Suffolk. From this early stage of his career, he faced the complaint of parishioners of Kedington that ‘Jesus Christ had not been preach’d amongst them, since Mr. Tillotson had been settled in the parish.’<sup>84</sup> The reason for this grievance was probably because of the Puritan inclination of the parishioners; in Birch’s words ‘the strong prejudices of the people there in favour of a religious system, too prevalent in that age, but directly opposite to that more rational one of real and genuine Christianity, upon which he [Tillotson] had form’d all his discourses to them.’<sup>85</sup> We have no information about what Tillotson preached in Kedington, but if we assume that Tillotson’s pattern of choosing sermon subjects (known by his extant sermons) was persistent, his emphasis on Jesus as teacher of moral virtues might have offended the hearers who were accustomed to Calvinist stress on Jesus as saviour and his atoning death, though Tillotson’s answer was that ‘Jesus Christ is truly preach’d, whenever his will, and laws, and the duties injoin’d by the Christian religion, are inculcated upon us.’<sup>86</sup> However, he was gaining ears in London, frequently preaching at St Lawrence Jewry, of which John Wilkins was rector from 1662. Tillotson and Wilkins shared

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<sup>82</sup> Beardmore, *Some memorials*, p. 387; Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, p. 18-9.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.* p. 19.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.* p. 28.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.* p. 28.

<sup>86</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached before the king and queen at Whitehall, February the 25th 1693/4 being the first Sunday in Lent* (London, 1694), p. 35.



the conviction of the rational basis of Christianity. When Burnet talked about Tillotson's intellectual development, he noted the influence of Wilkins, saying, 'that which gave him his last finishing, was his close and long Friendship with Bishop Wilkins.'<sup>87</sup>

In 1663 Tillotson was elected preacher to the society of Lincoln's Inn by virtue of the recommendation of Sir Edward Atkyns, then a bencher of Lincoln's Inn, who heard Tillotson's sermon at St Lawrence Jewry and was impressed. In the following year he was appointed Tuesday lecturer at St Lawrence Jewry. He retained these two pulpits until he became the archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>88</sup> His sermons in London attracted 'crouds of auditors.'<sup>89</sup> According to Beardmore, 'many, that heard him on Sunday at Linconln's-Inn, went joyfully to St. Laurence on Tuesday, hoping they might hear the same sermon again... when his sermons were ended, they went away with satisfied minds, and glad hearts, and cheerful countenances.'<sup>90</sup> Perhaps the popularity of his sermons was due in large part to his plain style that made them easy for the audience to understand and learn from them. And practical characters of his moral teaching might have added charm. Burnet spent some time talking about it in his funeral sermon.

He said what was just necessary to give clear Idea of things, and no more: He laid aside all long and affected Periods. His Sentences were short and clear: and the whole Thread as of a piece, plain and distinct. No affectations of Learning, no squeezing of Texts, no superficial Strains, no false Thoughts nor bold Flights, all was solid and yet lively, and grave as well as Fine: so that few ever heard him, found some new Thought occurred, something that either they had not considered before, or at least not so distinctly, and with so clear a view as he gave them.

Whether he explained Points of Divinity, Matters of Controversie, or the Rules of Morality, on which he dwelt more copiously, there was something peculiar in him on them all, that conquered the Minds, as well as is commanded the Attention of his hearers; who felt all the while that they were Learning somewhat... he concluded them with some Thoughts of such Gravity and Use, that he generally dismissed his Hearers with

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<sup>87</sup> Burnet, *A sermon preached at the funeral of... John... Archbishop of Canterbury*, p. 8.

<sup>88</sup> Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, pp. 26-9; Gordon, "Tillotson," *DNB*, vol. 56, p. 394.

<sup>89</sup> Beardmore, *Some memorials*, p. 408.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.* p. 408.

somewhat that stuck to them. He Read his Sermons with so due a Pronunciation, in so sedate and so solemn a manner, that were not the feebler, but rather the perfecter.<sup>91</sup>

The relationship between Tillotson and Wilkins was strengthened by Tillotson's marriage in February 1664 with his stepdaughter Elizabeth French, Oliver Cromwell's niece. Upon her desiring to be excused, Wilkins said, 'Betty, you shall have him; for he is the best polemical divine this day in England.'<sup>92</sup> His polemical skills, perhaps already being demonstrated in his sermons, would be shown in his two early publications. The first was a sermon *The wisdom of being religious* published in 1664. The sermon, designed to show the unreasonableness of atheism, was preached at St Paul's before the lord mayor of London in March 1664. The second was his polemical writing against Roman Catholicism *The rule of faith* (1666) where he dismissed the allegedly infallible authority of oral tradition and set forth rational grounds for the Bible as the rule of faith. Tillotson's talents and popularity gained him further preferment. In November 1668, he preached at the consecration of his father-in-law Wilkins to the bishopric of Chester. This sermon gave general satisfaction and the preacher's ability was soon recognised by the court. In the following year, he was appointed one of Charles II's chaplains.<sup>93</sup> The king gave him the second prebend at Canterbury (March 1670) and promoted him to the deanery (November 1672). Tillotson also obtained a prebend (Ealdland) at St. Paul's (December 1675) and exchanged it (February 1678) for a more remunerative one (Oxgate).<sup>94</sup> His sermon at Whitehall in early 1672 on 'the difficulty of salvation in the Roman church' offended the Catholic duke of York, the future King James II, and caused him to cease attending the chapel royal.<sup>95</sup>

Tillotson's vision of a comprehensive national Protestant church made him endeavour to reconcile the established church with Nonconformists. In 1674 Tillotson and his like-minded Anglican divine Edward Stillingfleet approached the leading Nonconformists including Presbyterian minister Richard Baxter. Tillotson and Baxter drew up a draft bill for comprehension. However, the end of the negotiation was marked by a letter (April 1675) from Tillotson to Baxter, announcing the hopelessness of gaining the agreement of the king and a

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<sup>91</sup> Burnet, *A sermon preached at the funeral of... John... Archbishop of Canterbury*, pp. 9-10.

<sup>92</sup> Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, p. 417.

<sup>93</sup> [Nichols, Philip], "Tillotson (John)," *Biographia Britannica, or, The lives of the most eminent persons who have flourished in Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 6, part 1 (London, 1763), p. 3947.

<sup>94</sup> Gordon, "Tillotson," *DNB*, vol. 56, p. 395.

<sup>95</sup> Beardmore, *Some memorials*, p. 392. The sermon was [John Tillotson], *A sermon lately preached on I Corinth. 3. 15* (n.p., 1673).

considerable part of the bishops.<sup>96</sup> Yet the failure did not discourage Tillotson. In his sermon delivered at the Yorkshire feast in London in December 1678 he urged that all the Protestants should overcome small differences among them and unite, because only a united Protestant national church could defend the best religion from the threat of Roman Catholicism. At the same time he suggested that for a firm union among Protestants, governors of the church should be content not to insist upon little things and allow the plausible exceptions of the Nonconformists. So he asked both the governors and the Nonconformists to adopt a flexible attitude, at the risk of becoming the target of criticism from both.<sup>97</sup> He also took interest in the efforts made by nonconforming minister Thomas Gouge for the relief of poverty and education in Wales and preached his funeral sermon of eulogy in November 1681.<sup>98</sup>

For Tillotson, Roman Catholicism was probably the most dangerous enemy which could destroy Protestant England, and James II was its powerful personification even before he came to the throne. James's Catholic faith became more disquieting after Titus Oates's revelations of a plot allegedly designed by a group of Catholics to assassinate Charles II. Though Oates's story was fictitious, it symbolised and magnified the English fear of Catholic cruelty. Because the openly-Catholic James would succeed his brother Charles who had no legitimate children, some started seeking to exclude James from the succession by parliamentary legislation in order to avoid Catholic tyranny, while others argued that hereditary succession was essential for a stable regime which could protect English people's liberty.<sup>99</sup> In this controversy over the succession, or 'the exclusion crisis,' Tillotson advocated the exclusion of James, because, as we shall see, he firmly believed that Catholicism made people vicious, immoral, and tyrannical. He and Burnet vainly 'took great pains on' the Earl of Halifax to dissuade him 'from opposing it [the exclusion] so furiously as he did.'<sup>100</sup> Tillotson did not cease to be an anti-Catholic leader after James ascended to the throne in 1685. He kept delivering sermons criticising Catholicism and had them published. For instance, his sermon collection published in 1686 contained vehement attacks against Catholic doctrines and practices, such as the persecution of Protestants, papal infallibility, and transubstantiation.<sup>101</sup> Also, as seen above, he participated in the seven bishops' petition in May 1688 which checked the vigour of

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<sup>96</sup> Gordon, "Tillotson," *DNB*, vol. 56, p. 395.

<sup>97</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at the first general meeting of the gentlemen, and others in and near London, who were born within the county of York... Decemb. 3. 1678* (London, 1679).

<sup>98</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at the funeral of the reverend Mr Thomas Gouge* (London, 1682).

<sup>99</sup> Tim Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and his kingdoms, 1660-1685* (London, 2005), pp. 136-202.

<sup>100</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *Bishop Burnet's history of his own time, vol. I* (London, 1724), p. 459.

<sup>101</sup> John Tillotson, *Sermons and discourses: some of which never before printed* (London, 1686).

James's pro-Catholic policy.<sup>102</sup> Tillotson thought that the promotion of the Catholic faith should be stopped, because it would endanger the English constitution as well as the Protestant religion.

In the immediate aftermath of the revolution of 1688, Tillotson was invited to preach on public thanksgiving day (31 January) at Lincoln's Inn. In the thanksgiving sermon the Prince of Orange was admired, and presented as God's glorious instrument of the great deliverance of the kingdom from popery and arbitrary power. Tillotson encouraged the audience not to forfeit the fruits of the deliverance by breaches and divisions. The way to keep the benefit of the liberation was clemency and moderation.<sup>103</sup> Under the new regime of William III and Mary II, the comprehension of the Nonconformists was brought up for debate again but became a lost cause. Tillotson was among the clergy who debated possible concessions to comprehend Dissenters, and their discussion resulted in two parliamentary bills.<sup>104</sup> While a bill of toleration was passed (May 1689), a bill of comprehension, after an unsuccessful first attempt, was sent to convocation for discussion before it would be back to parliament. A commission was appointed to consider possible concessions to the Nonconformists and Tillotson formulated a list of concessions for the commission. Extensive alterations in the Book of Common Prayer found favour with a majority. Tillotson also had a plan for a new book of homilies. In the convocation which met in November 1689, however, the opinion of high churchmen was dominant. The attempts to win them over were in vain and convocation was dissolved in February 1690.<sup>105</sup>

The revolution of 1688 and the departure of the Non-jurors including William Sancroft, archbishop of Canterbury, created the circumstance which eventually led to Tillotson's promotion to the highest position in the Church of England. Though Tillotson was reluctant, he was appointed by William III and was consecrated in May 1691. Perhaps his reluctance was due not only to his inclination but also to the concern that the animosity of his Non-juring adversaries would be intensified if he held the office. Indeed the new archbishop was condemned as a political opportunist and also as a heretic. He did not publish his response to the accusation of being an opportunist, but perhaps he felt the need to do so to vindicate his

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<sup>102</sup> Roger Thomas, "The seven bishops and their petition, 18 May 1688," *The journal of ecclesiastical history*, 12.1 (1961), pp. 56-70.

<sup>103</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at Lincoln's Inn Chapel on the 31 of January, 1688. being the day appointed for a public thanksgiving* (London, 1689).

<sup>104</sup> Simon Patrick, *The auto-biography of Symon Patrick* (Oxford, 1839), p. 141.

<sup>105</sup> Gordon, "Tillotson," *DNB*, vol. 56, p. 396.

orthodoxy. In 1693 he revised and published four sermons on the divinity and Incarnation of Christ which had been preached in 1679 and 1680. The reason for the publication specified in the preface was not the importunities of friends but ‘the importunate clamours and malicious calumnies of others.’<sup>106</sup> He wanted to deny the charge of Socinianism made against him and also hoped to persuade the Socinians - including his friend Thomas Firmin - out of their rejection of the divinity of Christ. The primacy of Tillotson was brief, but he actively played a leadership role in reforming his church. In April 1692 for instance, he presided over a conference with bishops at Lambeth Palace to improve the quality of clergy and to establish vigorous pastoral care for their flocks. He worked closely with Burnet on *A discourse of pastoral care* and *An exposition of the thirty nine articles*, which were designed as reform manuals. Though the author was Burnet, Tillotson read them meticulously before publication and added some words where he thought necessary.<sup>107</sup> Tillotson was also a chief advisor to Queen Mary who was entrusted by the king to care for ecclesiastical matters.<sup>108</sup>

Tillotson had a disposition to recommend the simple virtue of love and charity rather than to win an argument. In the preface of the last sermon collection published in his lifetime (1694), he articulated his hope that for the remainder of his time on earth, released from ‘that irksome and unpleasant work of Controversy and Wrangling about Religion,’ he would turn to something more agreeable to his temper and ‘of a more direct and immediate tendency to the promoting of true Religion, to the happiness of Human Society, and the Reformation of the World.’<sup>109</sup> For this purpose, the collection was mainly designed to encourage constant religious life and the transmission of faith to the next generation. It consisted of sermons on steadfastness in religion, family religion, education of children, and the advantages of an early piety. It reflected his lifelong conviction that true Christian faith had power to reform the lives of individual people and the whole society. The subject of his final sermon preached a few months before his death was ‘sincerity to God and man’: a topic that read as if it were the last lecture and the final confession just before completing his race of faith.<sup>110</sup> A few days after suffering

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<sup>106</sup> John Tillotson, *Sermons concerning the divinity and Incarnation of our blessed Saviour* (London, 1693), preface.

<sup>107</sup> Burnet, *Pastoral care*, p. 250; Burnet, *Exposition of the thirty nine articles*, pp. i-ii; Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, p. 266.

<sup>108</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *Bishop Burnet's history of his own time*, vol. I (London, 1724), p. 117.

<sup>109</sup> John Tillotson, *Six sermons... preached in the church of St. Lawrence Jury in London* (London, 1694), preface, p. i.

<sup>110</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at Kingston, July 29, 1694, the last his grace preached in Of sincerity and constancy in the faith and profession of the true religion in several sermons* (London, 1695), pp. 1-38.

an apoplectic stroke at Whitehall he died in November 1694 in the arms of his Non-juring friend Robert Nelson.<sup>111</sup>

## Sources

Regarding sources for this study, the large number of sermons left by Tillotson were of primary importance. Rosemary Dixon argued that elite sermon printing in the late seventeenth century was dominated by those churchmen who can be labelled ‘Latitudinarian’ and took Tillotson as a prominent example which showed the role of sermons, particularly, printed ones. She pointed out that they functioned as the main means of discussing politics as well as religion in the period, and those by notable preachers of the established church were influential in shaping public response to important national events. Dixon emphasised the role of anti-Catholic sermons including those preached on the anniversaries of the Gunpowder Plot (5 November) and the influence of the sermons supporting the new government after the 1688 revolution.<sup>112</sup> Though some studies have suggested that the revolution marginalised the genre of sermon in English life, Tony Claydon questioned this interpretation by demonstrating that the revolutionary government of William III and Mary II made an intensive use of sermons to justify the change of regime.<sup>113</sup> Renowned preachers, such as Burnet, Tillotson, and Patrick, used their pulpits to praise God for sending William to rescue England from arbitrary Catholic rule. A day of thanksgiving for the deliverance was proclaimed (31 January 1689), and it was celebrated with Williamite propaganda produced from the Anglican pulpits. The preachers also skilfully reinterpreted the date of 5 November which had been formerly remembered as Gunpowder Day; now it had added importance, because it was the day of William’s landing in England. The fact that the two great deliverances from Catholic cruelty took place on the same date, they believed, signified God’s special care for England. Given the extensive use of sermons, Claydon observed, it might be even argued that ‘preaching reached a peak of prominence within Williamite publicity.’<sup>114</sup> The pulpit oratory of leading preachers had a wide influence on public opinion, not only through publication but also through the repetition of its main message by the clergy throughout the nation.<sup>115</sup> The position of sermons was prominent

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<sup>111</sup> Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, p. 315.

<sup>112</sup> Rosemary Dixon, “Sermons in print, 1660-1700,” in Peter McCullough, Hugh Adlington, and Emma Rhatigan eds., *The Oxford handbook of the early modern sermon* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 460-79.

<sup>113</sup> Tony Claydon, “The sermon culture of the glorious revolution: Williamite preaching and Jacobite anti-preaching,” in *The Oxford handbook of the early modern sermon* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 480-94.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid. p. 486.

<sup>115</sup> Claydon, “The sermon culture of the glorious revolution,” pp. 481-7.

in the public culture of the period, and their importance as sources for historical research needs to be understood.

Sermons as a means of communicating ideas were especially significant for Tillotson. After taking the responsibility for the two pulpits of Lincoln's Inn and St Lawrence Jewry, he became a prolific producer of sermons in print, as well as in speech. We have two hundred and fifty-five printed sermons of Tillotson in all. Of these, fifty-five sermons were published in his life time from 1661 to 1694, some of which were printed separately and others in collections. His good reputation as a preacher resulted in the publication of two hundred sermons after his death. An eminent London bookseller Richard Chiswell, who bought the sermon manuscripts and the copyright from Tillotson's widow Elizabeth, published them in fourteen volumes from 1695 to 1704, with the help from Ralph Barker, formerly Tillotson's chaplain, who edited the manuscripts.<sup>116</sup> John Dunton, a bookseller and miscellaneous writer of the day, noted the prominence of Tillotson's works and Chiswell's commercial insight in undertaking the posthumous publication of Tillotson's sermons: Chiswell was 'admirably well qualify'd for his Business, and knows how to value a Copy according to its worth; Witness the Purchase he has made of Arch-Bishop Tillotson's Octavo Sermons.'<sup>117</sup>

Using Tillotson's sermons as a main source of this study is a natural choice, because there are no other sources that tell us anything substantially different about his thought on religion or politics. With the exception of *The rule of faith* published in 1666, he did not write any lengthy works, probably in part because he must have used most of his time and energy on preparing sermons, and on performing his archiepiscopal duty in his last years. Moreover, after Tillotson's biography was published in 1752 (enlarged in 1753) by Thomas Birch who used a number of Tillotson's letters and a few notes he left, no substantial bundles of Tillotson's correspondence or diaries have been discovered.<sup>118</sup> Still the largest manuscript collection about Tillotson is the one collected by Birch, Additional Manuscripts 4236 at the British Library, a substantial part of which was incorporated in the biography.

The correspondence written by Tillotson in Birch's manuscript collection included about forty letters sent to his clerical colleagues or personal friends. Most of these letters were

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<sup>116</sup> For the posthumous publishing of Tillotson's sermons, see Rosemary Dixon, "The publishing of John Tillotson's collected works, 1695-1757," *The Library: The Transaction of the Bibliographical Society*, 8.2 (2007), pp. 154-81.

<sup>117</sup> John Dunton, *The life and errors of John Dunton* (London, 1705), p. 204.

<sup>118</sup> Thomas Birch, *The life of the author*, in Thomas Birch, ed., *The works of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson, lord archbishop of Canterbury*, 3 vols. (London, 1752), vol 1, pp. i-cxxvi; Thomas Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson, lord archbishop of Canterbury... the second edition* (London, 1753).

inserted, either in whole or in part, in the biography written by Birch. Thus, the quantity that remained only in manuscript form is small. And the parts of letters excluded from the biography were mostly about private matters of minor importance. For example, Tillotson's concern for Stillingfleet's health in his letter dated 4 September 1694 - 'I am very glad to hear by Mr Pedley, that your Lord [Stillingfleet] hath had better health since your being in the Countrey, I pray God to continue & increase it.' - did not appear in the biography.<sup>119</sup> Half of the collected letters were sent to Robert Nelson, a Non-juror. Tillotson's friendship with him continued in spite of the difference of their attitudes towards the 1688 revolution. One might expect that they would have exchanged different views on politics, but the letters were mainly about personal affairs, and there was no discussion about the Non-juring schism. A few letters displayed Tillotson's observation of the political matters such as the discussion about the exclusion bill in parliament, and Birch did not miss this kind of remark in the biography, but the intention of Tillotson was not to debate them but to give information to Nelson.<sup>120</sup> Other parts which Birch considered worth quoting tended to be about significant personal events such as the death of Tillotson's daughter. Tillotson thanked Nelson for his condolence in a letter.<sup>121</sup> However, Birch omitted what he saw as less important affairs. For instance, a part of Tillotson's letter dated 19 October 1680 was missed out where Tillotson thanked him for his presents.

I received yours yesterday. And first I must acknowledge the kind presents of excellent Wines & other good things which I received at Canterbury; and give you my Wives [wife's] humble service & thanks for the occasion you have given her of exercising a peculiar virtue of her own in pondering her selfe in the fine Book you were pleased to send her.<sup>122</sup>

Thus, though the letters in manuscript form could be utilised for some sorts of in-depth historical researches - for example, cultural history of everyday life - they are of less importance for this study which chiefly aims to investigate Tillotson's theology, than are Tillotson's sermons, the main channel of communicating his views of religious and political issues.

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<sup>119</sup> Tillotson's letter to Stillingfleet, 4 September 1694, British Library Additional Manuscripts 4236, fol. 259.

<sup>120</sup> Tillotson's letter to Nelson, 5 January 1680, BL Additional Ms. 4236, fol. 225; Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, p. 78.

<sup>121</sup> Tillotson's letter to Nelson, 7 November 1681, BL Additional Ms. 4236, fol. 233; Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, p. 88.

<sup>122</sup> Tillotson's letter to Nelson, 19 October 1680, BL Additional Ms. 4236, fol. 223.



In particular, the present research gives priority to the sermons published in Tillotson's lifetime for several reasons. To begin with, they were the works that Tillotson himself chose to publish. It means that Tillotson found it pertinent to impart the contents of the chosen sermons more than others. In addition, many of the lifetime publications were preached on significant occasions or delivered to notable audiences. For example, Tillotson published his sermon preached in 5 November 1678, the day celebrating the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot, before the House of Commons.<sup>123</sup> Another famous sermon was his thanksgiving sermon in St Lawrence Jewry, delivered on 31 January 1689, the day of public thanksgiving for William's deliverance of Protestant England.<sup>124</sup> These sorts of sermons on special occasions were likely to be significant interventions. Furthermore, related to this, sermons published in Tillotson's lifetime allow us to know the original context in which they were preached, or at least when they were published. Such information can help us to examine what kind of ideas the preacher was expressing and stressing at a certain point of time. By contrast, in most cases, it is hard to know the occasion of the posthumously printed sermons. Though we can sometimes guess the context from the contents of those sermons, we can rarely absolutely know when and where the posthumously published sermons were preached. And they tended to repeat and broadly support the arguments of the ones published before his death. Having said that, this study tries to give due attention to the sermons posthumously published in a couple of ways. First, in a small number of cases where the editor noted the context, we may use the sermons to find out what he was stressing at a specific point in time, in the same way as we would use his lifetime sermons. Second, the posthumously published sermons would be at times used to complement Tillotson's point of view shown in his lifetime publications. They did not express significantly different ideas from the earlier ones, but they are still worth using to give clearer expressions of the same ideas or to provide more detailed explanations for the arguments advanced earlier.

### Controversy and chapter structure

The biography given earlier in this introduction shows that Tillotson generated a number of controversies in his lifetime, and they involved not just Tillotson but also his like-minded associates. So, to examine major controversies which Tillotson was involved in and

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<sup>123</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached November 5. 1678. at St. Margarets Westminster, before the honourable House of Commons* (London, 1678).

<sup>124</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at Lincoln's Inn Chapel on the 31 of January, 1688. being the day appointed for a public thanksgiving* (London, 1689).

identify his arguments in the disputes might be a good starting point to discuss the nature of the 'Latitudinarian' group. Broad categorisation of the controversies leads us to the discussion of the main chapters of this thesis. To begin with, Tillotson often argued that rational grounds are necessary to confirm religious truths. This caused his critics to maintain that he believed nothing that went beyond the scope of human understanding and that he was destroying Christianity as revealed religion. To assess how fair the criticism was, chapter 1 looks into Tillotson's view about questions related to reason – for example, what it was for him; how it worked; and its role in religion. The investigation will show how his truth-finding system worked, and this understanding about his epistemology will help us to comprehend other parts of Tillotson's theology examined in the subsequent chapters.

As seen in the parishioners' reaction to Tillotson's sermons in Kedington, his emphasis on moral behaviour offended some of his contemporaries. They complained that the sermons of Tillotson only contained mere morality, and failed to communicate Christian principles based on divine grace. It was also argued that Tillotson put so much stress on the importance of human works in salvation that he abandoned the Protestant principle of salvation by faith alone. To tackle the debate, chapter 2 researches into Tillotson's soteriology. It will try to identify the relationship among the many elements involved in human redemption such as faith, work, and grace in his theology, and in doing so it will examine to what extent the argument that Tillotson reduced the Christian religion to mere moralism can be justified.

Tillotson was also accused of being a clerical time-server who did not care about the exact forms of church structures, ceremonies, or doctrines. His sympathetic attitude towards Protestant Dissenters was at times considered a lack of loyalty to the Church of England, and his efforts to create a more comprehensive church - including Dissenters by altering the church's liturgy - earned him the accusation that he was an enemy of the church who tried to undermine its structure until the whole constitution was ruined. Why, despite facing the condemnation, did Tillotson always work for a more inclusive communion? To explore this question, chapter 3 deals with his view of the nature of the church. Ecclesiology was an important problem for the Anglican divines of the time, because they needed to vindicate the special status of the established church in a complex situation – the Anglican communion claimed to be the only lawful church in England, though the Protestant Dissenters and Roman Catholics were refusing to conform for different reasons, and the existence of the Protestant churches abroad (whose forms of church governments and worship were different from those of the Church of England) made the task of the churchmen in explaining their sole legitimacy

more complicated. In the chapter, the features of Tillotson's ecclesiology are discussed against the background of the different threads of arguments produced in the Anglican establishment. It examines his stance not only on the Dissenters but also on Catholics.

The career path Tillotson took exposed him to the charge of opportunism. He served under a wide range of political regimes with little difficulty – those governed by Cromwell, Charles II, James II, and William III. Ministers like Tillotson, who had served under the Cromwellian government, but conformed to the 1662 Act of Uniformity, were accused of inconstancy by some of both conformists and Nonconformists. After the 1688 revolution, those who considered the change of the regime caused by the revolution to be unlawful condemned Tillotson and other supporters for the revolutionary government as time-servers and place-seekers. What was Tillotson's rationale for his political decisions? Chapter 4 sketches Tillotson's political career and thinking in a little more detail than described in the biographical section above, showing that he tried to harmonise his career path with his view of divine providence. Added to this, it also briefly looks at his apocalypticism, an area of thought closely related to providentialism.

Throughout the chapters, this thesis will look at Tillotson's thought and career and re-examine how closely he accorded with the description provided by the existing studies. It will also seek to identify the core values of Tillotson's life which shaped his attitudes towards the religious and political issues of the period. By examining Tillotson who has been considered a leading Latitudinarian, this study proposes a fresh view of Latitudinarians. It also outlines the lasting influences and effects of Tillotson's theology on British society.

## Chapter 1: Reason

Tillotson's advocacy of the role of reason in Christianity is perhaps the thing for which he has become most famous. Not only modern scholars, but Tillotson's contemporaries, recognised his stress on reason, though accounts of this element of his thought have not been unanimous. Burnet commented in Tillotson's funeral sermon that his enemies unjustly criticised him for his reliance on reason. 'His endeavouring to make out every thing in religion from clear and plain principles... was laid hold on to make him pass for one, who could believe nothing, that lay beyond the compass of human reason.'<sup>1</sup> Among historians as well, there have been different views on the exact nature and role of reason in Tillotson's Christianity. Some historians thought that reason was a principal agent. According to Martin Griffin, for Tillotson and his Latitudinarian friends, 'reason can be defined briefly as the means by which certainty is attained, through the assent of the mind to evidence proposed to it.'<sup>2</sup> The reason was objective and universal in character and 'operated on a mathematical model from unquestionable external evidence.'<sup>3</sup> Though the certainty of the Christian revelation achieved by reason and evidence was not infallibly supported by mathematical demonstration, its truth was close to infallible and beyond reasonable doubt. Latitudinarians tried to bring Christian mysteries down to a level consistent with the human capacity to understand them. 'No suprarational or extrarational motives of credibility were necessary for the attainment of a divine faith.'<sup>4</sup> Griffin thought that mysterious parts of religion lost their meaning in the Latitudinarian system, which potentially involved a danger for Christianity. Harvey Hill also argued that Tillotson persuaded people of religious truth 'based on the probabilities of reason' and the truth he advocated was mainly that of natural religion rather than Christian revelation.<sup>5</sup> For example, Tillotson used probable evidence (the frame of the world) to defend 'a truth of natural religion, the existence of God.'<sup>6</sup> Tillotson did not reject the supra-rational Christian doctrines such as the Incarnation, but 'tended to downplay the mysteries of Christianity' by seeking a rational understanding of them.<sup>7</sup> According to Hill, when Tillotson talked about the

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<sup>1</sup> Burnet, *A sermon preached at the funeral of... John... Archbishop of Canterbury*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Griffin, *Latitudinarianism in the seventeenth-century Church of England* (Leiden, 1992) p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 92.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 88.

<sup>5</sup> Harvey Hill, "The Law of Nature Revived: Christianity and Natural Religion in the Sermons of John Tillotson," *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 70.2 (2001), p. 175.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. p. 175.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid. p. 178.

Christian mysteries, he related them to natural religion and he insisted Christianity was ‘the law of nature revived and perfected.’<sup>8</sup>

Yet it has been also argued that the role of reason was smaller than generally assumed and was overwhelmed by that of Christian revelation in Tillotson and other Latitudinarians. William Spellman observed that they allocated to reason the role of a guide, but the role ceased when people reached the revealed truth of scripture endorsed by the established church. Human reason had been so weakened by the Fall that few people could search out and follow the natural principles, so only revelation could lead them to the essential truths of religion. Different people could be guided by reason in different ways, and in wrong ways too, because reason without divine guidance was subjective and unreliable. According to Spellman, ‘regardless of the conquests of reason in the seventeenth century – the apparent advances in natural theology no less than the successes in experimental science – developments which suggested an expanded role for philosophy at the expense of theology did not signal the abandonment of a tradition of thought where the distrust of reason remained paramount.’<sup>9</sup>

Some scholars suggested middle views suggesting a balance between reason and revelation. According to Isabel Rivers, Latitudinarians thought that human reason was based on a divine implantation. They considered man to be ‘a rational being endowed with innate knowledge of God, good and evil, and moral duties.’<sup>10</sup> Not only did reason inform people of divinely ordained moral law, but it also encouraged them to follow it. Latitudinarians also made a point that faith was an act of reason which Rivers called ‘the apparent paradox.’ They insisted, ‘we must be convinced by our reason that we are required to believe what is beyond our reason.’<sup>11</sup> Rivers said that though their object was to unite faith and reason, its effect was ‘to restrict the role of reason in its association with faith to the task of proving the Scriptures true and worthy of assent.’<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, though Latitudinarians accepted that Christianity contained mysteries above reason, Rivers argued, ‘they tend to play them down’ with a rational emphasis.<sup>13</sup> They usually avoided discussing mysteries which were incomprehensible in nature and when they talked about them they did so out of inevitable necessity and with reluctance. So, Tillotson preached on the Trinity only to rebut the charge that he was a Socinian, not by

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 179.

<sup>9</sup> Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England* p. 85.

<sup>10</sup> Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, pp. 59-60.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. p. 65.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.66.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 70.

his choice. Even when he discussed the mystery, he was occupied in asserting a rational basis for believing it.

Though Rivers argued that there was a limit to the operation of Latitudinarians' reason, she was interested in showing Latitudinarians' Christianity a religion of reason. Interestingly, Gerard Reedy's main concern was presenting Tillotson as a faithful mainstream Protestant who appreciated the value of revelation, but Reedy also thought there was a conflict between reason and revelation in Tillotson's theology as Rivers did. Reedy wrote that reason and revelation worked in 'an interdependent fashion in Tillotson's theological methodology.'<sup>14</sup> However, the interdependency did not mean that they coexisted in harmony, because Reedy argued that they undermined each other in one way or another. He says, 'his [Tillotson's] object of inquiry, revelation, modified reason, his inquiring instrument.'<sup>15</sup> In other words, Tillotson used reason to justify the revealed truth of the Bible, but once it was proved to be revelation, all the narratives and doctrines it contained were true. For Tillotson, 'discrete rational judgments about individual doctrines would be at best unnecessary and at worst sacrilegious.'<sup>16</sup> However, reason 'also modified revelation.'<sup>17</sup> By this Reedy meant two things. First, Tillotson maintained that the doctrines necessary for salvation were plain and few. Second, the mystery and miracles contained in revelation 'annoyed' Tillotson, who said 'neither of them [mysteries and miracles] are easily to be admitted without necessity, and very good evidence.'<sup>18</sup> Only their presence in scripture made him admit them. In such a way, Reedy thought, Tillotson's reason minimised the mysterious aspects of religion.

The 'middle way' approach of Rivers and Reedy has some insights, but, as we shall see, their description of the relationship between reason and revelation in Tillotson's theology does not fully fit evidence found in his sermons. To get a more accurate picture, we need to investigate what Tillotson exactly meant by the word 'reason' in his arguments on various issues. Such an investigation will allow us to explore more deeply the complex way reason and revelation, sometimes adapting each other, worked to discover divine truths in constant dialogue. To this end, the basic structure of Tillotson's thought in terms of reason and truth is discussed briefly, before a series of case studies illustrating how reason and revelation interacted in various ways to establish religious truth for him.

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<sup>14</sup> Gerard Reedy, 'Interpreting Tillotson,' *The Harvard Theological Review*, 86.1 (1993), p. 91.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.* p. 91.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 91.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* p. 91.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.* p. 92.

## Tillotson's view of reason

Tillotson believed that there were some religious truths more fundamental than revelation. According to him, all people had God-given innate ideas and were endowed with reason as a natural faculty. Reason working on innate ideas led to the fundamental truths such as the existence of God. Tillotson called the reason operating in conjunction with innate ideas 'natural reason' to distinguish it from the reason in more general sense, which might be called 'discriminative reason' – the human ability to understand and discriminate the matters one experiences.<sup>19</sup> In a sermon preached at Whitehall Palace in April 1679, Tillotson said that people naturally had notions of 'the Divine perfections' and of 'good and evil which are imprinted upon our Natures.'<sup>20</sup> By the divine imprint, we knew 'there is a God... his Words are true... his Authority over us, and that he will reward our obedience to his Laws, and punish our breach of them.'<sup>21</sup> Therefore, Tillotson argued that all people intuitively knew some supernatural truths like the eternity of the human soul, the existence of God, and his fair judgement of every individual after death. Tillotson called these truths 'the Principles of Natural Religion.'<sup>22</sup> He said 'These and many other things are supposed to be true, and naturally known to us, antecedently to all supernatural Revelation; otherwise the Revelations of God would signifie nothing to us, nor be of any force with us.'<sup>23</sup>

A large number of other areas of theological truth, however, needed external data beyond innate ideas, such as scriptural books, tradition, or the testimony of reliable witnesses by which one could reach divine revelation: that is, reason alone would not have discovered it. That said, the revealed truth should be tested and confirmed by reason. Tillotson argued that 'nothing ought to be received as a Revelation from God which plainly contradicts the Principles of Natural Religion.'<sup>24</sup> For instance, statements such as that there was no God, and that there would be no afterlife, nor rewards and punishments in the next world, could not be divine revelation. By contrast, Tillotson maintained, doctrines in the Bible were confirmed by reason as true revelation. Furthermore, the role of reason did not end after the truth of scripture was

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<sup>19</sup> For example, John Tillotson, *1 John v. 3. And his commandments are not grievous in Sermons preach'd upon several occasions* (London, 1671), p. 217; John Tillotson, *A sermon concerning the unity of the divine nature and the B. Trinity* (London, 1693), p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at White-hall, April the 4th, 1679* (London, 1679), p. 7.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.* p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* p. 9.

confirmed, as Rivers and Reedy suggest. Tillotson argued that reason should be used to interpret what God had revealed, saying that ‘when any doubt ariseth concerning the meaning of any divine Revelation (as that of the Holy Scriptures) we are to govern our selves in the interpretation of it by what is most agreeable to those natural Notions which we have of God.’<sup>25</sup> For example, ‘when God is represented in Scripture as having a humane shape, eyes, ears and hands, the Notions which men naturally have of the Divine Nature and Perfections do sufficiently direct us to interpret these expressions in a sense worthy of God, and agreeable to his Perfection.’<sup>26</sup> In other words, if God has the parts of human body which are limited to time and space, it contradicts the notion of eternal God who is omnipresent and omnipotent. Therefore, Tillotson concludes, ‘it is reasonable to understand them as rather spoken to our capacity, and in a Figure, than to be literally intended. And this will proportionably hold in many other cases.’<sup>27</sup>

It may be helpful to situate Tillotson’s epistemological base in the context of the seventeenth-century philosophical thought on the roles of reason in establishing the existence of God, particularly with reference to the ontological argument of René Descartes and the cosmological argument of John Locke. Descartes’s quest for undoubted knowledge led him to doubt everything including the existence of the physical world - and to believe that he himself who is a thing that thinks and doubts, and the ideas conceived in him, should be the foundation of knowledge. Decartes’s argument for God can be formulated as follows.

- 1’. The cause of an idea must have as much reality as the idea represents its object as having.
- 2’. Only a perfect God has as much reality as my idea of God represents God as having.
3. The cause of my idea of God is a perfect God (from propositions 1’ and 2’).
4. A perfect God really exists (from proposition 3).<sup>28</sup>

Descartes’s own process of explanation was, of course, much more complicated than this succinct formulation, but his crucial premise was that everyone had an innate idea of God. He thought the idea of God was impossible, had it not been for the reality of a perfect God.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>28</sup> Georges Dicker, *Descartes: an analytical and historical introduction* (New York, 2013), p. 114.



By contrast, Locke maintained that there were no innate ideas, which were a crucial assumption of Descartes's argument for God, because some sorts of people - such as the uneducated or infants - did not show awareness of moral principles or the existence of God. Locke argued that people acquired ideas from perception through senses or intuition. Locke's intuition was not the same as innate ideas. It was rather, the experience of internal rational processes, as opposed to the experience of external sense data. Knowledge gained through intuition was not innate because one had no knowledge before one had gone through the rational process. In terms of certainty, Locke thought intuition was superior to senses. Though one attained knowledge about the external world through senses, according to Locke, the knowledge gained through senses, in comparison with that only through intuition, had a less degree of certainty, because 'Men may have such Ideas in their Minds, when no such Thing exists, no such Object affects their Senses.'<sup>29</sup> Thus, the cosmological argument from design - the idea that the elaborate physical world demonstrated the existence of its creator God - was not used by Locke, probably because its certainty was limited. Locke believed that intuition provided clearer knowledge, for example that three is more than two - so he founded his own cosmological argument on what he considered as more certain knowledge, that which was intuitively known - the existence of one's own self. 'I think it is beyond Question, that Man has a clear Perception of his own Being; he knows certainly, that he exists, and that he is something.'<sup>30</sup> Next, because there were some real beings, and because non-entity could not produce any real beings, 'it is an evident demonstration, that from Eternity there has been something,' because 'what was not from Eternity, had a Beginning; and what had a Beginning, must be produced by something else.'<sup>31</sup> Locke also tried to identify some attributes of the eternal being. Because creatures received their characters from the creator, and because one's own self had 'Powers' in it, the eternal source of all being 'must also be the Source and Original of all Power; and so this eternal Being must be also the most powerful.'<sup>32</sup> Locke was not clear as to which kind of powers he referred to, but the 'powers' seemed to mean physical strength, considering he discussed human intellectual abilities just after. Locke argued that because 'a Man finds in himself Perception, and Knowledge,' it was certain that 'there is not only some Being, but some knowing intelligent Being [human beings] in the World.'<sup>33</sup> It followed that it

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<sup>29</sup> John Locke, *An essay concerning human understanding* (London, 1694), p. 268.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. p. 312.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 312.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. p. 312.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. p. 313.

was impossible that unintelligent and non-perceptive being was able to create intelligent beings, so the creator should be intelligent and wise. Therefore, he concluded

from the Consideration of our selves, and what we infallibly find in our own Constitutions, our Reason leads us to the Knowledge of this certain and evident Truth, That there is an eternal, most powerful, and most knowing Being... From what has been said, it is plain to me, we have a more certain Knowledge of the Existence of a God, than of any thing our Senses have not immediately discovered to us. Nay, I presume I may say, that we more certainly know that there is a God, than that there is any thing else without us.<sup>34</sup>

Where can we situate Tillotson's position in connection with these arguments? As we have seen above, Tillotson's reason, depending on the ways it worked, can be broadly categorised into two types, natural and discriminative reason, which corresponded respectively to Cartesian and Lockean methodology. Tillotson's natural reason was an ability to recognise the truths inscribed in human nature. This was analogous to Descartes's way of finding undoubted knowledge based on universal innate ideas. Gerard Reedy, as we saw in the introduction, contrasted Descartes's 'mathematical mode of reasoning' and Tillotson's rational method harmonised with biblical revelation.<sup>35</sup> However, with regard to the attitude towards innate ideas, there was a degree of similarity between Descartes and Tillotson. Tillotson's discriminative reason, on the other hand, was an ability to acquire knowledge from external sources, by exploring a variety of objects, such as the physical world and written or spoken accounts. This method was similar to the empirical approach adopted by Locke, who denied the existence of innate ideas and who argued that knowledge should be based on observation. It may be said that Tillotson took a practical stance, employing both ways of reasoning, because both approaches made sense for him.

Thus, it is hard to say that Tillotson clearly belonged either to Cartesian or Lockean school. However, when we focus on his argument for the existence of God, Tillotson gave slightly more weight to a Lockean methodology, in part because it was useful when arguing with atheists, and in part because he truly thought it was stronger. It is true that he believed that everyone had an innate idea of God. He argued that God 'set this mark of himself upon all reasonable Creatures, that they know to whom they belong, and may acknowledg [sic] the

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 313.

<sup>35</sup> Reedy, "Interpreting Tillotson," pp. 89-92.

Author of their Beings.’<sup>36</sup> Therefore, Tillotson could not think that atheists’ reason directed them to deny God, but he argued that they wilfully refused to embrace the truths God had rooted in them. The reason why they denied these obvious truths was, in the eyes of Tillotson, to justify their immoral lives. If God did not exist, they would not have to answer for their wicked behaviour before Him. Tillotson thought:

Not that wicked men are destitute of the natural faculty of Understanding, but they have it as if they had it not; they have Understandings, but they do not use them, which in effect and by interpretation, is all one as if they had one; Nay, happy were it for them if they had them not, for then they would not be liable to the Judgment of God, nor accountable to Him as reasonable creatures; but this ignorance is wilfull and affected; men are not blind, but they wink, and shut their eye; they can understand, and will not.<sup>37</sup>

Because atheists denied the ‘Notion of a Deity... stamped upon’ their nature, Tillotson did not often use a Cartesian approach to vindicate the existence of God, but rather, as we are about to see in more detail in the case studies, he largely relied on Lockean techniques in this area.<sup>38</sup> However, Tillotson was different from Locke in his view of the certainty of sense data. While Locke believed the knowledge gained through our senses was less certain and put more trust on internal knowledge, Tillotson did not think that sense data had less certainty, so he was not reluctant to use the argument from design. He maintained that the physical world was clear evidence for the existence of its skilful designer and creator. He asserted that because atheists denied God the creator, they ascribed the creation to ‘the World, or at least to Matter; Not Goodness, or Wisdom, or Power, or Truth, or Justice’ of God.<sup>39</sup> For Tillotson, this was absurd because nobody could explain how mere matter could design and create the world and give it order. He thought any other grounds would be hardly stronger than the created world which could be perceived through the senses. He once preached that we were most surely persuaded of the existence of God by the ‘impressions stamp’d upon our Understandings God himself; or (which is most plain of all) from this visible frame of the world.’<sup>40</sup> Therefore, Tillotson was ready to use arguments both from innate ideas and from external evidence, but for the purpose of debate, he regarded perceptible evidence as more persuasive than inner ideas.

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<sup>36</sup> John Tillotson, *The wisdom of being religious* (London, 1664), p. 17.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p. 44.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 29.

<sup>40</sup> John Tillotson, *Of a religious and divine faith in Fifteen sermons on various subjects... the twelfth volume* (London, 1703), p. 36.

## Tillotson's argument with atheists

In the following, we will examine a number of case studies, in which Tillotson's methods for establishing truth can be analysed more deeply. They will be arranged in order, starting with those where he thought reason alone was enough to discover truth, and moving to those where revelation became more central. The best place to start is with Tillotson's arguments with atheists, who denied the very existence of God, let alone the revelation from him. Tillotson, being unable to use revelation in arguments with atheism, tried to base his arguments solely on reason. This allows us to see how far he thought reason alone could go in discovering divine truths. In his sermon titled *The wisdom of being religious*, delivered at St Paul's before the mayor and aldermen of London in March 1664, he affirmed the wisdom of having religious belief and attacked the unreasonableness of atheism on the text Job 28:28, 'And unto man he said; Behold the fear of the Lord that is wisdom, and to depart from evil that is understanding.' In the preface of the printed sermon, he said that this sermon was 'very seasonable in this degenerate Age, in which Atheism and Profaneness are grown so impudent, and... do appear with so bold a face in the world.'<sup>41</sup> Making a reference to Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*, he deplored that atheists told the world that 'Fear and Fancy are the Parents of a Deity... and that Religion is nothing else but the fear of an invisible power feigned by the mind.'<sup>42</sup> Tillotson regarded Hobbes as atheistic probably because of his insinuation that God was a human construction. In another sermon contained in a collection of eight sermons published in 1671, Tillotson argued that atheism had been spreading. He thought that atheism was confined to Italy before the sixteenth-century Protestant reformation. According to him, 'Atheistical Humour among Christians, was the Spawn of the gross Superstitions, and corrupt manners of the Romish Church and Court.'<sup>43</sup> However, 'in the last Age, Atheism travell'd over the Alpes; and infected France; and now of late it hath cross'd the Seas and invaded our Nation, and hath prevailed to amazement.'<sup>44</sup> Though Tillotson identified Rome as the main origin of the profaneness spreading in his day, he was also worried about the influence of atheism in England, which made him decide to preach against it. Tillotson's indication that Rome was the

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<sup>41</sup> John Tillotson, *The wisdom of being religious* (London, 1664), preface.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. preface.

<sup>43</sup> John Tillotson, *Prov. xiv. 34. Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is the reproach of any people* in *Sermons preach'd upon several occasions* (London, 1671), p. 145.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. p. 145.

home of atheism might have been an indirect attack on the Church of Rome which he thought perverted the Christian religion.

Because atheists did not accept the principles of natural religion, which Tillotson thought were naturally known to people, he was required to prove the basic principles not using his ‘natural reason,’ but using ‘discriminative reason’ – the human ability to make a proper judgement based on evidence. First, he sought to establish the truth about God which was the most foundational. Tillotson thought that the existence of the world was the evidence that God the creator existed. He said, ‘We see a World of Creatures, and a vast Frame of things, which we who believe a God attribute to God as the Author.’<sup>45</sup> Tillotson went further and inferred the attributes of God such as power, wisdom, and goodness from the creation, an argument that atheists might find even more difficult to agree with than the basic existence of God. From Tillotson’s viewpoint, only a God of ‘infinite Power’ was able to ‘create so vast a World, that is, to stretch forth the Heavens and lay the foundations of the Earth, to form these and all the Creatures in them out of Nothing.’<sup>46</sup> When we see ‘all these Creatures each of them so perfect in their kind, and all of them so fitly and harmoniously suited to each other and to the whole,’ we cannot but think that they are contrived by God’s ‘infinite Counsel and Wisdom.’<sup>47</sup> Tillotson’s grounds for God’s goodness was that the creatures of God were happy. According to him, God’s ‘infinite Goodness’ gave ‘Being and so many degrees of happiness to so numerous a progeny of goodly Creatures.’<sup>48</sup>

Tillotson insisted that atheism, by contrast, gave no probable account of the existence of the world. According to Tillotson, atheists had two kinds of explanation, both of those were unsatisfactory for him. First, Aristotelian atheists argued that the world had existed from eternity without the first cause. For Tillotson, this account was unreasonable, because many things in the world, especially living creatures, maintain their being by generating offspring. He said, ‘it is utterly unimaginable how there should have been an infinite orderly succession of things, that is, a third, fourth, fifth, &c. without a first.’<sup>49</sup> Thus it was improbable that the succession that was happening in the world could occur without a beginning. Because of this difficulty, Tillotson thought, the Aristotelian argument was becoming unpopular and a new explanation had recently gained support. That is, ‘the earth was always, and in time did produce

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<sup>45</sup> Tillotson, *The wisdom of being religious*, p. 13.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid. pp. 13-4.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. p. 13.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid. p. 14.

men, and that they ever since have produc'd one another.'<sup>50</sup> Tillotson looked upon this as a transitional stage to the Epicurean way, the second atheistic explanation for the existence of the world. Epicurean atheists argued

the matter of which the World is constituted, to be eternal and of it self; and then an infinite empty space for the infinite little Parts of this matter (which they call Atomes) to move an play in; and that these being always in motion, did after infinite trials and encounters, without any counsel or design, and without the disposal and contrivance of any Wise and Intelligent Being, at last by a lucky Casualty entangle and settle themselves in this beautiful and regular Frame of the World which we now see. And that the Earth, being at first in its full vigour and fruitfulness, did then bring forth Men and all other sorts of Living Creatures, as it does Plants now.<sup>51</sup>

Epicurean atheists, thus, ascribed the origin of the world to mere chance, by which the world was formed from the materials existent from eternity. This alternative was also absurd for Tillotson considering the large scale and elaborateness of the world. He complained that it 'imputes this vast pile of the World, this regular and orderly Frame of things... not to goodness, and power, and counsel, and wisdom; but to a fortunate chance, and happy casualty.'<sup>52</sup> Tillotson argued that it was hard to imagine that anything that required many parts and orderly arrangement of those parts could be made by chance. It was like making a good discourse by jumbling a set of letters or making the exact picture of a person by arbitrarily sprinkling paints. Tillotson supposed an imaginary case where 'a man that sees Henry the Seventh's Chappel at Westminster' maintained that 'it was never contrived or built by any Man, but... the Stone, Mortar, Timber, Iron, Lead and Glass, happily met together' and 'did by Chance grow into' the building with delicate order.<sup>53</sup> Tillotson commented, 'yet this is much more easie to be imagined, than how the innumerable blind parts of Matter should Rendezvous themselves into a World.'<sup>54</sup> By this metaphor, Tillotson maintained that God's creation was a more probable account of the world than casual development. This sort of the argument from design advanced by Tillotson may be seen as foreshadowing William Paley's more elaborate argument in his

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<sup>50</sup> John Tillotson, *Job xxviii. 28. And unto man he said, behold the fear of the Lord that is wisdom; and to depart from evil, that is understanding in Sermons preach'd upon several occasions* (London, 1671), p. 37. This sermon was an enlarged version of John Tillotson, *The wisdom of being religious* (London, 1664).

<sup>51</sup> Tillotson, *Job xxviii. 28. And unto man he said, behold the fear of the Lord that is wisdom*, p. 39.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16.

*Natural Theology* that as we infer the existence of a watchmaker from the observation of a watch and its mechanism, we infer a great creator from the existence of the world.<sup>55</sup>

Besides the existence of God, Tillotson also briefly set forth two other basic principles of natural religion in his sermon: the immortality of the human soul and divine judgement after death. He said it was less needful to speak of them, because no man who believed that there was a God ‘can have any reasonable scruple about these.’<sup>56</sup> That is, if one acknowledged the existence of God, other principles would easily follow. Having said that, his ratiocination was quite complicated. With regard to the immortality of the soul, Tillotson maintained that if a person admitted the existence of a God who was ‘an infinite Spirit’ he could have no doubt of ‘the possibility of a finite Spirit [human soul]’ which was ‘immaterial, and does not contain any principle of self-corruption in itself.’<sup>57</sup> What Tillotson meant here by a human spirit being ‘finite’ was not very clear. Perhaps he meant that human spirits were created by God, so had not been eternal or that they were finite in terms of ability while God’s infinite spirit was all-powerful and ubiquitous. Whatever was its specific meaning, certainly Tillotson’s intention was to express that the human spirit was inferior to that of God, but that it survived the death of human body to be judged in the next world. And considering the goodness of God, there was no doubt that ‘he hath made some things as good as may be, and for as long continuance as they are capable of.’<sup>58</sup>

Tillotson seemed to spend more time defending the existence of the soul than affirming its immortality. Probably it was in part because some atheists denied the very existence of the human soul as an immaterial reality and in part because he thought the existence of the soul naturally led to its immortality. In sermons focused on the immortality of the soul, posthumously published in 1701, Tillotson defined the soul as ‘a part of Man distinct from his Body, or a Principle in him which is not Matter.’<sup>59</sup> What he wanted to insist on was that the soul was distinct from the body, so it ‘still remains and lives separate from it [body]... and continues to perform all those Operations.’<sup>60</sup> Just as God’s creation gave the most probable account for the world, the existence of soul provided Tillotson with the most probable explanation for human behaviour from the perceptible evidence. He particularly took notice of

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<sup>55</sup> William Paley, *Natural theology or evidences of the existence and attributes of the deity* (Philadelphia, 1802).

<sup>56</sup> Tillotson, *The wisdom of being religious*, p. 33.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* p. 33.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.* p. 33.

<sup>59</sup> John Tillotson, *Of the immortality of the soul, as discover’d by Nature, and by Revelation in Several discourses of death and judgment, and a future state... the ninth volume* (London, 1701), pp. 17-8.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.* p. 20.

the functioning of the human mind such as thinking and judgement - which could hardly be ascribed to physical body. In a sermon published in 1703, he noted that it was 'altogether unimaginable how a Principle that is nothing else but Matter, can either understand, or determine it self by its own Will.'<sup>61</sup> In a more detailed account, he says, 'those several Actions and Operations... cannot be resolved into a bodily Principle, and ascribed to meer matter; such are perception, memory, liberty, and the several Acts of understanding and reason.'<sup>62</sup> Among those operations, memory was worth particular note, because Tillotson took it as direct evidence against Epicurean atheists, who denied the immaterial character of the soul. Tillotson defined memory as 'a kind of continued Sensation of things' and insisted that continued sensation was impossible with mere matter.<sup>63</sup> According to him, Epicurus thought the soul was 'a company of small round Particles of Matter in perpetual motion, it being a fluid thing, it would be liable to a continual dissipation of its parts, and the new parts that come, would be altogether strangers to the Impressions made upon the old.'<sup>64</sup> This would mean, Tillotson argued, that just like other parts of the body composed of flesh and blood, the soul would be liable to change in matter. If so, it would be impossible for people to have a memory of anything for a long time, because it was unimaginable that 'these new and foreign Particles should retain any sense of the Impressions made upon those which are gone many years ago.'<sup>65</sup> By such arguments based on mental operations, Tillotson might have suggested an argument for the immaterial nature of the soul, but it was less clear whether the argument could prove that the soul survived the dying of body, let alone its immortality.

Obviously, the principle of an immortal soul was closely related to Tillotson's next axiom: reward or punishment in an afterlife. For Tillotson, the principle of the future judgement of God was deduced from two precedent propositions. The first was the justice of God who loves righteousness and hates iniquity, for which Tillotson gave no clear grounds besides innate ideas, according to him, shared by all humankind. The second, which was more realistic, was the condition of the present world, where some virtuous people suffer while some evil people prosper. For Tillotson, the incongruity between the lack of justice in this world and God's perfect justice governing the universe necessarily led to a belief in the judgement in another

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<sup>61</sup> John Tillotson, *Of a religious and divine faith in Fifteen sermons on various subjects...the twelfth volume* (London, 1703), p. 37.

<sup>62</sup> John Tillotson, *Of the immortality of the soul, as discover'd by Nature, and by Revelation in Several discourses of death and judgment, and a future state... the ninth volume* (London, 1701), pp. 73-4.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 82.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 82.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid. pp. 82-3.



world that would accomplish the divine justice. Thus, no one, who ‘considers the promiscuous dispensations many times of Gods Providence in this World, think it unreasonable to conclude, that after this life good men shall be rewarded, and sinners punished.’<sup>66</sup> A sermon published in 1703 also said, ‘the justice of God would easily induce a man to believe, seeing the providence of God doth generally in this life deal promiscuously with good and bad men, that there shall be a day which will make a difference, and every man shall receive according to his works.’<sup>67</sup> The final judgement confirmed the immortality of the soul, because ‘unless this [the immortality of the soul] be supposed, it is impossible to solve the Justice of God’s Providence.’<sup>68</sup> For Tillotson, individual human beings must survive the death of body, because in the next world every individual would stand before God who would give a fair verdict on behaviour not fully judged during lifetime.

Another atheistic argument which Tillotson tackled was that good and evil were arbitrary concepts. This issue was related to the value of religion, because Tillotson advocated religion on the grounds that it could effectively encourage naturally good things. In a sermon contained in a collection of eight sermons published in 1671, his main concern was to show that religion was advantageous to human societies, namely, ‘Religion and Virtue are the great cause of publick happiness and prosperity.’<sup>69</sup> Tillotson insisted that the truth of this had been universally acknowledged and experienced in the world. Yet ‘because the Fashion of the Age is to call every thing into Question,’ he thought, ‘it will be requisite to satisfie men’s Reason about it.’<sup>70</sup> According to Tillotson, atheists argued that religion was ‘opposite to our present welfare, and did rob men of the greatest advantages and inconveniences [sic] of life.’<sup>71</sup> They also said, ‘1. That Government may subsist well enough, without the belief of a God, and a state of Rewards and Punishments after this life; 2. That as for Virtue and Vice, they are arbitrary things.’<sup>72</sup> On the first, Tillotson answered that if people were controlled only by human laws, ‘not by Principles of Conscience, and the dread of another World’ there would be ‘infinitely more disorders in the World.’<sup>73</sup> To the second, he tried to show that reversing the moral value of vice and virtue was not acceptable. If all the vices such as fraud, rapine, and perjury were encouraged and the virtues discouraged by a law, Tillotson asked, ‘would that

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<sup>66</sup> Tillotson, *The wisdom of being religious*, p. 33.

<sup>67</sup> Tillotson, *Of a religious and divine faith*, pp. 37-8.

<sup>68</sup> Tillotson, *Of the immortality of the soul, as discover’d by Nature, and by Revelation*, p. 44.

<sup>69</sup> Tillotson, *Prov. xiv. 34. Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is the reproach of any people*, p. 129.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.* p. 129.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* p. 128.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* p. 139.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* p. 140.

which we now call Vice, in process of time gain the reputation of Virtue; and that which we now call Virtue, grow odious and contemptible to Human Nature?’<sup>74</sup> If that were not the case, there was ‘something in the Nature of Good and Evil, of Virtue and Vices, which does not depend upon the pleasure of Authority.’<sup>75</sup> If any governments reversed virtue and vice in their law, ‘human Society would presently disband, and men would naturally fall into a state of War.’<sup>76</sup> From the experiment in thought Tillotson concluded, ‘there is a natural, and immutable, and eternal Reason for that which we call Goodness and Virtue, and against that which we call Vice and Wickedness.’<sup>77</sup> Here it can be said that Tillotson was using a utilitarian argument. He defined virtue by its consequences, saying x was virtue because x was beneficial. For him, being reasonable could mean being advantageous.

Tillotson knew that his arguments on religion did not achieve a perfect certainty as logical axioms do. However, he insisted that his reasoning provided enough grounds to establish truth, while atheism was unreasonable, ‘because it requires more evidence for things than they are capable of.’<sup>78</sup> He argued that atheists asked for a mathematical demonstration for God, or evidence that could be perceived by human senses. For Tillotson, this was an improper demand. He said, ‘onely Mathematical matters admit of this kind of evidence; Nor can it be proved immediately by sense, because God being supposed to be a pure Spirit.’<sup>79</sup> An explanation why God was a spirit was found in a sermon published in 1700, where Tillotson inferred the spirituality of God from the natural notion that ‘he is a Being every way perfect.’<sup>80</sup> If God was a body or matter, ‘God should not be infinite, nor in all places.’<sup>81</sup> Thus, the existence of God, being a pure spirit, could not be supported by perceptible evidence. Other basic principles of religion were similar in terms of evidence, because ‘the immortality of the soul, and a future state, are things which none in this life can experience.’<sup>82</sup> However, according to him, the existence of God was confirmed, ‘either by an internal impression of the Notion of a God upon our Minds, or else by such external and visible Effects [the world] as our Reason tells us must be attributed to some Cause.’<sup>83</sup> Tillotson argued that the issue was not capable of

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid. p. 142.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. p. 142.

<sup>76</sup> Tillotson, *Of the immortality of the soul, as discover'd by Nature, and by Revelation*, p. 57.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p. 57.

<sup>78</sup> Tillotson, *The wisdom of being religious*, p. 25.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

<sup>80</sup> John Tillotson, *The spirituality of the divine nature in The remaining discourses, on the attributes of God... the seventh volume* (London, 1700), p. 306.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p. 308.

<sup>82</sup> Tillotson, *Of a religious and divine faith*, p. 33.

<sup>83</sup> Tillotson, *Wisdom of being religious*, p. 26.

greater evidence than ‘this double assurance that there is a God.’<sup>84</sup> For him further religious principles would be built on the ‘double assurance’ – the internal impression of God and the existence of the world.

Tillotson’s final attack against atheists was that they had lost their ability to properly use reason. He asserted that the unreasonable judgement of atheists originated from their evil lives rather than erroneous thought. In his sermon devoted to showing the wickedness of atheists, he associated atheism with immorality. ‘When men once indulge themselves in wicked courses, the vicious inclinations of their minds sway their understandings, and make them apt to disbelieve those truths which contradict their lusts.’<sup>85</sup> Tillotson believed that their evil course of life destroyed their discernment, saying, ‘when mens judgments are once byassed, they do not believe according to the evidence of things, but according to their humour and their interest.’<sup>86</sup> For him ‘the true reason why any man is an Atheist is because he is a wicked man.’<sup>87</sup> Here Tillotson’s hidden premise was that virtuous people could not become atheists, whereas only corrupt people who tried to justify their wrongdoings could fall into atheism. Thus, if atheists were not persuaded by the sufficient assurance given by him, it was because their faculty of reason was weakened by their lusts.

Though Tillotson argued that the impartial use of reason led anyone to embrace the religious wisdom he presented, Tillotson’s reason seemed to operate in a teleological way to confirm the traditional Christian propositions about God and the world to come after death. Tillotson’s argument from design for God the creator was, as he acknowledged, not absolutely air-tight. Even if the existence of a creator was assumed, the perfect nature of the creator - perfect power, wisdom, justice, etc. - was not as easily inferred from the created world as Tillotson argued. The creator could be imagined in many different ways. For example, one might argue that the world had been made by a creator just wise and powerful enough to design and shape it. Also, the creator might not be interested in justice. Tillotson inferred God’s infinite goodness from the assertion that God gave happiness to all creatures, but he did (or could) not provide definite evidence that they were happy. Tillotson’s argument for God’s final judgement, too, was difficult to support without an innate idea of God’s perfect justice. Thus, what Tillotson considered to be truths about God innately known were in fact open to many

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

<sup>85</sup> John Tillotson, *2 Pet. Iii. 3. Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts* in *Sermons preach'd upon several occasions* (London, 1671), p. 104.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. p. 104.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. p. 106.

valid criticisms. Though Tillotson asserted his truths had sufficient assurance, they were unlikely to persuade atheists who rejected his supposedly innate ideas about the existence and attributes of God. Without these Tillotson seemed to have trouble constructing a tight logical thread. This suggests the parts of his thought that were supposed to rely on pure reason in fact rested more heavily on traditional Christian orthodoxy than he admitted.

### Reason and the Bible as the rule of faith

The next case study where Tillotson's reason played an important role was his argument that the Bible was true revelation from God. He believed that it was possible to establish the status of the Bible as divine revelation without relying on any precedent revelation, but by using reason. In this case, the role of Tillotson's reason was mainly judging the certainty of historical evidence, the Christian tradition. The first and most extensive work dealing with this issue was, interestingly, not a disputation against atheism, but a polemic against a Roman Catholic writer John Serjeant who argued that the Church's tradition had higher authority than the Bible. In *The rule of faith*, published in 1666, Tillotson tried to provide rational grounds for his argument that the scripture should be the rule of faith for Christians. The main arguments of this book would reappear in his later sermons.

Tillotson argued that the doctrines in the Bible should be accepted as divine revelation, because the books of scripture had been written by divinely-inspired authors. The divine inspiration of the penmen was confirmed by the miracles they performed. He said, 'It is evident, That the Apostles were men divinely inspired, that is, secured from error and mistake in the writing of this Doctrine, from the Miracles that were wrought for the confirmation of it.'<sup>88</sup> In a sermon titled *The sin against the holy ghost* published in 1678, he said, 'What can God be imagined to do more to convince a man of a Divine Revelation, or of the truth of any Doctrine of message that comes from him, than to work miracles to this purpose?'<sup>89</sup> Thus, the miracles performed by the authors through the power of the holy spirit were clear evidence for divinely-inspired authorship. Obstinate rejection of divine inspiration demonstrated by the miracles would, Tillotson argued, jeopardise one's salvation, because such stubbornness prevented people from accepting the truth of God's word. Tillotson took an example of the Jews who

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<sup>88</sup> John Tillotson, *The rule of faith or an answer to the treatise of Mr. I. S. entitled, sure-footing, &c* (London, 1666), pp. 69-70.

<sup>89</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon concerning the sin against the holy ghost in Sermons preach'd upon several occasions... the second volume* (London, 1678), pp. 187-8.

opposed Jesus. They witnessed Jesus's miracles proving his divine authority, but maintained that he performed miracles by the power of the devil, not by the holy spirit. Tillotson thought the Jews' sin against the holy spirit was unpardonable, because they rejected the miracles 'which God hath ever yet thought fit to use to bring men to repentance and salvation.'<sup>90</sup>

Though later generations did not have a chance to see the miracles of Jesus and his apostles, according to Tillotson, their unbelief could not be justified, because they had reliable historical evidence. He said, 'that such Miracles were wrought, is evident from as credible Histories, as we have for any of those things, which we do most firmly believe.'<sup>91</sup> The reality of miracles that guaranteed divine inspiration was no less well grounded than any well-known historical facts. Thus, 'even the rudest of the Vulgar, and those who cannot read, do believe, upon very good grounds, that there was such a King as William the Conqueror; and the Miracles of Christ, and his Apostles, are capable of as good evidence as we can have for this.'<sup>92</sup> In a sermon on *The Christian faith, the means of its conveyance, and our obligation to receive it* published in 1703, Tillotson made the same point, saying, 'Those who lived in the Age of Christ and his Apostles, had assurance of Miracles from their own Senses: and we now are assured of them by credible History and Relation.'<sup>93</sup> Though Tillotson acknowledged that the two ways of being assured - miracles and historical evidence - were not equal, 'they are both sufficient to beget in us an undoubted assurance, and such as no prudent Man hath any reason to doubt of,' because 'a man may be as truly and undoubtedly certain, that is, as well satisfied, that a thing was done, from the credit of History, as from his own senses.'<sup>94</sup> He told the audience, 'I make no more doubt whether there was such a Person as Henry the VIII, King of England, than I do whether I be in this place.'<sup>95</sup> Likewise, he argued that there was no reason people denied the miracles which confirmed the divine truth.

Though divine inspiration could be confirmed by miracles, some might still question whether the Bible had been written by those who had performed miracle and the preservation of the contents of scripture over centuries. Tillotson claimed that unprejudiced thinking would be enough to answer the opposition. He said there was a general confidence about books written

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid. p. 189.

<sup>91</sup> Tillotson, *Rule of Faith*, p. 70.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. p. 72.

<sup>93</sup> John Tillotson, *Of the Christian faith, the means of its conveyance, and our obligation to receive it in Fifteen sermons on various subjects... the twelfth volume* (London, 1703), p. 204.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. pp. 204-5.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. p. 205.

long time ago that ‘they are so ancient, and were written by those whose names they bear.’<sup>96</sup> According to Tillotson, it was ‘a constant and uncontroll’d tradition... transmitted from one age to another, partly Orally, and partly by the Testimony of other Books.’<sup>97</sup> This should be the same with the Bible. Furthermore, he insisted, the authorship of the books of scripture was not only accepted by Christians in all ages, but ‘the greatest Enemies of our Religion, the Jews and Heathens, never questioned the Antiquity of them, but have always taken it for granted, That they were the very Books which the Apostles writ.’<sup>98</sup> In the same manner, Tillotson maintained that it was impossible that the contents of common books such as the Bible had been altered. In a sermon published in 1698, he said that it was ‘not morally possible that a common Book... should be liable to any material Corruptions, without a general Conspiracy and Agreement.’<sup>99</sup> Moreover, Tillotson argued that the scriptures had an advantage above other books that ‘being of a greater and more universal concernment, they have been more common, and in every bodies hands, more read and studied than any other Books in the World whatsoever.’<sup>100</sup> In other words, the books of the Bible were so universally dispersed; translated into so many languages; cited in so many extant books (and all these still agreeing in all important matters), that it could not be imagined that their contents were distorted. Tillotson asserted, ‘this is as great an assurance as we can have concerning any ancient Book, without a particular and immediate Revelation.’<sup>101</sup>

Tillotson argued that his process of defending the truth of the Bible was guided by reason, but we can see that at least two other things were involved, which his reason validated: the holy spirit and Christian tradition. He maintained that the books of scripture were true divine revelation because they were written by the authors inspired by the holy spirit, who enable them to perform miracles as the sign of divine inspiration; and that the tradition supported the authorship of scripture, the preservation of its contents, and the historicity of the miracles. However, in connection with the holy spirit and tradition, a problem arose. The Roman Catholic Church insisted that the holy spirit working in the church gave it the authority to decide all spiritual issues, so church tradition had an equal or superior authority to the Bible. To counter this argument, Tillotson contended that the assistance of the holy spirit which

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<sup>96</sup> Tillotson, *Rule of Faith*, p. 39.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid. p. 39.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. p. 40.

<sup>99</sup> John Tillotson, *The parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Several discourses... the fifth volume* (London, 1698), pp. 409-10.

<sup>100</sup> Tillotson, *Rule of Faith*, p. 39.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p. 40.

guaranteed the truth of scripture was extraordinary not only in terms of its degree but also with regard to time, which meant that it was available only in the period of the apostles. ‘So long then as the Apostles lived, who were thus infallibly assisted, the way of Oral Tradition was secure, but no longer.’<sup>102</sup> According to Tillotson, the ceasing of the special assistance of the holy spirit was the reason the providence of God ensured the doctrines revealed by Christ were committed to writing. So, the tradition of the later ages could not have the same authority as the Bible. On these grounds, Tillotson distinguished his use of tradition from that of Catholics. ‘We allow, that Oral Tradition is a considerable assurance to us, that the Books of Scripture which we now have, are the very Books which were written by the Apostles and Evangelists; but withal we deny, That Oral Tradition is therefore to be accounted the Rule of Faith.’<sup>103</sup> Tillotson thought that tradition gave an assurance that the Bible was true revelation, but this did not mean that it had more authority than scripture to decide doctrinal matters. More importantly, it may be said that for Tillotson, it was the holy spirit rather than reason that guaranteed the truth of scripture, because though reason helped people to find and confirm the revealed truth, the author of the truth was the holy spirit. This provided Tillotson with the grounds for his firm biblicism.

Tillotson argued that the Bible was proved to be the rule of faith without a need for extra-biblical interpretive authority such as tradition. Tillotson firmly believed that the Bible was the rule of Christian faith, but, as we shall see below, when there arose a controversy about the meaning of biblical verses, a debate on how to interpret them could not be avoided. So, Tillotson could not completely deny a need for extra-biblical interpretive standards: and for him the standard was reason. However, there were other people, for example Calvinists and Socinians, who argued that they interpreted the Bible with reason and without relying on a traditional authority such as Roman Catholic Church, but disagreed with Tillotson on important doctrinal issues. Tillotson’s reason could not put an end to the competition with rival interpretations, but Tillotson’s mode of arguing in the disputes further clarifies what he meant by reason.

### Reasonable ways to understand God

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<sup>102</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. p. 39.

In the following case studies, we can see how Tillotson's reason worked to find the true meaning of the Bible. Though Rivers and Reedy said that the role of reason in religion for Tillotson ended once it had completed the task of proving that the Bible was truth, closer examination of his sermons shows that Tillotson's reason preserved its role as a guide to the revealed truth. In particular, it is interesting to note that Tillotson used his natural reason working on innate ideas as a tool for the interpretation of biblical texts. In his sermon given at Whitehall in Lent of 1677, he preached on the text Luke 15:7, 'I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in Heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance.' The main purposes of the sermon was to stress the desirability of the repentance of sinners and to encourage the audience to repent. Before he went into the main points, he gave some explanation about the main text of sermon. What is interesting is his explanation on the joy in heaven at the repentance of a sinner. Tillotson said that the joy of heaven, especially the joy of God, should be understood with care, because this might sound strange. What was the problem with the joy of God? Tillotson thought that the notion of divine perfection known by natural reason contradicted the idea that God had emotions such as joy. He said, 'as it refers to God, it seems very inconsistent with the happiness and perfection of the Divine nature to suppose Him really capable of joy, any more than of grief or any other passion.'<sup>104</sup> The idea that God had joy in certain events 'would be to imagine some new accession to his pleasure and happiness, which being always infinite, can never have any thing added to it.'<sup>105</sup>

For Tillotson, the concept of the perfection of God included the infinite happiness of God, being 'as Essential a part as any other of that Notion which Mankind have of God from the Light of Nature.'<sup>106</sup> However, it might still be asked: what did it mean that God was happy, if he had no emotions? Tillotson explained that the happiness of God naturally came from other kinds of his perfection, particularly from his infinite wisdom and power. God knew what constituted happiness and he had the power to do whatever contributed to happiness. That is, the perfect happiness of God was 'no other than a fixt and immoveable state of Contentment and Satisfaction, of Pleasure and Delight, resulting from the secure possession, and enjoyment of all that is good and desirable, that is, of all Excellency and Perfection.'<sup>107</sup> Thus, when the

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<sup>104</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon prached at Whitehall in Lent, March 30th 1677 in Sermons preach'd upon several occasions... the second volume* (London, 1678), p. 148.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid. p. 148.

<sup>106</sup> John Tillotson, *The happiness of God in Several discourses upon the attributes of God... the sixth volume* (London, 1699), p. 68.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid. p. 70.



Bible ascribed human emotions to God, it should be understood ‘to be spoken by way of condescension, and after the language and manner of the sons of men.’<sup>108</sup> In case of the text of the sermon, Tillotson said it simply signified that ‘the conversion of a sinner is a thing highly pleasing and acceptable to God.’<sup>109</sup> Perhaps not many hearers of the sermon thought that the joy of God might conflict with the perfection of God before Tillotson told them so, but Tillotson’s belief in the perfection of God meant that he felt it necessary to reconcile the seeming contradiction between the biblical description of emotional God and the idea of God’s perfection.

In the next case, his argument based on divine perfection was involved in a more disputed theological issue - predestination. Tillotson firmly repudiated the Calvinist doctrine of reprobation on the grounds that it could not accord with the justice and goodness of God, the truth of which was shown by natural reason. In his sermon preached before the king at Whitehall in Lent of 1673, the main point was the peace to be given to people who endeavoured to keep God’s commandments, but he noted that some people complained that religion could cause trouble, rather than peace, in the minds of some Christians. For this, he blamed false and mistaken principles. To illustrate, he took an example of a mistaken idea - namely the Calvinist doctrine of predestined reprobation: ‘God does not sincerely desire the salvation of men, but hath from all eternity effectually barr’d the greatest part of mankind from all possibility of attaining that happiness which he offers to them; and every one hath cause to fear that he may be in that number.’<sup>110</sup> However, Tillotson replied that ‘there is no ground either from Reason or Scripture to entertain any such thought of God. Our destruction is of our selves; and no man shall be ruined by any decree of God, who does not ruin himself by his own fault.’<sup>111</sup> In a sermon preached before the king in February 1676, he again argued that there was no need to be troubled by the idea that some people were reprobate. No one who sincerely endeavours to please God and to keep his commandments in the Bible should ‘suspect any latent or secret decree of God against him that shall work his ruin.’<sup>112</sup> For Tillotson, there was no reason to suspect that the good and just God had a hidden plan to exclude anyone from salvation.

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<sup>108</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon preached at Whitehall in Lent, March 30th 1677*, p. 149.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. p. 149.

<sup>110</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached before the king at Whitehall in Lent, March 20<sup>th</sup> 1673 in Sermon preach’d upon several occasions... the second volume* (London, 1678), pp. 26-7.

<sup>111</sup> Ibid. p. 27.

<sup>112</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached before the king, Febr. 25<sup>th</sup> 1675/6 in Sermon preach’d upon several occasions... the second volume*, (London, 1678)p. 124.

His more complete opinion on this issue can be found in his successive sermons on soteriology entitled *Of the nature of regeneration, and its necessity, in order to justification and salvation*, preached at Lincoln's Inn and St Lawrence Jewry in January and February 1681.<sup>113</sup> In the sermons, we can find him forming his opinion both from the biblical data and natural reason. He examined several views about predestination, which was the 'operation of God's grace in the Conversion of a Sinner.' The first opinion was the Calvinist view of predestination and reprobation. According to this view, the saved had been predestined from eternity, and God's grace operated on their conversion in an irresistible manner while the unsaved were reprobate, or predestined to eternal ruin by God's decree and regardless of their will. For Tillotson, this opinion, while intending to stress the sovereignty and power of God, endangered the honour of his justice, by charging upon God the destruction of impenitent sinners. This is 'to advance one Attribute of God upon the ruine of another; whereas it is a Fundamental Principle of Religion, to take care to reconcile the Attributes and Perfections of God to one another; for that is not a Divine Perfection, which contradicts any other Perfection.'<sup>114</sup> Tillotson did not entirely reject the predestination of the saved, but for him the idea of reprobation of the damned was unreasonable, because it could not be in harmony with the perfect justice of God, which was the truth of natural reason.

The second opinion Tillotson discussed was a complete rejection of the idea of predestination. In this view, God's grace did not work on anybody in an irresistible manner, because it would be an intrusion into free will of people. However, sufficient grace was offered to all the people who had heard the Christian gospel, and they might either comply with or resist the grace. Tillotson said this view was 'infinitely more reasonable than the other,' (the Calvinist view), but it did not have necessary foundation in the Bible.<sup>115</sup> This was because 'there are some instances in Scripture of the Conversion of Men after a very violent, if not an irresistible manner, which seems to be attributed to a particular predestination of God.'<sup>116</sup> Tillotson took the example of Paul, who said of himself in Gal 1:15 that he was separated from his mother's womb to that work to which he was called. Therefore, Tillotson argued, though

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<sup>113</sup> John Tillotson, *Of the nature of regeneration, and its necessity, in order to justification and salvation*, the fifth to ninth sermons in *Several discourses...the fourth volume*, (London, 1697), pp. 139-265. The circumstance of the sermons on regeneration does not appear in the publication, but Irène Simon identified the dates and places from a manuscript (Ms. Rawlinson E. 125 in Bodleian Library). Irène Simon, *Three Restoration divines: Barrow, South, Tillotson*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1967), vol. 2, p. 350.

<sup>114</sup> Tillotson, *Of the nature of regeneration*, p. 204.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. p. 208.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. p. 208.

this second view was better than the first, it was not entirely satisfactory because it contradicted biblical data which showed some cases of predestination.

Reason and the Bible collaboratively led Tillotson to endorse a third view, which was a sort of middle way. Tillotson could not ignore the biblical verses that alluded to the predestination of some, but if this was the only way God saved his people, the conclusion of Calvinists could not be avoided, resulting in the reprobation of those who were not elected to salvation. So, Tillotson insisted that the pro-predestination verses talked about some exceptional cases and that the salvation of others depended on how they responded to sufficient grace from God. He argues, ‘some are Converted in an irresistible manner... and that sufficient Grace is afforded to others, which is effectual to the Salvation of many, and rejected by a great many.’<sup>117</sup> From the viewpoint of champions of the two former opinions, this view lacked consistency in regard to God’s treatment of people. However, Tillotson, using this third way, managed to give an explanation that fitted both natural reason which could not imagine God intending the ruin of anyone, and biblical data which supported predestination. Under this view, no one was excluded from the chance of salvation offered by merciful God, who desired not the death of a sinner, but rather wanted him to turn from his wickedness and to be saved (Ezek 33:11). Tillotson also argued that the irresistible manner, in which a small number of people like Paul were predestined and saved, was not against reason, ‘since it is no injury to any Man to be made good and happy against his will.’<sup>118</sup> Tillotson’s discussion on predestination shows his principle that biblical verses should be interpreted to agree with the natural reason. In this instance, the verses concerning predestination were interpreted in a restricted sense by Tillotson to be in harmony with the natural reason which, according to him, demonstrated that God was perfect in every way and that the perfect justice of God could not exclude anyone from salvation with a full-scale scheme of predestination.

### Oath-taking

The following case study shows that besides natural reason, another kind of reason - discriminative reason, or reasonable judgement on evidence - was also used by Tillotson to interpret the Bible. In his day, Quakers were regarded by many as destructive of social order. One of the offensive Quaker practices was that they refused to take any oath due to Jesus’s

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid. p. 211.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. p. 209.

prohibition of oaths in the Bible. Because of this, Tillotson felt a need to defend the lawfulness of oaths. In *The lawfulness, and obligation of oaths, a sermon preach'd at the assises held at Kingston upon Thames, July 21. 1681*, Tillotson argued that the prohibitive verses were to be interpreted in a limited sense just like those about predestination. Quakers built their argument on Jesus's words in Matth 5:33-34, 'Ye have heard that it hath been said to them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thy self: but I say unto you swear not at all; But let your communication be yea, yea, and nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.' This seemed to be a complete prohibition of oath-taking. However, Tillotson argued that in view of the instruction just after the prohibition, 'let your communication be yea, yea,' Jesus's words meant 'in your ordinary commerce and affairs do not interpose oaths, but say and do,' so oath-taking was acceptable on weighty matters and even necessary in the case of judicial proceedings to prevent perjury.<sup>119</sup> He also argued that the main text of the sermon Heb 6:16, 'And an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife' supported his interpretation, because the text not only spoke of the use of oaths without any sense of disapproval, but it described the practice as necessary for the final decision of controversies. Furthermore, in the preceding verse Heb 6:13, 'When God made the promise to Abraham, because he could swear by none greater, he swears by himself,' God condescended to represent himself after the human manner. God would never have sworn, Tillotson insisted, if oaths had been evil in its own nature.

Tillotson presented other examples of oath-taking in the Bible. He found some cases in the Old Testament: the oath between Abraham and his old servant on the choice of a wife for Abraham's son (Gen 24:3), one between Jacob and Joseph on the burial of Jacob in Canaan (Gen 50:5), and one between David and Jonathan on their friendship (1 Samuel 20:17). From the New Testament, Tillotson argued that Paul and Jesus were indeed involved in oath taking. Paul called God to witness, which was the formality of an oath, several times in his epistles, for example, in Rom 1:9, 'God is my witness' and in Gal 1:20, 'Before God I lye not.' For Tillotson, 'these are all unquestionable oaths; which we cannot imagine St. Paul would have used, had they been directly contrary to our Saviour's Law.'<sup>120</sup> Furthermore, Tillotson said that Jesus, who was alleged to ban oaths, did not refuse to answer upon oath at his trial. In Matth 26:63, 'The high Priest said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ the Son of God,' Tillotson maintained, the high priest required Jesus to answer the question upon oath, because adjuring was the form of oath-taking in legal processes

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<sup>119</sup> John Tillotson, *The lawfulness, and obligation of oaths, a sermon preach'd at the assises held at Kingston upon Thames, July 21. 1681* (London, 1681), p. 17.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid. pp. 19-20.

among Jews in the period. Jesus replied that he was the son of God on oath, so he accepted the practice of oaths. From this case, Tillotson concluded that ‘unless we will interpret our Saviour’s Doctrine contrary to his own practice, we cannot understand him to forbid all Oaths; and consequently they are not unlawfull.’<sup>121</sup>

Tillotson argued that evidence outside of the Bible also confirmed his point. He tried to show that the early Christians did not refuse to take oaths. According to him, Tertullian said that the primitive Christians refused to swear by the emperor’s genius, not because it was an oath, but because they thought it was idolatrous. However, ‘the same Tertullian says, that the Christians were willing to swear... by the health and safety of the Emperour.’<sup>122</sup> Tillotson used the account of Athanasius as well. Tillotson said that Athanasius ‘being accused to Constantius, purged himself by oath, and desired that his Accuser might be put to his Oath, by calling the truth to witness.’<sup>123</sup> Athanasius said Christians were accustomed to swear by the form of words, ‘calling the truth to witness.’ For Tillotson, these examples showed that it was common for the early Christians who lived in the period closer to that of Jesus to take an oath on important matters. Thus, Tillotson argued that Jesus’s forbidding oaths should be interpreted in a restricted sense given the evidence from other biblical passages and the actual practices of the early church. He thought Christians with a reasonable faith, which carefully considered biblical and historical evidence would not argue for the unreasonable refusal to take oaths.

The underpinning premise of Tillotson’s interpretation of the verses about oaths was probably that true religion should be advantageous to social stability. In the beginning of the same sermon, he remarked, ‘The necessity of Religion to the support of humane Society in nothing appear more evidently than in this, That the obligation of an Oath, which is so necessary for the maintenance of peace and justice among men, depends wholly upon the sense and belief of a Deity.’<sup>124</sup> Tillotson said that oath was invoking God as a witness and judge and also as an avenger in case of perjury. It was therefore one of the most important practices, based on belief in God, through which society could be prevented from falling into chaos caused by a proliferation of false statements. For him this was another reason why atheism should be criticised, because it took away the reverence and obligation of oaths. Tillotson could not think that the total prohibition of oaths was intended by God. If the doctrine of prohibiting oaths was widely accepted, Tillotson thought, it would destroy human society. Perhaps, his experience of

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid. p. 21.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid. p. 19.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. p. 19.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid. pp. 1-2.

the English Civil War made him think that religion should promote the peace and order of human society.

#### Tillotson's argument with Socinians

The last case study in this chapter deals with Tillotson's engagement with the Socinian controversy. In his arguments with Socinians, who rejected the divinity of Jesus and the doctrine of the Trinity, Tillotson argued that a reasonable reading of the Bible did not lead to Socinian tenets, but to the established and orthodox Christological position. Because Socinians embraced the authority of the Bible and they argued that their doctrines were based on the scriptures, Tillotson was required to prove that the Socinian interpretation was mistaken, while he understood the true meaning of the Bible. His most direct attack on Socinians may be found in his *Sermons concerning the divinity and Incarnation of our blessed saviour* preached at St Lawrence Jewry in the Christmas periods of 1679 and 1680. In a season celebrating the birth of Jesus, he preached on the divinity of Christ, criticising the Socinian view. Tillotson's main target was the Socinian argument that Jesus was not God in nature, but a man who had not existed before he was born of the Virgin Mary. Tillotson argued that Socinians formed their doctrines by distorting the meaning of biblical verses, especially John 1:1-3, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.' According to Tillotson, 'in the beginning was the Word' meant that the word, which was Christ, existed from eternity. 'The Word was with God, and the Word was God' indicated that Christ the son of God himself was God in nature, but distinct from God the Father. 'All things were made by him' referred to the creation of the material world described in the book of Genesis, so Christ was the Creator, not a creature.<sup>125</sup>

Though Socinians granted that the word meant Christ in the passage, Tillotson asserted, the rest of their understanding of the passage was absurd. He aimed to show 'by what strained and forc'd arts of interpretation the Socinians endeavour to avoid the plain and necessary consequence from this Passage of St. John, namely that the Word had an existence before he was made flesh and born of the B. Virgin his Mother.'<sup>126</sup> Socinians argued that 'in the

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<sup>125</sup> John Tillotson, *Sermons concerning the divinity and Incarnation of our blessed Saviour* (London, 1693), pp. 19-27.

<sup>126</sup> Ibid. pp. 61-2.

beginning' meant the beginning of the gospel, when Jesus began to proclaim his message, so that the passage did not mean that Jesus existed from eternity. 'The Word was with God' indicated that before Christ started his ministry, he was taken up by God into heaven to be instructed in God's will, and went down to the world to declare it. 'The Word was God' meant that Christ was given the title of God, just like the cases where magistrates in the Bible were called God (Psalm 82:6, John 10:34), so Christ was God by divine appointment and by office, not by nature. Finally, Socinians thought that 'all things were made by him' did not signify the creation of the world in Genesis, but the reformation of humankind by the preaching of the gospel, which was several times called a new creation in the Bible.

Tillotson claimed that the Socinian interpretation was unreasonable, because they twisted the plain meaning of the biblical verses. He said that the Socinian position 'does perfectly contradict all the former Conclusions [Tillotson's interpretation] which have been so evidently drawn from the Description here given of the Word.'<sup>127</sup> Furthermore, the existence of Christ before his Incarnation, he maintained, did not rely only upon the single passage of the gospel of John, but also supported by many other verses. For example, Jesus said in John 17:5, 'And now, O Father, glorify me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee, before the World was.' Paul said in Col 1:16, 'For by him [Christ] were all things created, that are in Heaven and that are in Earth, visible and invisible.' Particularly with regard to the latter, Tillotson argued, Paul's words that all things were created by him that are 'in Heaven and that are in Earth' disproved the Socinian argument that the creation by Christ meant 'no more than the moral Renovation of the World here below.'<sup>128</sup> Tillotson thought that the unprejudiced consideration of the whole Bible made the Socinian view unjustifiable.

Another reason why the Socinian explanation was unreasonable for Tillotson was because it contradicted the understanding of Christians for the last 1,500 years. This is interesting, because, though Tillotson's arguments were generally within traditional Christian doctrines, he was normally reluctant to say that he was relying on traditional authorities. Especially when he argued with Catholics, he insisted that the opinions of church fathers could not be authoritative in themselves. In *The rule of faith*, he wrote, 'the Scripture doth sufficiently interpret it self, that is, is plain to all capacities, in things necessary to be believed and practised... As for obscure and more doubtful Texts, we acknowledge the Comments of the

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid. p. 56.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. p. 105.

Fathers to be a good help, but no certain Rule of interpretation.’<sup>129</sup> The opinions of church fathers might be helpful, but could not be the standard of interpretation, because they differed among themselves in the interpretation of some unclear texts. However, in the arguments with Socinians, Tillotson maintained that their view conflicted with long traditions of biblical interpretation. He insisted that ‘not only all the ancient Fathers of the Christian Church, but so far as I can find, all Interpreters whatsoever for fifteen hundred years together did understand this Passage of St. John in a quite different sense, namely, of the Creation of the material, and not of the Renovation of the moral World.’<sup>130</sup> He went on to say, ‘the generality of Christians did so understand this Passage, as to collect from it as an undoubted Point of Christianity, that the Word had a real existence before he was born of the B. Virgin.’<sup>131</sup> Tillotson argued that the uniform opinion of the 1,500-year tradition was the evidence which supported the clearness and reasonableness of his interpretation. However, from the viewpoint of Socinians, who thought that they had discovered a new and true meaning of the passage, Tillotson was appealing to the authority of tradition. It might be said that his attitude towards Christian tradition was not entirely consistent. While he tended to downplay tradition in the arguments with Catholics, he used it to criticise Socinian opinion, when he was certain that it was on his side.

By the late seventeenth century, the doctrine of the Trinity, another point of debate with Socinians, posed a problem in connection with the relationship between reason and faith. The doctrine seemed to some to demand an abandonment of human reason, because it meant that a single God existed in three persons (father, son, and holy spirit) - a numerical contradiction. In his defence of the Trinity, Tillotson argued that the doctrine could pass the test of reason, but here too, his reliance on tradition was not slight. Bearing Socinians in mind who argued the force of reason was on their side, Tillotson said that he was willing to ‘have this matter brought to a fair Trial at the Bar of Reason,’ but ‘as well as of Scripture, expounded by the general Tradition of the Christian Church.’<sup>132</sup> He even stressed that the general tradition, ‘next to Scripture, is the best and surest confirmation of this great Point now in question between us.’<sup>133</sup> That said, what Tillotson wanted to defend with tradition was a simple version of Trinitarian doctrine in comparison with the complicated types set forth by some traditional advocates of

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<sup>129</sup> John Tillotson, *The rule of faith or an answer to the treatise of Mr. I. S. entitled, sure-footing, &c* (London, 1666), p. 106.

<sup>130</sup> Tillotson, *Sermons concerning the divinity and Incarnation of our blessed Saviour*, p.64.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. p. 65.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid. p. 115.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid. p. 115.



the doctrine. He was wary of the complex explanation on the Trinity made by theologians, ‘in which the further we go, beyond what God has thought fit to reveal to us in Scripture concerning it, the more we are entangled.’<sup>134</sup> In another sermon on the Trinity published in 1693, he more clearly said that ‘there is a wide difference between the nice Speculations of the Schools... and what the Scripture only teaches and asserts concerning this Mystery.’<sup>135</sup> Schoolmen, ‘out of their own Brain,’ make ‘a thousand subtilities about this Mystery, such as no Christian is bound to trouble his head withal.’<sup>136</sup> Tillotson did not completely deny the value of more detailed explication. He acknowledged, ‘some learned and judicious Men may have very commendably attempted a more particular explication of this great Mystery by the strength of Reason,’ but he continued, ‘I dare not pretend to that, knowing both the difficulty and danger of such an Attempt, and mine own insufficiency for it.’<sup>137</sup> The way he chose was ‘to make out the credibility of the thing from the authority of the H. Scripture, without descending to a more particular explication of it than the Scripture hath given us.’<sup>138</sup>

So, Tillotson claimed to defend the core of the doctrine as revealed in the Bible, without an excessive annotation. Perhaps due to this way of defending the doctrine, Tillotson was suspected of a tendency towards Socinianism, even though he advocated the Trinity. Tillotson’s delineation consisted of two parts. First, the Trinity was three persons in one deity, that is ‘there are three Differences in the Deity, which the Scripture speaks of by the Names of Father, Son, and H. Ghost, and every where speaks of them as we use to do of three distinct Persons.’<sup>139</sup> Second, ‘not only the Name and Title of God, but the most incommunicable Properties and Perfections of the Deity, are in Scripture frequently ascribed to the Son and the H. Ghost.’<sup>140</sup> Among the biblical verses which were considered to support the Trinity, Tillotson presented 1John 5:7, ‘There are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, and the H. Ghost; and these three are one.’ He also mentioned Matth 28:19 where Jesus commanded his disciples to baptise all nations in the name of the father, son, and holy spirit; and 2Cor 13:13 where Paul joins the three persons in his prayer.

Tillotson emphasised that there was no contradiction in his description of the Trinity, answering the Socinian suggestion that the doctrine of the Trinity was internally inconsistent,

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<sup>134</sup> Ibid. p. 119.

<sup>135</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon concerning the unity of the divine nature and the B. Trinity* (London, 1693) p. 16.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid. p. 17.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid. pp. 17-8.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. p. 18.

<sup>139</sup> Tillotson, *Sermons concerning the divinity and Incarnation of our blessed Saviour*, p.120.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid. p. 121.

being contrary to reason. He argued that his opinion was not less rational than that of the Socinians. The only difficulty with the Trinity was, Tillotson said, that ‘the particular manner of the existence of these three Differences or Persons in the Divine Nature... is incomprehensible by our finite Understandings, and inexplicable by us.’<sup>141</sup> For him, it was not contrary to reason, but above reason, because the nature of God was infinite in itself and was above human comprehension. Tillotson argued that ‘it is not repugnant to Reason to believe some things which are incomprehensible by our Reason; provided that we have sufficient ground and reason for the belief of them.’<sup>142</sup> According to Tillotson, there were many phenomena that happened every day, though people could not understand the way they worked. People did not comprehend ‘the Continuity of Matter, that is, how the parts of it do hang so fast together that they are many times very hard to be parted... or how the small Seeds of things contain the whole Form and Nature of the things.’<sup>143</sup> Likewise, people did not know the mechanism of ‘the vital union of Soul and Body: Who can imagine by what device or means a Spirit comes to be so closely united and so firmly link’d to a material Body?’<sup>144</sup> For these cases, Tillotson argued that all people believed that those things were the case, though exactly how they came to be that way was incomprehensible. For him, these instances showed that it was not unreasonable to believe the existence of certain things, whose manner of existence could not be explained.

After affirming that embracing the existence of incomprehensible things was not absurd, Tillotson, to further reduce the difficulty of the Trinity, made a link between the doctrine of the Trinity and belief in God, which Tillotson assumed was the most basic truth for all people who had religion, including Socinians. Tillotson argued that incomprehensibility could not be reason to disbelieve the doctrine of the Trinity, because ‘if this were a good Reason for not believing it, then no man ought to believe that there is a God, because his Nature is most certainly incomprehensible.’<sup>145</sup> Tillotson’s premise was that natural reason working on innate ideas led people to the belief in God who was infinite and perfect in every way. ‘The same natural Reason which assures us that He is, doth likewise assure us that He is incomprehensible.’<sup>146</sup> For example, finite human understanding could not know how a God of infinite knowledge foresees a future event through contingent causes, but the Bible attributed

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid. p. 122.

<sup>142</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon concerning the unity of the divine nature and the B. Trinity*, p. 22-3.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>144</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. p. 28.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. p. 28.

such foreknowledge to God. So, if we believed in God, whose nature was beyond comprehension, we had no reason not to believe the doctrine of the Trinity revealed in Scripture, or the three persons in one deity, whose manner of existence was incomprehensible. Tillotson even encouraged an absolute faith in the Bible regarding this doctrine, saying that ‘in this and the like Cases I take an implicit Faith to be very commendable, that is, to believe whatever we are sufficiently assured God hath revealed, though we do not fully understand his meaning in such a Revelation.’<sup>147</sup>

Here, the two different meanings of Tillotson’s reason were made clear. On the one hand, when he said that the doctrine of the Trinity was ‘above reason,’ because the nature of God was incomprehensible, this reason meant human understanding. On the other hand, when he said that ‘natural reason’ made people believe the existence of God and his incomprehensible attributes, it meant the reason which worked on innate ideas which God imprinted on human nature. This ‘natural reason’ led people to fundamental truths, and the truths known by natural reason were not necessarily comprehensible by human understanding. Tillotson’s natural reason also helped people to accept the biblical doctrines about God which were difficult to fully understand, because by natural reason people knew that God was infinite and that his nature was incomprehensible.

Lastly, Tillotson attempted to counter-attack against Socinians, insisting that it was the Socinian position that was contrary to reason. In the Socinian position, Jesus was a creature and was not God by nature, but he was God by office and by divine appointment. According to Tillotson, Socinians worshipped Jesus, who was a creature and God only by office, as they worshipped God the Father, who was the creator and God by nature. Tillotson argued that this was ‘contrary to Reason and good sense,’ because in the Bible God often declared that ‘he will not give his glory to another.’<sup>148</sup> (Isa 42:8) Tillotson charged that Socinians committed idolatry by giving ‘Divine Worship to a mere Creature’<sup>149</sup> If Jesus was born as a creature and became God by appointment, for Tillotson, he was not worthy of divine worship which should be given only for an eternal God. He asked, ‘what? no Absurdity in a God as it were but of yesterday, in a Creature-God, in a God merely by positive Institution?’<sup>150</sup> Tillotson argued that ‘to avoid the shadow and appearance of a Plurality of Deities they [Socinians] run really into...

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid. p. 18.

<sup>148</sup> Tillotson, *Sermons concerning the divinity and Incarnation of our blessed Saviour*, p. 125.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid. p. 123.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid. p. 124.

downright Idolatry, by worshiping a Creature besides the Creator.’<sup>151</sup> (Rom 1:25) Tillotson accused the Socinian argument of being opposed to reason, but, to a large extent, his rationale was that their opinion resulted in a conclusion contrary to a biblical teaching about idolatry.

## Conclusion

To conclude, Tillotson’s way of using reason will be summarised, and the difference between the existing scholarship on his reason and the findings of this chapter will be pointed out. For Tillotson, human reason was the ability of the mind to think, understand, and make judgements, etc. in a broad sense. Close examination of Tillotson’s arguments, in which he used reason to defend his opinion, illustrated two different ways his reason operated. First, Tillotson thought that reason worked in conjunction with innate ideas which were, according to Tillotson, inscribed on human nature by God. Tillotson argued that by the innate ideas, people naturally knew the existence and perfection of God and the notion of good and evil. Reason working on these innate ideas, called ‘natural reason’ by Tillotson, was able to find fundamental truths of natural religion without the help of special revelation. The natural truths included the attributes of God, such as his infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, and God’s fair judgement on every individual in the next world. These other-worldly truths led to a principle of religion connected to the present world: a good and just God made his laws for the happiness of humankind and for the peace and order of human society. So, Tillotson thought that true religion was advantageous to individuals and societies.

Tillotson’s second form of reason assessed the validity of arguments, or formed its own opinion, on evidence including sense data and written or spoken accounts of events. By this ‘discriminative reason,’ Tillotson defended the Bible as true divine revelation, or revealed truth. For him, historical evidence confirmed that the authors recorded the scriptures with divine inspiration, which was proved by the miracles they performed. It is true that establishing the Bible to be true as a whole was a major task of reason. Rivers and Reedy even suggested that the role of Tillotson’s reason was finished here after the job was done. However, his reason, both natural and discriminative, was still used to find the true meaning of the revelation. For Tillotson, reason should interpret the Bible in accordance with human innate ideas given by God and reconcile different biblical verses. It also could use extra-biblical sources to interpret

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<sup>151</sup> Ibid. p. 124.

the passages under debate. For instance, Tillotson insisted that the Calvinist idea of reprobation was unreasonable because it conflicted with the human innate ideas about the perfect justice of God, so that the related passages should be interpreted in a way that preserved divine perfection. In the case of Quaker rejection of oaths, he used historical evidence of the early Christian practices as well as other biblical verses to qualify Jesus's prohibition of taking an oath. The doctrine of prohibiting oaths could not be true also in view of the principle of religion that divine laws were advantageous to societies. Tillotson argued that without oaths there was no effective way to prevent perjury in judicial proceedings, so the complete ban on oaths would make the world disorderly with false witnesses.

While Tillotson claimed to use reason, his reason was not identical with pure reason. The operation of natural reason was grounded on his assumption that all humankind, with universal innate ideas, thought about the transcendental world in the same way as he did. Moreover, the fundamental truths discovered by natural reason included mysterious ideas such as the infinite attributes of God which Tillotson said could not be fully understood by finite human understanding. So, it was difficult to fully justify the universal and fundamental truths with objective reason; and the fundamental truths, particularly those about God and the other world, strongly savoured of the revealed doctrines of Christianity. The working of his discriminative reason, which formed the opinion based on evidence, was not strictly objective, either. Tillotson insisted that constant Christian tradition, which accepted that the Bible was the true words of God written by divinely-inspired authors, was sufficient historical evidence that the Bible was truth. He thought that it was obstinate and unreasonable to reject the historical evidence for Scripture. At this point, Tillotson's reason was different from the 'reason' of the radical Enlightenment thinkers who questioned the authority of tradition of every kind, and tried to use reason as the sole standard of judgement. From their viewpoint, Tillotson's argument might seem close to a straightforward appeal to Christian tradition. When we consider the character of Tillotson's reason, it is hard to see him as a forerunner of the age of the Enlightenment. Griffin and Hill described him so, by taking his own argument at face value and by assuming that Tillotson's reason was pure reason. Rivers understood that Tillotson's reason worked through innate knowledge of God, but she, like Spellman and Reedy, was misleading about the function of his reason in saying that the role of reason was restricted to task of proving the Bible true. However, as seen above, Tillotson's reason kept working to discover the true meaning of biblical passages.

Another misunderstanding shared by Hill, Rivers, and Reedy was that Tillotson's emphasis on reason downplayed two supra-rational elements of Christian revelation: miracles and mysteries. Reedy said that Tillotson, though uncomfortable with the existence of miracles and mysteries, defended mystery just because it was recorded in the Bible.<sup>152</sup> However, careful examination shows that miracles and mysteries were far from being de-emphasised by Tillotson, because both had their own places in his theology in different ways. First, miracles, being distinct from mysteries in that they were perceived by human senses, were regarded by Tillotson as sensible evidence of divine authority. As seen in Tillotson's defence of the Bible, miracles performed by Jesus and the apostles indicated that they were inspired by the holy spirit and that the doctrines they declared were divine truth. So, the miracles were an indispensable element for Tillotson's truth construction. Hill admitted this, but he argued that Tillotson 'limited their [miracles'] evidentiary value by linking them to natural religion.'<sup>153</sup> Hill mentioned Tillotson's words that 'a miracle is not enough to give credit to a prophet who teacheth any thing contrary to that natural notion which men have, that there is but one God.'<sup>154</sup> Hill was right in pointing out that Tillotson here said that miracles did not automatically prove the truth of the miracle performer's words, because there might be false prophets who could show miracles with the help of evil spirits. However, it could hardly be said that this cautionary remark reduced the evidentiary value of the miracles of Jesus and the apostles, because Tillotson did not believe they taught anything contrary to natural religion. Furthermore, perhaps to the surprise of the modern scholars, Tillotson thought miracles could still happen in his age in special circumstances – pioneering evangelism to the nations that had never heard of the Christian gospel before. He said, 'I think it still very credible, that if Persons of sincere minds did go to preach the pure Christian Religion... to infidel Nations, that God would still enable such Persons to work Miracles, without which there would be little or no probability of success.'<sup>155</sup> Tillotson seemed to believe that God would work in a special way when his people undertook an extraordinary task.

Second, for Tillotson, mysteries, i.e. things incomprehensible, were essential parts of religion, whether natural or revealed. As discussed in the Trinity debate, Tillotson argued that a natural reason which accepted the notion of divine perfection - which was mystery - did not

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<sup>152</sup> Reedy, "Interpreting Tillotson," p. 92.

<sup>153</sup> Hill, "The law of nature revived," p. 173.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid. p. 173.

<sup>155</sup> John Tillotson, *The evidence of our saviour's resurrection in Several discourses of the life, sufferings, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; and the operations of the holy ghost... the tenth volume* (1701, London), pp. 157-8. This point will be discussed in connection with Tillotson's apocalypticism in chapter 4 of this thesis.

have any reason to deny the biblical mystery of the Trinity. In his arguments with atheists as well, God was described as mysterious in nature by Tillotson, who said that we understood God to be perfect and excellent, ‘yet we see we know not how much more beyond that, which our understandings cannot fully reach and comprehend.’<sup>156</sup> Hill and Rivers argued that Tillotson sought a rational understanding of the Trinity and the Incarnation which downplayed the mysteries.<sup>157</sup> However, the main ‘rational’ basis in Tillotson’s works for believing incomprehensible doctrines was that the mysteries were revealed by God. It is true that in his sermon on the Incarnation Tillotson tried to give other explanations as to why God chose to become man as a method of human salvation. For example, Tillotson said the Incarnation was accommodated to human prejudices about God in the ancient world: people were inclined to worship a visible deity, they relied on animal or human sacrifice for the expiation of sins, and they tended to look for mediators because they thought that directly addressing the deity was presumptuous. These ancient concepts about divinity were satisfied by the Incarnation of Jesus. Another reason God chose the method was that through the Incarnation and the expiation of Jesus, God, showing that sins cannot be forgiven without sufferings, preserved his justice and discouraged people from committing sins. The Incarnation also provided people with a perfect example of holiness and obedience through the life of Jesus. However, Tillotson, before looking into these reasons satisfying human understanding, urged the audience to have a humble attitude towards the infinite wisdom of God. He exhorted, ‘since God hath been pleased to pitch upon this Way rather than any other, this surely ought to be reason enough to satisfy us of the peculiar wisdom and fitness of it, whether the particular Reasons of it appear to us or not.’<sup>158</sup> Finite human understanding was not in a position to question the appropriateness of the way of salvation, because God selected it out of his infinite wisdom. So, the purpose of seeking reasons why God revealed particular mysteries should not be to test the reliability of mysteries, but to more deeply appreciate the wisdom of God who designed them. Therefore, although Tillotson’s attempt to find a reasonable basis for mysteries was a kind of rational approach, it was not carried out in a way that reduced the significance of mysteries.

Tillotson’s stress on reason may have been considered provoking by those who thought that he used reason as the sole criterion of everything including religion. He indeed argued that reason was a means by which one could find fundamental truths and test the authenticity of revelation. However, close examination of the contents of his arguments shows that the reason

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<sup>156</sup> Tillotson, *The wisdom of being religious*, p. 8.

<sup>157</sup> Hill, “The law of nature revived,” p. 178, Rivers, *Reason, grace, and sentiment*, vol. 1, p. 71.

<sup>158</sup> Tillotson, *Sermons concerning the divinity and Incarnation of our blessed saviour*, p. 182.

he used as a criterion of truth was not 'pure' reason. The fundamental truths found by Tillotson's reason were always within the framework of a traditional Christian worldview. Furthermore, his reason was used to maintain that the Bible was true divine revelation and to defend traditional Christian doctrines through the interpretation of revelation. Thus, Tillotson's reason confirmed his biblicism, and the truths of his reason were those of Christianity.

Closing this chapter, it may be useful to make some links between themes related to Tillotson's reason and the later chapters. Some of Tillotson's claims about reason discussed in this chapter contained a 'utilitarian' element; at times he regarded something useful and beneficial as reasonable. For example, denying an atheistic argument that good and evil were arbitrary concepts, Tillotson asserted that virtue was objectively more virtuous than vice, because it brought benefits to humanity. Also, for Tillotson, the serious problem of atheism was the fact that it justified immoral behaviour, leading to actions that harm others, rather than the intellectual denial of God. With regard to Quakers' refusal to take oaths, Tillotson condemned their practice as unreasonable, because without oaths, the truthfulness of testimonies in court could not be guaranteed. Thus, it may be said that a crucial motive of Tillotson's arguments based on reason was to promote the harmony and happiness of human society, by encouraging virtuous and charitable behaviour of individuals.

Tillotson's attitude towards Socinians and the Athanasian Creed perhaps further illustrated his viewpoint. As seen above, Tillotson believed that Socinians were wrong in their denial of the Trinity, but with regard to the Athanasian Creed - which condemned those who did not believe the doctrine to eternal damnation - he wrote to Burnet, 'I wish we were well rid of it.'<sup>159</sup> Given Tillotson's vindication of the Trinity, the reason he did not like the creed was, not because of its doctrine, but because it included the phrases condemning those who disagreed with the creed. It shows that Tillotson was, with his own charitable spirit, reluctant to condemn non-Trinitarians, though he thought they were wrong about the doctrine. In fact, in the middle of criticising Socinian errors in his sermon, for a moment Tillotson praised their virtue of 'the fair way of disputing'<sup>160</sup> and said, 'they have but this one great defect that they want a good Cause and Truth on their Side; which if they had, they have Reason, and Wit, and temper enough to defend it.'<sup>161</sup> Thus, we see Tillotson's assessment of Socinians was significantly different from that of atheists. Doctrinal errors among Socinians could be tolerated

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<sup>159</sup> Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, p. 315.

<sup>160</sup> John Tillotson, *Sermons concerning the divinity and Incarnation of our blessed saviour* (London, 1693), p.

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.* p. 72.



if they had virtuous manners, whereas the vicious behaviour of atheists was more unacceptable than their intellectual denial of God. For Tillotson, charity and behaviour were above doctrines and formalities. We will continue to see this pattern of his thinking in the following chapters discussing his soteriology, ecclesiology, and politics.

## Chapter 2: Soteriology

Soteriology was one of the most important subjects of Tillotson's theology. For him, eternal happiness in the next world was the biggest advantage of religion and this advantage was the foundation for other advantages for individuals and societies in this world. It may be said that Tillotson did not require people to understand and accept many complicated doctrines for salvation. However, he was eager to teach the simple but crucial way to heaven. Martin Griffin contended that the soteriology of Tillotson and his fellow Latitudinarians equated Christianity with moralism. Griffin argued that for them reason and faith were different only in terms of their objects. Reason was the procedure of assent to evidences, and its objects were the things of this present world and the principles of natural religion. Faith was the same rational process but with the difference that its object was the revealed truth in the Bible. So, faith had no supernatural value in Tillotson's works, and could not help the process of salvation. Furthermore, according to Griffin, though Tillotson asserted the necessity of grace for sinners to perform what God required for salvation, the supernatural power of grace was reduced by the fact that it was effective only to those who co-operated with it. Thus, Tillotson's theology, based on reason, removed God's part in human salvation, and turned Christianity into morality.<sup>1</sup> Isabel Rivers defined Tillotson's and the Latitudinarians' theology as 'the religion of reason,' - while she saw that of Nonconformist theologians such as Richard Baxter and John Bunyan as 'the religion of grace.'<sup>2</sup> Rivers accepted that Latitudinarians did not deny the importance of grace, but she argued that they practically made grace meaningless, by regarding 'vice, sin, or human degeneracy as very much within human control.'<sup>3</sup> Thus, according to her, Latitude-men were optimistic about human nature and they believed people could save themselves by acting morally.

Some historians' thoughts differed from Griffin and Rivers, situating Tillotson in the mainstream of Protestantism. John Spurr insisted that Latitudinarians, with other Anglican divines, had not departed from justification by faith, but merely defined faith in a different way from their Puritan opponents. For Tillotson, justifying faith should include obedience to a holy

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<sup>1</sup> Martin Griffin, *Latitudinarianism in the seventeenth-century Church of England* (Leiden, 1992), pp. 60-88, 128-130.

<sup>2</sup> Isabel Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment: A Study of the Language of Religion and Ethics in England, 1660-1780, volume 1, Whichcote to Wesley* (New York, 1992), pp. 25-163.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 79.

life, and the acquisition of the true faith was impossible without divine grace.<sup>4</sup> William Spellman too maintained that the picture of Tillotson as a mere moral preacher was not correct. He particularly pointed out that Tillotson's Augustinian view of human nature under the influence of original sin led to the essential role of grace, without which human could not do any good works.<sup>5</sup> Similar to Spurr and Spellman, Alan Clifford thought Tillotson had a good sense of balance between faith and work, between Calvinism and Arminianism. He argued that the position of Tillotson was close to that of Calvin, who was not a Calvinist of the seventeenth-century's sense. By the Stuart era, English Calvinists tended to reject the value of good works to an extent that went far beyond Calvin's own work, but Calvin himself did not forget the moral aspect in terms of the assurance of salvation, though God's election was the fundamental basis of salvation.<sup>6</sup> Calvin wrote that 'one argument whereby we may prove that we are truly elected by God and not called in vain is that our profession of faith should find its response in a good conscience and an upright life.'<sup>7</sup>

The different interpretations suggest that Tillotson's soteriology is difficult to define simply. To understand his thought in detail, this chapter investigates Tillotson's opinion about the nature of grace, comparing it with that of contemporary Calvinists. Then, further examination is made of his view of the salvation of heathens, and his soteriological arguments with Catholics and Dissenters.

### The necessity of grace

In a sermon entitled *The necessity of supernatural grace, in order to a Christian life*, posthumously published in 1701, Tillotson asserted the important role of divine grace in salvation. The text of the sermon was 'for without me [Jesus] ye can do nothing.' (John 15:5) The verse is a part of the metaphor of a grapevine and branches which signified Jesus and Christians respectively. Tillotson said that as there was a natural union between the vine and

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<sup>4</sup> John Spurr, "Latitudinarianism and the Restoration church," *The Historical Journal* 31.1 (1988), pp. 80-82.

<sup>5</sup> William Spellman, "Archbishop John Tillotson and the meaning of moralism," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 56.4 (1987), pp. 404-422; William Spellman, *The latitudinarians and the Church of England, 1660-1700* (London, 1993), pp. 89-111.

<sup>6</sup> Alan Clifford, *Atonement and justification: English evangelical theology, 1640-1790: an evaluation*, (Oxford, 1990), pp. 169-239.

<sup>7</sup> J. Calvin, *Calvin's Commentaries*, ed. D. W. and T. F. Torrance, 12 vols. (Edinburgh, 1959-72), vol. 1, p. 10, quoted in Clifford, *Atonement and justification*, p. 174.

the branches, there was a spiritual union between Christ and Christians. He argued that this spiritual union had a supernatural character.

‘Tis true indeed that without God we can do nothing; we cannot think, or speak, or do any natural action, without the common assistance and concurrence of his Providence; for in him we live, and move, and have our being. But this assistance is natural, and ordinary, and commonly afforded to every Man in the World: but the Grace and Assistance of Christ signifies something extraordinary and supernatural, that which Divines mean by supernatural grace, in opposition to the ordinary concurrence of Divine Providence to all the actions of men.’<sup>8</sup>

Thus, the phrase, ‘ye can do nothing’ meant that one could not lead a proper Christian life without the supernatural assistance of grace. Tillotson was convinced that ‘a Man cannot make himself good, he cannot convert and change himself, nor by his own strength continue and hold out in a good course.’<sup>9</sup> In a sermon published in 1671, Tillotson argued that the belief in the grace of God was a great encouragement for Christians who were struggling. It was ‘true we have contracted a great deal of weakness and impotency by our wilful degeneracy from goodness; but that grace, which the Gospel offers to us for our assistance, is sufficient for us.’<sup>10</sup> Being a good Christian was not easy due to the depraved human nature caused by Adam’s fall, but sinners were not without hope because grace helped them to achieve what their own efforts alone could not. Given the necessity of grace, there was ‘great reason why we should continually depend upon God, and every day earnestly pray to him for the aids and assistances of his Grace.’<sup>11</sup>

Tillotson stressed that God played a leading role in the operation of saving grace. In fact, although he used the metaphor of a grapevine, Tillotson worried that this risked the impression that grace was only available in certain spiritual situations, after one became a true Christian, as branches could benefit from the vine only after they were grafted. So he affirmed that the grafting itself, signifying conversion, was due to grace. ‘When I say this Grace and Assistance is derived to us from our Union, I do not intend to exclude the necessity of God’s Grace and Holy Spirit to the conversion of a Sinner... for if we cannot bring forth fruit, without

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<sup>8</sup> John Tillotson, *The necessity of supernatural grace, in order to a Christian life, in Several discourses of the life, sufferings, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; and the operations of the Holy Ghost... the tenth volume* (London, 1701), p. 445.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 446.

<sup>10</sup> John Tillotson, *1 John v. 3. And his commandments are not grievous in Sermons preach'd upon several occasions* (London, 1671), p. 221.

<sup>11</sup> Tillotson, *The necessity of supernatural grace*, p. 461.

the aid and assistance of his Grace, much less without that could we be planted into him, and united with him.’<sup>12</sup> The crucial role of divine grace was also revealed when Tillotson explained the several functions of grace.

This [grace], according to the several uses and occasions of it, is by Divines called by several names. As it puts good motions into us, and excites and stirs us up to that which is good, ‘tis called preventing [prevenient] grace; because it prevents [goes before] any motion or desire on our parts: as it assists and strengthen us in the doing of any thing that is good, it is called assisting Grace: as it keep us constant in a good course, it is called preserving Grace: and may have several other denominations, in several other respects; for it is suited to all our occasions and necessities.<sup>13</sup>

Thus, according to Tillotson, if one did anything good, it was done by divine assistance of grace. God’s grace initially stirred one up to be desirous of doing good, existing before and apart from human actions, and it helped one to good behaviour and to persist in living a godly life. As we are about to see in the next section of this chapter, Tillotson argued that people could choose to co-operate with grace or not, but the overall operation of saving grace was in God’s hand. The level of God’s grace given could be different from one person to another, so the time required for the change of a sinner’s vicious life into a virtuous one could be longer or shorter, depending on ‘the different degrees of God’s Grace afforded to Men.’<sup>14</sup>

For Tillotson, the Incarnation of Jesus was the event in which God’s grace was most vividly shown to humanity. In sermons preached in St Lawrence Jewry in the Christmas season of 1680, he said that the Incarnation - ‘the great Mystery of Godliness...that God should be manifested in the flesh, and become man’ - was ‘a most gracious and merciful design to bring man back again to God.’<sup>15</sup> Jesus, ‘by assuming our frail and mortal Nature,’ ‘became capable of suffering and of shedding his precious Blood for us, and by that means of purchasing forgiveness of sins and eternal Redemption for us.’<sup>16</sup> After discussing this great favour from God, Tillotson urged the audience to have grateful heart as a proper response to the Incarnation. ‘With all possible thankfulness we should acknowledge and adore the wonderful Goodness and

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. pp. 460-1.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. p. 449. The insertions in brackets by the present writer.

<sup>14</sup> John Tillotson, *Of the nature of regeneration, and its necessity, in order to justification and salvation in Several discourses...the fourth volume* (London, 1697), p. 231.

<sup>15</sup> John Tillotson, *Concerning the Incarnation of Christ in Sermons concerning the divinity and Incarnation of our blessed Saviour* (London, 1693), p. 152-3.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. pp. 155-6.

Condescension of Almighty God in sending his only begotten Son into the World in our Nature.<sup>17</sup> Here we find Tillotson preaching the grace of the Incarnation passionately.

What an everlasting Fountain of the most invaluable Blessings and Benefits to Mankind is the Incarnation of the Son of God? His vouchsafing to assume our Nature, and to reside and converse so long with us? And what are we, that the eternal and only begotten Son of God should condescend to do all this for us? That the High and Glorious Majesty of Heaven should stoop down to the Earth, and be contented to be clothed with Misery and Mortality? That He should submit to so poor and low a Condition, to such dreadful and disgraceful Sufferings for our sakes? For what are We? vile and despicable Creatures, guilty and unworthy, Offenders and Apostates, Enemies and Rebels. Blessed God! how great is thy Goodness? how infinite are thy tender Mercies and Compassions to Mankind?... When we reflect seriously upon those great things which God hath done in our behalf, and consider that mighty Salvation which God hath wrought for us; what thanks can we possibly render, what acknowledgments shall we ever be able to make?<sup>18</sup>

Also, Tillotson enjoined people to have gratitude when they took the Lord's supper. 'Every time we have occasion to meditate upon this, especially when we are communicating at his H. Table and receiving the blessed Symbols and Pledges of his precious Death and Passion: How should our Hearts burn within us and leap for Joy? How should the remembrance of it revive and raise our Spirits, and put us into an Extasie of Love and Gratitude to this great Friend and Lover of Souls.'<sup>19</sup> Tillotson's hearty encouragement of thankfulness calls into question his image as a dry moralist who reduced the importance of free grace, because gratitude is generally due for undeserved favour. The heartfelt attitude towards the Incarnation indicates that for Tillotson the Christian gospel was not a redundant addition to moralism, but it was the free gift from God which deserved the earnest gratitude of recipients.

#### Argument with Calvinists: the necessity of good behaviour

Thus far, we have seen Tillotson affirming the necessity of grace. He was convinced that without divine grace the salvation of sinners was impossible. This Tillotson had in common

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<sup>17</sup> John Tillotson, *Concerning the Incarnation of B. Saviour* in *Sermons concerning the divinity and Incarnation of our blessed Saviour* (London, 1693), p. 221.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. pp. 222-3.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 226.

with Calvinists. However, he disagreed with them about the way grace worked. In this section, the soteriology of contemporary Calvinists such as John Owen and John Bunyan based on ‘irresistible grace’ is briefly discussed, and then Tillotson’s objection to their position is examined.

In Calvinist soteriology, it was a sovereign and independent God who saved sinners. God’s election of certain people to salvation rested solely in his sovereign will. His choice was made before the creation of the world and was not based on any actions or beliefs of individuals. According to this theory of unconditional election, some were predestined to eternal life and others were reprobate to death. Bunyan supported this predestinarianism with Rom 9:10, ‘for the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand not of works, but of him that calleth.’<sup>20</sup> He added, ‘here you find twain [two] in their mother’s womb, and both receiving their destiny, not only before they had done good or evil, but before they were in a capacity to do it.’<sup>21</sup> Following election, God’s power and grace operated on the elect in an irresistible way, so human will was not involved in their salvation. ‘The Holy Spirit extends to the elect a special inward call that inevitably brings them to salvation.’<sup>22</sup>

In Calvinism, when the elect have true faith in Christ they are justified in the instant. In justification sinners were pardoned and the righteousness of Christ was imputed to them, so they were declared right at the court of God. This was called the concept of forensic justification. John Owen wrote that justification denoted ‘to absolve, acquit, esteem, declare, pronounce righteous, or to impute Righteousness, which is the Forensick sense of the word we plead for.’<sup>23</sup> This juridical sense of justification was declared and complete at the moment of trust.<sup>24</sup> Justification and regeneration were two sides of the same coin. In regeneration, which literally meant being born again, God created a new man who was given a new ability to produce good works. If justification was a legal declaration, regeneration was complete inward change instantly made by God’s power.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> John Bunyan, *Reprobation asserted, or, The doctrine of eternal election & reprobation promiscuously handled in eleven chapters wherein the most material objections made by the opposers of this doctrine are fully answered, several doubts removed, and sundry cases of conscience resolved* (London, 1674), p. 6.

<sup>21</sup> Bunyan, *Reprobation asserted*, p. 6.

<sup>22</sup> David Steele and Curtis Thomas, *The five points of Calvinism; defined, defended, documented* (Philadelphia, 1963), p. 18.

<sup>23</sup> John Owen, *The doctrine of justification by faith through the imputation of the righteousness of Christ, explained, confirmed, & vindicated* (London, 1677), p. 172.

<sup>24</sup> Clifford, *Atonement and Justification*, p. 210.

<sup>25</sup> Steele and Thomas, *The five points of Calvinism*, pp. 48-9.

Sanctification was a gradual process of becoming holy, which came after justification and regeneration. In this process, human good works were the fruits of justification. However, they could never be contributory to salvation, because a believer's life could not be free from sins in this world. They could be saved only due to the imputed righteousness of Christ, not their own righteousness. Owen said, 'God hath not appointed this Personal Righteousness [sanctification] in order unto our Justification before him in this life, though he have appointed it, to evidence our Justification before others, and even in his sight... But we are not acquitted by it from any real charge in the sight of God, nor do receive Remission of sins on the account of it. And those who place the whole of Justification in the Remission of sins, making this personal Righteousness the condition of it leave not any place for the Righteousness of Christ in our Justification.'<sup>26</sup> In Calvinism, therefore, justification had priority over sanctification both in order and as the cause of salvation.

Tillotson firmly denied that grace always worked in this irresistible way. In a sermon preached both at Lincoln's Inn and St Lawrence Jewry in 1681, he insisted that the doctrine of irresistible grace was unreasonable, because it removed human responsibility. He said

it is contrary to Reason, to make an irresistible act of Divine Power necessary to our Repentance, and Conversion; because this necessarily involves in it two things which seem very unreasonable. First, That no Man Repents upon Consideration and Choice, but upon meer force and violent necessity, which quite takes away the Virtue of Repentance... Secondly, It implies that the Conversion and Repentance of those, upon whom God doth not work irresistibly is impossible, which is the utmost can be said to excuse the impenitency of Men, by taking it off from their own choice, and laying it upon the impossibility of the thing, and an utter disability in them to choose and do otherwise.<sup>27</sup>

In a sermon published in 1671, Tillotson criticised the Calvinist understanding of grace for effectively leaving nothing for humanity to do for its own salvation. According to him, Calvinists argued, 'this new Covenant of the Gospel God takes all upon himself, and requires nothing, or as good as nothing, of us; that it would be a disparagement to the freedom of Gods

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<sup>26</sup> Owen, *The doctrine of justification by faith*, p. 221-2.

<sup>27</sup> John Tillotson, *Of the nature of regeneration, and its necessity, in order to justification and salvation*, in *Several discourses...the fourth volume* (London, 1697), pp. 172-3. The circumstance of the sermon does not appear in the 1697 publication, but Irène Simon identified the dates and places from a manuscript (Ms. Rawlinson E. 125 in Bodleian Library). Irène Simon, *Three Restoration divines: Barrow, South, Tillotson*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1967), vol. 2, p. 350.



Grace, to think he expects any thing from us. That the Gospel is all Promises, and our part is only to believe and embrace them; that is, to be confident that God will perform them.’<sup>28</sup> Moreover, the belief in irresistible grace, Tillotson argued, made God responsible for the ruin of the unrepentant, because the reason they did not repent was God’s decision not to give them grace. He warned, ‘we must take great heed, that while we endeavour to make God to do all in the Conversion of Sinners, we do not by this means charge upon him the ruine and destruction of impenitent Sinners.’<sup>29</sup> Blaming God for this was an inevitable consequence, Tillotson thought, if it was assumed that ‘in the one, God works Repentance by an irresistible act of his Power, so that he cannot but Repent, and denys this grace to the other, without which he cannot possibly Repent.’<sup>30</sup> Thus, Tillotson believed that the Calvinist interpretation of grace risked not only getting rid of human responsibility for salvation, but also blaming God for the unsaved.

What was Tillotson’s opinion about the working of grace? Tillotson thought that to be saved, sinners were required to co-operate with grace given by God. For Tillotson, ‘co-operating’ with grace included making an individual effort to live the proper life of a Christian as well as consenting to the operation of grace. While for Calvinists grace was given to selected people and grace irresistibly achieved their salvation, for Tillotson grace was given to all people and their salvation depended on whether they co-operated with the grace or not. Tillotson believed the message of the Christian gospel demanded human actions.

God considering the lapsed and decayed condition of Mankind, sent his Son into the World, to recover us out of that sinful and miserable condition into which we were fallen, to reveal eternal life to us, and the way to it, and to purchase happiness for us, and to offer it to us upon certain terms and conditions to be performed by us.<sup>31</sup>

The problem was that sinners did not have power to perform the ‘terms and conditions’ offered by the gospel, i.e. to live a virtuous life as God commanded. Tillotson argued that divine grace was desperately needed for sinners to carry out their duty.

But we being weak and without strength, slaves to sin, and under the power of evil habits, and unable to free our selves from this bondage by any natural Power left in us, our Blessed Saviour, in great pity and tenderness to Mankind, hath in his Gospel offer’d,

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<sup>28</sup> John Tillotson, *2 Tim ii. 19. Let every one the nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity in Sermons preach'd upon several occasions* (London, 1671), p. 252.

<sup>29</sup> Tillotson, *Of the nature of regeneration*, p. 201.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.* p. 201.

<sup>31</sup> Tillotson, *The necessity of supernatural grace*, p. 448.

and is ready to afford to us an extraordinary assistance of his Grace and Holy Spirit, to supply the defects of our natural Power and strength. And this supernatural Grace of Christ is that alone, which can enable us to perform what he requires of us.<sup>32</sup>

Tillotson maintained that being a Christian meant not only assenting to the articles of the Christian religion, but also living a holy life in imitation of the example of sinless Jesus. He believed that ‘the Gospel requires something on our part. For the Covenant between God and us, is a mutual engagement; and as there are Blessings promised on his part, so there are Conditions to be performed on ours. And if we live wicked and unholy lives, if we neglect our duty towards God, we have no title at all to the blessings of this Covenant.’<sup>33</sup> When Tillotson preached about the Incarnation of Jesus, he exhorted his audience to make a proper response to this blessing, and that was co-operation with grace. ‘The consideration hereof [of the Incarnation] should persuade us all to comply with the great Design of all this, which is the Reformation of Mankind and the Recovery of us out of that sinful and miserable estate into which we were fallen.’<sup>34</sup> The Incarnation accomplished everything on the part of God, but we were required to do our part for salvation. ‘The Obedience and Sufferings of our B. Saviour are indeed accounted to us for Righteousness, and will most certainly redound to our unspeakable benefit and advantage upon our performance of the Condition which the Gospel doth require on our Part, namely, that every man that names the Name of Christ depart from iniquity.’<sup>35</sup> (2 Tim 2:19) This might seem to set a high standard for salvation, but Tillotson assured his hearers that God did not leave us without assistance. ‘The Grace of God's H. Spirit is ready to enable us to perform this Condition, if we earnestly ask it, and do sincerely co-operate with it.’<sup>36</sup> Thus, it was our own fault ‘if we fall short of that Happiness which Christ hath purchased, and promised to us upon such easie and reasonable conditions as the Gospel proposeth.’<sup>37</sup>

Tillotson knew that his argument for co-operation would be criticised by Calvinists. They would argue that he underestimated the grace of God, by making the work of grace dependent on human effort. However, Tillotson argued, ‘God is not robbed of any part of the glory of his grace,’ because the human part in salvation was ‘not worthy to be mention’d, in

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 448-9.

<sup>33</sup> Tillotson, *2 Tim ii. 19. Let every one the nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity*, pp. 251-2.

<sup>34</sup> Tillotson, *Concerning the Incarnation of B. Saviour*, p. 216.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. pp. 218-9.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. p. 219.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. p. 219.

Comparison of the riches of God's grace towards us.'<sup>38</sup> Tillotson used an allegory of a prince and a traitor. 'The grace and favour of a Prince is not the less in offering a Pardon to a Traytor, who puts forth his hand and gladly receives it, than if he forc'd it upon him whether he would or no... in both Cases the Man owes his Life to the great grace and goodness of his Prince.'<sup>39</sup> Another Calvinist criticism was that the doctrine of human co-operation with grace undermined the sovereignty of God, because it was not God but people who made difference. In his answer, Tillotson tried to preserve both God's sovereignty and the role of human co-operation. Tillotson admitted that the sovereignty of God converted some in an irresistible way 'when God pleaseth, and whom he designs to be extraordinary Examples, and Instruments for the good of others,' for example, Paul who experienced a dramatic conversion on the road to Damascus.<sup>40</sup> (Acts 9:1-19) However, apart from some extraordinary cases, Tillotson thought, 'sufficient grace is afforded to others, which is effectual to the Salvation of many, and rejected by a great many.'<sup>41</sup> As such, Tillotson sought to preserve the sovereignty of God by affirming that there were some rare cases of grace irresistibly working, but also highlighted the love and justice of God by arguing that he offered sufficient grace to all for their salvation, and stressed human responsibility by claiming that their salvation depended upon whether they would co-operate with grace.

Another point where Tillotson took issue with Calvinists was on the timing of salvation. As seen above, Calvinists believed that sinners were justified 'instantly' when they had faith in Jesus. And, in Calvinism, at the moment they were justified, or forgiven, by God, they were also regenerated, or born again. Tillotson accepted that the power of God could change one's life in an instant in some cases, but he thought they were rare. He argued that Calvinists made an error as a consequence of an excessive interpretation of metaphorical expressions of conversion in the Bible, such as a new creation and being born again. Tillotson maintained that the word 'regeneration,' which meant being born again, was used in the Bible to express the greatness of the change in a sinner's life, but it did not necessarily mean that the change was made in an instant. Rather, considering that 'Regeneration is the change of a Man's state, from a state of Sin, to a state of Holiness,' 'there is nothing in Reason, why a Man may not gradually be changed and arrive at this state by degrees.'<sup>42</sup> Tillotson thought that the transformation from

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<sup>38</sup> Tillotson, *Of the nature of regeneration*, pp. 197-8.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 200.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 211.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid. p. 211.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p. 228-9.

an evil course of life to a virtuous one took substantial effort and time in ordinary cases. In the process the repentant sinner

is under the sense and conviction of his sinful and miserable state, and sorrowing for the folly of his past Life, and coming to an effectual Purpose and Resolution of changing his Course; and it may be several times thrown back by the temptations of the Devil, and the power of evil Habits, and the weakness and instability of his own purpose; 'till at last, by the Grace of God following and assisting him, he comes to a firm Resolution of a better Life, which Resolution governs him for the future.<sup>43</sup>

Logically, there was an instant when individuals entered the regenerate state, but knowing the precise moment was neither easy nor necessary. What was important was, Tillotson believed, continuously seeking to reform one's life and keep it holy.

Arriving at the regenerate state did not remove the necessity of human effort. Tillotson said, 'after this change is made, and he arrived at this state of a Regenerate Man, he may by degrees grow and improve in it.' More importantly, though maintaining the regenerate state was easier than reaching it, slipping back into the former state was still possible. Tillotson warned

If when, by God's grace, we have in a good measure conquer'd the first difficulties of Religion, and gain'd some habitual strength against sin; if after this, we grow careless and remiss, and neglect our guard, and lay our selves open to temptations, Gods Spirit will not always strive with us: Notwithstanding all the promises of the Gospel, and the mighty assistances there offer'd to us, if we love any lust, and will with Sampson lay our head in Dalilah's lap, we shall be insensibly rob'd of our strength, and become like other men.<sup>44</sup>

Tillotson's belief that it took time and effort for sinners to reach the state of salvation led him to warn against the danger of deathbed repentances. He asserted that salvation could not be guaranteed by the repentance and the faith confessed on one's deathbed, because it could never be tested. Last minute repentance was dangerous also because, Tillotson argued, one's repentance and the resultant change of life was not an easy business, but a time-consuming process, requiring serious effort and the assistance of grace. In a sermon preached before the king during the Lent of 1671, he exhorted, 'how unfit are most men at such a time for so great

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid. pp. 230-1.

<sup>44</sup> Tillotson, *1 John v. 3. And his commandments are not grievous*, pp. 223-4.

and serious a work as repentance is, when they are unfit for the smallest matters.’<sup>45</sup> Tillotson went on to say,

For when death is ready to seize upon the sinner, and he feels himself dropping into destruction, no wonder if then the mens stomach come down, and he be contented to be saved; and seeing he must stay no longer in this world, be desirous to go to Heaven rather than Hell; and in order to that, be ready to give some testimonies of his repentance... in hopes of a pardon he make many large promises of amendment, and freely declare his resolution of a new and better life. But then it is the hardest thing in the world to judg[e], whether any thing of all this that is done, under so great a fear and force, be real.<sup>46</sup>

Tillotson did not absolutely deny the possibility of sincere deathbed repentances, but he thought they were very rare. He mentioned one example when he preached before Princess Anne in 1688, ‘we have but one Example, that I know of, in the whole Bible of the Repentance of dying Sinner; I mean that of the penitent Thief upon the Cross.’<sup>47</sup> However, this could not be an example that others should seek to follow, because ‘the circumstances of his Case are so peculiar and extraordinary, that I cannot see that it affords any ground of hope and encouragement to men in ordinary Cases.’<sup>48</sup> Therefore, Tillotson urged his audience to repent immediately they heard his words, and to start reforming their lives, if they were indulging in sins.

What emerges from Tillotson’s view about human co-operation with divine grace and about the timing of salvation is his stress on behaviour. Tillotson thought the change of a sinner started from inner resolution, but it was an outward holy life which guaranteed one was saved. If Tillotson heard someone confess the Christian faith, but did not yet see the manner of his life, Tillotson could not be sure of his salvation. However, Tillotson would not doubt the salvation of an acquaintance who constantly practiced Christian virtue. Tillotson’s emphasis on behaviour was revealed also when he described the features of the saved and the unsaved, because he distinguished the two groups in terms of their outward appearance of life, rather than their inward state or relationship with God. In a sermon he preached before the king in

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<sup>45</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached before the king, in Lent, 1671 in Sermons preach’d upon several occasions by John Tillotson... the second volume* (London, 1678), p. 23.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 23-4.

<sup>47</sup> John Tillotson, *The parable of the ten virgins, in a sermon preached before her royal highness the Princess Ann of Denmark at Tunbridge-Wells, September the 2d. 1688* (London, 1694), p. 16.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16.

1676, he considered ‘the character and mark of difference between a good and bad man’ based on the text, ‘in this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the Devil: whosoever doth not righteousness, is not of God.’<sup>49</sup> (1 John 3:10) Those who ‘in the Apostles sense may be said not to do righteousness’ were

1. They that live in the general course of a wicked life; in the practice of great and known sins, as injustice, intemperance, filthy and sensual lusts, profane neglect and contempt of God and Religion... 2. They who live in the habitual practice of any one known sin, or in the neglect of any considerable part of their known duty. For any vicious habit denominates a man, and puts him into an evil state. 3. They who are guilty of the single act of blasphemy, or murder, perjury, fraud or oppression, or of any other crime of the lime enormity.<sup>50</sup>

Then, who were the righteous? In a strict sense only those who lived a blameless and perfect life before God could be the righteous, but if these were the criteria then, Tillotson said, no one could be the children of God. However, Tillotson argued, ‘the text supposes some to be so, and therefore by doing righteousness the Apostle must necessarily be understood to mean something that is short of perfect and unsinning obedience.’<sup>51</sup> Thus, the children of God were

They who in the general course of their lives do keep the Commandments of God. And this implies these two things; That the tenour of our lives and actions be agreeable to the Laws of God; And that these actions be done with a sincere and upright mind, out of regard to God and another World, and not for low and temporal ends.

And I chuse rather to describe a righteous man by the actual conformity of the general course of his actions to the Law of God, than (as some have done) by a sincere Desire or resolution of obedience. For a desire may be sincere for the time it lasts, and yet vanish before it come to any real effect... it is certainly a great mistake in Divinity and of very dangerous consequence to the souls of men, to affirm that a Desire of grace is grace; and... a desire of obedience is obedience.<sup>52</sup>

As such, for Tillotson, what mattered was actual behaviour. He pointed out that the Calvinist stress on inner faith was a dangerous mistake, because it could not bring salvation unless it led

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<sup>49</sup> John Tillotson, *Sermon preached before the king, Febr. 25th 1675/6* (London, 1676), p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. pp. 6-7.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

to obedience. In his sermon on regeneration in 1681, again, he affirmed, ‘a bare assent to the truth of the Gospel, without the fruits of Holiness and Obedience, is not a living, but a dead Faith, and so far from being acceptable to God.’<sup>53</sup>

After describing the features of the righteous and the unrighteous, Tillotson dealt with the conditions of some people who misunderstood their state, or who were uncertain about it: broadly there were three cases. First, some corrupt people wrongly considered themselves to be righteous on mistaken grounds, such as being baptised, receiving the sacrament, or the mere confession of the Christian faith. Tillotson argued that these conditions and practices could not exempt one from the obligation of living a holy life. Second, some people, whose lives were generally good and acceptable to God, were worried about their state, because of the imperfection of their lives. Tillotson assured them that God, knowing human weakness, did not demand perfect obedience, but ‘provided the sincere endeavour and general course of our lives be to please him and keep his Commandments... our frailties shall not be imputed to us, so as to affect our main state.’<sup>54</sup> A sub-set of this group, influenced by Calvinism, were afraid that they might be reprobate. Tillotson argued that this was an unreasonable worry, because people who sincerely endeavoured to please God and to keep his commandments had no ground to suspect God’s secret plan to ruin them. Third, there were some who, according to Tillotson, had proper grounds to doubt their condition. ‘They have good resolutions, and do many things well; but they often fall, and are frequently pull’d back by those evil inclinations and habits which are yet in a great measure unsubdued in them.’<sup>55</sup> With regards to these ‘Borderers between two countries,’ Tillotson advised

Now the case of these persons is really doubtful, both to themselves and others. And the proper direction to be given them, in order to their peace and settlement, is by all means to encourage them to go on and to fortifie their good resolutions; to be more vigilant and watchful over themselves, to strive against sin and to resist it with all their might. And according to the success of their endeavours in this conflict, the evidence of their good condition will every day clear up and become more manifest.<sup>56</sup>

In this case, Tillotson reserved his judgement, but encouraged further effort. If such people continued to endeavours, soon their holy lives would clearly show their regenerate state. From

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<sup>53</sup> Tillotson, *Of the nature of regeneration*, p. 259.

<sup>54</sup> John Tillotson, *A Sermon preached before the king, Feb. 25th 1675/6* (London, 1676), p. 24.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 29-30.

this analysis of different kinds of people, it is obvious that Tillotson believed that the judgement of one's state regarding salvation should be based on behaviours which were perceptible, rather than invisible faith.

### The salvation of heathens

The topic of the salvation of heathens was not among the main issues of Tillotson's sermons. He did not take it as a sole subject of any sermon. Clearly there was little reason for a preacher, who addressed Christian congregations, to talk about heathens through a whole sermon without giving other main lessons. However, this theme might be worth our attention, because a theologian's opinion about what might happen to heathens living in the unevangelised part of the world could be a good test of his soteriology. Though Tillotson did not say much about the salvation of heathens, his passing remarks allow us to examine his view. A good place to start might be Tillotson's discussion on the condition of general humanity under the consequence of Adam's fall. In a sermon included in the collection published in 1686, Tillotson vindicated the Christian religion from the charge that God commanded laws that went against human nature, and so were unduly heavy burden to people.<sup>57</sup> Tillotson acknowledged that human nature was depraved to a large extent, saying 'there is a great degeneracy and corruption of human Nature, from what it was originally framed when it came out of God's hands... this weakness contracted by the fall of our first Parents naturally descends upon us their posterity, and visibly discovers it self in our inclinations to evil, and impotence to that which is good'<sup>58</sup> However, this did not mean a complete impotence of humankind, because

this degeneracy is not total. For though our faculties be much weakened and disordered, yet they are not destroyed nor wholly perverted. Our natural Judgment and Conscience doth still dictate to us what is good, and what we ought to do; and the impressions of the natural Law, as to the great lines of our duty, are still legible upon our hearts. So that the Law written in God's Word is not contrary to the Law written upon our hearts.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> John Tillotson, *Joshua XXIV. 15. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, chuse you this day whom you will serve in Sermons and discourses: some of which never printed before* (London, 1686), pp. 405-39. This sermon was a continuation of the ninth sermon of the same collection, which was preached before King Charles II in 1680 and was published in the same year, with the title *The Protestant religion vindicated, from the charge of singularity and novelty of singularity and novelty*.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid. p. 410.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 411.



According to this, God could not be a harsh lawgiver, because the commandments of God which were revealed in the Bible were already stamped on human nature, though in a vague form. As discussed in the chapter on Tillotson's reason, he firmly believed in the existence of innate ideas within human beings. Obviously this notion of natural law divinely inscribed on human heart could be grounds for salvation of heathens, because the divine inscription was commonly shared by all humankind, regardless of whether the Christian gospel was given to them or not. Although Tillotson did not make a direct connection between the natural law and heathens here, we will see him doing so below.

Another reason why the Christian religion was not an unreasonable burden was that God provided a remedy for the weakness of human nature. Tillotson argued that God 'hath not left us destitute of a sufficient aid and strength to enable us to conquer the rebellious motions of sin, by the powerful assistance of that grace which is so plentifully offered to us in the Gospel.'<sup>60</sup> After discussing the assistance of grace available through the Christian gospel, Tillotson briefly mentioned the case of those who were not under the gospel.

And this is the case of all those who live under the Gospel: As for others, as their case is best known to God, so we have no reason to doubt but that his infinite goodness and mercy takes that care of them which becomes a mercifull Creatour: Though both the measures, and the methods of his mercy towards them are secret and unknown to us.<sup>61</sup>

This remark about heathens had a significant implication, because it might effectively remove the distinction between Christians and heathens. The two groups already shared the natural law inscribed on their heart, and Tillotson now granted that God took care of heathens too in a way unknown to the Christian world, though he avoided using the word 'grace.' Tillotson was not able to explain in detail how God cared for those who were in the unevangelised world, but he believed that they were not out of God's sight, thus, not hopeless.

What was the condition of heathens in Tillotson's view? He broadly distinguished a small number of wise heathens from the generality of pagan people. In his sermon titled *The wisdom of being religious* which aimed to confute atheism, he argued that 'the general consent of Man-kind in this apprehension That there is a God, must in all reason be ascribed to' the fact that 'God himself hath stamped this Image of himself upon the Mind of Man.'<sup>62</sup> Tillotson noted

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 417.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 417.

<sup>62</sup> Tillotson, *The wisdom of being religious* (London, 1664), p. 24.

that to this there was an objection that there was ‘the general agreement of so many Nations for so many Ages in Polytheisme and Idolatry’<sup>63</sup> Tillotson’s answer was that

the generality of the Philosophers and wise men of all Nations and Ages did dissent from the multitude in these things; they believed but one Supreme Deity, which, with respect to the various benefits men received from him, had several Titles bestowed upon him; and although they did servilely comply with the People in worshipping God by sensible Images and Representations, yet it appears by their Writings that they despised this way of Worship as superstitious, and unsuitable to the Nature of God.<sup>64</sup>

According to Tillotson, though most pagans worshipped many false gods, the wisest of them believed in the existence of one supreme deity. This distinction of wise from unwise pagans was consistently held by Tillotson. In *A sermon concerning the unity of the divine nature and the B. Trinity* published in 1693, he made the same distinction and listed the names of heathen philosophers who had a correct notion of God. ‘In the midst of all this Crowd and confusion of Deities, and the various Superstitions about them, the Wiser Heathen, as Thales, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Tully [Cicero], Plutarch and others, preserved a true Notion of One Supreme God, whom they defined an infinite Spirit, pure from all Matter and free from all imperfection.’<sup>65</sup> Apart from these extraordinary cases, however, the majority of pagans were out of God’s favour. ‘The generality were grossly guilty both of believing more Gods, and of worshipping false Gods. And this must needs be a very great Crime, since the Scripture every where declares God to be particularly jealous in this Case, and that he will not give his glory to another, nor this praise to graven Images.’<sup>66</sup> (Isa 42:8)

Thus, Tillotson thought, wise heathens had the belief in one supreme deity which was the best faith available to them without having been evangelised. However, Tillotson did not say anything about their salvation when he was discussing their faith in one God. This is understandable when we consider that for Tillotson salvation depended more on behaviour than on faith as a mere intellectual consent. To have a deeper look, we need to turn to his posthumous publications. In a sermon published in 1700, Tillotson’s main concern was to stress the danger of impenitent people who heard the gospel message but rejected it. He warned that ‘the Case of those who are impenitent under the Gospel, is of all others the most dangerous, and their

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 24.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid. p. 24.

<sup>65</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon concerning the unity of the divine nature and the B. Trinity* by John, Lord Archbishop of Canterbury (London, 1693), p. 8.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

Damnation shall be heaviest and most severe.’<sup>67</sup> If they continued their wicked life till the end, they ‘shall be thrown down to Hell, and have our place in the lowest part of that dismal Dungeon, and in the very Centre of that fiery Furnace.’<sup>68</sup> In comparison with them, according to Tillotson, unrepentant heathens would be less severely punished, though their impenitence was inexcusable as well, because they did not receive God’s revealed laws, but had only ‘a natural Law written in Mens Hearts, which the Apostle tells us the Heathens had.’<sup>69</sup> (Rom 2:15) This law in every heart ‘which obligeth Men not to transgress, should oblige them to Repentance in case of Transgression. And this every Man in the World is bound to, tho’ he had never seen the bible, nor heard of the name of Christ.’<sup>70</sup> So, the universal law gave hope to heathens, though Tillotson said their hope was smaller than that of those under the gospel. ‘The heathens were not without hopes of God’s Mercy, and upon those small hopes which they had they encouraged themselves into Repentance.’<sup>71</sup> Tillotson presented a biblical example of repentance of heathens. In the book of Jonah, Ninevites, after hearing the warning of the prophet Jonah, immediately repented of their sins. The king of Nineveh proclaimed to his people, ‘let them turn every one from his evil ways, and from the violence that is in his hands. Who can tell, if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?’<sup>72</sup> (Jonah 3:8, 9) Tillotson believed that the repentance of pagans was possible and desirable. For him repentance was the only possible way for sinners, whether they were Christians or heathens, to begin a virtuous life.

What was Tillotson’s view of the morality of heathens? In a sermon published in 1702, he dealt with this theme, while arguing for the necessity of good works for salvation. In the latter part of the sermon, Tillotson answered an objection that he was trying merely to promote morality. His answer was that it depended on the meaning of morality. If morality meant ‘those virtues only which are sincere and substantial and real, the Principle and Root whereof is the love of God and Goodness, and the End the Honour and Glory of God,’ then Tillotson was happy to say he was promoting such a morality.<sup>73</sup> On the other hand,

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<sup>67</sup> John Tillotson, *The danger of impenitence, where the gospel is preach’d in Several discourses of repentance... the eighth volume* (London, 1700), p. 462.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid. p. 465.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid. p. 466.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid. p. 466.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid. p. 468.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. p. 468.

<sup>73</sup> John Tillotson, *Of the necessity of good works in Fifteen sermons on several subjects... the eleventh volume* (London, 1702), p. 159.

if by Morality men mean counterfeit Virtue, and the specious shew of Justice, and Charity, and Meekness, or any other Virtue, without the Truth and Reality of them, without an inward Principle of love to God and goodness, out of ostentation and vain-glory, or for some other bye[secret] and sinister end, such as probably were the Virtues of many Heathens, and it is to be feared of too many Christians; if this be that which the Objectors mean by Morality, then we do assure them that we preach up no such Morality.<sup>74</sup>

Here Tillotson mentioned that the virtues of many heathens were feigned, but he soon elaborated on these virtues to avoid being misunderstood, because he did not think that all their virtues were fake.

Not that I believe that all Virtues of the Heathen were counterfeit and destitute of an inward principle of Goodness; God forbid that we shou'd pass so hard a Judgment upon those excellent men, Socrates, and Epictetus, and Antoninus, and several others, who sincerely endeavoured to live up to the light and law of Nature, and took so much pains to cultivate and raise their minds, to govern and subdue the irregularity of their sensual appetites and brutish passions, to purifie and refine their manners, and to excel in all Virtue and Goodness. These were glorious Lights in those dark times, and so much the better for being good under so many disadvantages as the ignorance and prejudice of their Education, the multitude of evil Examples continually in their view, and the powerful temptation of the contrary Customs and Fashions of the generality of Mankind.<sup>75</sup>

Tillotson thought that in a sense the virtues of these heathens were more commendable than those of Christians, because they were surrounded by evil examples of the generality of pagans.

Tillotson also argued that the genuine virtues of heathens were, just in the case of Christians, the consequence of God's help. Though 'they [virtuous heathens] had not that powerful grace and assistance of God's holy Spirit which is promised and afforded to all sincere Christians,' Tillotson believed, 'such Persons were under a special care and providence of God, and not wholly destitute of Divine assistance, no more than Job and his Friends, mentioned in the old Testament, and Cornelius in the new, who surely were very good men, and accepted of

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid. pp. 158-9.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid. pp. 159-60.

God, tho' they were Gentiles.'<sup>76</sup> Thus, Tillotson found no reason to deny the chance of salvation to the righteous pagans.

there might be several good men among the Gentiles, in the same condition that Cornelius was before he became a Christian; of whom it is said, whilst he was yet a Gentile, that he was a devout man, and feared God, and that his prayer and his alms were accepted of God, a certain sign that they were not counterfeit. And if he had died in that condition, before Christ had been revealed to him, I do not see what reasonable cause of doubt there can be concerning his Salvation.<sup>77</sup>

Perhaps Tillotson's view of the salvation of heathens most clearly displayed his emphasis on moral behaviour in his soteriology, because he thought that heathens could be saved if their lives were sincere and moral, though they were very rare cases. It is true that he believed pagans were, to be saved, required to have the soteriological elements which he thought Christians needed for their salvation. Heathens, without God's laws revealed in the Bible, should follow the natural laws imprinted on their heart. Being destitute of the Christian doctrines, they should believe in one supreme deity. Though the grace given through the gospel was unavailable to them, God was able to help them in a special way. Interestingly, these alternative soteriological elements were not easily perceptible, and in some cases might be hidden or unknown: but the virtues of heathens, the most crucial element in their possible salvation, were clear and observable. This in fact suggests that Tillotson thought one's behaviour showed almost everything about salvation. Whether Christians or heathens, Tillotson said, they needed God's help to practice true morality, and the fact that God helped them meant that they had belief in one true God or deity: but for all, Christian or not, the key issue was whether people achieved a virtuous life of good outward behaviour. Given Tillotson's stress on the Incarnation and atonement of Jesus discussed earlier, Tillotson's conviction that heathens could be saved just like Christians is surprising: it might undermine the core of traditional Christian soteriology. The salvation of heathens was not among the central themes of Tillotson's theology, but his viewpoint on it may make him more radical than some historians have argued.

#### Soteriological criticisms: against Catholics and Dissenters

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p. 160.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p. mispaged 151. (p. 161 actually)

Tillotson's soteriological argument centred on behaviour was consistent during his lifetime. Divine grace was necessary, but grace led sinners to salvation only when they co-operate with it, by endeavouring to live a holy life. Most of his works upheld the same basic position whenever they were written. However, despite holding this broadly consistent position, particular events in Tillotson's life led him to fight against different opponents with regard to soteriology. This section examines Tillotson engaging his two main opposing groups - Catholics and Dissenters.

Under the reign of the Catholic king James II, Tillotson's wariness of Catholicism markedly increased. In a sermon preached before Princess Anne in September 1688, Tillotson's soteriology was mixed with anti-papal mentality. The sermon was based on Christ's parable of ten virgins. The main text was Matth 25:1-2 'Then shall the Kingdom of Heaven be likened unto ten Virgins, which took their Lamps, and went forth to meet the Bridegroom. And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.' In the parable, each of the ten bridesmaids carried a lamp and waited for the bridegroom at night. The five wise virgins prepared additional oil for their lamps, but the five foolish ones did not. Late at night, they heard the call to come to meet the bridegroom. The foolish virgins, seeing their lamps going out, asked the wise for oil, but the wise ones declined to give them any, saying that there would not be enough to share. While the foolish five were away to buy more oil, the bridegroom arrived. The wise virgins participated in the marriage feast with him while the foolish ones could not enter. This is the end of the parable. What then, was the meaning of oil, wise virgins, and foolish ones? Tillotson interpreted as follows.

By Oyl in their Lamps and the first lighting of them, which was common to them both, is meant that solemn Profession of Faith and Repentance which all Christians make in Baptism; By farther supply of Oyl, which the wise Virgins only took care to provide, is signified our constancy and perseverance in this Profession, together with the fruits of the Spirit... by the practice and exercise of all the Graces and Virtues of a good life whereby men are fitted and prepar'd for Death and judgment, which are here represented to us by the coming of the Bridegroom.<sup>78</sup>

The first oil meant the profession of faith which was shared by all Christians. The difference between the two sorts of virgins, i.e. Christians, was, according to Tillotson, whether they

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<sup>78</sup> John Tillotson, *The parable of the ten virgins in a sermon preached before Her Royal Highness Princess Ann of Denmark at Tunbridge-Wells, September the 2d, 1688* (London, 1694), p. 3.

continuously practised virtues or not. Tillotson placed this exhortation of persistence in the circumstances of England of the day, where Protestantism was in danger. 'For God's sake, since in this hour of Temptation when our Religion is in so apparent hazard, we pretend [aspire] to love it to that degree as to be contented to part with any thing for it, let us resolve to practise it; and to testify our love to it... by keeping his commandments.'<sup>79</sup>

In addition to encouragement of adherence to Protestantism, Tillotson also gave warning against the danger of Catholicism. He ingeniously interpreted the parable as condemning the Catholic doctrine of the treasury of merit. In the parable, the foolish virgins tried to get oil from the wise ones, but the wise virgins refused on the grounds that the oil would not be enough to share. From this, Tillotson argued that one's good works, which were signified by oil, could not be transferred to others for their salvation. Tillotson criticised the Church of Rome for claiming to be able to do what the foolish virgins tried in vain. Catholic theologians argued that there were some people so excellent and holy that they could do more good works than they needed for their own salvation. The extra merit could be stored in the treasury of the church and, according to them, the pope, 'by his Pardons and Indulgences' could transfer the merit 'to whose account he pleases: And out of this Bank, which is kept at Rome, those who never took care to have any Righteousness of their own may be supplied at reasonable rates.'<sup>80</sup> Tillotson, of course, was critical that the doctrine of treasury was used to satisfy the financial greed of the Catholic clergy, since sinners were willing to pay for merit to be transferred to them. However, a more serious problem for Tillotson was that it removed the need for one's good behaviour for salvation. He censured the Catholics that

they have enervated the Christian Religion to that degree, that it hath almost quite lost its true virtue and efficacy upon the hearts and lives of men: And, instead of the real fruits of Goodness and Righteousness, it produceth little else but Superstition and Folly; or if it produce any real Virtues, yet even the virtue of those Virtues is in a great measure spoil'd by their arrogant pretences of Merit and Super-erogation, and is render'd insignificant to themselves by their insolent carriage and behaviour towards God.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid. pp. 18-9.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p. 19.

Tillotson thought that this error was due in part to the Catholic view that human works were meritorious for salvation. To deny this, he set forth his view of the relationship between the merit of Christ and human works.

Indeed our B. Saviour hath merited for us all the Reward of eternal Life, upon the Conditions of Faith and Repentance and Obedience: But the infinite Merit of his Obedience and Sufferings will be of no benefit and advantage to us, if we our selves be not really and inherently righteous. So St. John tells us, and warns us to beware of the contrary Conceit, Little children, let no man deceive you, he that doth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous. (1 John 3:7) If we do sincerely endeavour to please God and to keep his commandments in the general course of a holy and virtuous Life, the Merit of Christ's perfect Obedience and Sufferings will be available with God for the acceptance of our sincere though but imperfect Obedience.<sup>82</sup>

According to Tillotson, merit belonged not to human good works, but only to Christ, but sinners could benefit from the merit of Christ when they achieved good works by imperfect but sincere obedience.

Another criticism Tillotson made of Catholicism from the parable was that the Church of Rome denied the salvation of the non-Catholic Christians on the grounds that they did not accept papal supremacy. By the fact that in the parable the number of wise virgins was equal to that of foolish ones, Tillotson argued, God showed his merciful design towards his people: since at least as many were to be saved as lost. Contrary to this charitable design, the Church of Rome, Tillotson castigated, not only 'shut out all the Reform'd Part of the Western Church, almost equal in number to themselves, from all hopes of Salvation under the notion of Hereticks; but likewise to un-church all the other Churches of the Christian World, which are of much greater extent and number than themselves, that do not own subjection to the bishop of Rome.'<sup>83</sup> Tillotson warned his hearers against this narrow and uncharitable disposition, and encouraged them to 'extend our charity to all Churches and Christians, of what Denomination soever, as far as regard to Truth and to the foundations of the Christian Religion will permit us to believe and hope well of them.'<sup>84</sup> In the next chapter, we will see Tillotson's charity-based ecclesiology in more detail. With regard to salvation, Tillotson had a generous view of Christians of different denominations. For him, differences in doctrines and practices among

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid. p. 20.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid. pp. 7-8.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p. 7.



denominations could not be a matter serious enough to deny salvation. This liberal attitude was well expressed in his earlier sermon preached in 1673, which also displayed a strong anti-Catholic sentiment. After pointing out what he considered Roman Catholic errors throughout the sermon, he said that his main aim as a preacher was, far from attacking Catholicism or disputing religious matters, to ‘perswade any one to be a good man, than to be of any party or Denomination of Christians whatsoever,’ because ‘I doubt not but the belief of the Ancient Creed, without the addition of any other Articles, together with a good Life, will certainly Save a man.’<sup>85</sup> This shows Tillotson’s soteriological optimism: as we already saw, he thought the salvation of heathens was possible, so it is not surprising to see him arguing that belief in very basic Christian doctrines, coupled with a moral life, was enough to save souls.

As the 1688 revolution reduced the threat from Catholicism, Tillotson seemed to begin putting his emphasis more on union among Protestants and on warning against division. In April 1689, before William III and Mary II, he preached a soteriological sermon based on Luke 10:42 ‘but one thing is needfull.’ The one thing needful was, of course, to take care of one’s soul for salvation. It included, Tillotson said, the belief in fundamental religious principles, the constant exercise of piety and virtues, and avoiding the sins jeopardising one’s salvation. Of these, particular attention was paid to the last item. Tillotson warned that one of the most pernicious sins was ‘an inordinate love of the World’ which ‘tempts men to forsake God and Religion when their worldly interests come in competition with them.’<sup>86</sup> However, he warned, targeting Nonconformists, ‘besides these dangers which are more visible and apparent, there is another which is less discernible because it hath the face of Piety; and that is Faction in Religion: By which I mean an unpeaceable and uncharitable zeal.’<sup>87</sup> The reason why faction was particularly dangerous was that factious people ‘are so zealous about small things... that they neglect the weightier things of the Law, Faith and Mercy, and Judgment, and the Love of God’ which were ‘more necessary and essential parts of Religion.’<sup>88</sup> A year later, Tillotson again preached against division before the mayor of London. In the sermon, citing a Jewish historian Josephus, Tillotson argued that one of the main reasons Jews were ruined by Romans was the division among them. He then made a parallel between Israel and England. ‘We, I say, who next to the Jewish Nation seem to be a People highly favoured by God above all the Nations

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<sup>85</sup> [John Tillotson], *A sermon lately preached on I Corinth. 3. 15* (n.p., 1673), p. 33.

<sup>86</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preach’d before the King and Queen at Hampton-Court, April the 14th, 1689* (London, 1689), pp. 14-5.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.* p. 15.

of the Earth. We resemble them very much in their many and wonderful Deliverances, and a great deal too much in their Faults and Follies.’<sup>89</sup> Tillotson enjoined his hearers to avoid their ruin, by stopping ‘Factions and Divisions, which were... the immediate cause and means of those dismal Calamities.’<sup>90</sup>

Tillotson thought that the division among English Protestants was caused by the controversies about church rituals or abstract and minor doctrinal issues, mostly raised by Dissenters. He condemned those who were ‘so concern’d about little Speculative Opinions in Religion’ and neglected ‘the Practice of Religion.’<sup>91</sup> Tillotson maintained that the serious problem was not a mistaken opinion but misbehaviour. He deplored

they are so taken up in spying out and censuring Errour and Heresy in others, that they never think of curing those Lusts and Vices and Passions which do so visibly reign in themselves. Delude people! that do not consider that the greatest Heresy in the World is a wicked life, because it is so directly and fundamentally opposite to the whole design of the Christian Faith and Religion: And that do not consider, that God will sooner forgive a man a hundred defects of his Understanding than one fault of his Will.<sup>92</sup>

It was obvious for Tillotson that right behaviour rather than right opinion brought about the salvation of souls. He warned that an uncharitable and sectarian disposition to find fault with others could jeopardise one’s salvation.

This section has shown, on the one hand, that Tillotson focused on slightly different issues regarding soteriology in the different phases of his career, but that on the other his emphasis was consistently on behaviour. Under James II he was alerted by Catholic aggrandisement. Tillotson asserted Catholicism replaced Christian virtues with man-made tradition as the way to salvation. Particularly he attacked the doctrine of the treasury of merit, because he believed it plainly took away the necessity of effort to live a good life. After the 1688 revolution removed the Catholic government, Tillotson was more concerned about healing the division among English Protestants. He warned that a divisive spirit not just destroyed the national community, but also endanger one’s salvation, because it distracted Christians from pursuing a holy and charitable life. Regardless of circumstances, what

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<sup>89</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at St Mary le Bow before the lord mayor, court of aldermen, & citizens of London* (London, 1690), p. 25.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

<sup>91</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon preach'd before the King and Queen at Hampton-Court*, p. 16.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. p. 16.

provoked him was something which destroyed the practice of virtuous life, which he thought was essential for salvation. Throughout his career, Tillotson was at pains to affirm the importance of good behaviour, without which one could not be accepted in heaven.

### Conclusion

Early studies of Tillotson tended to see him as a moralist who downplayed the role of grace. It is true that, as Rivers observed, Tillotson at times described grace as identical to moral virtue. However, close examination shows that Tillotson's concept of grace was richer than some scholars have assumed. Tillotson believed that grace worked at God's initiative. He argued that though God gave sufficient grace for salvation to all humankind, God provided different degrees of grace for different people. Due to this, Tillotson thought, some people could achieve a holy life more easily and quickly than others. Paul was an extreme case in which an overwhelming degree of grace was given for the dramatic change of his life. Thus, Tillotson encouraged his hearers to earnestly ask God for grace for the improvement of their lives. He maintained God's grace was indispensable for salvation, but the exact way divine grace worked was a mystery and unknown to people.

In order for grace to achieve salvation, however, Tillotson asserted, some human effort was required. Apart from rare cases such as Paul, Tillotson argued, the sinner had to co-operate with grace to benefit from it. A holy life was the visible effect of successful human co-operation. Thus, for Tillotson, the main role of grace was to help the sinner behave well, and good behaviour was central to salvation. Historians such as Spellman have pointed out that Tillotson affirmed the necessity of grace for salvation, but they did not pay much attention to the fact that in Tillotson's theology the realm where grace was desperately needed for salvation was behaviour rather than faith. Tillotson's stress on behaviour leads us to see him as a moralist, but he also believed that virtuous behaviour could be performed by humankind only with divine assistance. In this regard, Tillotson may be called a grace-based moralist. In fact, his moral emphasis was hard to miss, but he did not abandon the role of grace in moral behaviour. It was a moralism based on grace which Tillotson presented.

### Chapter 3: Ecclesiology

The Church of England, since its birth in the sixteenth-century, had ‘had a mixed parentage’ of medieval church ceremonies and government on one hand, and early modern Protestant theology on the other, which functioned as a dividing force among its members.<sup>1</sup> The Henrician Reformation separated the national church from the Church of Rome, but ‘offered an uncomfortable mix of pragmatism, evangelism, and reactionary conservatism.’<sup>2</sup> After the more radical Protestant reforms under Edward VI, and the reversion to Catholicism under Mary I, the Elizabethan settlement in 1559 established the Church of England’s Protestant identity within the medieval inheritance of episcopacy and liturgy. Elizabethan authorities, while enacting a liturgical unity, tried to constrain a movement for further reform advanced by Puritans.<sup>3</sup> The unrealised aspirations of the Puritans generated considerable discord within the Church of England. By the mid-seventeenth century, the political conflict between King Charles I and English parliament, entangled with the underlying religious discord, caused the Civil War in 1642.<sup>4</sup> The victory of the parliamentarians over the royalist episcopalians resulted in the abolition of monarchy with the execution of Charles I, and Oliver Cromwell, who governed the country during the Interregnum, dismantled the ceremonial parts of the national church and tolerated separatist churches.<sup>5</sup> Protestants with radical positions ‘fashioned their own curious hybrids of conventional and heterodox churchmanship.’<sup>6</sup> Many different religious groups, such as Presbyterians, Independents, Quakers, and Baptists, emerged and enjoyed freedom of worship during the Interregnum.

In 1660, however, the English monarchy was restored with Charles II, and after that there was no doubt that the national church supported by the crown would return, too. However, it was unclear what form the restored Church of England would take. Separatist religious communities, which had enjoyed the freedom of worship during the Interregnum, clamoured

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<sup>1</sup> Tony Claydon, “The Church of England and the churches of Europe,” in Jeremy Gregory ed., *The Oxford history of Anglicanism, volume II: establishment and empire, 1662-1829* (Oxford, 2017), p. 314.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Milton, “Introduction: reformation, identity, and ‘Anglicanism’, c. 1520-1662,” in Anthony Milton ed., *The Oxford history of Anglicanism, volume I: Reformation and identity, c. 1520-1662* (Oxford, 2017), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Peter Marshall, “Settlement patterns: the Church of England, 1553-1603,” in Milton ed., *The Oxford history of Anglicanism, volume I*, pp. 45-62.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Claire Cross, “The church in England: 1646-1660,” in G. E. Aylmer ed., *The Interregnum: the quest for settlement, 1646-1660* (London, 1972), pp. 99-120.

<sup>6</sup> Anthony Milton, “Unsettled reformations, 1603-1662,” in Milton, ed., *The Oxford history of Anglicanism, volume I*, p. 80.

for a moderate religious settlement. Some, such as Presbyterians, demanded a broader national church with a modified liturgy which they would be willing to take part in, while others, such as Independents, hoped to worship freely apart from the national church structure. The Declaration of Breda made by Charles in April 1660 promised a liberty to tender consciences, and the ensuing Worcester House Declaration outlined a form of reduced episcopacy suggested by James Ussher: the size of dioceses would be reduced and the power of bishops would be exercised only with the ordinary clergy playing a greater role in governance. These movements seemed to give the green light to hopes for a broad-based church.<sup>7</sup>

The vision of a moderate settlement, however, gave way to the rigid Act of Uniformity which forced Nonconformists out of the Church of England. Though Charles II might have been seeking a flexible solution, many of 'his ministers and allies' did not agree with him, and 'the government's confusions and divisions over ecclesiastical policy' did much to shape the final settlement.<sup>8</sup> The conservative opinion of hard-line episcopalians was influential. A bill to enact the Worcester House Declaration was dropped in the House of Commons. The Savoy Conference from April to July 1661 which brought together Presbyterian and episcopal clergy to discuss revision of the Book of Common Prayer was 'one-sided' and the voice of the Presbyterian side headed by Richard Baxter was ignored.<sup>9</sup> A bill of uniformity, which required all clergy to use the existing prayer book and to declare their consent to everything contained in it, was passed in May 1662, and the Act of Uniformity came into force on St Bartholomew's day in August. As a result of this, nearly 1,000 ministers were ejected from their livings, and the clergy and their flocks became liable to the penal laws known as the Clarendon Code.<sup>10</sup>

After the Act of Uniformity outlawed worship outside the established church, Dissenters kept asking – if the Church of England could lawfully separate from the Church of Rome, why could not Dissenters lawfully separate from the Church of England? This was a question that plagued Anglican divines in the Restoration era. The discussion of Tillotson's ecclesiology in this chapter will centre on his answer to this question. Regarding the break-up with the Church of Rome, the rejection of the erroneous doctrines of Rome was commonplace in Protestant argument, and Tillotson combined this doctrinal rejection with an Erastian argument to justify the separation of a national church. However, closer examination of

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<sup>7</sup> John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven, 1991), pp. 29-36.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. p. 37.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid. p. 38.

<sup>10</sup> Tim Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and his kingdoms, 1660-1685* (London, 2005), pp. 43-56; Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England*, pp. 36-42.

Tillotson's criticism of Catholicism reveals that he thought the chief problem of the Church of Rome was its lack of charity. In fact, the emphasis on charity was central to his ecclesiology. When Tillotson engaged in arguments with Dissenters, he denounced them for the same reason – the lack of charity. Tillotson maintained that their failure to conform to the established church showed not only disloyalty to the monarch but also their lack of charity towards fellow believers. According to Tillotson, the practice of love was the core of Jesus's teaching, so it should be a mark of the true church, as well as of the true faith of individual Christians. In what follows, while general elements of the Restoration ecclesiology are discussed, it will be shown that charity was at the heart of Tillotson's thought on the true church.

It was not an easy task to defend the established church's attempt to integrate all the Christians in England into its episcopal church government and a fixed form of worship, not least because there were many different forms of Protestant churches in western Europe. The tension between the national and international religious communion had been present in English ecclesiology since the Reformation officially separated English Christians from the Church of Rome, but also aligned them with other Protestant congregations on the continent. Despite the argument that John Foxe's *Acts and monuments* presented England as the true elect nation, it was not possible to believe there were no true churches in the world beyond England.<sup>11</sup> Patrick Collinson pointed out that even in Foxe's works, his ethnocentric enthusiasm for the Church of England was 'tempered by the sense that the Church achieved its truest identity above nationality and beyond history, as a mystical entity.'<sup>12</sup> Collinson noted, 'Protestantism complicated the religious sense of nationhood even while it intensified it.'<sup>13</sup> In the late seventeenth century, Anglican churchmen were required to argue against the validity of the co-existence of various forms of worship in England, while admitting that Protestant churches beyond England could lawfully worship in different ways from the Church of England. Dissenters argued that they were demanding the same right that the Church of England asserted when it justified its separation from the Church of Rome. So, to justify ecclesiastical monopolies, churchmen had to insist that the case of the Church of England was different from that of Dissenters. The existing scholarship has identified that their arguments for this purpose were mainly based on Protestantism, Erastianism, and episcopalianism, corresponding to the features of the Church of England – doctrinal rejection of Roman Catholic theology, royal

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<sup>11</sup> William Haller, *Foxe's book of martyrs and the elect nation* (London, 1963), pp. 224-50.

<sup>12</sup> Patrick Collinson, *The birthpangs of Protestant England: religious and cultural change in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries* (Basingstoke, 1988), p. 16.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.* p. 17.

supremacy, and an episcopal church government.<sup>14</sup> As we shall soon see, although these arguments conflicted with each other at some points, they were avidly utilised by Anglicans, and were often used jointly.

### Ecclesiology in the Church of England

Within the argument based on Protestantism, churchmen tried to emphasise the difference between the Church of England and the Church of Rome. They insisted that while Roman Catholicism was full of doctrinal errors and fake traditions that were repugnant to the word of God, the Church of England had sound doctrines and it was rooted in the principles taught by Jesus and the apostles. According to this argument, English Protestant reformers could show that the doctrines and practices of Rome were contrary to scripture, so the Church of England could legitimately separate from the Church of Rome, but Dissenters could not legitimise their Nonconformity because the Church of England had been purified from the errors of Rome. Robert Grove, who was later made bishop of Chichester, observed that Dissenters said they had left the established church because its fixed form of public worship and ceremonies ‘gives great Scandal to the weak’ and because they could find ‘greater Edification’ elsewhere.<sup>15</sup> To this, Grove answered, ‘none of these things against which the exceptions are made are Unlawful; and therefore they cannot make our Communion Unlawful; and if that be not Unlawful, it must be Unlawful to divide from it.’<sup>16</sup> Jean Durel, a French divine who admired the English communion, raised the Protestant argument to an international level in his book published in 1662.<sup>17</sup> He quoted passages written by European reformers such as Marin Bucer and John Calvin, which he argued approved and commended England’s ecclesiastical arrangements. In this way, Durel aimed to show that the Church of England was an excellent communion acclaimed by Protestants across Europe, so that all Englishmen were bound to conform to the communion.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven, 1991), pp. 105-165; Tony Claydon, *Europe and the making of England, 1660-1760* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 284-313; John Marshall, “The ecclesiology of the latitude-men 1660-1689: Stillingfleet, Tillotson and ‘Hobbism’,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36.3 (1985), pp. 407-27.

<sup>15</sup> [Robert Grove], *A perswasive to communion with the Church of England* (London, 1683), pp. 18-19.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 19.

<sup>17</sup> Jean Durel, *A view of the government and publick worship of God in the reformed churches beyond the seas* (London, 1662).

<sup>18</sup> Claydon, *Europe and the making of England*, pp. 284-5, 290.

The Dissenters, however, were unconvinced. They accused Durel of quoting foreign Protestants' approval out of context and of exaggerating scattered similarities into an agreement in form of worship.<sup>19</sup> More generally, the Protestant argument could not effectively persuade Dissenters to join the established church, mainly because the Nonconformists believed that they, too, were Protestants with true biblical faith. They argued that their worship beyond the establishment did not give rise to schism because Conformists and Protestant Nonconformists shared the one faith. They asserted that it was internal true faith, not external uniformity, which united Christians. Richard Baxter argued, 'our Unity lyeth not so much in meeting in one place, as in being of one Mind, and Heart and Life.'<sup>20</sup> John Owen also maintained, 'the Apostles did give Rules of Faith... which we find recorded in the Scripture. Unto all these Rules we do declare our assent and consent, with an entire conformity; ... this is enough to free us from the charge of Schisme.'<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, arguments based on international Protestantism strengthened the case of Dissenters, because their logic approved Protestant churches overseas as well as the Church of England, despite the fact that they were separate institutions. If the outward form of true church could differ from one country to another, why could different types of churches not legitimately co-exist together in one country?<sup>22</sup> This predicament was answered in different ways by Erastians and episcopalians.

Anglican apologists with Erastian views maintained that the English Dissenters were required to conform to the establishment supported by the crown because the secular magistrate had authority over religious matters, as well as civil ones, in his country. In such an argument, state control was necessary to ensure Christian peace. The reason for this was that when Christ preached the gospel he did not decide the precise manner of worship or the form of the visible church. These areas were 'things indifferent' and Christians were free to shape outward forms according to their preferences. However, total liberty might lead to confusion and chaos, and even inappropriate forms of worship due to ignorance, and, as a result, put an end to the unity among Christians. To avoid such confusion, a centripetal force was necessary, and state control was a useful and practical answer. Erastian apologetics, therefore, insisted that civil power had authority to decide indifferent matters. Magistrates operating in different nations could lawfully decide external details in a variety of ways, so long as the fundamentals of faith were retained.

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid. p. 304.

<sup>20</sup> Richard Baxter, *The cure of church-divisions, or, directions for weak Christians to keep them from being dividers or troublers of the church* (London, 1670), p. 296.

<sup>21</sup> [John Owen], *A brief vindication of the non-conformists from the charge of schism* (London, 1680), pp. 24-5.

<sup>22</sup> Claydon, *Europe and the making of England*, p. 304.



Thus, while Christians in other parts of the globe could shape their church and divine worship in their ways which diverged from that of the Church of England, English Christians were required to follow the form decided by English monarchs. Edward Stillingfleet, a London clergyman and later bishop of Worcester after the 1688 revolution, expressed a strong Erastian sentiment in his 1661 work *Irenicum*. He insisted that the magistrate was ‘bound to defend, protect, and maintain the Religion he owns as true.’<sup>23</sup> The religious authority of the magistrate was valid ‘by virtue of his office... The maintainer of the honour of Gods Laws.’<sup>24</sup>

From the viewpoint of Erastianism, the Church of England’s episcopacy was defended simply because it had royal support rather than because it had more validity than other forms of church government. Though episcopacy was considered a prudent and very efficient system, it was a historical accident that had survived in England. However, for episcopalian apologists, the manner of shaping church government was not regarded as a part of things indifferent, and episcopacy was not a historical contingency, but it had apostolic legitimacy in itself. In the episcopalian argument, Dissenters, who lacked this legitimate church institution, had to join the Church of England which retained it. This ecclesiology centred on bishops gained much vigour in the mid-seventeenth century, paradoxically when episcopacy was at its lowest. During the Interregnum more churchmen began to think that fundamental authority within the church rested with the episcopate rather than with civil power, which - held by parliamentary radicals, Cromwell, and the army - had destroyed episcopacy.<sup>25</sup> Herbert Thorndike, a Cambridge scholar who lost his college post during the Interregnum and was reinstated with the Restoration, was a passionate defender of episcopacy. He commented that the apostles had instituted bishops to rule over churches, and that universal authority ran through the succession of bishops. They were authorised to exercise exclusive authority over the lower clergy within dioceses. Any intrusion into the bishop’s rights, whether by other ministers and laity from within, or by another bishop from without (particularly the Bishop of Rome), would break the order of universal church.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, Thorndike argued, bishops, as heads of their dioceses, had a role of ensuring harmony between dioceses, and collectively constituted the representative body of universal church. Thorndike described the universal communion of bishops as ‘a standing Synod’ which was able to ‘conclude the whole.’<sup>27</sup> In his vision, ‘the

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<sup>23</sup> Edward Stillingfleet, *Irenicum. a weapon-slave for the churches wounds* (London, 1661), p. 40.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 40.

<sup>25</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration church*, p. 130.

<sup>26</sup> Claydon, *Europe and the making of England*, pp. 294-5.

<sup>27</sup> Herbert Thorndike, *Just weights and measures* (London, 1662), p. 41.

Visible Unity of the Church must stand or fall with Episcopacy.’<sup>28</sup> Using the episcopalian argument, churchmen could denounce papal authority of wrongly claiming universal authority over other bishops, and also could castigate English Puritans for denying the means of Christian unity, which had apostolic authority.

Yet episcopalianism raised questions about the status of the Protestant but non-episcopalian churches of the continent. Herbert Croft, the bishop of Hereford, raised this issue in his 1675 work *The naked truth*. He worried that those who were obsessed with episcopacy misinterpreted scripture, by arguing that ‘a Church without such Bishops as you require can’t be truly call’d a Church,’ and so would ‘exclude many Godly Reformed Churches.’<sup>29</sup> Because of this difficulty, such an extreme position was, according to Spurr, a minority viewpoint in the Church of England.<sup>30</sup> Anglican clerics usually did not go so far as to unchurch foreign protestant churches. For example, Gilbert Burnet, a London clergyman and later the bishop of Salisbury after the 1688 revolution, argued that there was a difference in situation between the Church of England and other European Protestant churches. According to Burnet, the reason European Protestants could be excused from having episcopacy was because they had lost their bishops in the tumultuous years of the Reformation. However, Christians in England, where bishops were firmly instituted, had no excuse for denying episcopacy.<sup>31</sup>

Although Erastianism and episcopalianism tried to constitute rationales for uniformity in England, their arguments were far from flawless and Nonconformists were ready to retort. They argued that Anglican apologists approved Roman Catholicism in other countries with the arguments they used, because many foreign churches supported by secular power and/or governed by bishops – those in France, Spain, Italy and a large part of Germany – were Roman Catholic. Particularly the situation in France where the Huguenots were persecuted by a national and episcopalian church gave a chance for Dissenters to ask Anglican churchmen a difficult question: what was the true church in France? If Anglicans chose the established church in France, Dissenters could complain that they advocated Catholicism. On the other hand, if Anglicans selected the Huguenots, Dissenters would claim that the case of English Nonconformists was not different from their Protestant brothers in France. If the Huguenots could be true church without conforming to their national church, why should English Puritans conform to the Church of England? Another problem was that in theory, Erastianism and

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid. p. 40.

<sup>29</sup> Herbert Croft, *The naked truth, or the true state of the primitive church* (London, 1675), p. 42.

<sup>30</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration church*, p. 135.

<sup>31</sup> Claydon, *Europe and the making of England*, p. 301.

episcopalianism conflicted with one another, because the two arguments could not agree on the place of final authority in the Church of England. For Erastians, it rested with the civil ruler. From their viewpoint, episcopacy was useful but not a fundamental part of the true church; thus, if necessary, the form of church government might be altered by Christian rulers, though it did not have to be changed in England. However, in the eyes of episcopalians, the Erastian view shook the authority of bishops instituted *jure divino* (by divine law). Episcopalian Samuel Parker, archdeacon of Canterbury, observed that ‘mistaken Friends’ allowed that ‘there ought to be some sort of Government establish’d in the Church, but then they denied an particular Form of it to have been settled by Divine Right, or Apostolic Constitution, and leave it wholly to the choice and determination of Humane Authority.’<sup>32</sup> For episcopalians, divine authority was embodied in an ecclesiastical structure governed by bishops and it was an unalterable feature of the Church of England.

Both Claydon and Spurr noted that Protestantism, Erastianism, and episcopalianism were important parts of the ecclesiology that supported the Church of England after 1662, but the two historians laid emphasis on different aspects of the relationship between the three elements. To put it roughly, Claydon stressed that all the three arguments had European dimensions and their clash with each other became more evident in the international context, because they found three different and sometimes contradictory fellow churches abroad. Episcopalian churchmen approved Protestant churches with bishops such as those in north Germany, but they could go further. They, belying Protestant principle, tended to see the Church of Rome as the true church, though one that had fallen into deep doctrinal errors. Another contradiction was found in France where, as seen above, the national church and Protestant communion were opposed to one another. In another case, some Protestant churches such as the Genevan church were supported by civil authority but did not have bishops. The diversity generated by the different Anglican arguments undermined the grounds for uniformity.<sup>33</sup> Claydon concluded that the incompatibilities and weakness in Anglican apologetics during the Restoration period formed one of the factors that led to the Toleration Act of 1689.<sup>34</sup> By contrast, Spurr, while recognising the difference between the arguments, stressed that they together served the common cause of the Church of England. For Anglican

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<sup>32</sup> Samuel Parker, *The case of the Church of England* (London, 1681), p. 117.

<sup>33</sup> Claydon, *Europe and the making of England*, pp. 296-303; Tony Claydon, “The Church of England and the churches of Europe,” in Jeremy Gregory, ed., *The Oxford history of Anglicanism, volume II: establishment and empire, 1662-1829* (Oxford, 2017), pp. 314-331.

<sup>34</sup> Claydon, *Europe and the making of England*, pp. 312-3.

churchmen, defending the establishment from Nonconformist attack was more pressing than disputes among themselves. Spurr said the majority of churchmen tried to maintain a united front.<sup>35</sup> For example, William Sherlock, a London clergyman, despite his episcopalian view, expressed support for Stillingfleet's Erastian pamphlet the *Unreasonableness of separation*, and articulated criticism of pamphlets written by leading Dissenters, John Owen and Richard Baxter.<sup>36</sup> Spurr also pointed out that churchmen paid little attention to the subtleties of arguments, and classified works with different views on what made true church in the same category, citing and recommending them together as authorities against nonconformity.<sup>37</sup> So, Spurr argued that the Restoration church sought, and managed, to 'hold in tension several ideas about episcopacy and church authority,' united by 'belief in the principle of a national church.'<sup>38</sup> On at least this point, Claydon agreed that, 'an almost universal condemnation of the Dissenters' schism blurred any factionalism' in the Restoration period.<sup>39</sup> After all, in practice, Protestant, Erastian, and episcopalian arguments were able to co-exist, by focusing more on pursuing a shared cause rather than arriving at agreement about the precise definition of a true church. The sketch of general Anglican apologetic above sets a context for the ecclesiology of Tillotson, helping us to observe how he was interested in the general strands of establishment polemic and what made him different from the typical Anglican apologists.

#### Protestant argument in Tillotson

Along with other Protestant theologians, Tillotson argued that errors and corruptions in the Church of Rome justified the Reformation and the separation of the Church of England from it. In early 1672 he preached at Whitehall before the royal family about the difficulty of salvation in the Church of Rome on 1 Cor 3:15 'But he himself shall be Saved, yet so as by Fire.' This sermon was a vehement attack on the doctrines and practices of the Church of Rome. According to John Beardmore who was Tillotson's pupil at Cambridge, it irritated the duke of York, the future King James II, who had not made his Catholic faith public yet, and made him stop attending the royal chapel. Because of its strong anti-Catholicism, the sermon was forbidden to be published, but an unnamed 'noble Lord having borrow'd a copy of it of the

<sup>35</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration church*, pp. 154-8.

<sup>36</sup> [William Sherlock], *A discourse about church unity: being a defence of Dr. Stillingfleet's unreasonableness of separation. in answer to... Dr. Owen and Mr. Baxter* (London, 1681); [William Sherlock], *A continuation and vindication of the defence of Dr. Stillingfleet's unreasonableness of separation* (London, 1682).

<sup>37</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration church*, p. 158.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* p. 164.

<sup>39</sup> Claydon, *Europe and the making of England*, p. 297.

Dean [Tillotson], it was printed privately without his knowledge in 1673.<sup>40</sup> The first Catholic error that Tillotson picked up in the sermon was the doctrine of infallibility. He began with this item, not least because he thought it gave the Church of Rome a blank check to make new false doctrines. If it was once admitted, it ‘makes way for as many Errors as they please to bring in.’<sup>41</sup> Not only did Tillotson insist that infallibility had no biblical grounds, but he also pointed out that there was no agreement among Catholics on where it lay; ‘whether in the Pope alone, or a Council alone, or in both together, or in the diffusive body of Christians.’<sup>42</sup> Tillotson asked how Catholics could be unsure of the location of infallibility, and have controversies about it, if the privilege was truly given to the Church of Rome. He said that until the controversy was finished in the church, the infallibility would be useless to decide anything. Moreover, Tillotson claimed in a posthumously published sermon that the infallibility, wherever it was, ‘is plainly confuted by the contradictory Definitions of several Popes and Councils; for if they have contradicted one another... then there must of necessity be an Error on one side.’<sup>43</sup>

The infallibility was, Tillotson insisted, not only fictional but also needless. In his sermon preached at Whitehall in 1679 when an anti-Catholic atmosphere was heightened by the exclusion crisis, Tillotson argued there was no need of such an infallible judge, because all the important doctrines a Christian need to know were plainly revealed in the Bible.<sup>44</sup> The first time he made this argument was when he was engaged in the ‘rule of faith’ controversy in 1666. In his *Rule of faith*, Tillotson argued that God had chosen scripture, not the unwritten tradition of the church, as the means of conveying divine truth throughout generations. And he affirmed ‘all necessary points of faith and matters of practice’ were clearly revealed in the Bible.<sup>45</sup> So, if people removed themselves from ‘prejudice and interest,’ they would ‘generally agree well enough’ about ‘the necessary things of Religion’ without an infallible judge.<sup>46</sup> Conversely if people were biased or influenced by calculations of profit, they would not accept a different

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<sup>40</sup> John Beardmore, *Some memorials of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson*, in Thomas Birch, ed., *The works of most reverend Dr. John Tillotson*, 3 vols. (London, 1572), vol. 1, p. cxiv. The printed sermon bears no name of printer and described it simply as ‘lately preached... by A Reverend Divine of the Church of England.’ [John Tillotson], *A sermon lately preached on I Corinth. 3. 15* (n.p., 1673). However, a French translation of the sermon printed in the same year tells it was preached by Tillotson. John Tillotson, *Sermon preche devant le roy a Whitehall*, (Londres, 1673).

<sup>41</sup> [Tillotson], *A sermon... on I Corinth. 3. 15*, p. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>43</sup> John Tillotson, *Heb X. 23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that hath promised in Of sincerity and constancy in the faith and profession of the true religion, in several sermons*, (London, 1695), pp. 284-5.

<sup>44</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at White-Hall, April the 4th, 1679* (London, 1679).

<sup>45</sup> John Tillotson, *The rule of faith or an answer to the treatise of Mr. I. S. entitled, sure-footing, &c* (London, 1666), p. 86.

<sup>46</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at White-Hall, April the 4th, 1679* (London, 1679), p. 30.

opinion, even one from an infallible judge. Tillotson thought that if a general consensus was made by prudent Christians, disagreement on minor issues would not be a serious problem, in comparison with the presumptuous argument for infallibility. In addition, Tillotson argued, disagreement on doctrines did not have to be solved by unification. He said, ‘there is no such absolute need... of determining all Controversies in Religion,’ because they could be overcome by Christian charity.<sup>47</sup> ‘As for doubtful and lesser matters in Religion, charity and mutual forbearance among Christians would make the Church peaceable and happy.’<sup>48</sup> Tillotson’s argument for the necessity of agreement on fundamental matters only, and for the toleration on the non-fundamental, was a new solution to the problem of different opinions among Christians, replacing the infallibility claimed by Catholics. However, as we shall see, it could not put an end to the difficulty caused by divisions among Protestants, and Catholics kept attacking this point.

If the infallibility of the Church of Rome brought in new doctrines, for Tillotson, one of the most harmful doctrinal innovations was its doctrine of repentance. He said the doctrine meant, ‘confessing their Sins to the Priest; which if it be but accompanied with any degree of Contrition, does, upon Absolution received from the Priest, put them into a state of Salvation.’<sup>49</sup> Tillotson deplored that ‘nothing can be more destructive of a good life’ than this doctrine.<sup>50</sup> For, according to it, though people had ‘the long Course of a most lewd and flagitious Life,’ they could be reconciled to God through a formal ceremony of repentance, without a need for a virtuous life.<sup>51</sup> In his discourse on communion published in 1683, Tillotson, contrasting a good preparation for communion accompanied by true repentance with a Catholic practice of confession, claimed that Catholics performed confession and absolution ‘once or twice a year, that so they may begin to sin again upon a new score.’<sup>52</sup> Tillotson argued that this false teaching could make ‘any man that is strongly addicted to his Lusts... venture his Salvation upon this hazard.’ And all the encouragements to a good life would be ‘very insignificant, to a man that hath a mind to be wicked, when Remission of Sins may be had upon such cheap terms.’<sup>53</sup> This criticism of penance showed a typical Tillotsonian stress on behaviour. The reason he considered it to be more damaging than other errors was because it endangered the salvation

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid. p. 30.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid. pp. 30-1.

<sup>49</sup> [Tillotson], *A sermon... on I Corinth. 3. 15*, p. 8.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

<sup>51</sup> Tillotson, *Heb. X. 23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*, p. 214.

<sup>52</sup> John Tillotson, *A persuaide to frequent communion* (London, 1683), p. 32.

<sup>53</sup> [Tillotson], *A sermon... on I Corinth. 3. 15*, p. 9.

of those who relied on it. The doctrine of penance clearly conflicted with Tillotson's soteriology in which moral behaviour was indispensable to salvation.

In Tillotson's Protestant ecclesiology, while the Catholic practice of confession was considered to be detrimental in that it removed the need for a good life, he criticised the doctrine of transubstantiation for a different reason in as early as 1666 in *The rule of faith*. Embracing the doctrine of transubstantiation, 'a substantial change of the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ' in communion was, Tillotson said, denying the reliability of human senses.<sup>54</sup> Tillotson asked, 'How can the whole body of Christ be contained under the least sensible part of the species of bread?'<sup>55</sup> The sight, touch, and taste testified that it was a piece of wafer both before and after consecration. He argued that if the certainty of human senses were denied, 'we can have no sufficient assurance' that any Christian doctrine was truly revealed by God.<sup>56</sup> It might seem that Tillotson was exaggerating the case when he related the certainty of human senses with the validity of the whole Christian belief system. However, it is understandable when we remember the way Tillotson defended the Bible as divine revelation. According to him, the fact that Christian doctrine had been divinely revealed was confirmed by the miracles its authors (Christ, the apostles, and those who had recorded their lives in scripture) had performed, because only divine power was able to make such supernatural phenomena happen. And it was by human senses that the miracles were perceived. Therefore, Tillotson said, 'that doctrine [of transubstantiation] which takes away the certainty of sense, does in so doing overthrow the certainty of Christian religion.'<sup>57</sup> He looked upon transubstantiation as a downright fraud, to whatever degree it is 'esteemed one of the most principal Articles of the Christian Faith.'<sup>58</sup> In the initial part of his *Discourse against transubstantiation* published in 1684, he claimed, 'the business of Transubstantiation is not a controversy of Scripture against Scripture, or of Reason against Reason, but of downright Impudence against the plain meaning of Scripture, and all the Sense and Reason of Mankind.'<sup>59</sup> To put it simply, 'if we be not certain of what we see, we can be certain of nothing.'<sup>60</sup>

Tillotson insisted that the principal ground for transubstantiation was an erroneous interpretation of Jesus's words – this is my body. As we have seen in chapter 1 of this thesis,

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<sup>54</sup> Tillotson, *The rule of faith*, p. 270.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. p. 273.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid. p. 275.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid. p. 275.

<sup>58</sup> [Tillotson], *A sermon... on I Corinth. 3. 15*, p. 10.

<sup>59</sup> John Tillotson, *A discourse against transubstantiation* (London, 1684), p. 2.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid. p. 3.

he maintained that reason should guide Christians to a proper understanding of scripture. At times, a reasonable interpretation of the Bible meant a sensible distinction should be made between the passages to be understood literally, and the verses which were figurative expressions. Tillotson argued that in the institution of the sacrament Jesus used figurative expressions which could not be taken strictly and literally. For example, Jesus said the words, ‘This Cup is the new Testament in my blood, which is shed for you and for many for the remission of Sins,’ where, for Tillotson, the cup stood for the wine contained in the cup.<sup>61</sup> If the words were literally understood to signify a substantial change, Tillotson said, ‘it is not of the Wine but of the Cup; and that, not into the blood of Christ but into the new Testament or new Covenant in his blood.’<sup>62</sup> So, Tillotson argued it was reasonable to interpret Jesus’s words figuratively, just like his remarks that he was the door, the vine, and many other things.<sup>63</sup>

Being a distortion of Jesus’s words, the doctrine of transubstantiation, according to Tillotson, first appeared in the eighth century and was confirmed by Popes Gregory VII and Innocent III in the eleventh and thirteenth century respectively.<sup>64</sup> Tillotson sketched the process by which transubstantiation entered the church as follows. The doctrine was ‘very likely to be advanced by the ambitious Clergy of that time, as a probable means to draw in the People to greater veneration of them,’ and afterwards it was propagated by church leaders.<sup>65</sup> Any prudent objectors such as Berengar could ‘easily be born down by the stream, and by the Eminency and Authority and pretended Sanctity of those who are the heads of this Innovation.’<sup>66</sup> And when the doctrine was generally spread, and all who opposed it were punished as heretics, the church leaders fraudulently maintained that the doctrine had been the perpetual belief of the church. ‘The most of the learned men’ of the Church of Rome, knowing that transubstantiation was invented by the church, resorted to ‘the infallible Authority of the present Church to make and declare new Articles of Faith’ as a ground for the doctrine.<sup>67</sup> However, Tillotson argued that the special inspiration of the holy spirit had ceased after the Bible was completed, so no one could make a new Christian doctrine beyond the Bible.<sup>68</sup> Furthermore, Tillotson insisted that the consequence of the false authority to make a new doctrine was destructive to Christianity, because if any church had such a power, the Christian faith could be changed and enlarged as

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 6; Tillotson, *The rule of faith*, p. 208; [Tillotson], *A sermon... on I Corinth. 3. 15*, p 10.

<sup>64</sup> Tillotson, *A discourse against transubstantiation*, pp. 21-5, 29.

<sup>65</sup> Tillotson, *The rule of faith*, p. 208.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid. p. 211.

<sup>67</sup> Tillotson, *A discourse against transubstantiation*, p. 29.

<sup>68</sup> Tillotson, *The rule of faith*, p. 36.



often as people pleased. If the Catholic claim for power to create new doctrines was justified, anything ‘absurd and unreasonable, may become an Article of Faith obliging all Christians to the belief of it, whenever the Church of Rome shall think fit to stamp her Authority upon it: which make Christianity a most uncertain and endless thing.’<sup>69</sup> In the eyes of Tillotson, the defence of transubstantiation by Catholic intellectuals meant that they were either dishonest about history or dependent upon the groundless and arbitrary authority of their church.

There were still more Catholic beliefs which, according to Tillotson’s Protestantism, undermined the validity of the Church of Rome’s position as a true church. When he handled the doctrine of purgatory, ‘by which they mean a state of Temporary Punishments after this Life, from which men may be released and Translated into Heaven, by the Prayers of the Living and the Sacrifice of the Mass,’ he argued that the Church of Rome did not want to discard the doctrinal error because it was very profitable.<sup>70</sup> He maintained that the doctrine was ‘not known in the primitive church, nor can be proved from Scripture,’ and that even many ‘Learned and Eminent men’ of Rome acknowledged ‘it is a Superstructure upon the Christian Religion.’<sup>71</sup> However, ‘how groundless soever it be, it is too gainful a Doctrine to be easily parted withal.’<sup>72</sup> Catholics did not want to give up ‘the vast Revenues which this doctrine (and that of indulgences, which depends upon it) brings into that Church.’<sup>73</sup> This was a traditional Protestant criticism of Roman Catholicism, but it was also related to Tillotson’s emphasis on behaviour because it condemned the avarice of Catholic clergy. One of Tillotson’s sermons posthumously published developed this point further. The Church of Rome used purgatory to increase its gain, because the more it put people in fear of going to purgatory, ‘the Market of Indulgences riseth the higher, and the Profit thence accruing to the Pope’s Coffers; and the more and greater Legacies will be left to the Priests, to hire their saying of Masses, for the delivery of Souls out of the Place of Torments.’<sup>74</sup> Catholic priests also falsely advertised that - though the prayers of friends or family contributed to the delivery of souls from purgatory to some extent - nothing was more effectual than ‘the Masses and Prayers of Priests to that end.’<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Tillotson, *A discourse against transubstantiation*, pp. 29-30.

<sup>70</sup> [Tillotson], *A sermon... on I Corinth. 3. 15*, p. 9.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.* p. 9.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.* p. 10.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.* p. 10.

<sup>74</sup> John Tillotson, *The second sermon preached on Rev. XIV. 13 in Sixteen sermons, preached on several occasions... the second volume* (London, 1696), p. 310.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.* p. 310.

For Tillotson, several other doctrines or practices of Rome tended to increase the prestige, if not the profit, of the clergy, by distinguishing them from the laity: mass in Latin, the ban on the Bible in vernacular languages, and administering communion to laity in one kind only. All of these had no biblical grounds and unjustly raised the status of priests, but he thought the first two were more vicious, because the linguistic barriers were against the purposes of divine worship and the Bible. For him, ‘the great end and design of Religious Worship... is the Edification of those who are concerned in it.’<sup>76</sup> If the worship was performed in an incomprehensible language, ‘it is hard to imagine how men can be Edified by what they do not understand.’<sup>77</sup> As far as the Bible was concerned, Tillotson argued, ‘the knowledge of the Holy Scriptures is necessary to our Eternal Salvation,’ because it contained ‘the Nature of God and his Will concerning our Duty, and the Terms and Conditions of our Eternal Happiness in another World.’<sup>78</sup> Thus, if the Bible was allowed only in Latin, the common people could not have the most convenient means of knowing God’s will. For Tillotson, ‘to lock up the Scriptures and the Service of God from the People in an Unknown Tongue’ was ‘in effect to forbid Men to know God, and to serve him; to render them incapable of knowing what is the good and acceptable Will of God; of joyning in his Worship, or performing any Part of it, or receiving any Benefit or Edification from it.’<sup>79</sup> In this case as well, we can see Tillotson making a strong attack on Roman practices which he thought damaged good behaviour.

Tillotson associated the lack of biblical teaching in the Church of Rome with their false practices of worship. He argued that their worship of images was contrary to the commandment in the Bible that prohibited idolatry. Tillotson particularly criticised the leaders of the Church of Rome because he thought ‘at least the Teachers and Guides of that Church’ knew the worship of images was forbidden in the Bible.<sup>80</sup> He said the worship of Rome was also corrupted by ‘the Worship and invocation of Saints and Angels; and particularly Mary, which hath now for some Ages been a principal part of their Religion.’<sup>81</sup> According to Tillotson, though there was not one word concerning the worship of the Virgin Mary in scripture, the worship of her in the Church of Rome was a main part of their public ceremonies and of private devotion. Tillotson said that a person who ‘considers this and had never seen the bible, would have apt to think, that there had been more said concerning Her in Scripture, than either concerning God; or our

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<sup>76</sup> [Tillotson], *A sermon... on I Corinth. 3. 15*, p.16.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p. 16.

<sup>78</sup> John Tillotson, *The indispensable knowledge of the holy scripture* (London, 1687), p. 4.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

<sup>80</sup> [Tillotson], *A sermon... on I Corinth. 3. 15*, p.17.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid. p. 18.

Blessed Saviour; and that the New Testament were full from one end to the other of Precepts and Exhortations to the worshipping of her.’<sup>82</sup> Catholic priests did not value the commandments in scripture, so they failed to instruct people properly, but instead ‘their Sermons are commonly made up of feigned Stories and Miracles of Saints, and exhortations to the Worship of them (and especially of the Blessed Virgin) and of their Images and Relicks.’<sup>83</sup>

Tillotson regarded the miracles of saints as fabricated by church leaders who encouraged the worship of the saints. This might cause a problem of inconsistency for Tillotson, because he himself embraced the truth of the miracles performed by Jesus and the apostles, which had been conveyed through the church tradition. Tillotson could answer that while the miracles of Jesus were performed to prove his divine authority and were recorded by faithful witnesses, ‘the miracles pretended to by the Church of Rome, are of very doubtful and suspected credit, even among the wisest persons of their own communion’ and the miracles ‘are generally looked upon by the more prudent and learned among them, as pious frauds, to raise and entertain the devotion of the weak and ignorant.’<sup>84</sup> And ‘the greatest part of the history of these miracles (which they call legends) were... much in the same style, with the like wantonness and extravagancy of fancy, and fulsom[e] absurdity of invention.’<sup>85</sup> Furthermore, by the supposed miracles the Church of Rome supported doctrines contrary to the true worship of God. Even if the miracles were true, Tillotson argued, Christians should not follow the Church of Rome’s ‘idolatry in their worship of images, and of the host, and in the invocation of saints and angels.’<sup>86</sup> Tillotson maintained, ‘this is evident from Deut. xiii. where Moses supposeth that a prophet might work a sign or a wonder; but if it was to seduce them from the worship of the true God, who is naturally known, to the worship of idols, in that case they were not to hearken to them, notwithstanding he wrought a miracle.’<sup>87</sup>

#### Erastian argument in Tillotson

For Tillotson, the crucial errors of the Church of Rome were ‘a just ground of our Separation from them.’<sup>88</sup> Their imposing new doctrines and practices contrary to scripture was

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<sup>82</sup> Ibid. pp. 19-20.

<sup>83</sup> Tillotson, *The indispensable knowledge of the holy scripture*, p. 16.

<sup>84</sup> John Tillotson, *Of the miracles wrought in confirmation of Christianity in Fifteen sermons on various subjects... the twelfth volume* (London, 1703), p. 380.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. p. 381.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid. p. 390.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. pp. 389-90.

<sup>88</sup> [Tillotson], *A sermon... on I Corinth. 3. 15*, p.6.

‘the great hazard and danger of mens Salvation.’<sup>89</sup> In a posthumously published sermon, he said, ‘We were once involved in the like Degeneracy; but... are happily rescued out of it... since our Reformation from the Errors and Corruptions of the Church of Rome.’<sup>90</sup> This rejection of Rome’s doctrines was coupled with an Erastian view of church and state to complete the argument for the Church of England’s separation from Rome. Tillotson argued that as an individual person had a right to reform his or her fault, ‘every National Church hath a Power within it self, to reform it self from all Errors and Corruptions, and by the Sanction of the Catholick Authority to confirm that Reformation; which is our Case here in England.’<sup>91</sup> For Tillotson, ‘Catholick Authority’ came not from any visible church organisations but from ‘the True Faith and Doctrine of Christ, which by him was delivered to the Apostles, and by them publish’d and made known to the World.’<sup>92</sup> According to this logic, English civil and religious authorities lawfully broke with the Church of Rome to disentangle true Christian doctrines from the papal corruption. He further maintained that the guilt of schism was not on the Church of England, but on Rome which turned its back on the rightful national church.

And whatever part of the Church, how great and eminent soever, excludes from her Communion such a National Church, for reforming her self from plain Errors and Corruptions, clearly condemned by the Word of God, and by the Doctrine and Practice of the Primitive Christian Church, is undoubtedly Guilty of Schism. And this is the Truth of the Case between us and the Church of Rome.<sup>93</sup>

Tillotson’s Erastian argument against Catholicism was based on his positive view of the civil authorities, an attitude which had Lutheran origins. Luther, attacking the jurisdictional powers of the Church of Rome, passionately defended the secular authorities, without which Lutheranism could not survive Roman Catholic hostility. He based his argument on Paul’s command that we were required to be subject to governing authorities, because existing authorities had been established by God. (Romans 13:1-7) Luther asserted

since the temporal power is ordained of God to punish the wicked and protect the good, it should be left free to perform its office in the whole body of Christendom without restriction and without respect to persons, whether it affects pope, bishops, priests, monks, nuns, or anyone else... temporal Christian authority ought to exercise its office

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

<sup>90</sup> Tillotson, *Heb. X. 23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering*, p. 260.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. pp. 261-2.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. p. 234.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. p. 262.

without hindrance, regardless of whether it is pope, bishop, or priest whom it affects. Whoever is guilty, let him suffer. All that canon law has said to the contrary is the invention of Romanist presumption.<sup>94</sup>

Tillotson, too, argued that the authority of civil magistrates was one of God's ways of governing the world, and it should not be trespassed upon by religious authorities. One of his main attacks on the Church of Rome was that its 'Doctrine of deposing Kings in case of Heresie' was false and 'was not the Doctrine of our Saviour and his Apostles, nor of the Primitive Christians.'<sup>95</sup> According to Tillotson, the Roman claim for the right to excommunicate and depose kings was groundless and it infringed upon the authority that God gave civil authority to impose peace and order in human societies.

A sermon titled *The Protestant religion vindicated*, preached before the king in 1680, provides us with a good chance to see the Erastian dimension of Tillotson's thought. It affirmed the civil ruler's right to establish the ruler's own religion in his country. Tillotson asserted, 'to countenance and support the true Religion, and to take care that the people be instructed in it, and that none be permitted to debauch and seduce men from it, properly belongs to the Civil Magistrate.'<sup>96</sup> This right was not only allowed, but also approved and commended by God. For Tillotson, if a master of a family had power over his children and servants, so did a magistrate over his subject. 'The natural Authority of a Father may be, and often is, limited and restrained by the Laws of the Civil Magistrate'; if so, Tillotson asked, 'why then may not a Magistrate exercise the same power over his Subjects in matters of Religion.'<sup>97</sup> In one of his earlier sermons as well, Tillotson, after expounding the advantages of religion to societies, entrusted the maintenance of religion to 'those who are in place of power and authority.'<sup>98</sup> After God planted Christianity with a supernatural power shown in the miracles of Jesus and the apostles, he 'now left it to be maintained and supported by more ordinary and human ways, by the countenance of Authority, and assistance of Laws.'<sup>99</sup> Therefore, magistrates had duty and power to support the true religion.

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<sup>94</sup> Martin Luther, *To the Christian nobility of the German nation*, trans. Charles M. Jacobs in *Three treatises*, ed. James Atkinson (Philadelphia, 1970), pp. 15-16.

<sup>95</sup> [Tillotson], *A sermon... on I Corinth. 3. 15*, p. 14.

<sup>96</sup> John Tillotson, *The Protestant religion vindicated* (London, 1680), p. 9.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.* p. 10.

<sup>98</sup> John Tillotson, *Prov. xiv. 34. Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is the reproach of any people* in *Sermons preach'd upon several occasions* (London, 1671), p. 143.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.* p. 144.

In his sermon delivered on 29 May 1693, the anniversary of the restoration of English monarchy, Tillotson highlighted the advantages of governments and enjoined his audience to pray for the king and queen and for those in authority. According to him, the reason that we could live in safety and ‘that we are able to call any thing our own for one day...; that we are not in perpetual Terror... is solely the Effect of this great Blessing, and Divine Appointment of Government, to preserve the Peace of Humane Society, and by wise and wholesome Laws, to tie up Mens hands from mutual Injuries and Violence.’<sup>100</sup> In addition to the protection of ‘Civil rights and Interests’ by the government, ‘Men are protected by it, in the free Exercise and Practice of Religion and Virtue.’<sup>101</sup> Tillotson acknowledged that true religion was not always supported by civil authorities, and that ‘Good Men may receive great harms and injuries from Persecuting Princes and Governors; (as the Primitive Christians did from several of the Roman Emperours).’<sup>102</sup> However, persecuting government ‘was but an accidental effect and abuse of Government,’ and ‘Christians, even in that State of Persecution, did enjoy many considerable Benefits and Advantages by it, so that they were not perpetually exposed to popular Rage and Cruelty.’<sup>103</sup> Thus, Tillotson firmly believed that the civil authorities were, even if they oppressed true religion, the instrument established by God for preserving human societies. Perhaps Tillotson’s advocacy of the regulatory authorities was rooted in his experience of the turmoil of the Civil War. In the same sermon, the period before the Restoration was called ‘the intestine Wars and Confusions of many Years.’<sup>104</sup>

Erastianism - which Tillotson developed to argue with Catholics - was also a major plank of his case against his second adversary, Dissenters. Discussing the right of governors, Tillotson commented, ‘this Power of the Civil Magistrate in matters of Religion was never called in question, but by the Enthusiasts of these later times.’<sup>105</sup> The argument of Dissenters that they were following their conscience was, Tillotson asserted, false and groundless.

I cannot think (till I be better inform’d, which I am always ready to be) that any pretence of Conscience warrants any man, that is not extraordinarily commission’d as the Apostles and first Publishers of the Gospel were, and cannot justifie that Commission by Miracles as they did, to affront the establish’d Religion of a Nation (though it be

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<sup>100</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached on the 29. of May, 1693, in Sixteen sermons, preached on several occasions... the second volume* (London, 1696), p. 423.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid. p. 424.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid. p. 424.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid. p. 426-7.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. p. 414.

<sup>105</sup> Tillotson, *The protestant religion vindicated*, p. 10.

false) and openly to draw men off from the profession of it in contempt of the Magistrate and the Law.’<sup>106</sup>

According to Tillotson, because civil magistrates were commissioned by God to maintain the law and order of their country by force, to worship openly in a way contrary to the laws of a country, or to try to spread religions not approved by them, was to resist the order of God’s governance.

Tillotson generally valued human conscience, thinking it discerned what was good and evil. However, he warned in a sermon preached before the queen in 1691 that conscience could be corrupted by ‘an unreasonable prejudice and a heady passion’.<sup>107</sup> Particularly if doubt or scruples of conscience led someone ‘against charity, and peace, and obedience to Government, whether Ecclesiastical or Civil,’ the conscience should be ‘over-ruled by the command of Authority... and in consideration of the publique peace, and of the unity and edification of the Church.’<sup>108</sup> Doubtless this principle was applicable to Dissenters. They could ‘enjoy the private liberty and exercise of their own Conscience and Religion,’ but Tillotson argued that it was ‘gross Hypocrisie’ to claim ‘a further obligation of Conscience in this matter,’ i.e. nonconformist claims for a duty to worship and preach against the law.<sup>109</sup> To justify this argument, he equated the Dissenters’ demand with promulgating Protestantism in Catholic countries on the grounds that both violated the laws of the country.

No Protestant (that I know of) holds himself obliged to go and Preach up his Religion and make Converts in Spain or Italy: Nor do either the Protestant Ministers or Popish Priests think themselves bound in conscience to Preach the Gospel in Turkey, to convert the Mahometans. And what is the Reason? Because of the severity of the Inquisition in Popish Countreys, and of the Laws in Turkey. But doth the danger then alter the obligation of Conscience? No certainly; but it makes men throw off the false pretence and disguise of it.<sup>110</sup>

This somewhat strained argument stirred up the complaints of Nonconformists, because it led to the conclusion that in a country where Roman Catholicism was established by the law, Protestants should not try to convert Catholics. John Humfrey and Stephen Lobb argued that

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid. pp. 11-2.

<sup>107</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached before the queen, at White-Hall, February the 27th 1690/1* (London, 1691), p. 12.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p. 13.

<sup>109</sup> Tillotson, *The Protestant religion vindicated*, p. 12.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid. pp. 12-3.

Tillotson was misleading in asserting that spreading Protestantism in a Catholic country should be avoided out of a consistently applicable principle. They maintained that Protestants avoided evangelising in a Catholic country out of ‘prudence’ because ‘Pearls need not be cast where they will be certainly trampled upon.’<sup>111</sup> ‘Nevertheless,’ Humfrey and Lobb went on to say, ‘let a man have but an ordinary call, and be deliberately convinced in his conscience that by his Preaching even in such a place, he shall convert a Nation, or really bring any such glory to God.’<sup>112</sup> John Collinges maintained that Tillotson’s argument condemned the early reformers such as Wycliffe, Luther, and Zwingli. ‘There was a false Religion established by law... yet these great men did not keep to a private exercise of their Religion, but openly Preached the Gospel.’<sup>113</sup> Collinges deplored ‘this notion [of Tillotson]’ because it would ‘Rivet and confirm Popery, yea Paganism in any Nation under Heaven, where either of them doth obtain by a law, or shall hereafter obtain.’<sup>114</sup> Tillotson himself appeared to realise that he had gone so far as to make no justification for spreading Protestantism in non-Protestant countries. When the sermon was republished in 1686, he added, ‘every man hath a Right to publish and propagate the true Religion, and to declare it against a false one.’<sup>115</sup> Considering that the sermon was republished in the reign of the Catholic King James II, perhaps the sense of crisis of Protestantism in England also led him to add the remark about the ‘right’ to spread the true religion. However, there was still no duty to do so, unless a special mission was given. He continued, ‘but there is no Obligation upon any man to attempt this... when without a miracle it can have no other effect but the loss of his own life: unless he have an immediate command and Commission from God to this purpose, and be endued with a power of miracles, as a publick Seal and Testimony of that Commission, which was the case of the Apostles.’<sup>116</sup>

#### Tillotson’s view of bishops

Erastian argument was an important part of Tillotson’s attack on Dissenters. However, unlike his fellow Anglican apologists, he did not use episcopalian argument against them. In other words, he did not criticise Dissenters for the lack of episcopacy, because he was unwilling to regard bishops as a necessary element of an ideal church. John Beardmore, Tillotson’s pupil

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<sup>111</sup> [John Humfrey and Stephen Lobb], *An answer to Dr Stillingfleet’s sermon* (London, 1680), p. 5.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.* p. 5.

<sup>113</sup> [John Collinges], *Short animadversions upon a sermon lately preached* (London, 1680), p. 13.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.* p. 13.

<sup>115</sup> John Tillotson, *The Protestant religion vindicated in Sermons and discourses. some of which never printed before* (London, 1686), p. 383.

<sup>116</sup> *Ibid.* p. 383.



at Cambridge, recalled a conversation of Tillotson with Henry Dodwell who fervently advocated episcopacy and who, according to Beardmore, challenged foreign Protestant churches ‘as being no churches; for want of Episcopal government’ in his books *Separation of churches from episcopal government* (1679) and *A discourse concerning the one altar and the one priesthood* (1683).<sup>117</sup> Dodwell brought one of his books to Tillotson and asked for his comments before printing. At this, Tillotson ‘freely told him his dislike of it’ and said, ‘I can hardly tell you, where it is, that you break the chain; yet I am sure, that it is broken somewhere; for such and such particulars are so palpably [sic] false, that I wonder you do not feel the absurdity of them.’<sup>118</sup> The main reason Beardmore recorded this anecdote was to illustrate Tillotson’s moderation which was applied not only to English Dissenters, but ‘hath extended likewise to the Reformed churches beyond the seas,’ but it also showed that Tillotson had some doubt on Dodwell’s style episcopalian argument.<sup>119</sup>

If the office of the bishop was not an essential part of the true church for Tillotson, it can be asked: what was the office of bishop to him? Though Tillotson preached at the consecration of John Wilkins to the bishopric of Chester in 1668, the sermon, whose text could have been useful to look into his opinion about episcopacy if extant, did not seem to be published in print. However, it is still possible to examine his thinking through his other sermons discussing the role of clergy. In fact, it seems probable that he hardly distinguished the function of the bishop from that of other ranks of priest. This is not surprising when we consider his reluctance to allocate to bishops a distinct position in constructing the church. In a sermon preached on a fast day in 1691 before Queen Mary II, Tillotson urged the audience to repent not only of their personal sins, but also the sins of others including the ministers of the country. Here we have a chance to see what he considered the main function of ministers when he spoke of their negligence in discharging their responsibility. Tillotson pointed out that many ministers failed to instruct their congregation in the knowledge of God’s words and to lead them by an exemplary demeanour. He particularly deplored their unworthy life, saying, ‘too many among us demean themselves so scandalously, as perfectly to undermine the credit and effect of their Doctrine by leading lives so directly contrary to it.’<sup>120</sup> It is worth noting that Tillotson was not interested in the classification of ranks of clergy, but he considered them as

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<sup>117</sup> John Beardmore, *Some memorials of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson*, in Thomas Birch, ed., *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, (London, 1753), p. 400.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. p. 401.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid. p. 400.

<sup>120</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at White-hall before the queen on the monthly fast-day* (London, 1691), pp. 19-20.

a uniform group. Tillotson exhorted that ‘the Teachers and guides of Souls’ were required to take great heed ‘both to their Doctrine and their Lives.’<sup>121</sup>

This twofold responsibility of ‘all ranks of clergy’ – being a teacher and example – was also found in a posthumously published sermon on the instruction of Jesus to his disciples to spread his teaching throughout the world. The performance of this mission, Tillotson said, ‘doth primarily concern the chief governors of the church, and next to them the ministers of the Gospel in general.’<sup>122</sup> Again, the high-ranking clergy differed in position rather than in function. And they all should ‘instruct our respective charges in the necessary doctrines of faith, and the indispensable duties of a good life.’<sup>123</sup> For Tillotson, teaching God’s words and leading an exemplary life were the main roles of clergy at every level. Given that Tillotson did not emphasise the distinction between bishops and the lower clergy but stressed their shared role, he might have had sympathy with James Ussher’s ‘reduced episcopacy,’ which suggested a ‘combination of ministerial synods with episcopal rule.’<sup>124</sup> Because Ussher’s model could provide a brake on the bishop’s arbitrary rule, it was considered as ‘a basis for presbyterian-episcopal reconciliation,’ in the late seventeenth century.<sup>125</sup> Tillotson did not mention Ussher directly, but when we consider his view of bishops and his conciliatory disposition, Ussher’s idea of a limited episcopacy might have appealed to Tillotson. This speculation is supported by the fact that Tillotson was present at Savoy Conference as an observer on the Presbyterian side led by Baxter, who had advocated reduced episcopacy since the 1650s.<sup>126</sup> It is unlikely that a clergyman, who sided with the Presbyterian interest and Ussherian idea before the 1662 Act of Uniformity, became a hard-line episcopalian afterwards.

Another good source to examine Tillotson’s view of the offices of the clergy might be the sermon preached at the consecration of Tillotson to the archbishopric of Canterbury in 1691. The sermon was delivered by Ralph Barker, afterwards the archbishop’s chaplain, and the contents were approved by Tillotson himself. Illustrating the duty of bishops and pastors, Barker summed it up in three particulars, two of which we have already seen in Tillotson’s

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid. p. 21.

<sup>122</sup> John Tillotson, *The authority of Jesus Christ, with the commission and promise which he gave to his apostles*, in *Several discourses... the fifth volume* (London, 1698), p. 298.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid. p. 298.

<sup>124</sup> William Abbott, “James Ussher and “Ussherian” episcopacy, 1640-1656: the primate and his reduction manuscript,” *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, 22.2 (1990), p. 237; James Ussher, *The reduction of episcopacie unto the form of synodical government received in the antient church* (London, 1656).

<sup>125</sup> Abbott, “James Ussher and “Ussherian” episcopacy,” p. 237.

<sup>126</sup> James Spalding and Maynard Brass, “Reduction of episcopacy as a means to unity in England, 1640-1662,” *Church History*, 30.4 (1961), pp. 414-32.

sermons, namely, ‘providing them with convenient Food... that is, the Holy Scriptures,’<sup>127</sup> and ‘being Examples to the Flock... showing themselves Patterns of good Works.’<sup>128</sup> The remaining duty was disciplining the flock, ‘an Holy Zeal and concern for them to preserve and secure them... from Sin and Error.’<sup>129</sup> For this reason, the pastor has spiritual power and authority, which Christ left with his church. However, this spiritual power should be exercised within the proper range and could not disturb civil authorities. With an Erastian emphasis, it was argued that the spiritual power of the clergy should be ‘kept within its due Bounds and Measures;... a due Respect to the Civil Rights and Interests of Kings, and the Governors which are Commissioned by them.’<sup>130</sup> So, in the event where Tillotson undertook the highest clerical office, not only its role and power, but also its jurisdictional limit was declared.

Thus far, Tillotson’s view of the church was within the framework of the ecclesiology of Anglican divines of the late seventeenth-century. Like his colleagues, Tillotson used Protestant and Erastian principles to oppose the Church of Rome. He argued that the corrupt doctrines of Rome justified the Protestant Reformation in Western Europe. Particularly in England, Tillotson maintained, the established Church of England had lawful authority to carry out the Reformation, because it was supported by legitimate civil powers. Turning to Dissenters, he asserted that they should cast away all false pretence of conscience and conform to the Church of England which was established by civil authorities and purified from erroneous papist teachings. However, Tillotson differed from his fellow Anglican clergy in that he was unwilling to use the episcopalian argument. He questioned its validity and was concerned about any implication that would undermine the position of Protestant churches on the continent. Yet there was a more distinctive aspect in Tillotson’s understanding about the true church. Though not entirely departing from the existing arguments, he developed the ecclesiology based mainly on Christian charity, in the course of arguments with both Catholics and Dissenters.

#### Ecclesiology of charity regarding Roman Catholicism

As indicated above, Tillotson criticised the Church of Rome for its false doctrines which jeopardised the salvation of its members and had justified the separation of Protestant

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<sup>127</sup> Ralph Barker, *A sermon preached... at the consecration of the most reverend father in God John lord archbishop of Canterbury* (London, 1691) p. 6.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. p. 11.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>130</sup> Ibid. p. 9.

churches. However, the greatest error of Roman Catholicism was, for Tillotson, its lack of charity. He expressed this idea when preaching to the Yorkshire society, one of the regional societies which flourished in London in the seventeenth century.<sup>131</sup> During the first Yorkshire feast in December 1678, a meeting of Yorkshire-born people who were living in London, Tillotson, who himself was a Yorkshireman, preached on Jesus's commandment to love one another. After asserting that Jesus made the precept of love the badge of his disciples and a principal duty of Christianity, Tillotson applied his criticism to the Church of Rome, which was seasonable in the days when the exclusion crisis was going on. He maintained it was 'very reasonable that Churches as well as particular Christians should be judged by their Charity,' and by this standard, the Church of Rome was extremely poor.<sup>132</sup> They argued that no Christians in the world besides themselves had true faith, because non-Catholic Christians 'do not believe upon the Authority of their Church, which they pretend to be the only foundation of true Faith.'<sup>133</sup> The church 'which excommunicates all other Christian Churches in the world,' though they shared the same fundamental beliefs, could not be considered to follow the precept of charity.<sup>134</sup> Tillotson repeated his standpoint time and again. In another sermon posthumously published, he introduced the Church of Rome's argument that all churches and Christians 'which refuse Subjection to the Bishop of Rome... are out of the Communion of the Catholick Church, and a capacity of Salvation.'<sup>135</sup> To this Tillotson retorted, 'surely it is not possible, that the True Catholick Church of Christ can have so little Charity as this comes to.'<sup>136</sup> For him, the Roman argument that the true church was based on recognition of papal supremacy was an illustration of its lack of charity at a theoretical level.

Yet Tillotson claimed that the Roman Catholic practice of persecuting heretics, even more clearly indicated its uncharitable bias. On 5 November 1678, he was appointed to preach before the House of Commons on the day which celebrated the failure of the 1605 Gunpowder Plot. The anti-Catholic mentality of the day was even more heightened by the discovery of the alleged Popish Plot to assassinate King Charles II. In the sermon, Tillotson asserted that a cruel and destructive spirit was contrary to the design of the gospel and the brutal plot of the day

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<sup>131</sup> Peter Clark, *British clubs and societies 1580-1800: the origins of an associational world* (Oxford, 2000), pp. 274-308.

<sup>132</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at the first general meeting of the gentlemen, and others in and near London, who were born within the county of York... Decemb. 3. 1678* (London, 1679) p. 21.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.* p. 21.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.* p. 21.

<sup>135</sup> John Tillotson, *Of sincerity and constancy in the faith and profession of the true religion in several sermons* (London, 1695), the eighth sermon, p. 249.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.* p. 249.

could not be justified in the name of zeal for God and religion. However, the Church of Rome endorsed ‘this unchristian spirit’ and taught the doctrine that ‘Hereticks, that is all who differ from them in matters of Faith, are to be extirpated by fire and sword.’<sup>137</sup> For an example of the papacy exercising such a cruel spirit, Tillotson said, there was no need to look further than the Gunpowder Plot, ‘the horrid and bloody Design of this Day.’<sup>138</sup> In his Yorkshire feast sermon too, he charged that it was ‘the greatest wonder’ that ‘they who hate and persecute Christians most, do all this while the most confidently of all others pretend to be the Disciples of Christ, and will allow none to be so but themselves.’<sup>139</sup> In *A discourse against transubstantiation* published in 1684, his criticism of the doctrine developed into the condemnation of the brutality arising from it. Tillotson argued that ‘more Christians have been murther’d for the denial of it [the doctrine of transubstantiation] than perhaps for all the other Articles of their religion.’<sup>140</sup> This ‘cruel and bloody consequences’ of the doctrine was ‘so contrary to the plain Laws of Christianity, and to one great end and design of this Sacrament, which is to unite Christians in the most perfect love and charity to one another.’<sup>141</sup> In this way, he aimed to show that the persecuting zeal of the Church of Rome demonstrated its complete absence of charity. The heartless behaviour of the Church of Rome, according to Tillotson, made it far being from the true church.

In contrast, Tillotson claimed that Protestants, particularly in the Church of England had charity, which was a mark of the true church. In his 1672 sermon preached at the royal chapel, he argued, ‘the most judicious Protestant’ did not deny that ‘the Church of Rome do hold all the Articles of the Christian Faith which are necessary to Salvation,’ so being saved in the church was possible, though hazardous.<sup>142</sup> Saying this, he might have been referring to the narrow-mindedness of Dissenters, because the view of the ‘judicious Protestant’ on the Church of Rome was generally taken by Anglicans rather than by Nonconformists who complained about the Anglican tendency to acknowledge Rome as a true church.<sup>143</sup> Tillotson revealed this tendency once again in a sermon on true faith posthumously published in 1695. After listing Roman errors, he added that ‘if these Points, and a few more, be pared off from Popery, that

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<sup>137</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached November 5. 1678. at St. Margarets Westminster, before the honourable House of Commons* (London, 1678), p. 23.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid. p. 24.

<sup>139</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon preached at the first general meeting of the gentlemen... who were born within the county of York*, p. 21.

<sup>140</sup> John Tillotson, *A discourse against transubstantiation* (London, 1684), p. 36.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

<sup>142</sup> [Tillotson], *A sermon... on I Corinth. 3. 15*, p. 6.

<sup>143</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration church*, pp. 121-2; Claydon, *Europe and the making of England*, p. 305.

which remains of their Religion, is the same with ours, that is, the true Ancient Christianity.’<sup>144</sup> However, Rome’s uncharitable claim to be the only true church on earth and its violent persecution demanded ‘the utmost of our Charity to think that they are a true, tho very unsound and corrupt Part of the Catholick Church of Christ.’<sup>145</sup> At the end of his sermon, Tillotson confirmed that the charity found among Protestants, which extended even to Catholics, was a token of the true church. ‘Our Religion is evidently more Charitable to all Christians that differ from us, and particularly to them, who, by their Uncharitableness to us, have done as much as is possible to discharge and damp our Charity towards them. And Charity, as it is one of the most essential Marks of a true Christian, so it is likewise the best Mark and Ornament of a true Church.’<sup>146</sup> In his Gunpowder Day sermon of 1678, Tillotson returned to the sixteenth-century English history as an example of Protestant charity, which contrasted to the cruelties of the Gunpowder Plot. Edmund Bonner, the bishop of London, who was notorious for his role in the persecution of Protestants under the Catholic Queen Mary I, ‘notwithstanding all his Cruelties and Butcheries, was permitted quietly to live and die amongst us,’ after Queen Mary was succeeded by Protestant Queen Elizabeth.<sup>147</sup> For Tillotson, the fact that the infamous Catholic persecutor was not executed, though imprisoned, under Elizabeth I’s Protestant government was an indication of ‘the generous Humanity and Christian Temper of the English Protestants.’<sup>148</sup> Tillotson’s viewpoint based on charity might show that he put more weight on the difference in attitude and behaviour between Protestantism and Catholicism than the doctrinal gulf between them.

#### Ecclesiology of charity regarding Protestant Dissenters

Tillotson’s stress on the importance of charity provided the foundation for his strategy to deal with the problem of the Dissenters as well as that of the Church of Rome. As an Anglican cleric, he endeavoured to make the established church the focal point of religious life in England. He believed that all Christians in England should strive for unity within the Church of England. In this respect, Tillotson was not very different from other Anglican clergy. However, in terms of strategy, he was different from a group of churchmen who came to be

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<sup>144</sup> John Tillotson, *Heb. X. 23. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering in Of sincerity and constancy in the faith and profession of the true religion in several sermons* (London, 1695), pp. 287-8.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. p. 260.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. p. 292.

<sup>147</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon preached November 5. 1678*, p. 31.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid. p. 31.

known as ‘high church.’ The following discussion indicates where Tillotson agreed with high churchmen, and where he differed, and illustrates his charity-based strategy.

High church polemicists insisted that the refusal to conform to the established church was the sin of schism. Thomas Long maintained, ‘where all things necessary to Salvation are constantly imparted, we may and ought to continue in that Communion; and it is acknowledged to be a sin to separate from such a Church, wherein we may continue not only without sin, but to the saving of our Souls.’<sup>149</sup> According to this reasoning, the Toleration Act of 1689 did not bring about any changes to the duty to conform, because the act only removed the civil punishments but did not change the sinful character of schism. William Saywell asserted

the Toleration is not meant to justifie Heresie or Schism, or to warrant that they are in a safe condition that separate from the Church... but only to take off the Temporal Punishment which the Civil State did inflict... so tho’ the State does not at present punish Dissenters, yet it does so far disapprove of their Wayes, that all the Obligations in Conscience to Conform to the Church still remain, both by the Laws of the Church and State also.<sup>150</sup>

Tillotson would have agreed with this opinion. He was not reluctant to describe dissent in his sermons as being uncharitable and unchristian. During the Yorkshire feast sermon in 1678, which centred on Jesus’s commandment to love, he deplored that the commandment was neglected and violated ‘by most unchristian divisions and animosities in that common relation wherein we stand to one another, as Brethren, as Christian, as Protestants.’<sup>151</sup> In a fast day sermon in 1691, two years after the Toleration Act was passed, he highlighted the sin of ‘our most uncharitable and unchristian Divisions, to the endangering both of our Reformed Religion, and of the Civil Rights and Liberties of the Nation.’<sup>152</sup> Tillotson’s view was also revealed in *A discourse of pastoral care* written by Gilbert Burnet, the bishop of Salisbury following the 1688 revolution, who acknowledged he wrote it at the ‘Direction’ of Tillotson and ‘sent to him; by whose particular Approbation I publish it.’<sup>153</sup> The chapter on the functions of clergymen affirmed

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<sup>149</sup> [Thomas Long], *The case of persecution charg’d on the Church of England* (London, 1689), p. 18.

<sup>150</sup> William Saywell, *The necessity of adhering to the Church of England as by law established* (Cambridge, 1692), preface.

<sup>151</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon preached at the first general meeting of the gentlemen... who were born within the county of York*, p. 22.

<sup>152</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at Whitehall before the queen on the monthly fast-day* (London, 1691), p. 24.

<sup>153</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *A discourse of the pastoral care* (London, 1692), p. 250.

Nor are we to think, that the Toleration, under which the Law has settled the Dissenters, does either absolve them from the Obligations that they lay under before, by the Laws of God and the Gospel, to maintain the Vnity of the Church, and not to rent it by unjust or causeless Schisms, or us from using our endeavours to bring them to it, by the methods of Perswasion and Kindness; Nay, perhaps, their being now in Circumstances, that they can no more be forced in these things, may put some of them in a greater towardness to hear Reason.<sup>154</sup>

Both high churchmen and Tillotson, therefore, were of the opinion that Dissenters should conform. Yet, while Tillotson suggested ‘the methods of Perswasion and Kindness’ referred to above, high church clerics insisted on adopting more rigid ways because of their impression of Dissenters. They believed that there had been a long-term plot among Dissenters, partly controlled by Geneva, ‘to undermine and destroy the Established Church... either by open Acts of Hostility, or secret and subtile Arts of Defamations, Tolerations, illegal Conventicles, Confederacies, and Compliances with her professed Enemies.’<sup>155</sup> The penal laws had been introduced, because of ‘the seditious practices of ungovernable Men.’<sup>156</sup> The origin of sedition could be traced back to the year 1541 when Calvin came to Geneva. Since that time, ‘the Faction, with Calvin’s instigation, tumultuously and rebelliously plotted against, expell’d and abdicated their lawfull Lord and Bishop... thus... was the Genevian Discipline begotten in Rebellion, born in Sedition, and nurs’d up in Faction.’<sup>157</sup> In addition, high churchmen believed the episcopal system of the established church was essential for a true church, so they could not allow any concession to Dissenters on this important point. For them, ‘the lawfulness of Ordination’ was as important a principle as preaching the doctrines ‘agreeable to the written word’ to distinguish ‘false Prophets’ from true ones.<sup>158</sup> No one who wished to promote the ‘advancement of true Religion’ should be tempted ‘to change this ancient Apostolical Order of a Synod of Bishops governing according to the Rules of the Ancient Church, and with the assistance of their Presbyters, for a Synod of Presbyters only, according to the late Modell of Mr Calvin invented at Geneva.’<sup>159</sup> Therefore, high churchmen maintained that strict enforcement rather than allowing gentle concession would lead Dissenters to conformity. Though force alone was not enough for persuasion, it could provide

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid. p. 203.

<sup>155</sup> [Long], *The case of persecution*, p. 52.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid. p. 6.

<sup>157</sup> Anon. *A true and impartial narrative of the Dissenters new plot* (London, 1690), p. 8.

<sup>158</sup> [Long], *The case of persecution*, p.23.

<sup>159</sup> Saywell, *The necessity of adhering to the Church of England*, p. 12.



the occasion for a reconsideration.<sup>160</sup> For instance, Henry Dodwell, replying to Richard Baxter who insisted that compulsion only made hypocrites, argued that conforming out of fear should not be considered just hypocrisy, because fear had often ‘proved the beginning of true wisdom.’<sup>161</sup> Long mentioned Augustine who ‘asserts the necessity of Penal Laws, which he grounds on his own experience.’<sup>162</sup> The bishop of Hippo, said Long, successfully reduced Donatists, the Dissenters of his age, to unity by penal laws. Augustine observed, ‘they being first awed by fear, were afterward convinced by truth, which they could not hear from their false Teachers.’<sup>163</sup>

Tillotson, by contrast, proposed a different solution to the problem of nonconformity. John Beardmore, who had been Tillotson’s pupil at Cambridge, recalled in his memoirs that

our Doctor having known many of them [Dissenters] himself to have been honest and sincere in the main... tho’ misled, and held under almost invincible prejudices, he had a tender respect, and a great compassion for them; and therefore thought they were rather to be instructed with meekness, and reduc’d by gentle and fair methods to a good opinion of this church, and the orders and constitutions of it, than to be continually pelted with sharp reflections from the pulpit, or rigorously dealt with by the execution of penal laws... he was the most successful man in his endeavours this way, of all others in this whole church and nation; at least beyond any one man, having been an instrument of reducing great numbers of Dissenters, both Presbyterians, Independents, Anabaptists, into the church.<sup>164</sup>

Tillotson’s ‘gentle and fair’ spirit was well revealed in his Yorkshire feast sermon. Tillotson argued that the division among the Protestants in England should be overcome by charity, the chief Christian virtue, because they only differed in the minor things while they agreed on ‘the great matters.’

Give me leave a little more fully to expostulate this matter, but very calmly... in the name of our dear Lord, who loved us all at such a rate as to die for us, to recommend to you this new Commandment of his, that ye love one another: Which is... so little hath

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<sup>160</sup> Mark Goldie, “The theory of religious intolerance in Restoration England,” in Ole Peter Grell, Jonathan Israel and Nicholas Tyacke, eds., *From persecution to toleration: the Glorious Revolution in England* (Oxford, 1991), pp. 345-58.

<sup>161</sup> Henry Dodwell, *A reply to Mr. Baxter’s pretended confutation* (London, 1684), p. 192.

<sup>162</sup> [Long], *The case of persecution*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>164</sup> Beardmore, *Some memorials*, p. 399.

it been practised among Christians for several Ages. Consider seriously with your selves, ought not the great matters wherein we are agreed, our Union in the Doctrines of the Christian Religion, and in all the necessary Articles of that Faith... in the same Sacraments, and in all the substantial parts of God's worship, and in the great Duties and Vertues of the Christian life, to be of greater force to unite us, than difference in doubtful Opinions, and in little Rites and circumstances of Worship, to divide and break us?<sup>165</sup>

Some ceremonial issues such as the use of the surplice, kneeling for communion, and the use of the Prayer Book are 'in their nature indifferent, that is, things about which there ought to be no difference among wise men.'<sup>166</sup> The list of 'things indifferent' could have included episcopal church government, for which Tillotson did not have a great affection, but he excluded it probably in order to avoid offending episcopalians. Tillotson perhaps also wanted to avoid mentioning too many examples of differences 'in doubtful Opinions' because he did not want to add fuel to the fire in the sermon on charity and unity.

An example of Tillotson's moderation in doctrine might be seen in *An exposition of the Thirty Nine articles* by Burnet. Just like *A discourse of pastoral care*, the *Exposition* was written at Tillotson's direction. Burnet made clear in the preface that Tillotson not only inspired Burnet to write it, but 'he employed some Weeks wholly in perusing it, and he corrected it with a Care that descended even to the smallest matters.'<sup>167</sup> The *Exposition* contained the explanation of Article 17 on predestination, which was one of the most disputed doctrines in the period. In the debate, Calvinists argued that salvation was not dependent on human will but completely determined by the sovereign election of God. On the other hand, Arminians insisted that the Calvinist view made God unjust and they believed that people's free will and behaviour affected their salvation. The *Exposition* maintained, 'the Source of both Opinions' was 'the different Ideas that they have of God, and both these Ideas being true.'<sup>168</sup> That is, Calvinists emphasised the infinite independency and sovereignty of God, whereas Arminians stressed his infinite goodness and mercy. Both sides had their own biblical grounds for their beliefs, and a true zeal for God and his glory, and 'these are great Ground for mutual Charity and Forbearance

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<sup>165</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon preached at the first general meeting of the gentlemen... who were born within the county of York*, pp. 23-4.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid. p. 24.

<sup>167</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *An exposition of the thirty nine articles of the Church of England* (London, 1699), p. i.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid. p. 165.

in these Matters.<sup>169</sup> Furthermore, both sides agreed on many important points, for example, that God offered his son Jesus to be our propitiation to the world and that all people were bound to obey the rules declared in the gospel. 'If they would agree as honestly in the practice of them, as they do in confessing them to be true, they would do that which is much more important and necessary, than to speculate and dispute about Niceties; by which the World would quickly put on a new Face.'<sup>170</sup> The key was to focus more on practising the uncontroversial precepts of the gospel in Christian love rather than digging into complicated theological controversies.

Tillotson went a step further by alluding that out of charity the established church should soften the rigidity of its outward forms to bring in Dissenters. Towards the close of the Yorkshire feast sermon, he recommended to the Church of England's governors that they should make some concessions to Dissenters.

I think we have no cause to doubt, but the Governours of our Church... are Persons of that Piety and Prudence, that for Peace sake, and in order to a firm Union among Protestants, they would be content, if that would do it, not to insist upon little things: but to yield them up, whether to the infirmity, or importunity, or perhaps in some very few things, to the plausible exceptions of those who differ from us. But then surely on the other side, men ought to bring along with them a peaceable disposition, and a mind ready to comply with the Church in which they were born and baptized, in all reasonable and lawfull things, and desirous upon any terms that are tolerable to return to the Communion of it: a mind free from passion and prejudice, from peevish exceptions, and groundless and endless scruples.<sup>171</sup>

This remark appears to have given rise to many complaints from high churchmen. Beardmore stated that following the delivery and publication of this sermon, Tillotson was condemned as 'an enemy to the church' and 'the head of that party, which was for altering the liturgy in compliance with the Nonconformists' by those who thought 'the very establishment of the church upon the reformation was moderate enough, and needs to make no further abatement, unless it were oblig'd to moderate again and again, and so till the whole constitution be destroyed.'<sup>172</sup> Yet Tillotson believed that making concessions would not weaken the Church

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<sup>169</sup> Ibid. p. 165.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid. p. 168.

<sup>171</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon preached at the first general meeting of the gentlemen... who were born within the county of York*, p. 28.

<sup>172</sup> Beardmore, *Some memorials*, p. 403.

of England, but would rather strengthen it if the measure united the Protestants, particularly in the light of the Roman Catholic menace.

Achieving the unity of Protestants was fulfilling the commandment of charity in itself, but it could promote charity in another way when the united effort of Protestants enhanced its ability to defend Protestantism against Catholicism. Reformed Christians had to stop the most dangerous persecuting force in the world, which was continually looking for a chance to destroy Protestant churches. In pursuit of this goal, minor differences among Protestants should be put aside. If the work of unity was neglected, Catholicism would creep in.

Can we in good earnest be contented that rather than the Surplice should not be thrown out, Popery should come in? and rather than receive the Sacrament in the humble but indifferent posture of kneeling, to swallow the Camel of Transubstantiation, and adore the Elements of Bread and Wine for our God and Saviour? and rather than to submit to a set Form of Prayer, to have the Service of God perform'd in an unknown Tongue?<sup>173</sup>

Catholics were believed by many to promote divisions within Protestant communities. In his 1689 thanksgiving sermon, Tillotson blamed Catholics as sowers of divisions, saying, 'by the unwearied Malice and Arts of the Church of Rome the seeds of Dissention were scattered very early amongst us ... for a long time before things broke out into a Civil War.'<sup>174</sup> A year later, preaching before Londoners mainly on the necessity of peace and unity, he again warned, 'their chief policy and wisdom is, and ever hath been, to divide us; and it will be our own great folly and weakness if we suffer our selves to be divided.'<sup>175</sup> For Tillotson, the crucial way to defend Protestantism in England from the Catholic threat was to build a firmly united national church.

Is it not plain to every eye, that little Sects and separate Congregations can never do it? but will be like a Foundation of sand to a weighty Building, which whatever shew it may make cannot stand long, because it wants Union at the Foundation, and for that reason must necessarily want strength and firmness.<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>173</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon preached at the first general meeting of the gentlemen... who were born within the county of York*, pp. 24-5.

<sup>174</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at Lincoln's Inn Chapel on the 31 of January, 1688. being the day appointed for a public thanksgiving* (London, 1689), p. 23.

<sup>175</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at St Mary le Bow before the Lord Mayor, Court of Aldermen, & citizens of London* (London, 1690), p. 32.

<sup>176</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon preached at the first general meeting of the gentlemen... who were born within the county of York*, p. 27.

Tillotson was not negligent in putting into action his exhortation to unity among English Protestants against Rome. In April 1687 James II issued his declaration of indulgence which removed the penal laws against Roman Catholics and the Protestant Dissenters. In April of the following year he reissued the declaration, and followed it up a week later on 4 May by an order that the declaration should be read in all churches: in London on the last two Sundays in May and in the rest of the country on the first two Sundays in June.<sup>177</sup> The churchmen found themselves in trouble. A London clergyman, Simon Patrick wrote, ‘we were in great perplexity about reading the declaration for liberty of conscience, which all my acquaintance seemed to abhor.’<sup>178</sup> Some, such as William Sherlock, the prebendary of St Paul’s, disliked the declaration because it provided toleration for Dissenters. Others like Tillotson and Patrick, who did not want to alienate Dissenters, disliked the idea that Catholics had religious freedom. If the churchmen read it, they would become the tool of the indulgence they disagreed with, and furthermore they would lose the respect of the faithful Anglican people. If, on the other hand, they refused to read, in addition to being reproached for disobeying the king’s order, they would alienate Dissenters and encourage them to ally with James, resulting in the isolation of the established church surrounded by Protestant Dissenters and Catholics under the aegis of the monarch.<sup>179</sup> The clergy had many meetings to decide how to react, and reached the conclusion: ‘every one resolving, for some reason or other, not to read the Declaration.’<sup>180</sup> Then they ‘entered into consultation about an address to the King, and at last it was agreed it should be by way of petition from his Grace, the Bishops present with him, and in behalf of their brethren, and of the Clergy of their Dioceses.’<sup>181</sup> In the petition, what was emphasised as the reason for disobeying the order was that the royal dispensing power which the declaration was founded upon had been declared illegal in parliament. Yet there remained the problem that refusing to read the declaration of indulgence could offend Dissenters. The moderate clerics, such as Tillotson, Patrick, and Edward Fowler, tried to get Dissenters to support the anti-Catholic spirit in their opposition, and managed to secure some approval.<sup>182</sup> To show they were not hostile to Dissenters, they included in the petition to the king the phrase that the clergy were not opposed to reciting the declaration for ‘any want of due tenderness to Dissenters.’<sup>183</sup> After the seven

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<sup>177</sup> Roger Thomas, “Comprehension and indulgence,” in Geoffrey Nuttall and Owen Chadwick, eds, *From uniformity to unity 1662-1692* (London, 1962), pp. 235-8.

<sup>178</sup> Simon Patrick, *The auto-biography of Symon Patrick* (Oxford, 1839), p. 131.

<sup>179</sup> Roger Thomas, “The seven bishops and their petition, 18 May 1688,” *The journal of ecclesiastical history*, 12.1 (1961), pp. 59-62.

<sup>180</sup> Patrick, *The auto-biography*, p. 132.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.* p. 133.

<sup>182</sup> Thomas, “The seven bishops,” pp. 62-3.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.* p. 64.

bishops presented the petition to the king on 18 May on behalf of their like-minded clergy, the bishops were committed to the Tower on a charge of seditious libel, but were acquitted at the end of June.<sup>184</sup>

The peaceful mood between the established church and Dissenters continued. While the bishops were still in the Tower, ten dissenting ministers visited them, probably beginning some preliminary talks for unity. After the release of the bishops, William Sancroft, the archbishop of Canterbury and some London churchmen had several meetings with the leaders of Dissenters to come to an agreement on indifferent points of ceremonies. Before the end of the reign of James, Sancroft organised a committee for revision of the liturgy, among whose members were Tillotson, Patrick, Stillingfleet, and Burnet.<sup>185</sup> After the 1688 revolution, Tillotson and his friends appear to have started taking a more active part. On 14 January 1689, a meeting was held at the house of Stillingfleet, attended by William Lloyd, the bishop of St Asaph, Tillotson, Patrick, John Sharp, the dean of Norwich, and Thomas Tenison, the future archbishop of Canterbury, ‘to consult about such concessions as might bring in Dissenters to our communion.’<sup>186</sup> They ‘agreed that a bill should be prepared to be offered by the Bishops.’<sup>187</sup> As a result, a bill for the comprehension of Dissenters with necessary concessions was prepared. They also proposed a bill to suspend punishment for breaches of uniformity, expecting that it would be only applied to a small number of intransigent bigots, while most Dissenters would be covered by the comprehension scheme. However, whereas the toleration bill passed parliament in May 1689, the comprehension bill met opposition in parliament, and it was decided that further discussions would be made in convocation before being presented to parliament again. This decision, being influenced by the party against the comprehension, was disastrous for those working for the comprehension. ‘To call a Convocation of the clergy,’ complained Burnet, ‘would be the utter ruin of the comprehension scheme.’<sup>188</sup>

Despite this, Tillotson believed that there was still a chance of success and persuaded William III to delegate the project to a committee of clergy. Tillotson thought, ‘lest affairs of this nature, consisting of such a multitude of particulars, might proceed too slowly in so numerous a body, it would be best... for his Majesty to authorize... several of the most eminent

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<sup>184</sup> Thomas, “Comprehension and indulgence,” pp. 238-9; Spurr, *The Restoration church*, pp. 96-7.

<sup>185</sup> Timothy Fawcett, *The Liturgy of Comprehension 1689* (Southend-on-Sea, 1973), pp. 18-20.

<sup>186</sup> Patrick, *The auto-biography*, p. 141.

<sup>187</sup> *Ibid.* p. 141.

<sup>188</sup> Thomas Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson, lord archbishop of Canterbury... the second edition* (London, 1753), p. 165.

of the clergy to consider of some methods of healing the wounds of the church.’<sup>189</sup> The king agreed in September to set up the commission to prepare matters for convocation. In preparation for the royal commission, Tillotson drew up ‘Concessions, which will probably be made by the Church of England for the union of Protestants.’ In this, we can see the details of his plan to bring Dissenters into the established church. With regard to the ceremonies and the liturgy, he intended

that the ceremonies injoin’d or recommended in the liturgy, or canons, be left indifferent... that the liturgy be carefully reviewed, and such alterations and changes therein made, as may supply the defects, and remove, as much as is possible, all ground of exception to any part of it, by leaving out the apocryphal lessons, and correcting the translation of the Psalms, used in the public service.<sup>190</sup>

Tillotson also addressed another obstacle to conformity - the problem of reordination. For Presbyterian ministers who had performed ministry before the Restoration without ordination by a bishop, the demand of the 1662 Act of Uniformity that they should be reordained by a bishop was disturbing. Many of them were reluctant to conform, because they felt that by submitting a new ordination, they repudiated their former ordinations and past ministries.<sup>191</sup> To reduce the scruples, Tillotson was ready to propose

that those, who have been ordained only by Presbyters, shall not be compelled to renounce their former ordination. But because many have, and do still doubt of the validity of such ordination, where episcopal ordination may be had, and is by law required, it shall be sufficient for such persons to receive ordination from a Bishop in this or the like form: If thou are not already ordained, I ordain thee.<sup>192</sup>

The commission met from 3 October to 18 November and produced considerable work to be presented to the convocation that started its session on 21 November 1689. However, as Burnet expected, the convocation turned out to be in no mood for comprehension. When the two houses of convocation began business, they quarrelled over the terms of an address to the king to thank him. After they finally agreed on the form of words on 12 December, the convocation was adjourned until 24 January, and soon after it was dissolved with the

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid. p. 166.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid. pp. 168-9.

<sup>191</sup> John Spurr, “The Church of England, comprehension and the Toleration Act of 1689,” *English Historical Review*, 104 (1989), pp. 929-30.

<sup>192</sup> Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, pp. 169-70.

parliament.<sup>193</sup> According to Birch, the party against comprehension ‘labour’d to find out some other business to divert them from that, for which they were called together.’<sup>194</sup> In this way, the commission’s work was not even discussed and the attempt at comprehension failed. However, the whole story showed the readiness of Tillotson and his colleagues to comprehend Dissenters, even by modifying the appearance of the established church. For example, in compliance with the proposals of Tillotson, the committee suggested that ceremonies, such as the use of surplice, the cross in baptism, and kneeling at the sacrament, should be optional. For nonconformist ministers, conditional ordination would be allowed so that a bishop could ordain them with the words, ‘if thou are not already ordained, I ordain thee.’<sup>195</sup> If the comprehension scheme had been successful and had brought even a small number of Dissenters into the church, Tillotson would have considered that the Church of England had made progress in terms of charity, the mark of the true church.

### Conclusion

The virtue of charity was crucial when Tillotson constructed his ideas on the church, and with this, he was able to distinguish the Church of England both from the Church of Rome and from the communities of Dissenters. Regarding the Church of Rome, Tillotson thought its most serious problem was its uncharitable attitude and persecuting zeal rather than its doctrinal errors. It is true that he sharply condemned Catholic beliefs such as the doctrine of transubstantiation as unreasonable. However, more serious was the fact that the Church of Rome imposed its false doctrines with violence. Tillotson believed that the Catholic practice of coercion and persecution was incompatible with Christian love. Turning to Dissenters, he accused them of lacking charity, because if they had possessed it, they would have prioritised oneness with their brothers in the Church of England. Tillotson argued that the Church of England held pure and ancient Christian beliefs which were freed from many Catholic errors. Thus, refusing to conform to the established church due to ceremonial issues or subtle doctrinal points was, he asserted, narrow-minded and contrary to a charitable spirit that Jesus commanded.

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid. pp. 173-92; Thomas, “Comprehension and indulgence,” pp. 251-3.

<sup>194</sup> Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, p. 191.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid. p. 170.



Furthermore, the other ecclesiological arguments Tillotson used - Protestantism and Erastianism - were related to his stress on charity. It looks quite clear that charity was at the root of Tillotson's Protestant ecclesiology, because, as we have seen, he believed Jesus's commandment of love was the core of Christianity, which he thought was embraced by Protestantism but was ignored by Catholicism. By contrast, Erastianism, which justified the state control over the religious realm, may appear to have had little to do with charity. In fact, under Charles II Tillotson supported the monarch's role of enforcing uniformity to ensure peace. However, his experience of Restoration England and the Toleration Act of 1689 might have changed his view. Preaching on the duty to pray for the government in 1693, Tillotson seemed to reconceptualise the ruler's job. The main reason to pray for rulers was that there were great advantages of government. He said that the two great benefits of government were 'that by Government we are secured in our Civil Rights and Interests, in the quiet and peaceable Profession of what is our own' and 'that we may thereby be protected in the free Practice and Exercise of Religion and Virtue.'<sup>196</sup> It can be seen that Tillotson thought the role of ruler with regard to religion was not to intervene the spiritual life of individuals to ensure uniformity, but to keep the peace in his country so that people could seek to live religious and virtuous lives without the need to fear violence from others. Uncharitable coercion was not encouraged by Tillotson. Rather, now the task of governors concerning the religious lives of subjects was encouraging true religion, not by force but by influence. Tillotson argued

The Piety and Goodness of Princes and Magistrates (especially those who are in highest place of Authority) have a general good influence upon the Manners of Men, both for the discountenancing of Wickedness and Vice, and for the encouragement of Religion and Virtue, which are the main Pillars and Foundation of publick Peace and Prosperity... The Pattern of a Religious and good Prince is a living Law to his Subjects, and more than the Example of then Thousand others, to Mould and Fashion the Manners of the People to a conformity to it.<sup>197</sup>

By suggesting a new concept of the governor's role, Tillotson might have sought to make his Erastian ecclesiology work in a charitable way, probably thinking that this new model could be a more effective way to bring a peaceful and charitable society.

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<sup>196</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached on the 29. of May, 1693 in Sixteen sermons, preached on several occasions by the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second volume* (London, 1696), p. 420.

<sup>197</sup> Ibid. p. 428-9.

Tillotson's ecclesiastical vision was creating a Christian community of charity. His ecclesiology based on charity may provide us with a new insight into the intellectual and social history of the late seventeenth and the eighteenth century in a couple of ways. First, Tillotson's ecclesiology examined in this chapter may suggest that an ecclesiology based on charity and community was one of the main elements of Latitudinarianism. Though some studies have mentioned that charity-based arguments were at times used by the moderate Anglican churchmen, no studies have closely associated contemporary Anglican ecclesiology with charity.<sup>198</sup> Given that many of Tillotson's so-called Latitudinarian colleagues believed that cruelty was the manifestation of an un-Christian spirit and stressed moderation and charity as primary virtue, they might also have shared Tillotson's charity-based ecclesiology. Stillingfleet wrote in the epistle dedicatory of his sermon published in 1681 to the Lord Mayor and the aldermen of London, 'the true Protestant Charity... brought Honour to our Religion; advanced the Reputation of the City; and promoted the Good of the whole Nation.'<sup>199</sup> Burnet opposed violent action against Catholics in his pamphlet published in 1688. He wrote, 'the returning the Severities we have suffered... is a Practice so contrary to the Christian Religion... I had rather see the Church of England fall under a very severe Persecution, than fall to Persecute others.'<sup>200</sup> Fowler accused Dissenters of being uncharitable in their claim that 'the Ceremonies of our Church [the Church of England] is as unquestionably sinful, as to worship false Gods, and fall down to graven images.'<sup>201</sup> Fowler argued that the Dissenters' attitude was 'a most manifest transgression of the law of Charity.'<sup>202</sup> Second, more generally, Tillotson's emphasis on practice of Christian love rather than doctrines and theology might have paved the way for a society where charitable behaviour was fervently encouraged as true piety. In such a social atmosphere, religious and social reformation came to be driven by a wider public who could follow a simple message of charity, rather than being led by doctrinally-centred clerics.<sup>203</sup> Tillotson's view of true religiosity in church and society might therefore have helped a transformation in religious life in England: ushering in the laicised and benevolent Christianity

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<sup>198</sup> Spurr, *The Restoration church*, pp. 123-4; Martin Griffin, *Latitudinarianism in the Seventeenth-Century Church of England* (Leiden, 1992), pp. 158-9; Tony Claydon, "Latitudinarianism and apocalyptic history in the worldview of Gilbert Burnet, 1643-1715," *The Historical Journal*, 51.3 (2008), pp. 577-597.

<sup>199</sup> Edward Stillingfleet, *Protestant charity: a sermon preached at S. Sepulchres church, on Tuesday in Easter week* (London, 1681), epistle dedicatory.

<sup>200</sup> G[ilbert] B[urnet], *The case of compulsion in matters of religion stated* (London, 1688), p. 15.

<sup>201</sup> [Edward Fowler], *The principles and practices of certain moderate divines of the Church of England* (London, 1670), p. 30.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.* p. 31.

<sup>203</sup> Mark Goldie, "Voluntary Anglicans," *The Historical Journal*, 46.4 (2003), pp. 977-90; Lawrence Klein, "Politeness and the interpretation of the British eighteenth century," *The Historical Journal*, 45.4 (2002), pp. 869-898.

of the eighteenth century. This topic will be further discussed in the overall conclusion of this thesis.

## Chapter 4: Politics

In the seventeenth century, politics and religion were closely connected to each other, so no consideration of Tillotson's theology would be complete without an examination of his political ideas. Tillotson's lifetime (1630-1694) was one of the most tumultuous periods in English history, spanning the personal rule of Charles I, the English Civil War, the Interregnum, the Restoration, the exclusion crisis, and the 1688 revolution. During the era, people in England faced a set of theoretical issues related to contemporary politics: dynastic legitimacy; the legitimacy of Catholic rule over Protestants; resistance theory; and the validity of regimes brought to power by force. The attitude towards these issues varied and it is not easy to clearly categorise the range of views. Nevertheless, by the end of the century they tended to be grouped into the rival ideas held by political parties - Whigs and Tories.

Though Whigs in general valued dynastic legitimacy, the prospect that a Catholic heir, the duke of York, would come to the throne made them seek to limit the principle of hereditary succession during the exclusion crisis. They thought a regime headed by a Catholic king should not be accepted in a Protestant country, because it would inevitably lead to an arbitrary government and the ruin of the Protestant religion. Whigs believed that in case of tyranny the people had right to resist, and accordingly they regarded the revolution of 1688 as legitimate resistance to a tyrant. With regard to the problem of nonconformity, Whigs were sympathetic to Dissenters and sought to accommodate their interests, because they considered Protestantism to be the common ground binding Anglicans and Dissenters. On the other hand, Tories asserted that the principle of hereditary succession was sacred and inviolable and breaking it would cause serious confusion. They insisted that even if the Catholic successor James was in power, the liberty and religion of the English people would be protected by the law. Tories denied subjects the right to resist rulers, so when the revolution brought the change of monarch, they tried to come to terms with the event in ways other than considering it as a lawful resistance. Some Tories believed William III had the right to govern England because he conquered the country with his military force and provided the people with protection. Others suggested the exceptional success of William's military action meant it was designed by divine providence.

As far as Dissenters concerned, Tories were much less generous than Whigs on episcopal and Erastian grounds.<sup>1</sup>

Yet the view of individuals could be more complex than this polarity between Whigs and Tories suggests, and some held a mixed position, straddling the two parties - for example, George Savile the marquis of Halifax and Robert Harley the earl of Oxford and Mortimer. An examination of Tillotson's political ideas may show that his standpoint, too, was complicated. In this chapter, Tillotson's reactions to the events of his day are examined chronologically. It will help us understand his ideas in close connection with the regimes he experienced - from the Interregnum through the reigns of Charles II and James II to the post-revolution government of William III and Mary II. The fact that Tillotson served all the regimes of his day throws up a question: what was his rationale behind constantly pursuing his career under many different kinds of government? One of the aims of this chapter is to answer this question, by exploring Tillotson's main concerns related to politics. His understanding of divine providence seemed to be instrumental in shaping his political thought. Also, the promotion of good Christian behaviour was his overarching aim, and this largely dictated his attitudes in politics.

### The Interregnum and the restored government of Charles II

The Civil War started in 1642 while Tillotson was growing up under his Calvinist father. When Tillotson entered Clare Hall, Cambridge in his mid-teens in 1647, Charles I was in the hands of parliament and was to be executed two years later. John Watson, who in the eighteenth century wrote a history of Halifax in Yorkshire, included an interesting letter that the undergraduate Tillotson wrote at Clare Hall in December 1649 to Henry Root, a minister of the congregational church gathered at Halifax, of which he had been a member. In the letter, he asked Root's opinion about taking 'the engagement,' the oath of loyalty which had to be taken by all who would hold office in church or state under the new republican regime. The oath stated 'that they would be true and faithful to the Government established, without King or House of Peers.'<sup>2</sup> Tillotson wrote

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<sup>1</sup> Tim Harris, *Politics under the later Stuarts: party conflict in a divided society, 1660-1715* (London, 1993); J. P. Kenyon, *Revolution principles: the politics of party 1689-1720* (Cambridge, 1977); H. T. Dickinson, *Liberty and property: political ideology in eighteenth-century Britain* (London, 1977); Mark Goldie, "The revolution of 1689 and the structure of political argument," *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, 83 (1980), pp. 473-564.

<sup>2</sup> John Watson, *The history and antiquities of the parish of Halifax in Yorkshire* (London, 1775), p. 519.

The engagement is either coming downe hither, or (as I heare) already come, to which how soone wee shall bee called upon to subscribe, wee knowe not; as for my selfe I do not (for present) at all scruple the taking of it, yet, because I dare not confide too much to my owne judgement, or apprehension of things, and because matters of such serious consequence require no little caution and consideration, therefore I shall desire you... to return mee your opinion of it.<sup>3</sup>

The fact that Tillotson asked his advisor's opinion might show he had some hesitation, but it is worth noting that he wrote he did 'not at all scruple the taking of it.' Watson commented that though Root's answer had not survived, given that 'Mr. Roote, who at that time was Preacher at Sowerby Chapel, was one of the Puritans, it is probable that he would not dissuade Mr. Tillotson from complying with that Engagement.'<sup>4</sup> Whether Tillotson took the engagement is not known, but his subsequent career in the Interregnum, along with his own judgement revealed in the letter, hints at his readiness to accept the regime and work under it. After commencing Bachelor of Arts, he acted as a fellow of his college from 1651 nominated by 'mandamus from the higher powers.'<sup>5</sup> In 1656 or 1657 he started serving a person near power, Edmund Prideaux, Oliver Cromwell's attorney-general, as tutor to his son and chaplain to the family.<sup>6</sup> The reason why Tillotson remained loyal and carried on his career under the Cromwellian regime is a matter of speculation, because he did not explain the rationale behind his decision. His reasoning might have been the *de facto* argument which was used, most famously by Thomas Hobbes, to justify the loyalty to the Cromwellian government. He insisted, 'any political power with the capacity to protect its citizens is... a justifiable political authority, and so is entitled to their obedience.'<sup>7</sup> This reasoning could be in harmony with Tillotson's providential readings of politics, which would be expressed in his later years.

In retrospect, Tillotson described the Civil War and the Interregnum as dark and turbulent. The virtue and order of English nation had been lost at the time. In his sermon at Lincoln's Inn published in 1671 which mainly discussed the advantages of religion to societies, Tillotson deplored the dwindling religiosity and morality, particularly since the Civil War.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid. p. 518.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. p. 519.

<sup>5</sup> John Beardmore, *Some memorials of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson* in Thomas Birch, ed., *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition* (London, 1753), p. 385.

<sup>6</sup> Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, p. 14.

<sup>7</sup> Quentin Skinner, "Conquest and consent: Thomas Hobbes and the Engagement Controversy," in G. E. Aylmer ed., *The Interregnum: the quest for settlement, 1646-1660* (London, 1972), p. 96.

It is most apparent that, of late years, Religion is very sensibly declin'd among us. The Manners of Men have almost been universally corrupted by a Civil Warr. We should therefore all jointly endeavour, to retrieve the ancient Virtue of the Nation, and to bring into fashion again that solid and substantial, that plain and unaffected Piety.<sup>8</sup>

The corruption of manners was due partly to the violence during the war, but it was also accredited to a lack of proper government. In a posthumously published sermon dated 29 May 1693, the anniversary of the Restoration, the Civil War period and the Interregnum were lumped as 'the miserable Distractions and Confusions of twenty Years.'<sup>9</sup> In those days 'our own ancient Government and Laws' were lost.<sup>10</sup> Thus, though he did not scruple approving a government without a king while living under it, after the monarchy was restored Tillotson judged Cromwell's reign to have been constitutionally deficient.

When he talked about the turbulent past, however, he seemed to try not to raise hostility towards Nonconformists. Dwelling on the dark past could have weakened what he was trying to say by irritating Dissenters or by increasing Anglican hostility against Dissenters. In the sermon published in 1671 mentioned above, therefore, the reference to the Civil War was immediately followed by the encouragement of virtue and piety 'free from the extrems both of Superstition, and Enthusiam [sic].'<sup>11</sup> Tillotson wanted to focus more on the value of the regained monarchy under which Englishmen could freely endeavour to reform their manners, rather than the chaos of the past.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps his reluctance to alienate Dissenters led him to avoid preaching on 30 January, the anniversary of the execution of Charles I, because Dissenters were regarded by some Anglicans as the heirs of those who had committed regicide.<sup>13</sup> This was an unusual case: for preachers who actively published sermons in the Restoration years, 30 January was an important occasion when they were expected to condemn the regicide. Thus, Tillotson's silence on the occasion might indicate his Dissenter-friendly view. Tillotson at

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<sup>8</sup> John Tillotson, *Prov. xiv. 34. Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is the reproach of any people* in *Sermons preach'd upon several occasions* (London, 1671), p. 147.

<sup>9</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached on the 29. of May, 1693* in *Sixteen sermons, preached on several occasions... the second volume* (London, 1696), p. 439.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.* p. 414.

<sup>11</sup> Tillotson, *Prov. xiv. 34. Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is the reproach of any people*, p. 147.

<sup>12</sup> The sermons touching the morality in the Restoration period will be discussed again below.

<sup>13</sup> Among the printed sermons, including posthumous publication, none was preached on 30 January. Gerard Reedy argued choosing not to preach on 30 January showed one's sympathies of Dissenters. High churchmen did not hesitate about preaching on the date. Gerard Reedy, *Robert South (1634-1716), an introduction to his life and sermons* (Cambridge, 1992), p. 55.

times blamed Catholics for promoting the divisions among Protestants from long before the Civil War. In the 1689 thanksgiving sermon, he argued

almost from the beginning of our happy Reformation the Enemy had sown these Tares, and by the unwearied Malice and Arts of the Church of Rome the seeds of Dissention were scattered very early amongst us; and a sowre humour had been fermenting in the Body of the Nation, both upon account of Religion and Civil Interests, for a long time before things broke out into a Civil War.<sup>14</sup>

In this way, he laid the pre-Restoration confusion at the door of Catholics and sought to rally a wide Protestant support for moral reform.

With the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 and the following religious settlement, Tillotson was faced with a choice between dissenting and conforming to the rigid episcopalian establishment. At the Savoy Conference in 1661, he was among the auditors on the Presbyterian side. However, he accepted the Act of Uniformity in 1662 and continued his clerical career in the Church of England. After going through the post of parish minister at Cheshunt and Kedington, Tillotson settled in London. He was elected preacher to the Society of Lincoln's Inn in 1663, by the recommendation of Robert Atkins, a bencher of the inn who was impressed by Tillotson's sermons.<sup>15</sup> The reputation of his preaching gained him the Tuesday lectureship in 1664 at St Lawrence Jewry where 'he was commonly attended by a numerous audience, brought together from the remotest parts of the metropolis.'<sup>16</sup> Tillotson preached at the consecration of John Wilkins to the bishopric of Chester, and 'this discourse gave general satisfaction, and the Preacher's merit began now to be taken notice of at Court' so that Charles II appointed him one of his chaplains in 1669.<sup>17</sup> When the deanery of Canterbury became vacant in 1672, archbishop Gilbert Sheldon, the duke of Buckingham, and the earl of Berkley approached the king to promote Tillotson to the office. According to John Beardmore, Tillotson's pupil at Cambridge, 'when the King understood, and that they did it not by any mutual correspondence, but each one out of their own particular respect to the Doctor, he was very well pleased, and so preferred him very readily.'<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at Lincoln's Inn Chapel on the 31 of January, 1688. being the day appointed for a public thanksgiving* (London, 1689), p. 23.

<sup>15</sup> Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition* (London, 1753), p. 26.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 29.

<sup>17</sup> [Philip Nichols], "Tillotson (John)," *Biographia Britannica, or, The lives of the most eminent persons who have flourished in Great Britain and Ireland*, vol. 6, part 1 (London, 1763), p. 3947.

<sup>18</sup> Beardmore, *Some memorials*, pp. 393-4.



Like his position over the engagement controversy under Cromwell, his conformity to the Restoration settlement might have had something to do with the *de facto* principle. And without contradicting this, Tillotson praised the Restoration as a remarkable work of divine providence. Two sermons preached by Tillotson on 29 May, the anniversary of the Restoration, were published. One was given on Ascension day towards the end of the reign of Charles II; though the sermon was mainly about the circumstances and benefits of the Ascension, he noted at the beginning ‘there are two occasions of this day accidentally met together, which bear some resemblance to one another; the Ascension of our Blessed Saviour... and the Restoration of our Sovereign to his just Rights, and Royal State and Dignity here upon Earth, by a Miraculous Providence of God, and as if were by a kind of Resurrection from the Dead.’<sup>19</sup> After discussing the ascension of Jesus, Tillotson, at the end of the sermon, encouraged his hearers to ‘bless God for the wonderful Restoration of his Majesty to the Government of these Kingdoms, who under the Christ is the great Defender of our Faith and Religion’ and exhorted them to obedience and prayer for the king.<sup>20</sup> The other 29 May sermon was delivered under William and Mary in 1693. He said the day was appointed for ‘an Anniversary Solemnity, in a grateful commemoration of the great Mercy of God to these Nations, in putting an end to the intestine Wars and Confusions of many Years, in restoring to us our own ancient Government and Laws, and in bringing home, as upon this Day, the rightful Heir of these Kingdoms, to the Crown and Throne of his Fathers.’<sup>21</sup>

Thus, Tillotson believed 1660 saw a gracious gift of God which gave back to the English people their ancient and rightful government, and the reign of Charles II, particularly its early years, was an age of peace and safety. In a sermon included in the collection of sermons at Lincoln’s Inn published in 1671, Tillotson declared, ‘God hath now been pleased to settle us again in Peace, both at home and abroad.’<sup>22</sup> In another sermon in the same collection, Tillotson discussed persecution. He encouraged his hearers, telling them that if persecution happened God would give an extraordinary support to make it tolerable. More importantly, however, Tillotson argued that they did not have to worry much about persecution, because the time of suffering had passed. He said, ‘the suffering of persecution for Religion is an extraordinary

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<sup>19</sup> John Tillotson, *The circumstances and benefits of our saviour’s ascension in Several discourses of the life, sufferings, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; and the operations of the Holy Ghost ... the tenth volume* (London, 1701), pp. 223–4.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* p. 251.

<sup>21</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon preached on the 29. of May, 1693*, pp. 413–4.

<sup>22</sup> Tillotson, *Prov. xiv. 34. Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is the reproach of any people*, p. 148.

Case, and did chiefly concern the first Ages of Christianity.’<sup>23</sup> Back then, Christians were indeed persecuted because of the evil in the world. ‘But since the kingdoms of the earth became the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, and the Governours of the world were turn’d to be Patrons of the Church; ‘tis so far from being universally true, that every Christian hath suffer’d the violence of persecution, that it hath been a rare Case, and happen’d only in some few Ages, and to some persons.’<sup>24</sup> Thus, Tillotson maintained that persecution should not be considered to be among the ordinary difficulties in religious life. It was a secure time: Christians did not need to be afraid under the restored monarchy which guaranteed peace and order.

In the land where God had re-established peace, Tillotson asserted that Englishmen should maintain the blessing by reforming their lives in obedience to God’s law. He thought they should learn their lesson from the Civil War experience. The war perverted the manners of Englishmen, but before that, the war was the result of their sins and God’s judgement for ‘the general and crying Sins of a Nation.’<sup>25</sup> Alluding to the Civil War, Tillotson cited the biblical author James who wrote, ‘whence come warrs and fightings among you? Are they not hence, even from your Lusts, that war in your Members?’<sup>26</sup> (James 4:1) Tillotson, therefore, consistently stressed the importance of moral reform under Charles II. He believed that Englishmen should reform their lives and practice virtues in order to consolidate the Restoration regime and prevent confusion such that caused by the Civil War.

Preaching morality in the Restoration period thus had a political dimension, but this might have a critical as well as celebratory element. From as early as 1660s, the ‘court-country’ conflict generated an early form of party politics before the controversy between Whigs and Tories emerged over the exclusion crisis. ‘Country’ critics, who would largely constitute the Whig party, condemned the court of Charles for immorality, corruption, and authoritarianism.<sup>27</sup> Anglican clergy may be thought to have contributed to this country criticism. For example, William Lloyd preached on the need to ‘purge the nation of all immorality’ before Charles II in 1680.<sup>28</sup> In 1681 Gilbert Burnet wrote a letter to the king setting ‘before him his past ill life, and the effects it had on the nation, with the judgements of God that lay on him.’<sup>29</sup> Tillotson,

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<sup>23</sup> Tillotson, *1 John v. 3. And his commandments are not grievous* in *Sermons preach'd upon several occasions*, p. 229.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 229-30.

<sup>25</sup> Tillotson, *Prov. xiv. 34. Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is the reproach of any people*, p. 131.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.* p. 135.

<sup>27</sup> Harris, *Politics under the later Stuarts*, pp. 52-79.

<sup>28</sup> John Spurr, “Virtue, religion and government: the Anglican uses of providence,” in Tim Harris, Paul Seaward, and Mark Goldie, eds., *The politics of religion in Restoration England* (Oxford, 1990), p. 40.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.* p. 39.

too, preached many sermons in which morality was much emphasised, and some of them were delivered before the king. In his sermon preached before Charles II in February 1675, he exhorted the audience that they should examine their lives and repent of the sins to reform their manners. He said, ‘would they but seriously consider the consequences of a wicked life, they would see so plain reason and so urgent a necessity for the reforming of it.’<sup>30</sup> Two months later, he urged instant repentance and reformation of life. Because many delayed the task of repentance, ‘my work at this time shall be, to endeavour to convince men of the monstrous folly and unreasonableness of delaying the reformation and amendment of their lives; and to persuade us to resolve upon it, and having resolved, to set about it immediately and without delay.’<sup>31</sup> In February 1676, he insisted that there was a clear distinction between ‘the children of God’ and ‘the children of the Devil.’<sup>32</sup> (1 John 3:10) While the former was those ‘who in the general course of their lives do keep the Commandments of God,’<sup>33</sup> the latter ‘live in the general course of a wicked life.’<sup>34</sup> Tillotson might have sought to change the life of the king, whom he thought should set a better example for his kingdom.

Though the Restoration period was an age of regained peace and order and a proper season to pursue virtuous life in the eyes of Tillotson, he did not let down his guard against the old enemy, Catholicism; and his concern grew at the prospect of a Catholic king. Tillotson’s sermon about the difficulty of salvation in the Church of Rome delivered in 1672, well before the exclusion crisis began, caused the duke of York, future King James II, to stop attending the chapel royal.<sup>35</sup> The Catholic faith of James became clear in 1673 when he refused to take the oath required by the Test Act. The prospect of a Catholic king caused unease among many Protestants in England, including Tillotson, and the situation came to a head in 1678 when Titus Oates argued that a group of Catholic plotters were planning to assassinate the king. The country now became highly anxious about Catholic cruelty. This anxiety brought about the controversy over the succession of James. As this exclusion crisis developed, parties began to more clearly emerge. Whigs insisted that James should be excluded from the succession by statute to protect England against the danger of brutal Catholic rule, whereas Tories maintained that hereditary succession was vital for the stable government which guaranteed the

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<sup>30</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached before the king, Febr. 26th 1674/5* (London, 1675), p. 3.

<sup>31</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached before the king, April 18th 1675* (London, 1675), p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached before the king, Febr. 25th 1675/6* (London, 1676), p. 1.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.* p. 8.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.* p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> John Beardmore, *Some memorials of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson*, in Thomas Birch, ed., *The works of most reverend Dr. John Tillotson*, 3 vols. (London, 1572), vol. 1, p. cxiv. The sermon was [John Tillotson], *A sermon lately preached on I Corinth. 3. 15* (n.p., 1673).

preservation of English people's religion and liberty. In his sermon on 5 November 1678, a few months after the discovery of the alleged Popish Plot, Tillotson severely condemned the Church of Rome for its persecuting spirit.<sup>36</sup> Perhaps such a concern for Catholic brutality made him have sympathy with exclusion, as Burnet suggested. Burnet thought denying the lawfulness of the exclusion was 'a wild and extravagant conceit,' and seeing that George Savile, the marquis of Halifax, was against the exclusion bill 'so furiously,' Burnet wrote, 'both Tillotson and I, who thought we had some interest in Lord Halifax, took great pains on him, to divert him from opposing' the exclusion.<sup>37</sup> However, the attempt failed to change Halifax's position. When the exclusion bill was brought up to the House of Lords, the debate on the bill was dominated by Halifax who opposed it and Shaftesbury who supported it. Halifax 'gained great honour in the debate; and had a visible superiority to Lord Shaftesbury in the opinion of the whole House... in conclusion, the bill was thrown out upon the first reading'<sup>38</sup> Tillotson was disappointed with the failure of the exclusion bill. After Charles II finally defeated the measure by dissolving the Oxford parliament and issued a declaration justifying his action in accordance with the Tory argument in 1681, over 200 addresses were presented to the king from all over England thanking him for his declaration.<sup>39</sup> When an address was promoted at Canterbury, Tillotson, at the time dean of Canterbury, 'absolutely refused' to sign the thanksgiving address.<sup>40</sup> It appears Tillotson was troubled by prospect of James's rule for the rest of Charles's reign. According to a fragmentary account of a sermon written in 1683, he said 'our religion and liberty in all human probability would expire with' Charles.<sup>41</sup>

The discovery of the Rye House Plot in 1683 provided an occasion in which Tillotson's view on the constitution - the principle of obedience to existing authority - was clearly revealed, which had been hinted at in the engagement controversy under Cromwell. Tillotson was friends with one of the conspirators, William Russell. Before Russell was executed, Tillotson, with

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<sup>36</sup> This sermon was the only Gunpowder sermon Tillotson published in his lifetime, and it was probably the fiercest in tone among his sermons in the occasion. Four more Gunpowder sermons (in the years 1682, 1684, 1686, and 1688) were published posthumously. Unlike in case of 30 January, he did not seem to be reluctant to preach on 5 November.

<sup>37</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *Bishop Burnet's history of his own time*, vol. I (London, 1724), p. 459.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.* p. 482.

<sup>39</sup> Tim Harris, *Restoration: Charles II and his kingdoms, 1660-1685* (London, 2005), pp. 252-81.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.* p. 274; Narcissus Luttrell, *A brief historical relation of state affairs from September, 1678, to April, 1714*, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1857), vol. 1, p. 128.

<sup>41</sup> *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic 1683*, vol 1, p. 40 (2 February 1683) in Roger Thomas, 'Comprehension and indulgence,' in Geoffrey Nuttall and Owen Chadwick, eds, *From uniformity to unity 1662-1692* (London, 1962), p. 232.

Burnet, tried in vain to save his life by persuading him to issue a profession against the legitimacy of resistance.<sup>42</sup> In his letter to Russell, he argued

First, that the Christian religion doth plainly forbid the resistance of authority.

Secondly, that though our religion be established by law, (which your Lordship argues as a difference between our case and that of the primitive Christians) yet in the same law, which establishes our religion, it is declared, that it is not lawful upon any pretence whatsoever to take up arms, &c. Besides that there is a particular law declaring the power of the militia to be solely in the King. And this ties the hands of subjects, though the law of nature and the general rules of Scripture had left us at liberty, which I believe they do not, because the government and peace of human society could not well subsist upon these terms.

Thirdly, your Lordship's opinion is contrary to the declared doctrine of all Protestant churches. And though some particular persons have thought otherwise, yet they have been contradicted herein, and condemned for it by the generality of Protestants.<sup>43</sup>

For Tillotson, both Christian religion, especially Protestantism, and the positive law of the country, forbade resistance. He believed even the law of nature did not allow it, because if resistance was justified in any ways, the security of human society could not be guaranteed.

### The reign of James II and the revolution of 1688

The accession of James II strengthened the fear of a restoration of Catholicism. James promised to support the Church of England, but he soon stirred up suspicions: not least by attacking the Latitudinarian clergy's zeal against his religion. He complained to archbishop Sancroft of 'the ministers of London, who preached too much against Popery.'<sup>44</sup> Sancroft once met Simon Patrick and told him that the king named him in particular, who 'was a good man, but leaned too much to the two Deans,' meaning Stillingfleet and Tillotson.<sup>45</sup> James's publication of a pamphlet, allegedly written by Charles II, arguing for Catholicism over Protestantism, indicated his commitment to the task of rebuilding Catholic faith in England.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Thomas Birch, ed., *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition* (London, 1753), pp. 101-2.

<sup>43</sup> John Tillotson, *A letter written to my lord Russel in Newgate* (London, 1683), p. 2.

<sup>44</sup> Simon Patrick, *The auto-biography of Symon Patrick* (Oxford, 1839), p. 122.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.* p. 122.

<sup>46</sup> Paul Seaward, *The Restoration, 1660-1688* (London, 1991), p. 123.

The appointment of Catholic officers to his army against the Test Act also increased the anxiety of Protestants. When the parliament objected to the employment of Catholic officers and was unwilling to support enlarging his standing army, the king ordered it prorogued in November 1685, never to meet again in his reign.<sup>47</sup> James's willingness to support Catholicism became more explicit when he issued his declaration of indulgence in April 1687, also known as the declaration for liberty of conscience, suspending the penal laws for those who refused to conform to the Church of England. It allowed both Catholics and Dissenters to worship freely and hold office. James brought matters to a head a year later by reissuing the declaration and ordering it to be read in all the churches by Anglican clergy, which eventually led to the opposition of seven bishops.<sup>48</sup>

In this period Tillotson, as suggested by his influence on Patrick as suspected by the king, stood as a pillar of anti-Catholicism in the Church of England. Officiating at court as a royal chaplain, Tillotson still preached sermons emphasising a morality which, he thought, Catholics lacked. John Evelyn wrote about Tillotson's Lenten sermon at Whitehall in April 1685, 'applying most of it to the worke of Charity, & exemplariness of a good life, & to the greate businesses of timely Repentance; especial pressing it to Noble & greate men.'<sup>49</sup> Tillotson might have avoided attacking directly Catholicism at court, but he articulated clear criticisms in some occasions. While most of the sermons in his collection printed in 1686, had been printed individually before, a new sermon unpublished till then appeared.<sup>50</sup> This sermon, whose circumstance of delivery is unknown, was separately printed in the following year with the title, *The indispensable necessity of the knowledge of the holy scripture*. Though it asserted the necessity of biblical knowledge for salvation at its start, Tillotson devoted the most part of it to condemning the Roman practice of forbidding the Bible in vernacular tongues and of celebrating mass in Latin. The Church of Rome, he said, 'lock up the Scriptures and the Service of God from the People in an Unknown Tongue.'<sup>51</sup> By taking away 'the true Touchstone, the Word of God' from its members, the Church of Rome was able to easily spread 'Errors and Corruptions' among the deprived people. In his Gunpowder Day sermon in 1686, Tillotson

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<sup>47</sup> John Miller, *James II: a study in kingship* (London, 1978), pp. 142-3, 146-7.

<sup>48</sup> Roger Thomas, "Comprehension and indulgence," in Geoffrey Nuttall and Owen Chadwick, eds, *From uniformity to unity 1662-1692* (London, 1962), pp. 235-9.

<sup>49</sup> John Evelyn, *The diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E. S. De Beer, 6 vols. (Oxford, 1955), vol. 4, p. 435. This sermon was published in John Tillotson, *Fifteen sermons on several subjects... the eleventh volume* (London, 1702), pp. 225-59.

<sup>50</sup> John Tillotson, *Matthew XXIII. 13. Woe unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites* in *Sermons and discourses: some of which never before printed* (London, 1686), pp. 469-505.

<sup>51</sup> John Tillotson, *The indispensable necessity of the knowledge of the holy scripture* (London, 1687), p. 5.

argued that Rome's 'uncharitable Censures' of excommunicating others as heretics 'almost naturally proceed to Cruel Actions.'<sup>52</sup> In another sermon, preached before Princess Anne at Tunbridge Wells in September 1688, he denounced the Roman doctrine of indulgence which he thought perverted human behaviour. According to him, 'such easy ways of Religion and pleasing God are very grateful to the corrupt nature of Man, and that men who are resolv'd to continue in an evil course are glad to be of a Church which will assure Salvation to men upon such terms.'<sup>53</sup> As such, for Tillotson, the doctrinal errors of the Church of Rome made its members immoral and brutal. James's Catholic faith must have reinforced Tillotson's anxiety about the national corruption of manners, which he thought was influenced by the court.

Some of Tillotson's sermons preached in the reign of the Catholic king reflected his recognition that the Protestant religion was in danger. He was at pains to encourage the hearers to keep the true faith in tough times. In a sermon preached at Whitehall before Princess Anne in 1687, he emphasised, 'it is a prudent and reasonable thing, to prefer even an afflicted state of Piety and Virtue, before the greatest pleasures and prosperity of a sinful course.'<sup>54</sup> He sought to hearten the audience by saying that there were still many who remained faithful.

And we have great cause to thank God, to see so many in this day of trial, and hour of temptation, to adhere with so much resolution and constancy to their Holy Religion, and to prefer the keeping of Faith, and a good Conscience, to all earthly considerations and advantages.<sup>55</sup>

In the sermon preached at Tunbridge Well in 1688, Tillotson again exhorted the audience to be steadfast in practicing their faith, stressing the truthfulness of the Protestant religion.

The Protestant Reformed Religion, which we in this Nation profess, is the very Gospel of Christ, the true ancient Christianity. And, for God's sake, since in this hour of Temptation, when our Religion is in so apparent hazard, we pretend [aspire] to love it to that degree as to be contented to part with any thing for it, let us resolve to practise

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<sup>52</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached November 5. 1686 in Sixteen sermons, preached on several occasions... the second volume* (London, 1696), p. 396.

<sup>53</sup> John Tillotson, *The parable of the ten virgins, in a sermon preached before her royal highness the Princess Ann of Denmark at Tunbridge-Wells, September the 2d. 1688* (London, 1694), p. 11.

<sup>54</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at Whitehall MDCLXXXVII. before the princess Ann in Of sincerity and constancy in the faith and profession of the true religion, in several sermons* (London, 1695), p. 79.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* p. 106.

it; and to testify our love to it in the same way that our Saviour would have us shew our love to Him, by keeping his commandments.<sup>56</sup>

Tillotson even felt a need to prepare his congregation for impending persecution. The two sermons on 1 Peter 4:19 'Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God, commit the keeping of their Souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator' contained in a posthumously published collection, were undated, but it is almost certain that they were preached in the reign of James in view of his remark about 'our present Danger, and that Terrible Storm which threatens us' and the reference to the repeal of the Edict of Nantes (1685) and perhaps James's declaration for liberty of conscience.<sup>57</sup> Tillotson noted that persecution by the Church of Rome

hath of late revived, and to this very Day continues the same or greater Cruelties, and a fiercer Persecution of Protestants... than was ever yet practised upon them; and yet whilst this is doing almost before our eyes, in one of our next neighbour Nations, they have the Face to complain of the Cannibal Laws, and bloody Persecutions of the Church of England; and the Confidence to set up for the great Patron of Liberty of Conscience.<sup>58</sup>

Tillotson advised those under 'Suffering and Persecution for the Cause of Religion' should 'commit your selves in the constant discharge of your Duty, and a good Conscience, to the particular Care and Providence of Almighty God, as the faithful Creator.'<sup>59</sup> He argued pious Christians who were suffering had good reasons to hope that they would receive comfort and encouragement from God. Obviously, the atmosphere fostered by Tillotson under James was quite different from that felt in the sermons preached in the early years of Charles II's reign, when persecution looked far away.

Yet in spite of the heightened sense of crisis, Tillotson still affirmed subjects' duty of obedience to the ruler. He warned his audience that those who hoped for the assistance of divine providence should not try to rescue themselves from suffering by unlawful means.

This is an Eternal Rule, from whence we must in no Case depart, That men must do nothing contrary to the Rules and Precepts of Religion, no not for the sake of Religion

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<sup>56</sup> Tillotson, *The parable of the ten virgins*, p. 23.

<sup>57</sup> John Tillotson, *The second sermon on 1 Peter IV. 19 in Sixteen sermons, preached on several subjects... the third volume* (London, 1696), p. 442.

<sup>58</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon on 1 Peter IV. 19. in Sixteen sermons, preached on several subjects... the third volume*, pp. 384-5.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 376-7.



it self: We must not break any Law of God, nor disobey the lawful Commands of lawful Authority, to free our selves from any Sufferings whatsoever; because the Goodness of no End can sanctify Evil Means, and make them lawful.<sup>60</sup>

As revealed in his letter to William Russell, for Tillotson, Protestant principle commanded obedience to secular authorities, forbidding resistance as unlawful. He argued that only casuists justified evil means with good ends, as many did in the Church of Rome which corrupted the Christian religion. They maintained, ‘a right Intention, and a good End, will render things, which are otherwise evil and unlawful, not only lawful to be done by us, but in many Cases meritorious; especially where the good of the Church, and the Extirpation of Heresie are more immediately concerned.’<sup>61</sup> Tillotson argued that resistance was unlawful and could not be justified even by the cause of the true religion. In fact, seventeenth-century Protestants tended to denounce the idea of deposing monarchs as a Catholic heresy: historically it was the pope who had claimed to have such a power. Thus, Tillotson was following a standard Protestant line, even as he defended a Catholic king from resistance theory.<sup>62</sup> Tillotson exhorted the audience not to flirt with the destructive ideas of the Church of Rome which was the enemy of the true religion and lawful authorities, but to put their trust in the providence of good God.

We do trust the Providence of God, and do indeed commit our selves to it; relying upon his Wisdom and Goodness, entirely submitting and resigning up our selves to his Will and Disposal, both as to the Degree and the Duration of our Sufferings; believing that he will do that for us, which upon the whole matter, and in the final issue and result of things, will be best for us.<sup>63</sup>

Thus, in his sermon, resistance - attempts to improve the situation by disobeying - was contrasted with obedient attitudes patiently waiting for divine assistance.

However, Tillotson acted against the principle pronounced in his sermon in the summer of 1688 when he took part in seven bishops’ petition to James in which they requested the cancellation of his order that the declaration of indulgence should be read in all churches in England. There were a number of meetings of the clergy in and near London to discuss how to respond to the king’s order. The voices of anti-popery men, such as Tillotson, Fowler, and

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<sup>60</sup> Tillotson, *The second sermon on 1 Peter IV. 19*, p. 420.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. p. 421-2.

<sup>62</sup> Johann Sommerville, “Papalist political thought and the controversy over the Jacobean oath of allegiance,” in Ethan Shagan ed., *Catholics and the ‘Protestant nation’* (Manchester, 2005), pp. 162-84.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid. p. 423.

Patrick, were influential, and the outcome was the decision not to read the declaration. It was also decided that the bishops led by archbishop Sancroft would present the petition to the king in behalf of other clergy. At last, six bishops presented the petition on 18 May. Sancroft signed the petition, but did not join them, claiming to be in ill-health.<sup>64</sup> The seven bishops were committed to the Tower, because their organised activity to defy the king's order was judged to be subversive. When the bishops were acquitted after the trial on 30 June, many Londoners who heard the news celebrated with cheers and bonfires.<sup>65</sup> James's response to the petition demonstrated that the action of the clergy was unexpected, and appeared to him to be seditious. Patrick described the reaction of James as follows.

When they came to that part of it against his dispensing power, his countenance altered, and when it was read over, he said, "What! The Church of England against my dispensing power! The Church of England! They that always preached it!" which he spake in a great fury... "It surprises me," said he, "I did not expect an address of this nature from you... This is a step to rebellion." (Which he repeated more than once.)<sup>66</sup>

Tillotson's support for what the king thought was a subversive move showed that his growing concerns for increasing Catholic influence in England put great strain on his *de facto* argument for obedience. He said the disobedience to rulers was against the law of God, because it was God who had brought them to power. However, when he himself faced an order which would promote Catholic interest, he participated in an action of disobedience, which was damaging to the government. In fact, the petitioning went beyond the principle of Anglican passive obedience and non-resistance, which was claimed by Tillotson and other theologians. Passive obedience allowed people to disobey an ungodly order from their ruler. Therefore, according to this principle, the clergy who felt the order to read the declaration ungodly were supposed to peacefully disobey it, and accept the punishment for their disobedience. However, they openly challenged the king's dispensing power with the petition, attracting the attention of Londoners. In addition, it may be asked whether the order to declare a religious indulgence was really against the laws of God, because the declaration itself does not seem to have been ungodly or immoral.

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<sup>64</sup> Roger Thomas, "The seven bishops and their petition, 18 May 1688," *The journal of ecclesiastical history*, 12.1 (1961), pp. 56-70.

<sup>65</sup> William Gibson, *James II and the trial of the seven bishops* (New York, 2009), pp. 132-4.

<sup>66</sup> Simon Patrick, *The auto-biography of Symon Patrick* (Oxford, 1839), pp. 134-5.

Tillotson's reasoning behind his participation, which was not made explicit by him, might have been one or both of the following. First, one could disobey an order which broke English law and constitution; the petitioners argued that they sought to defend the English constitution. They maintained in the petition that the reason they pleaded was 'because that Declaration is founded upon such a dispensing power, as hath been often declared illegal in Parliament.'<sup>67</sup> It is hard to know Tillotson's exact personal position due to the lack of evidence, but his view might have been shifting his political stance under James, because under Charles II he tended to stress the evil of challenging the monarch rather than the constitution. A new emphasis on the constitution is found in his sermon preached in the reign of William III. In a sermon preached in 1693, Tillotson argued that God had used William to protect the Protestant religion and 'the very Constitution it self of our ancient Government.'<sup>68</sup> It seems that the constitution was stressed as the divinely-ordained power, not just the monarchy. The second possible reason, not mentioned in the petition but perhaps more important for some of the petitioners, was the idea that any move to permit Catholicism was sinful, because the religion was so evil. The reign of James II might have revived the collective memory of the real or fictitious Catholic plots of 1605 and 1678. Perhaps, for many Protestants, the increase of Catholic power meant the growth of evil and violence. As we are about to see, Tillotson hinted at this sentiment in 1689 when he preached a sermon of thanksgiving for the rescue of England 'from popery and arbitrary power.'<sup>69</sup>

While the proceedings surrounding the seven bishops were under way, a momentous event arrived on 10 June: the birth of James's son. This might have seemed like a miracle for James and the English Catholics, but it eventually brought about the premature end of the Catholic regime of James. Prior to the birth of the son, James's possible successors were his two Protestant daughters, Mary and Anne, so the English Protestants, though discontented with James, could regard his pro-Catholic policies as temporary, looking forward to a new Protestant government. However, the prince's birth unfolded the prospect of a permanent Catholic dynasty. From almost as soon as it had been declared that James's queen was pregnant, doubt

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<sup>67</sup> Roger Thomas, "The seven bishops and their petition, 18 May 1688," *The journal of ecclesiastical history*, 12.1 (1961), p. 65.

<sup>68</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached on the 29. of May, 1693*, in *Sixteen sermons, preached on several occasions... the second volume* (London, 1696), p. 414.

<sup>69</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at Lincoln's Inn Chapel on the 31 of January, 1688. being the day appointed for a public thanksgiving* (London, 1689).

had been expressed as to whether the pregnancy was genuine; now it was rumoured that a baby had been smuggled into the birthing room in a warming pan.<sup>70</sup>

Even before the birth of the son was announced, James's daughter Mary and her husband, William of Orange of the United Provinces of the Netherlands, had been considering the invasion of England and discussed it with English dissidents.<sup>71</sup> William, as a Protestant monarch in Western Europe, felt a need to check growing Catholic powers, so a pre-emptive strike to prevent James from collaborating with Louis XIV of France was desirable. The birth of James's son now caused them to act more quickly than before, and an invitation to invade was signed by seven English men and sent to William in late June. The English circumstances were ready, but it would be dangerous to leave the Provinces vulnerable to the French attack. Though this danger was reduced when Louis XIV moved his army to his eastern frontier to check Habsburg power in Germany in September, William took considerable risks in deciding to invade, because it was possible that Louis might attack the United Provinces before William's army could get back. William had his fleet ready by mid-October, but bad weather spoiled the first attempt to depart. He tried again on 1 November, and this time wind drove his fleet down the Channel and blocked James's navy in the Thames, so William was unopposed when he landed in Torbay on 5 November 1688. James's hopes to oppose the Dutch force on land were frustrated by the desertions within his army. With William's connivance, James fled from England and landed in France on Christmas morning. William and Mary were proclaimed King and Queen, and most English people, who had been disgusted with James's Catholic policies, accepted the dynastic shift. Yet those who kept their loyalty to James or office holders who were convinced of the absolute inviolability of their oaths to James refused to accept the validity of the new regime and became Jacobites or Non-jurors.<sup>72</sup>

### The reign of William III

What Tillotson did in the immediate aftermath of William's landing in England is unknown. The printed marginal note of a posthumously published sermon tells us that Tillotson preached a Gunpowder Day sermon somewhere on 5 November 1688.<sup>73</sup> After this date, there

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<sup>70</sup> Paul Seaward, *The Restoration, 1660-1688* (New York, 1991), pp. 135-6; Tim Harris, *Revolution: the great crisis of the British monarch, 1685-1720* (London, 2006), pp. 269-272.

<sup>71</sup> Tim Harris, *Revolution*, pp. 281-2.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid. pp. 273-307, 354-63; John Miller, *The Glorious Revolution* (New York, 1983), pp. 11-16.

<sup>73</sup> John Tillotson, *Instituted religion not intended to undermine natural in Several discourses... the fourth volume* (London, 1697), pp. 43-84. The date is indicated on p. 53.

is no record of his activity until the next January. We find him discussing possible ecclesiastical concessions to Dissenters under the new regime with his clerical colleagues on 14 January 1689. Probably by this time Tillotson was sure that God had chosen William as a new monarch of England.<sup>74</sup> In the meantime, Tillotson might have been assuming a wait-and-see attitude until the work of divine providence became clear for him, without supporting either William or James. It may be criticised as cowardly, but Tillotson might justify himself that he was waiting for clear guidance from God. Tillotson's decision to preach on 31 January 1689, the day appointed for thanksgiving 'for having made... the prince of Orange the glorious instrument of the great deliverance,' and his continuing service to the new regime, clearly indicated his support for the revolution of 1688 and the government founded upon it once it had happened.<sup>75</sup>

Tillotson's thanksgiving sermon was couched in providential language describing a God who punished and saved his people. Tillotson claimed that God judged the English people for horrible sins; among the sins were the contempt of religion, hypocrisy, and 'great Dissentions and Divisions; great uncharitableness and bitterness of Spirit' among Protestants.<sup>76</sup> However, the worst part of all, emphasised by Tillotson, was England's association with the Church of Rome. In parallel with Old Testament Israelites, whose intermarriage with non-Israelites enraged God, England's 'joining in affinity with the People of these abominations' (Ezra 9:14) had 'no small influence upon a great part of the Miseries and Calamities which have befallen us.'<sup>77</sup> Particularly, Tillotson argued that royal marriages with Catholics had been fatal, probably referring to Charles I, Charles II, and James II, who had all married Catholics, because 'had it not been for the countenance which Popery had by the Marriages and Alliances of our Princes, for two or three Generations together, with those of religion, it had not probably had a continuance among us to this day.'<sup>78</sup> Tillotson maintained that such marriages were not just harmful to Protestants, but even sinful in themselves. Towards the end of the sermon, he urged the hearers

let us now at length resolve, never to join in affinity with the People of abominations; since our Alliances with them by Marriage have had so fatal an Influence, both upon the publick Peace and Tranquillity of the Nation, and upon the Welfare also of private

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<sup>74</sup> Simon Patrick, *The auto-biography of Symon Patrick* (Oxford, 1839), p. 141.

<sup>75</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at Lincoln's Inn Chapel on the 31 of January, 1688. being the day appointed for a public thanksgiving* (London, 1689).

<sup>76</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

Families. I have known Many Instances of this kind, but hardly ever yet saw One that prov'd happy; but a great many that have been pernicious and ruinous to those Protestant Families in which such unequal, and, as I think, unlawful Matches have been made: Not that such Marriages are void in themselves, but yet for all that sinful; because of the apparent Danger and Temptation to which those of our Church and Religion that enter into them do evidently expose themselves, of being seduc'd from their Religion; not by the good Arguments which the other can offer to that purpose, but by the ill Arts which they have the Confidence and the Conscience to make use of in the making of Proselytes.<sup>79</sup>

Tillotson's argument that the marriage of Protestants with Catholics was sinful gave the impression that Catholic faith was evil in itself. It is true that he acknowledged in several sermons that the Church of Rome, though morally and doctrinally corrupted, retained 'all the Articles of the Christian Faith which are necessary to Salvation'<sup>80</sup> and that there had been several people with 'the great Piety and Charity' in the church, such as Erasmus.<sup>81</sup> Yet throughout his clerical career, Tillotson constantly argued that Catholicism generally depraved human nature. Thus, he warned against the marriage between Catholics and Protestants which he thought would almost surely lead to disastrous effects on the Protestant families and nation.

How did God punish the sinful nation? In 1667, Tillotson saw the plague of 1665-6 in England and the fire of London in 1666 as 'the terrible messengers of his [God's] wrath.'<sup>82</sup> About twenty years later, he presented the same view, but with strong anti-Catholic sentiment. 'For this great Trespass, and for many other Sins,' Tillotson said, 'God was angry with us, and sent among us the most raging Pestilence that ever was known in this Nation.'<sup>83</sup> Because the English people did not repent in spite of the punishment, 'the very next year after, God sent a terrible and devouring Fire, which in less than three days time laid the greatest part of this great City in ashes.'<sup>84</sup> Tillotson was not reluctant to ascribe the fire to Catholics, saying, 'there is too much reason to believe that the Enemy did this; that perpetual and implacable Enemy of the peace and happiness of this Nation.'<sup>85</sup> Even after the fire, they continued cruel designs

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<sup>79</sup> Ibid. p. 34-5.

<sup>80</sup> [John Tillotson], *A sermon lately preached on I Corinth. 3. 15* (n.p., 1673), p. 6.

<sup>81</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached November 5. 1678. at St. Margarets Westminster, before the honourable House of Commons* (London, 1678), p. 29.

<sup>82</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached before the king, June 30th 1667 in Sermons preach'd upon several occasions... the second volume* (London, 1678), p. 20.

<sup>83</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon preached... on... the day appointed for a public thanksgiving*, p. 20.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid. p. 20.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid. p. 20.

underground, but began to work more openly when James came to the throne. Preaching in 1689, Tillotson did not go into details about ‘the cruel Designs of that Party,’ perhaps because the preacher and the audience had already shared the experience of them, and also perhaps because he did not want to stir up the animosity towards Catholics.<sup>86</sup> Later in the sermon, he counselled the hearers to deal with them ‘with great Moderation and Clemency,’ and not to treat them ‘as they would have done Us, had we fallen under their Power; with great Insolence, and Rage, and Cruelty.’<sup>87</sup>

Thus, God punished Englishmen for their sins, using the Church of Rome as a tool of punishment at times, but now he had worked a wonderful deliverance which the nation did not deserve. Tillotson thought 1688 saw ‘a Deliverance full of Mercy, and I had almost said, full of Miracle,’ because ‘the Finger of God was visibly in it; and there are plain Signatures and Characters upon it, of a more immediate Divine interposition.’<sup>88</sup> The rescue was so remarkable that, as Claydon pointed out, it led Tillotson to describe it in apocalyptic terms.<sup>89</sup> His declaration that ‘Christ... is now beginning the Glorious Deliverance of his Church from the Tyranny of Antichrist’ gives a glimpse of his apocalyptic thinking, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.<sup>90</sup> Tillotson argued it was a wonderful deliverance in many ways. It was a sudden work no one could have imagined a few months ago and it was achieved with easiness, without a major battle and almost bloodlessly. What was most stressed by Tillotson was, however, that ‘it was brought about in a very extraordinary manner, and by very strange means,’ considering both human and natural factors.<sup>91</sup> It was made possible thanks to ‘the States of the United Provinces, who were then in so much danger themselves, and wanted more than their own Forces for their own Defence and Security’ and ‘the many Worthies of our Nation, who did so generously run all hazards of Life and Fortune, for the preservation of our Religion, and the asserting of our ancient Laws and Liberties.’<sup>92</sup> And also despite the difficulties ‘from the uncertainties of Wind and Weather, and many other Accidents impossible to be foreseen and prevented,’ England saw ‘in Conclusion a strange concurrence of all things, on all sides, to bring the thing which the Providence of God intended to a happy issue and

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<sup>86</sup> Ibid. p. 20.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid. p. 33.

<sup>88</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

<sup>89</sup> Tony Claydon, “Latitudinarianism and apocalyptic history in the worldview of Gilbert Burnet, 1643-1715,” *The Historical Journal*, 51.3 (2008), pp. 596-7.

<sup>90</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon preached... on... the day appointed for a public thanksgiving*, pp. 32-3.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. pp. 26-7.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid. p. 27.

effect.<sup>93</sup> Tillotson even regarded the alleged birth fraud which faked James's son as a strange means whereby the revolution was brought about. 'The very counsels and methods of our Enemies did prepare the way for all this, and perhaps more effectually, than any counsel and contrivance of our own could have done it.'<sup>94</sup> Lastly, the date 5 November 1688, when the deliverance arrived in England, was providential. It was the anniversary of another rescue from the Catholic hostility, the Gunpowder Plot, and it was exactly a hundred years after 1588 when the deliverance from the Spanish Armada had happened. All this demonstrated that God 'have united and brought together all the great Deliverances which He hath been pleas'd to work for this Nation against all the remarkable attempts of Popery, from the beginning of our Reformation.'<sup>95</sup>

Yet not all English people welcomed the revolution and shared Tillotson's providential view. Tillotson's fervent support for the new regime aroused criticisms from Non-juring writers. Particularly it was argued that Tillotson's conformity to the new government was in conflict with his earlier argument for non-resistance which had been revealed in his letter of 1683 trying to convince William Russell of the unlawfulness of resistance. This letter was reprinted in 1691 with the addition of an anonymous literary creation: a dialogue between the Russell's ghost and Tillotson, in which the ghost rebuked, 'you have done the same, You set up for a Man of Fame; Though I can prove, that, of the two, If any be the worse, 'tis you. I did what just was in my own Sense; But you rebell'd against your Conscience.'<sup>96</sup> Another letter was published, which had been sent to Tillotson personally, but was made public several months later, the author claimed, because Tillotson had not provided the answer the anonymous writer had demanded. The writer argued that 'your Actions since do less quadrate with that Opinion'<sup>97</sup> expressed in the letter to Russell and maintained that 'our present Government stands upon Foundations that contradict all those Discourses, which you, as well as others, have lent to Passive Obedience.'<sup>98</sup> Shortly after Tillotson died, a similar criticism was published by George Hickes, the former dean of Worcester who had been deprived due to his refusal to taking the oath of allegiance to William. He accused Tillotson of 'Apostasy from his own avowed

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<sup>93</sup> Ibid. p. 27.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid. pp. 27-8.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid. p. 30.

<sup>96</sup> Anon. *A dialogue between the Lord R[ussell]'s Ghost, and the D.[ean] of C.[anterbury]* in [John Tillotson], *A letter written to my Lord Russel in Newgate in the twentieth of July, 1683* (London, 1691), p. 2.

<sup>97</sup> Anon. *A letter sent to Dr. Tillotson several months ago* (n.p., 169-?), p. 2. The letter was printed with no indication of the place and date of publication, but the date can be conjectured by the author's mention of Tillotson's accepting the archbishopric, which was made public in 1691. So, it must have been printed between 1691 and 1694 when Tillotson died.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid. p. 7.



Principale and Doctrine of the Church of England, the once venerable Doctrine of Non-Resistance, or Passive Obedience.’<sup>99</sup> To show the inconsistency, he quoted passages from Tillotson’s thanksgiving sermon.

We must not, saith he [Tillotson], here forget the many Worthies of our Nation, who did so generously ran all hazards of Life and Fortune, for the Preservation of our Religion, and the Asserting our Ancient Laws and Liberties. Behold the Preacher at Lincolns Inn, and the Confessor in Lincolns Inn Fields, contradicting one another. The Confessor told my Lord Russell, That the Christian Religion plainly forbids the Resistance of Authority... But the Preacher, now turned Apostate from the Confessor, commends that many Worthies, as he calls the Traytors and Rebels of our Country, for soliciting a Foreign Prince, and the Creature of another State, to invade their own Sovereign’s Dominions, and assisting of him in the Undertaking, till they had driven him out of his Kingdoms.<sup>100</sup>

Tillotson did not publish any defence against these kinds of criticisms. If he had given any answers, judging by the contents of his thanksgiving sermon, they might have included the argument that, not resistance, but a miraculous work of divine providence had achieved the revolution. Burnet, one of his closest friends, who preached his funeral sermon, published an answer on the behalf of his colleague. He maintained that Tillotson and other divines who preached passive obedience did not depart from their former opinions in supporting the 1688 revolution, because they deployed an argument which Mark Goldie has classified as ‘resistance *in extremis*.’<sup>101</sup> Burnet argued that he ‘had expressly and publicly owned a reserve for Resistance in case of a total Subversion; so I must add, that to my knowledge, other Divines still understood that Doctrine of Non-resistance with this Reserve; though they did not think it necessary to mention it.’<sup>102</sup> In other words, extreme cases might justify resistance, though the exception did not have to be mentioned in ordinary circumstances. Burnet asserted

when we exhort Children to obey their parents in all things; we do not suppose the Case of their Parents going about to kill them, nor argue what they may do in such a Case. Extraordinary Cases ought not to be supposed, when we give the Directions that belong

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<sup>99</sup> George Hickes, *Some discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson; occasioned by the late funeral sermon of the former upon the later* (London, 1695), p. 35.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

<sup>101</sup> Mark Goldie, “The revolution of 1689 and the structure of political argument,” *Bulletin of Research in the Humanities*, 83 (1980), pp. 473-564.

<sup>102</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *Reflections upon a pamphlet entitled some discourses upon Dr. Burnet and Dr. Tillotson* (London, 1696), pp. 38-9.

to the ordinary course of Life; and therefore Divines might preach Submission in very large and full Expressions, who yet might believe, That a total Subversion was a Case of another nature, which might warrant more violent Remedies. This I am sure was our late Primate [Tillotson]’s Opinion.<sup>103</sup>

Burnet added that Tillotson was not reluctant to reveal his opinion in conversation, saying, ‘some particular Considerations restrained him from Writing about it; but he did not decline to explain this, as oft as there was occasion given for it.’<sup>104</sup>

Thus, according to Burnet, the argument of resistance *in extremis* justified the actions of Tillotson and other Anglican divines in supporting the revolution, and showed they did not contradict their former position. This logic was considered ‘rather lame in argument’ by Alexander Gordon, the author of Tillotson’s Dictionary of National Biography entry, but it appealed to some who accepted and defended the revolution.<sup>105</sup> The argument was used by thirteen out of the 139 pamphlets written in defence of the revolution between February 1689 (when William and Mary declared king and queen) and the end of 1694 (when the number of allegiance controversy pamphlets was reduced to a trickle). Goldie grouped the arguments supporting the revolution into six main doctrines, including resistance *in extremis*. The other five were contractual resistance – people had a right to resist when the monarch broke the contract; possession, or *de facto* theory – the possession of power was sufficient grounds for loyalty; abdication – James lost his kingship by abdicating; conquest – William’s conquest of England legitimised his reign; and providence – the revolution was achieved by God’s intervention. Whigs used contractual resistance argument which was hated by Tories, but the other five theories were shared by Whigs and Tories. Goldie indicated the ‘blunderbuss’ nature of pro-revolution pamphlets: most of the authors were ready to use two or more theories at the same time when the theories were thought to help persuade more readers. Tillotson, avoiding the clear-cut Whiggish contractual resistance theory, mainly used the argument of providence in his sermons, and according to Burnet, Tillotson also agreed with the theory of resistance *in extremis*.<sup>106</sup>

Under William and Mary, Tillotson obtained further promotions. In 1689 he was made clerk of the closet to the king and was appointed dean of St Paul’s, and finally in May 1691 he

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid. pp. 39-40.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid. p. 42.

<sup>105</sup> Alexander Gordon, “Tillotson, John,” *Dictionary of National Biography*, vol. 56 (London, 1898), p. 396.

<sup>106</sup> Goldie, “The revolution of 1689,” pp. 486-91.

was consecrated archbishop of Canterbury, the see which had become vacant due to the refusal of the former archbishop Sancroft to take an oath of allegiance to the new monarchs.<sup>107</sup> This remarkable advancement probably resulted from his support of the revolution and his reputation as a preacher in London, and more directly from the recommendation of his friend Burnet, who had been an intimate advisor of William and Mary since settling in their court in 1686. The reluctance of Tillotson to take the archbishopric was shown in his letters to Lady Rachel Russell. In his letter in April 1689, he wrote, ‘after I kiss’d the King’s hand for the Deanry of St. Paul’s, I... told him, that now he had set me at ease for the remainder of my life. He replied, No such matter, I assure you; and spoke plainly about a great place, which I dread to think of.’<sup>108</sup> Tillotson was sure that ‘this I owe to the Bishop of Salisbury, [Burnet] one of the worst and best friends I know: Best for his singular good opinion of me: And the worst for directing the King to this method, which I know he did.’<sup>109</sup> This belief is confirmed by Burnet’s memorandum to William drawn up in December 1688, recommending a group of London clergy that ‘deserve more particular regard from your Highness,’ among them Tillotson was mentioned first as ‘the most moderate and prudent clergyman of England.’<sup>110</sup> Tillotson’s unwillingness was due to his reluctance to take high office and ill-health, but it was further fuelled by an awareness of the hostility that would be shown by his enemies, particularly the Non-jurors. He was worried that the situation would look ‘as if his Lordship and I had concerted the matter how to finish this foolish piece of dissimulation, in running away from a Bishopric to catch an Archbishopric.’<sup>111</sup> Which bishopric was offered to Tillotson is not known, but according to Tillotson’s biographer Birch, when some bishoprics were vacated by Non-juring bishops, William considered appointing Tillotson to one of these. Birch cited a draft of Tillotson’s letter asking the earl of Portland, who was close to King William, to ‘defend me [Tillotson] from a Bishopric’ for reasons of old age and infirmity. Perhaps Tillotson was trying to avoid any proposal for promotion before any particular bishopric was offered to him. Whatever the truth, Tillotson’s worry that people might think he declined a bishopric to get an archbishopric was not groundless. In the imaginary dialogue between the Russell’s ghost and Tillotson, written before the declaration of Tillotson’s nomination to the archbishopric, the ghost argued that his refusal of a bishopric was ‘but a Trick: Refusing of that small Preferment

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<sup>107</sup> Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, pp. 139, 202-41.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid. p. 205.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid. p. 206.

<sup>110</sup> R. W. Blencowe, ed., *Diary of the times of Charles the Second by the honourable Henry Sidney*, 2 vols. (London, 1843), vol. 2, pp. 281-2.

<sup>111</sup> Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, p. 206.

Was to create a fresh Endearment.’<sup>112</sup> However, his reluctance was eventually overcome by the king’s constant pressure and Lady Russell’s advice, and most importantly by his belief that divine providence was behind the opportunity, as it ruled all affairs on earth. In his letter to Lady Russell in October 1690, he wrote

I cannot but own the weight of that consideration, which you are pleased to urge me withal; I mean the visible marks of a more than ordinary providence of God in this thing; that the King, who likes not either to imposture, or to be denied, should, after so obstinate a declining of a thing on my part, still persist to press it upon me with so much kindness, and with that earnestness of persuasion, which it does not become me to mention. I wish I could think the King had a superior direction in this, as I verily believe he hath had in some other things of much greater importance.<sup>113</sup>

Here again for Tillotson providence dominated the events surrounding him. His career was influenced by his friends, superiors, and public and private events. Yet behind all this, he believed, divine providence guided his personal life, just as it determined the fate of his nation.

Tillotson, backed by the soundly Protestant monarchs, must have felt the reign of William and Mary was the best time to implant the true religion in the country. An urgent task was bringing together the country divided over the validity of William’s government. Though the crisis caused by James II had been overcome, the existing disunity within English Protestants was aggravated by the Non-juring schism. As early as January 1689, Tillotson felt a need to deal with this problem. At the end of his thanksgiving sermon, he warned

if by our own fickleness and inconstancy, disgusting the Deliverance now it is come, which we so earnestly desir’d before it came; if by our ingrateful Murmurings and Discontents, by our own foolish Heats and Animosities, kindled and carried on by the ill designs of some, working upon the tenderness and scruples of others, under the specious pretences of Conscience and Loyalty... our Destruction will then be of our selves; and there will be no need that God should be angry with us, for we shall be undone by our own Differences and Quarrels about the Way and Means of our being saved; and so be angry with one another till we be consumed.<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup> Anon. *A dialogue between the Lord R[ussell]’s Ghost, and the D[ean]. of C[anterbury]*, p. 2.

<sup>113</sup> Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, p. 226.

<sup>114</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon preached... on... the day appointed for a public thanksgiving*, pp. 36-7.

Thus, according to Tillotson, those who complained about the wonderful deliverance of God for any reason were nurturing division and hatred, which would lead to the destruction of the national community. In March 1689, again in the context of the Non-juring schism in which the divided parties regarded each other as enemies, Tillotson preached about love for enemies and forgiveness. He emphasised, 'To love our enemies and to do good to them that hate us... is the most excellent and perfect act of the greatest and most perfect of all Grace and Vertues, I mean Charity.'<sup>115</sup> Tillotson argued that though there were vile enemies, they still shared the same human nature as ourselves – the fact which provided 'the two great Foundations of Love,' that is 'Relation and Likeness.'<sup>116</sup> Tillotson exhorted the audience to mutual charity, stressing that love for enemies could even change them into friends. Towards the end of the sermon, Tillotson skilfully altered the status of those who were to be loved, from enemies to brothers. 'If we ought to be thus affected towards our Enemies, how great ought our kindness, and the expressions of it, to be to others?... to those more especially... our spiritual Brethren to whom we are so strongly link'd and united by common Bond of Christianity.'<sup>117</sup> The clear message of the sermon was that disagreement on the revolution settlement should be overcome by Christian love. The sermon's last point was that 'we would resolve upon the Practice of it, when ever there is occasion offered for it... I need not to put you in mind, that there is now like to be great occasion for it.'<sup>118</sup> Though Tillotson did not further illustrate the circumstances of 'now,' diarist Evelyn did. He wrote, 'an excellent discourse... exhorting to charity and forgiveness of Enemies' was delivered when 'an Act of Amnesty were more seasonable, to paciffie the minds of men... especialy of those who did not expect to see the Government assum'd without any regard to the absent King, or proving a spontaneous abdication, or that the Pr[ince]: of Wales was an Imposture, &c: 5 of the Bishops also still refusing to take the new Oath.'<sup>119</sup>

Tillotson's friendship with the Non-juror Robert Nelson showed that he lived up to his words about English people who disagreed with him over the validity of the new government. The correspondence from the early 1680s to the 1690s between Tillotson and Nelson indicated that their friendship continued in spite of the difference of their attitudes towards the post-

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<sup>115</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preach'd before the queen at Whitehall, March the 8th, 1688/9* (London, 1689), p. 10.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid. p. 8.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid. p. 30.

<sup>119</sup> Evelyn, *The diary of John Evelyn*, vol. 4, p. 628. This sermon was published in John Tillotson, *Fifteen sermons on several subjects... the eleventh volume* (London, 1702), p. 628.

revolution regime.<sup>120</sup> Tillotson still filled his letter with affectionate words after 1688 as he did before, and he even answered Nelson's question about the propriety of the practice of some Non-jurors who 'frequented the churches, and yet... did not join in the prayers for their Majesties.'<sup>121</sup> Tillotson's answer was 'I think it very plain that no man can joine in prayers in which there is any petition which he is verily persuaded is sinfull.'<sup>122</sup> Though Tillotson thought that the Non-jurors were wrong, he was willing to provide an opinion about a matter of debate among Non-jurors for his Non-juring friend. Nelson, too, was faithful to his friend to the end. Nelson attended Tillotson's deathbed during the last two nights of his illness after he was seized with paralysis in November 1694.<sup>123</sup>

Despite Tillotson's encouragement for mutual charity, reconciling the divisions was far from easy: the Non-juring schism persisted and the comprehension scheme of 1689-90 aiming to bring Dissenters into the established church, in which Tillotson was involved, was defeated. However, Tillotson did not completely give up the aim of at least outward unification, and kept trying to create a spiritual unity transcending the borders of denominational and political allegiances by promoting moral reform. In April 1692 Tillotson, as primate, had a meeting with bishops at Lambeth Palace to ensure high ethical standard for clergy and diligent moral direction over flocks.<sup>124</sup> Probably not unrelated to this initiative, Burnet's *A discourse of pastoral care* was written under the close direction of the archbishop and published a month after the meeting of bishops. In the *Discourse*, ministers were instructed to lead exemplary lives not just to edify their flocks in the established communion but also to enlighten those outside of it so that they might return.

if we were stricter in our Lives, more serious and constant in our Labours; and studied more effectually to Reform those of our Communion, than to rail at theirs; If we took occasion to let them see that we love them, that we wish them no harm, but good, then we might hope, by the Blessing of God, to lay the Obligations to Love and Peace, to Unity and Concord before them, with such Advantages, that some of them might open their Eyes.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>120</sup> Tillotson's letters to Nelson, 19 October 1680, BL Additional Ms. 4236, fols. 217-49.

<sup>121</sup> Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, p. 259.

<sup>122</sup> Tillotson's letter to Nelson, 15 December 1691, BL Additional Ms. 4236, fol. 249; Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, p. 259.

<sup>123</sup> Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, p. 315.

<sup>124</sup> Tony Claydon, *William III and the godly revolution* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 174; Birch, *The life of Dr. John Tillotson*, pp. lxxxi.

<sup>125</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *A discourse of the pastoral care* (London, 1692), p. 204.

The moral campaign was primarily targeted on those within the established church, but Tillotson, Burnet and their allies also hoped that enhanced morality and charity would influence Dissenters and Catholics.

Tillotson sought moral reform also through his sermons and publications. For example, in February 1694, preaching before the king and queen, he chose as the subject ‘one of the common and reigning Vices of the Age, Calumny and evil-speaking; by which men contract so much guilt to themselves, and create so much trouble to others.’<sup>126</sup> This was, of course, one of the traditional subjects of Christian ethics, but he tried to make particular points relevant to his time. In the context of the party division among Englishmen, Tillotson asserted that many partisans were committing the sin of evil-speaking.

But especially, if it concerns one of another Party, and that differs from us in matters of Religion; in this Case, all Parties seem to be agreed that they do God great service in blasting the reputation of their Adversaries: And though they all pretend to be Christians, and the Disciples of Him who taught nothing but kindness and meekness and charity; yet it is strange to see with what a savage and murderous disposition they will flie at one another’s Reputation and tear it in pieces.<sup>127</sup>

Another relevant point was a warning against speaking ill of rulers. He hoped that ‘every man that impartially considers must own it to be a fault of a very high nature to revile those whom God hath placed in Authority over us.’<sup>128</sup>

Towards the end of the sermon, Tillotson thought it was necessary to defend his ‘moral’ preaching. He foresaw, ‘some men are pleased to say, that this is mere Moralitie, I answer, that this is Scripture-Moralitie and Christian-Moralitie, and who hath any thing so say against that? Nay, I will go yet further, thath no man ought to pretend to believe the Christian Religion, who lives in the neglect of so plain a Duty; and in the practice of a Sin so clearly condemn’ed by it, as this of evil-speaking is.’<sup>129</sup> From this, it may be seen that when Tillotson discussed where the essence of the Christian religion lay, his emphasis was on behaviour rather than belief. This emphasis was again revealed in the preface to his last lifetime sermon collection published in 1694. In this he declared his hope that ‘for the remainder of my Life... I shall now turn my

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<sup>126</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached before the king and queen at Whitehall, February the 25th 1693/4 being the first Sunday in Lent* (London, 1694), p. 2.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid. p. 12.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid. p. 33.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid. p. 35.

thoughts to something more agreeable to my temper... to the promoting of true Religion, to the happiness of Human Society, and the Reformation of the World.’<sup>130</sup> For this purpose

I do heartily wish that all that are concern’d in the respective Duties, treated on in the following Sermons, would be persuaded so to lay them to heart as to put them effectually in practice: That how much soever the Reformation of this corrupt and degenerate Age in which we live is almost utterly to be despair’d of, we may yet have a more comfortable prospect of future Times, by seeing the foundation of a better World begun to be laid in the careful and conscientious discharge of the Duties here mention’d: That by this means the Generations to come may know God, and the children yet unborn may fear the Lord.<sup>131</sup>

This was the message for the present and future generations sent by the archbishop who was soon to leave the world. For Tillotson, the business of the true religion was to make the world a happy place. To accomplish the business, the manners of individuals should be reformed through the discharge of Christian duties. And the moral reform of the individuals would, in turn, lead to the reformation of the world.

Tillotson’s attempt to improve morality was not new. As seen above, Tillotson and his fellow Anglican divines had preached morality throughout the reigns of Charles II and James II. Yet the 1688 revolution made a difference to the status of the court in terms of morality. It had been transformed from the object of moral reform to the supporter of it. From the early years of their reign, William and Mary began to be praised as moral examples and presented as promoters of the godly campaign by Anglican churchmen. Tillotson declared in a fast day sermon before the House of Commons in April 1690, ‘their Majesties, in their great Piety and Wisdom, and from a just sense of the Providence of Almighty God, which rules in the Kingdoms of men, have thought fit to set apart this Day for solemn repentance and humiliation: That the many and heinous Sins, which we in this Nation have been, and still are guilty of... may not separate between God and us.’<sup>132</sup> In another fast day sermon delivered two month later before the Lord Mayor of London, he again said, ‘God hath given us two excellent Princes sitting on the Throne together, and both of the same Religion with the main Body of the Nation;

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<sup>130</sup> John Tillotson, *Six sermons... preached in the church of St. Lawrence Jury in London* (London, 1694), preface, p. i.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid. preface, p. iv.

<sup>132</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preach’d before the honourable House of Commons, on Wednesday the 16<sup>th</sup> of April: a day appointed by their majesties, for a solemn monthly fast* (London, 1690), p. 32.



and as bright Examples of piety and goodness as England ever saw.’<sup>133</sup> Tillotson was also careful to present the king and queen as devoted ecclesiastical governors through the procedure he used to carry out his improvement programme, as well as in his sermons. When he wrote to Burnet in August 1694 to discuss further measures to reinforce controls over the residence of clergy at their cures, he suggested the new orders should be enforced by royal injunction, not merely by the authority of bishops. He thought this method would provide a firmer legal basis for the measure, but he ‘had also another reason, which moved me herein, that their Majesties concernment for religion and the church might appear to the nation.’<sup>134</sup>

Not only was the royal couple presented as a role models for the godly reformation of England, but William was also described as an international Protestant hero fighting against oppressive Catholic powers. In his sermon before the queen in September 1691, Tillotson asked the hearers to pray for their monarchs, particularly for William.

And more especially, since His majesty, with so many Confederate Princes and States of Europe, is engaged in so necessary an undertaking for the Common good of Christendom, and for the mutual preservation and recovery of their respective Rights: We should earnestly implore the favour and assistance of Almighty God in so just and glorious a Cause, against the common Invader and oppressour of the Rights and Liberties of Mankind.<sup>135</sup>

Later in the same sermon, he complained ‘too many among us’ are ungrateful ‘to so great a Benefactor, I say, not onely to these Nations, but even to all Europe, in asserting and maintaining their Liberties against the insolent pride and unjust encroachments of one of the greatest Oppressors the World hath known for many Ages.’<sup>136</sup> He might have thought William’s military campaign against Catholic powers could give added justification to the post-revolution regime. Perhaps, the praise of William reached a peak in Tillotson’s thanksgiving sermon for ‘the signal victory at sea’ near La Hogue in the summer of 1692. He declared God gave a victory ‘while His sacred Majesty was so freely hazarding his Royal Person abroad, in

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<sup>133</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at St Mary le Bow before the Lord Mayor, court of aldermen, & citizens of London on Wednesday the 18<sup>th</sup> of June; a day appointed by their majesties, for a solemn monthly fast* (London, 1690), p. 28.

<sup>134</sup> Birch, *The life of the most reverend Dr. John Tillotson... the second edition*, p. 309.

<sup>135</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached at Whitehall before the queen on the monthly fast-day, September 16th 1691* (London, 1691), p. 28.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.* p. 32.

the Publick Cause of the Rights and Liberties of almost all Europe.<sup>137</sup> He made a sharp contrast between his master and Louis XIV. The glory of the Catholic prince who was ‘mighty and Powerful in his Preparations for war’ had been stained ‘by Tyranny and Oppression, by Injustice and Cruelty; by enlarging his Dominions without Right, and by making War upon his Neighbours without Reason, or even colour of Provocation.’<sup>138</sup> By contrast, William was described as a king after God’s own heart.

And behold a greater than he is here: A prince of a quite different Character, who does understand and know God to be the Lord, which doth exercise loving-kindness and judgment and righteousness in the Earth: And who hath made it the great Study and Endeavour of his life to imitate these Divine Perfections, as far as the imperfection of humane nature in this mortal state will admit... This is the Man whom God hath honoured to give a Check to this Mighty Man of the Earth, and to put a hook into the Nostrils of this great Leviathan who has so long had his pastime in the Seas.<sup>139</sup>

Tillotson closed his sermon by urging the audience to pray that God would long preserve the blessing of ‘our two Excellent Princes; whom the Providence of God hath sent amongst us, like two good Angels’ to rescue the nation; who were ‘Two Princes perfectly united in the same Design of promoting the true Religion, and the Publick Welfare, by reforming our Manners, and... by repairing the breaches, and healing the Divisions of a miserably distracted Church and Nation.’<sup>140</sup> They were angels sent from God to save Englishmen from their own vices as well as from Catholic hostility. Furthermore, the king and queen were praised as ‘Benefactors to mankind.’<sup>141</sup> They were God’s instruments to liberate not only England but also the whole Europe from the evil forces of Catholicism. The image of William as a Protestant warrior on the international stage presented by Tillotson and other Williamite propagandists might have contributed to keeping Englishmen committed to the wars against France.<sup>142</sup> Without the successful propaganda campaign, the long and costly wars that transformed England as a rising world power might have been unsustainable.<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached before the king and queen at Whitehall, the 27th of October, being the day appointed for a publick thanksgiving to almighty God, for the signal victory at sea* (London, 1692), p. 25.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 28-9.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 33-4.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.* p. 35.

<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.* p. 36.

<sup>142</sup> Claydon, *William III*, pp. 122-147.

<sup>143</sup> John Brewer, *The sinews of power: war, money and the English state, 1688-1783* (Cambridge, 1990), pp. 137-61.

## Providentialism

Tillotson's political career and his views on events of the time show that providence was central to his perspective of the world. So, Tillotson's providentialism – how he thought providence worked – is worth a closer look. An extensive discussion of providence is found in one of his posthumously published sermons, titled *The wisdom of God in his providence*, undated but conjectured to be delivered in the reign of James II from its grave tone and a passage that God's church and religion 'seem to be in greatest danger.'<sup>144</sup> In this address, Tillotson indicated he would not be engaged in a large proof of the providence of God, because it was a too big and complicated subject for a sermon. Another difficulty was that perfect explanation of many particular appearances of providence depended upon a full view of God's design which would only be available for human beings in the next world. Nevertheless, Tillotson tried to give a brief proof that divine providence governed the world. He observed that dealing with the question about providence supposed the existence of God and the fact that he made the world, because it would be useless to argue about the providence of God with those who doubt his being and creation. If the two principles were assumed, Tillotson argued, it was credible that God should take care of the management of the world, especially humankind, the best part of it, because 'we cannot believe, that he, who employed so much power and wisdom in the raising of this great and magnificent pile, and furnishing every part of it with such variety of creatures..., should so soon as he had perfected it, forsake his own workmanship, and take no further care of it.'<sup>145</sup> Tillotson argued that some heathen philosophers too believed in providence, though their understanding of it was defective. They thought God took care of important matters but neglected small affairs. Though they seemed to give God honour by exempting him from the care of lesser matters, Tillotson argued, indeed they dishonour him as if it were a burden to him. Considering God's infinite knowledge, power, and goodness, 'it is no trouble and disquiet to him, either to take notice of what is done here below, or to interpose for the regulating of any disorders that may happen.'<sup>146</sup>

Thus Tillotson maintained that, though many things appeared to be the result of chance or accidents to human beings, they were all designed by providence. God had all things in his

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<sup>144</sup> John Tillotson, *The wisdom of God in his providence in Several discourses upon the attributes of God... the sixth volume* (London, 1699), p. 273.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid. p. 249.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid. p. 249.

hand, from personal affairs, such as Tillotson's promotion to the archbishopric, to the rule of nations. When Tillotson discussed the latter in a sermon in 1671, he argued that unlike in case of individuals where God's judgement could be made in the next world, 'publick Bodies and Communities of Men, as such, can only be rewarded and punished in this world,' because 'in the next, all those Publick Societies and Combinations, wherein men are now link'd together under several Governments, shall be dissolved.'<sup>147</sup> Tillotson believed, 'God may defer his Judgments for a time, and give a People a longer space of Repentance; He may stay till the iniquities of a Nation be full: But sooner or later, his Vengeance will overtake them. And usually, the longer Punishment is delay'd, it is the heavier when it comes.'<sup>148</sup>

One of the difficulties of providentialism was the problem of injustice in the world, particularly the prosperity of the wicked and the suffering of the righteous. Tillotson argued they were a part of God's plan, because 'God made man a free creature, and capable of abusing his liberty, and intends this present life for a state of trial in order to another, where men shall receive the just recompence of their actions here.'<sup>149</sup> However, the compensation in the next world did not mean, to Tillotson, that God did not care about the present world. When good people suffered, 'the providence of God usually ordereth it so, that they are armed with great patience to bear them, and find great comfort and support under them, and better use and improvement of them than others' and eventually 'all the evils and afflictions which happen to good men, conspire one way or other to the promoting of their happiness, many times in this world, to be sure they make a great addition to it in the other.'<sup>150</sup> Tillotson must have stressed God's providential care of this kind in order to comfort those who faced the Catholic threat under James II. They were told in another sermon that God promised to 'support you under Sufferings, and to reward them,'<sup>151</sup> so 'he that is assured of his own heart, that he loves God, and would do or suffer any thing for him, can have no cause to doubt but that God loves him, and is concerned for his Happiness.'<sup>152</sup> Tillotson mentioned yet another way divine providence worked, which was dramatic but not very common. 'The providence of God does sometimes visibly and remarkably interpose, for the prevention and remedy of great disorders and confusions.'<sup>153</sup> Any readers who faced this line of the sermon first published in 1699 might

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<sup>147</sup> John Tillotson, *Prov. xiv. 34. Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is the reproach of any people* in *Sermons preach'd upon several occasions* (London, 1671), p. 130.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.* p. 131.

<sup>149</sup> Tillotson, *The wisdom of God in his providence*, p. 253.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.* p. 255.

<sup>151</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon on 1 Peter IV. 19*, p. 413.

<sup>152</sup> *Ibid.* p. 412.

<sup>153</sup> Tillotson, *The wisdom of God in his providence*, p. 253.

well naturally think that the 1688 revolution fit the description, but the fact that Tillotson did not explicitly mention it appears to confirm that the sermon was preached before the event, which was remarkable intervention of providence for him. Indeed, he did not take any examples, skipping the Restoration of 1660, another candidate for an example of the dramatic appearance of providence. It was perhaps because he did not think it was wise to stir up the hearers' hope for an extraordinary divine intervention. Because no one could be sure whether and when God's help would come, it was safer for Tillotson to focus on God's support for good people under difficult circumstances in general terms.

Another problem regarding providence was that how one could tell whether God supported something or not, if everything was under God's providence (God might allow evil to occur, but this could surely not mean he approved it). Tillotson did not directly address this issue in the sermon we just examined. However, if we compare it with his 1689 thanksgiving sermon, we can get a clue to his thinking, because the comparison makes it clear that he responded differently to different sorts of providential events. As already shown, the sermon preached prior to the revolution was dominated by Tillotson's exhortation not to misunderstand the wise providence of God. 'We should consider, that we are very ignorant and short-sighted creatures, and see but a little way before us, are not able to penetrate into the designs of God, and to look to the end of his providence.'<sup>154</sup> Finite human understanding, Tillotson sought to make clear, stood in a stark contrast with the infinite wisdom of God.

we ought to reckon, that while we are in this World, under God's care and discipline, it is necessary for our good, that we be restrained in many things, which we eagerly desire; and suffer many things that are grievous to us; and that when we come to Heaven, and are grown up to be Men, and have put away childish thoughts, and are come to understand things, as they truly are... and we shall see a plain Reason for all those Dispensations which we were so much stumbled at, and acknowledge the great Wisdom and Goodness of them.<sup>155</sup>

Therefore, when God proclaimed his will in any way in this world, his children 'ought to acquiesce, and rest fully satisfied.'<sup>156</sup> By contrast, in the 1689 thanksgiving sermon, Tillotson mainly talked about a work of providence which the people of God should be grateful for. Before the revolution the sinful people were under God's just punishment and they should

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<sup>154</sup> Ibid. p. 264.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid. pp. 266-7.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid. p. 268.

accept God's chastisement, repenting their sins; but 1688 brought 'the thing which the Providence of God intended to a happy issue and effect.'<sup>157</sup> Tillotson considered it as a wonderful deliverance of God.

It is a Deliverance full of Mercy, and I had almost said, full of Miracle. The Finger of God was visibly in it; and there are plain Signatures and Characters upon it, of a more immediate Divine interposition. And if we will not wisely consider the Lord's doings, we have reason to stand in awe of that Threatning of His, Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up. It was a wonderful Deliverance indeed, if we consider all the Circumstances of it: The Greatness of it; and the strangeness of the Means whereby it was brought about; and the Suddenness, and Easiness of it.<sup>158</sup>

In short, given the extraordinary way the revolution was achieved and the benefit God's people received from it, he thought, it was undeniable that God not only designed, but also supported and approved the revolution. Tillotson probably agreed with the more detailed thought of Burnet on how to distinguish works of 'an immediate Hand of Heaven.'<sup>159</sup> In a sermon preached soon after William's arrival in London, Burnet argued that God's positive interventions in history were great and eminent in themselves and in consequences; God's honour and glory are increased in them; they operated on multitudes of people's mind; and they revealed the attributes of God, such as his power, wisdom, and goodness.<sup>160</sup>

Yet perhaps the more fundamental difficulty for Tillotson's providentialism was how it could be harmonised with human free will. As we have seen, he argued that moral life and charitable behaviour are essential for individual salvation and desirable for the community. If divine providence was in control of everything that happened in the world, what was the significance of human behaviour? Was there any room left for free will? Tillotson must have recognised this problem. In the beginning of his sermon on providence, he warned that faith in providence did not mean 'to take no care of ourselves, to use no diligence and endeavour for the obtaining of the good which we desire, and the prevention of the evil we fear.'<sup>161</sup> Rather, we were able to rely on providence only on condition that we use 'all prudent care and

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<sup>157</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon preached... on... the day appointed for a public thanksgiving*, p. 27.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid. p. 26.

<sup>159</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *A sermon preached in the chapel of St. James's, before his highness the prince of Orange, the 23d of December, 1688* (London, 1689), p. 3.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid. pp. 3-18.

<sup>161</sup> Tillotson, *The wisdom of God in his providence*, p. 245.

diligence.’ And after doing all we can do, ‘we should not be farther solicitous, nor trouble ourselves about the event of things, which, when we have done all we can, will be out of our power.’<sup>162</sup> As such, providence did not remove the need to make every endeavour using our will power. It was Tillotson’s basic assumption that human beings had free will, and he declared in a posthumously printed sermon that ‘a man may by experience be persuaded or induced to believe this proposition, that his will is free, that he can do this, or not do it; which is a better argument than a demonstration to the contrary, if there could be one.’<sup>163</sup>

How, then, did Tillotson reconcile free will with providence? A close examination shows that Tillotson thought God governed humankind in a different way from non-human parts of the world. The collection that contained the sermon on providence also included a couple of sermons on the knowledge of God. Parts of these discussed the foreknowledge of God, which was closely related to his providence. In it, Tillotson answered some objections to the idea that God had full knowledge of future events, one of which centred on free will. ‘If God have an infallible Knowledge of what we will do, then we cannot but do what he infallibly foresees we will do; for otherwise his Knowledge would be fallible.’<sup>164</sup> To this objection, Tillotson answered, ‘God’s Fore-knowledge lays no necessity upon the Event,’ because ‘bare Knowledge is no more the Cause of any Event, which because it is known must infallibly be, than my seeing a Man run, is the Cause of his running, which, because I do see, is infallibly so.’<sup>165</sup>

A similar difficulty about the relationship between foreknowledge and human free will was introduced and answered in another posthumously printed sermon.

How God can certainly fore-know things, which depend upon free and arbitrary causes, unless he do some way decree and determine them? I answer, that this is not a fair and reasonable demand to ask of men, who have but finite understandings, to make out and declare all the ways that infinite knowledge hath of knowing and of fore-seeing the actions of free creatures, without prejudice to their liberty and freedom of acting. However, it is of the two, much more credible to reason, that infinite knowledge should certainly fore-know things, which our understandings cannot imagine how they should

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<sup>162</sup> Ibid. p. 245.

<sup>163</sup> John Tillotson, *Of the nature of faith in general in Fifteen sermons on various subjects... the twelfth volume* (London, 1703), p. 22.

<sup>164</sup> John Tillotson, *Of the knowledge of God in Several discourses upon the attributes of God... the sixth volume* (London, 1699), p. 159.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid. pp. 159-60.

be fore-known, than that God should any ways be the author of sin, by determining and decreeing the wicked actions of men. The first only argues the imperfection of our understanding; but the other lays the greatest blemish and imperfection that can be upon the divine nature.<sup>166</sup>

According to this, God did not intrude on human free will. Particularly his attribute of perfect goodness precluded God from ‘decreeing the wicked actions of men.’ A safe solution for Tillotson to avoid making God ‘the author of Sin’ was arguing that though God knew what people would do in advance in a way incomprehensible to human understanding, God let people use their free will to decide whether they did good or bad things. Yet God was still able to govern the world according to his will, because he knew human thought and action beforehand and controlled non-human parts of the universe. God, to show he is in control of the world, ‘when he sees it fit, gives some remarkable instance of his justice upon great and notorious offenders in this life,’ as he did ‘in the destruction of the old world by an universal deluge,’ and in ‘that terrible vengeance which was poured down upon Sodom and Gomorrah.’<sup>167</sup> Tillotson must have seen the 1688 revolution, in which God controlled the winds and the sea to the advantage of William, as a contemporary event corresponding to such biblical examples. When he preached a thanksgiving sermon for the revolution in January 1689, Tillotson compared it with the deliverance of Israel from Babylon. ‘The last Parallel between our Case, and that in the Text [Ezra 9:13-4], is the great and wonderful Deliverance which God hath wrought for us.’<sup>168</sup> Tillotson asserted that Englishmen should confess with Israelites that ‘God hath punish’d us less than our iniquities did deserve... and hast given us such a deliverance as this.’<sup>169</sup>

### Apocalypticism

While providentialism examined God’s wisdom permeating everything in the world for all eternity, a closely related area of thought, apocalypticism, tended to deal with more specific events, because its main task was applying prophetic passages of the book of Revelation to historical developments in the world. Though Tillotson was not a passionate expositor of

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<sup>166</sup> John Tillotson, *The long-suffering of God in The remaining discourses on the attributes of God... the seventh volume* (London, 1700), p. 251.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid. pp. 206-7.

<sup>168</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon preached... on... the day appointed for a public thanksgiving*, p. 25.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid. pp. 24-5.



Revelation's prophecies, several sermons revealed his apocalypticism sharing the traditional Protestant assumption that the Church of Rome was Antichrist. Historians used to argue that Protestant apocalypticism waned after the Restoration, as rational principles supplanted Puritan enthusiasm.<sup>170</sup> However, this view has been challenged by some scholars. It has been shown that in post-Restoration England many still used the book of Revelation to find out where they were in God's plan and to support their religious or political views based on the findings.<sup>171</sup> Examination of Tillotson's apocalyptic sermons may provide another interesting case.

A sermon contained in a collection posthumously published in 1696 was mainly based on Revelation 13 and it interpreted the text in a European context. The place and date of preaching were not indicated, but like some other sermons, the contents suggest that the preacher worried about imminent persecution by Catholics under James II. Tillotson observed, 'the extream Sufferings, which are to fall upon the faithful Servants of Christ in the last times... seem now to be begun in the World.'<sup>172</sup> Though he was cautious about determining 'whether this be that last and extream Persecution spoken of here by St. John,' he thought extreme sufferings begun in France, probably alluding to persecution caused by the repeal of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 – 'they in our Neighbour Nation have a bitter Cup put into their hands; a Cup of Astonishment to all those that here of it.'<sup>173</sup>

Tillotson's apocalyptic exegesis centred on the two beasts described mainly in Revelation 13 and 17. He argued that the first beast, which appeared in Rev 13:1-10 and Rev 17, was the Roman Empire and the Church of Rome. The beast came out of the sea and had seven heads, which meant a succession of seven governments and also the seven hills which the city of Rome was founded upon. He also had ten horns, which were ten kings who had not received kingdoms yet when the revelation was given to John. One of the beast's heads was critically wounded, but he was healed and was given power to rule for forty-two months, or 1,260 days. For Tillotson, this meant that the Western Roman Empire had collapsed, but the Church of Rome had taken its place. Tillotson did not enquire into the exact duration of its power (the 1,260 days), but argued that it was 'in the Prophetick Stile, so many Years,' and it

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<sup>170</sup> For example, Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in seventeenth-century England* (London, 1971), pp. 146-82; William Lamont, *Godly rule: politics and religion, 1603-1659* (London, 1696), pp. 163-82.

<sup>171</sup> Tony Claydon, "Latitudinarianism and apocalyptic history in the worldview of Gilbert Burnet, 1643-1715," *The Historical Journal*, 51.3 (2008), pp. 577-597; Warren Johnston, "The Anglican apocalypse in Restoration England," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 55.3 (2004), pp. 467-501. Johnston's article provides a good historiography of this debate.

<sup>172</sup> John Tillotson, *The second sermon preached on Rev. XIV. 13. in Sixteen sermons, preached on several occasions... the second volume* (London, 1696), p. 321.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.* p. 322.

began when ‘the Ten Kingdoms, into which the Roman Empire upon its dissolution was divided, were set up.’<sup>174</sup> Tillotson argued

The beast then with Ten Horns, must be Rome, governing the Ten Kingdoms, into which the Roman Empire was broken; and this can be nothing else, but Rome Papal, to which the Ten Kings are said to give their Power, and to which they were in a most Servile manner subject for several Ages, as is plain from History.<sup>175</sup>

Tillotson thought the 1,260 days were still going on in his age, because the days would end when the beast was killed. (Rev 18:21) For Tillotson, the Church of Rome was the first beast in his age, which had been claiming papal supremacy over kingdoms, but eventually would be destroyed in the future.

While Tillotson was sure that the first beast was the Church of Rome, he was more cautious about the interpretation of the second beast. (Rev 13:11-18) The second beast did not succeed in the place of the first beast, but appeared during his continuance. The second beast had two horns, which meant two kingdoms. Tillotson argued that they were two of the ten kingdoms (the ten horns of the first beast), into which the Western Roman Empire was divided. Tillotson did not clearly clarify countries he thought were the two kingdoms, but he described the characters of the second beast, to which the two kingdoms belonged. The beast looked like a lamb, but he spoke like a dragon. This meant he would pretend to be lenient, but in truth was very cruel, ‘either alluding to the Cruelty of the Dragon, literally so call’d; or perhaps prophetically pointing at a particular sort of Armed Souldiers, called by that name of Dragons, or, as we according to the French Pronunciation call them, Dragoons.’<sup>176</sup> Tillotson’s indication that the dragon in Revelation might mean dragoons is startling, because he must have known that the similarity of pronunciation would not have worked in the original Greek text. Without discussing the linguistic aspect, he argued that the dragon might be ‘prophetically pointing at’ dragoons. Tillotson might have relied upon God’s providential and mysterious way of working through the biblical text. This does not support the image of Tillotson as a secularising agent who minimised mysteries in religion. In terms of the persecuting activity of the second beast, Tillotson said

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid. p. 324.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid. p. 325.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid. p. 327.

He [the second beast] shall arise during the continuance of the first Beast, and engage in his Cause; but the first Beast shall only stand by and look on, [Rev. 13] Ver. 12. And he exerciseth all the Power of the first Beast, before him, and causeth the earth and them that dwell therein, to Worship the Beast, whose deadly wound was healed; plainly declaring, that this Persecution should not immediately arise from the first Beast, which is said to come out of the Sea, which in this Prophecy denotes the State Ecclesiastical; but from the second Beast, which comes out of the Earth, and denotes the Temporal Power. But yet all this ought to be acted in the Sight of the first Beast, and in his behalf, to compel Men to Worship him.<sup>177</sup>

Tillotson's interpretation that the second beast was 'the Temporal Power' in charge of two kingdoms and that the two kingdoms would coerce people to worship the first beast, the Church of Rome, must have caused his hearers to do guesswork over which were the two kingdoms. Probably, France might be the first country to come across their mind due to his mention of 'the French Pronunciation... Dragoons.' And there was no reason for the hearers to rule out England under James II as the second kingdom in the circumstances in which the sermon was likely to have been preached.

Yet to the disappointment of any audience looking for detailed guidance, Tillotson did not mention any particular countries, and only provided several more characters of the second beast without detailed interpretations: the beast would cause fire to come down from heaven and would forbid those without the mark of the beast from buying and selling, and the beast's number would be 666. After listing these features, Tillotson remarked, 'now to whom all these Characters do agree, and especially the last, concerning the Number of his Name, I shall not presume to conjecture; much less positively to determine, whether he be now in being.'<sup>178</sup> We cannot be sure how specific Tillotson intended to be about the two kingdoms. Yet, he was certain that the second beast worked for the first beast, the Church of Rome. He also argued that 'this extream Persecution, whenever it shall be, will forerun the Final Destruction of Babylon [the Church of Rome], which will not then be far off.'<sup>179</sup> However, Tillotson did not try to predict when the severe persecution would come to an end; thus, God's people needed to be even prepared for death, which was a blessing in the days of extreme persecution. He closed the sermon by quoting Revelation 14:12-13

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<sup>177</sup> Ibid. p. 328.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. pp. 329-30.

<sup>179</sup> Ibid. p. 330.

St John speaks... here is the Patience of the Saints, here are they that keep the Commandments of God, and the Faith of Jesus. And then he immediately adds... And I heard a voice from heaven, saying unto me, Write; Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord, from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do accompany them.<sup>180</sup>

The right way of enduring the suffering was to patiently keep God's commandments in faith. Even if they lost their lives, true Christians would go to their resting place with their good works accompanying them.

The 1688 revolution, because it removed James II, the powerful defender of Catholicism, brought a new surge of apocalyptic speculation, which 'interpreted future events as the completion of the Reformation.' - the process which involved 'perfecting protestant lives, and restoring the unity of reformed Christians' and which would bring the final victory of Christ over Antichrist.<sup>181</sup> Tillotson declared in January 1689 that Christ 'is now beginning the Glorious Deliverance of his Church from the Tyranny of Antichrist,' and presented William III as the instrument of the deliverance.<sup>182</sup> Tillotson now seemed to give his answer to the apocalyptic riddle about the two kingdoms of the second beast, which he insinuated in the sermon under James. Looking back on the tortured past, Tillotson mentioned two Catholic countries.

I think we can hardly ever hope to understand Popery better, and the Cruel Designs of it, than we do already; both from the long Trial and Experience which we have had of it in this Nation, and likewise from that dismal and horrid View which hath of late been given us of the true Spirit and Temper of it in One of our Neighbour Nations, which hath long pretended to the Profession of the most refin'd and moderate Popery in the World; but hath now at last shewed it self in its true Colours, and in the Perfection of a Persecuting Spirit.<sup>183</sup>

Tillotson was now able to talk openly about the Catholic cruelty experienced by 'this Nation' and the 'dismal and horrid View... in One of our Neighbour Nations.' God used William 'to give a Check to the Two Great aspiring Monarchies of the West, and bold Attempters upon the

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<sup>180</sup> Ibid. p. 330.

<sup>181</sup> Tony Claydon, "The reformation of the future: dating English Protestantism in the late Stuart era," [online], 32 (2017) [<http://journals.openedition.org/episteme/1831>, accessed 7 January 2019], paragraph 36.

<sup>182</sup> Tillotson, *A sermon preached... on... the day appointed for a public thanksgiving*, pp. 32-3.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid. p. 34.

Liberties of Europe: To the One, in the last Age; and to the Other, in the present.’<sup>184</sup> Tillotson’s allusion to England and France was hard to miss. Just like the version before the revolution, Tillotson’s post-1688 apocalypticism had a clear message. The English people, who saw the beginning of God’s wonderful deliverance, should seek to complete it by unanimously supporting the instrument of God, William III, and by reforming their lives. ‘Breaches and Divisions among our selves’ would destroy ‘the fruits of this Deliverance.’<sup>185</sup> By putting the completion of the revelation in the future and leaving the exact end point uncertain, Tillotson made clear that responsible human behaviour was still necessary. He might have thought that not being too specific on apocalyptic interpretation was not only safe in terms of exegesis, but also useful in delivering practical messages.

This future-focused view can be seen also in his opinion about the millennium, which was religious in content rather than political. Tillotson’s millennarian vision appeared in a posthumously published sermon, undated but perhaps delivered after 1688, given the sense of hope shown in it. After talking about the resurrection of Jesus and the spreading of the good news of the gospel, he expressed his hope that before the end of the world, ‘the Providence of God will in his own appointed time, make a farther step in the Conversion of the Infidel Nations.’<sup>186</sup> Tillotson thought this dramatic conversion of many nations denoted the millenarian kingdom of Christ in Revelation 20 and he expected it would begin soon.

Since this is like to be the work of some ages, the time perhaps is not far off, when it shall begin: and tho’ I see no sufficient grounds from Scripture to believe the personal reign of Christ upon Earth for a thousand years: yet it seems so be not improbable, that sometime before the end of the World, the glorious Kingdom of Christ, I mean the prevalence of the pure Christian Religion, should be of as long a continuance, as the reign of Mahomet, and Anti-Christ have been, both which have now lasted about a thousand years.<sup>187</sup>

Tillotson told his audience to pray for this glorious future event. And though he did not directly urge them to go to the heathen nations, he implicitly encouraged such actions by saying that as the apostles were empowered by God to perform miracles, ‘if Persons of sincere minds did go

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<sup>184</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

<sup>185</sup> Ibid. pp. 33-4.

<sup>186</sup> John Tillotson, *The evidence of our saviour’s resurrection, in Several discourses of the life, sufferings, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; and the operations of the Holy Ghost... the tenth volume* (1701, London), p. 159.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid. p. 160.

to preach the pure Christian Religion... to infidel Nations, that God would still enable such Persons to work Miracles.’<sup>188</sup>

The apocalypticism of Tillotson revealed his view of the cosmic battle between the true followers of Christ and the false church headed by the pope. For him, 1688 saw the beginning of God’s great rescue of God’s people from the power of Antichrist. Tillotson urged his hearers to support the work of God which had just begun but was not yet completed, and he hoped for the coming of the millennium which for him meant the dramatic conversion of heathen nations. Tillotson’s apocalyptic vision supports the view emphasised by Warren Johnston that apocalyptic thought did not lose its significance after 1660 but was still entertained in Restoration England.<sup>189</sup> It also strengthens Claydon’s suggestion of ‘a wider latitudinarian apocalyptic’ headed by Burnet.<sup>190</sup> Tillotson’s exegesis on the book of Revelation, particularly on the two beasts, shows that his apocalyptic interest led him to more than a simple identification of the 1688 revolution with God’s rescue of England from Antichrist. These observations go against the idea that apocalypticism was weakening in the late seventeenth century. Although Tillotson did not engage in the detailed apocalyptic dating seen in some responses to the revolution (for example the works of such commentators as Thomas Beverley), what we have seen of the thoughts of an archbishop of Canterbury on Revelation does argue against any great weakening of apocalypticism in the later seventeenth century.<sup>191</sup>

## Conclusion

This chapter has shown that Tillotson’s belief in providence had a strong influence on his political view. He thought that complying with providence most of the time meant supporting *de facto* political power and that resistance was unlawful, because it was God who brought rulers to power, whether they came to power by succession or by force. Thus, Tillotson supported all the regimes he experienced, from those of Cromwell through Charles II and James II to William III, though he supported them to varying degrees. Even under James, Tillotson warned his hearers against resisting the lawful authority, but encouraged them to endure patiently the current or imminent suffering under providence. In this regard, Tillotson and

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid. p. 157.

<sup>189</sup> Warren Johnston, “The Anglican apocalypse in Restoration England,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 55.3 (2004), pp. 467-501.

<sup>190</sup> Claydon, “Latitudinarianism and apocalyptic history in the worldview of Gilbert Burnet,” p. 597.

<sup>191</sup> Claydon, “The reformation of the future,” paragraphs 34-40.

Tories shared a view of the sacred nature of monarchical authority. However, the position of Tillotson can be distinguished from that of Tories. The spirit of charity, which shaped Tillotson's ecclesiology discussed in the previous chapter, may also explain his politics. Tillotson, on one hand, urged Dissenters to conform, and on the other hand, he tried to persuade Anglicans to change church rites to bring in Dissenters. Tillotson believed that both Dissenters and Anglicans were required to carry out the command of charity, by accepting some things they were not satisfied with for the sake of unity and peace. Likewise, for Tillotson, the *de facto* argument could be the most 'charitable' position to adopt, because it avoided the conflict and violence caused by parties that had different judgements on the legitimacy of authority. Thus, accepting the existing order that had been established by providence in one way or another was, Tillotson thought, the way not only to obey the governing order of God, but also to keep the command of love.

If Tillotson's providentialism imbued with charity can account for his 'Toryish' view, it may also explain his 'Whiggish' and anti-Catholic positions, such as the ones he adopted in the exclusion crisis and after 1685. Paradoxically, his adherence to charity caused him to reject the Church of Rome, because he believed Catholicism *per se* tended to destroy the spirit of charity, and instead cultivated persecuting zeal. Though Tillotson criticised Dissenters for their uncharitable attitudes, he saw them as an object of edification and negotiated with them to create a more comprehensive church. However, the Church of Rome was regarded as a dangerous enemy by Tillotson. Not only did the doctrine of Catholicism make its members depraved, it also had a subversive influence in England by diverting its followers' allegiance away from the English monarchy, and towards Rome. Needless to say, the reign of the Catholic king, James II, brought about a situation which set Tillotson's two different charity-based principles - *de facto* and anti-Catholicism - in conflict with each other. When Tillotson supported the exclusion of James from the succession, the action might not have produced a serious internal tension, because James was not in power yet, but it certainly foreshadowed the difficulty coming soon. The contradiction between *de facto* power and anti-Catholicism became most evident when Tillotson supported and organised the seven bishops' petition to James, which was a collective action going beyond the principle of passive obedience. His *de facto* principles were shaken, if they did not collapse, when James openly promoted Catholicism, the most uncharitable religion for Tillotson. The Catholic policy of James made him take an apocalyptic view that his age might be seeing the most intense phase of the war between the true and the false church. Providence, he thought, did not support the government

that destroyed the principle of love, the primary command of God. In this situation, Tillotson believed, providence worked against the regime and strengthened those who suffered under it.

Thus, at last, providence came to the rescue. Tillotson regarded the 1688 revolution, which removed the Catholic government from England, as the beginning of Christ's glorious deliverance of his people from Antichrist. He welcomed not just the revolution but the post-revolution settlement. Tillotson believed that William III and Mary II were the best rulers for promoting the true religion in England. In his view, they were advocates of Protestantism, the pure and ancient Christianity, and also their godly lives served as excellent examples to encourage their English subjects to live in a moral and charitable way. In addition to his role in England, William was central to the apocalyptic drama unfolding on the European stage to complete the deliverance of the true church and to destroy Antichrist. For Tillotson, William and Mary were rulers appointed by providence to establish the reign of charity and to pave the way for the kingdom of Christ on earth in the last days.



## Conclusion

This study has examined John Tillotson's views on the major theological issues of his day. It analysed the way Tillotson, using reason and revelation, constructed his methodological foundation to gain knowledge, particularly true religious knowledge, and then observed how Tillotson, using this methodology, developed his ideas about the ideal state of the world at the levels of individuals, religious communities, and civil societies. To conclude, we will review the core ideas revealed in each chapter, and then several attempts will be made to place his thought in the context of the religious, intellectual, and social development in the late seventeenth and the eighteenth century. Early writings on Tillotson argued that the importance of his theology lay in the increased role of reason in religion which paved the way for a secularised worldview where human reason was more emphasised than divine revelation. Some recent studies followed suit, establishing Tillotson, and the Latitudinarians who shared many ideas with him, as a secularising force.<sup>1</sup> However, others maintained that the role of reason in Tillotson was not as dominant as assumed in earlier debates. They emphasised that the theology of Tillotson and his peers remained within mainstream Protestantism and maintained that their significance should be understood in the seventeenth-century setting to which they belonged to, rather than the secularising developments of later periods.<sup>2</sup> This study shows, on one hand, the place of reason in Tillotson's thought was not so crucial as to outweigh the centrality of revelation, so he was not a prominent pioneer in terms of the ascendancy of reason. On the other, it argues that Tillotson and perhaps his Latitudinarian friends, had a lasting influence on the eighteenth-century attitudes in ways scarcely suggested by other studies, particularly through their stress on charitable behaviour.

What was the role of reason - the capacity to think and have opinions - in religion for Tillotson? Depending on the way it worked, Tillotson's reason could be broadly categorised into natural reason and discriminative reason. Natural reason worked in connection with innate

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<sup>1</sup> Leslie Stephen, *History of English thought in the eighteenth century*, 2d ed., 2 vols (London, 1881), vol1, pp. 74-90; Horton Davies, *Worship and theology in England from Andrewes to Baxter and Foxe, 1603-1690* (Princeton, 1975), pp. 133-137, 181-184; Isabel Rivers, *Reason, grace, and sentiment: a study of the language of religion and ethics in England, 1660-1780*, vol. 1 (New York, 1992), pp. 25-88; Martin Griffin, *Latitudinarianism in the seventeenth-century Church of England* (Leiden, 1992).

<sup>2</sup> William Spellman, "Archbishop John Tillotson and the meaning of moralism," *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 56.4 (1987), pp. 404-422; William Spellman, *The latitudinarians and the Church of England, 1660-1700* (London, 1993); Gerard Reedy, "Interpreting Tillotson," *The Harvard Theological Review*, 86.1 (1993), pp. 81-103; John Spurr, "'Latitudinarianism' and the Restoration church," *The Historical Journal*, 31.4 (1998), pp. 61-82.

ideas imprinted by God on human nature. Using natural reason, people could recognise fundamental truths though in a vague form. Tillotson termed these basic truths the principles of natural religion, and they included the existence and the perfect attributes of God, the notion of good and evil, and God's judgement of individuals after death. Next, discriminative reason was used to evaluate the validity of arguments. This could be engaged in all sorts of human affairs, but its most important role was to examine all the accounts which were alleged to be revealed by God. Tillotson argued that all would agree that the Bible was true divine revelation, if they properly used discriminative reason to consider reliable testimonies about it throughout history. Such testimonies affirmed the traditional authorship of the Bible and the divine inspiration of the authors, which was proved by miracles they performed. The revealed doctrines in the scripture were the same in content as those attainable by natural reason, but revelation was much more detailed and intelligible, and gave a clearer guidance on how to lead a life pleasing God. As such, reason played a role in discovering religious truths, but its role did not stop here. Tillotson believed that reason should be used to rightly interpret the Bible, because the Bible could be misunderstood by biased readers. For example, he rejected the Calvinist doctrine of reprobation as unreasonable, by maintaining the doctrine that God had fated anyone to damnation contradicted his perfect justice, which was the divine attribute backed both by natural reason and by many biblical verses. In this way, reason and revelation were in dialogue to reach true religious knowledge in Tillotson.

Though Tillotson assigned a considerable role to reason in confirming and interpreting the revealed truths in the Bible, he did not allow it to question the authority of the revelation, because he seemed to believe it was divine inspiration rather than reason that gave the Bible authoritative status. And all the contents of the Bible should be believed as true, even though some of them were beyond human comprehension. For example, he thought the doctrine of the Trinity was not entirely comprehensible, because the Trinity's manner of existence – three persons but one God – was incomprehensible. However, because the doctrine was, he believed, backed by scripture, i.e. revealed by God, it should be accepted with implicit faith. This quite strong biblicism of Tillotson calls into question the view that his stress on reason was one of the driving forces of a secularisation which led to the ascendancy of reason over revealed religion. The reason that Tillotson deployed was different from that of the radical Enlightenment which challenged 'everything inherited from the past – not just commonly received assumptions about mankind, society, politics, and the cosmos but also the veracity of

the Bible and the Christian faith or indeed any faith.’<sup>3</sup> Rather, close examination shows Tillotson used reason, not to undermine, but to promote, the Bible and revealed religion. Thus, it is misleading to interpret him as a leader of secularisation.

Tillotson thought the main message of the Bible was encapsulated in Jesus’s commandment of love of God and neighbour, and this viewpoint shaped his theology. On the salvation of individuals, he argued saving faith included obedience to God’s law, so the mark of salvation was to live a virtuous life out of charity in obedience to Jesus’s commandment. Tillotson distanced his soteriology from the Calvinist one, because its emphasis on faith alone could, he thought, lead to antinomianism. The notion that faith alone without good works gave salvation, he often warned, could not effectively encourage good behaviour, so it was a dangerous teaching for Christian life. Tillotson stressed good behaviour more than the faith in correct doctrines. The state of one’s salvation was described by him as living a generally good life rather than having a good relationship with God through faith. For this reason, Tillotson has at times been regarded as a mere moralist. Scholars such as Davies and Griffin argued that Tillotson minimised the significance of supernatural elements in religion and practically reduced Christianity to simple moralism.<sup>4</sup> This view is a part of the secularisation model which, as seen above, understands Tillotson as not a biblicist but a rationalist. It is true that an emphasis on moral behaviour was characteristic of his theology, and its influence will be discussed later in the conclusion. However, as Spurr and Spellman maintained, the soteriology of Tillotson and his like-minded peers was within the spectrum of Protestant theology.<sup>5</sup> As Tillotson’s rationalism was subordinate to his biblicism, his moralism was based on, and supplemented by, biblical revelation. Even in his lifetime, Tillotson was criticised that he preached ‘mere moralitie,’ but he responded that he proclaimed ‘Scripture-Moralitie and Christian-Moralitie.’<sup>6</sup> Tillotson thought that no one could claim to be a true Christian, if they neglected moral duties commanded in the Bible.

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<sup>3</sup> Jonathan Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: philosophy and the making of modernity, 1650-1750* (Oxford, 2002), p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Horton Davies, *Worship and theology in England from Andrewes to Baxter and Foxe, 1603-1690* (Princeton, 1975); Martin Griffin, *Latitudinarianism in the seventeenth-century Church of England* (Leiden, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> John Spurr, “Latitudinarianism and the Restoration church,” *The Historical Journal*, 31.4 (1998), pp. 61-82; William Spellman, “Archbishop John Tillotson and the meaning of moralism,” *Anglican and Episcopal History*, 56. 4 (1987), pp. 404-422; William Spellman, *The Latitudinarians and the Church of England, 1660-1700* (London, 1993).

<sup>6</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon preached before the king and queen at Whitehall, February the 25th 1693/4 being the first Sunday in Lent* (London, 1694), p. 35.

In addition, the Bible, which was common ground for Tillotson and Calvinists, made them agree over important soteriological issues such as the tragic consequence of the fall of Adam and the resultant need of divine grace for human salvation. Where they differed was only on the point where the assistance of grace – the undeserved favour of God towards sinners - was most necessary. For Calvinists, the crucial element for salvation was faith, and God's special assistance of grace was primarily needed here. In Calvinism, faith generated good works, but they were only a sign of salvation, not a condition of salvation. By contrast, for Tillotson, not only faith but also good works were a condition of salvation, and doing good works was a more difficult part than having faith, because living a good life involved a tough and constant fight against man's sinful nature resulting from the fall, while faith could be gained through a mere consent to the articles of faith. So, Tillotson thought grace - supernatural assistance from God - was more desperately needed for good works than for faith. In this way, though Tillotson emphasised the importance of good works, he still affirmed, just like Calvinists, the vital need for divine grace to achieve the salvation of fallen humanity. Tillotson might have believed that the disagreement between his 'faith and works' and Calvinist 'faith alone' could be solved by taking a broad view. Tillotson approved Burnet's *Exposition of the thirty nine articles* which in the section on the twelfth article on the good works addressed the disagreement. The *Exposition* argued that all were agreed that 'a holy Life... was absolutely necessary to Salvation'; therefore it is 'Speculations of very little consequence' 'whether it [good works] is of it self a condition of Justification, or if it is the certain distinction and constant effect of that Faith which justifies.'<sup>7</sup> It is true that Tillotson stressed moral behaviour, but he did not seek to liberate morality from the traditional Christian faith. Rather, he believed that moral behaviour was a main part of the Christian religion and that the supernatural assistance of grace given through faith in Christ was indispensable for the moral life which led to salvation. Thus, Tillotson might be called a grace-based moralist.

The ecclesiology of Tillotson has received little attention in comparison with his thought about reason and salvation. One reason may be that scholars think it has been well established that he upheld fervent anti-Catholicism, and Erastian views of church and state, so no more investigation is necessary.<sup>8</sup> Yet evidence shows this was not the whole story; and

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<sup>7</sup> Gilbert Burnet, *An exposition of the thirty nine articles of the Church of England* (London, 1699), p. 128.

<sup>8</sup> John Marshall, "The ecclesiology of the latitude-men 1660-1689: Stillingfleet, Tillotson and 'Hobbism'," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 36.3 (1985), pp. 407-27; John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven, 1991), pp. 105-165; Tony Claydon, *Europe and the making of England, 1660-1760* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 284-313.

perhaps, if more closely examined, his ecclesiology may be the key to his whole theology. As Jesus's commandment to charitable behaviour shaped Tillotson's soteriology, the same principle formed his ecclesiology based on charity. He maintained that the practice of charity distinguished the Church of England from both the Church of Rome and Protestant Dissenters. Protestant attacks on the doctrinal errors of Roman Catholicism, of course, constructed an important part of Tillotson's apologetic for the Church of England against Rome. However, he criticised the Church of Rome more bitterly for its lack of the Christian charity displayed by its persecution of non-Catholic Christians. He argued that contrary to the Church of Rome, the Church of England had charity towards the Christians of other denominations including Catholics. To persuade Dissenters into joining the established church, Tillotson employed the Erastian argument that the monarch had the authority to decide religious matters for their subjects, just as he exercised control over civil matters. Yet, more importantly, he criticised Dissenters for their lack of Christian charity, which led to their unreasonable division from his church, caused by disagreements over trivial issues about ceremonies and doctrines. As seen in his soteriology, Tillotson believed the most essential part of Christianity was the practice of love exhorted by Jesus. For Tillotson, the practice of love was far more important than scruples over ceremonies and doctrines. He believed that Dissenters should cease to be stubborn about lesser matters and conform to the establishment by practising the most important Christian principle – charity.

Obviously, Tillotson was no advocate of religious pluralism. He shared the ecclesiastical goal - strengthening the established church - with those churchmen who would be called 'high church' because of their love for the episcopal church government and the ceremonies of the Church of England. Yet Tillotson had a difference in strategy. High churchmen, who considered bishops as an indispensable part of a true church, argued that the episcopacy and ceremonies of the Church of England should remain the same and Dissenters should conform to the establishment as it was. By contrast, Tillotson thought the external elements of the church was not essential, so they could be changed if the change helped the Dissenters to conform. He believed that liturgical alteration might be an act of charity which might be performed on the Church of England's part. For him, achieving Christian unity through mutual charity took precedence over the adherence to the present form of the church. It is true that the gap between high and low church emerged more clearly after 1689, and before then their common concern for the established church blurred the party lines. Nevertheless, Tillotson's emphasis on charity and unity over the existing church system in ecclesiology,

which was shared by his Latitudinarian associates from the early Restoration era, indicates that the seeds of the church factions were already growing from the mid-seventeenth century. Christian love, the chief lesson of the Bible in Tillotson's reading of it, was at the heart of his ideas about church.

Though Tillotson was not an inventive political theorist, it was natural for an Anglican divine who served the state-supported church to form political ideas. In fact, politics and religion were closely connected in his day, so any observation of Tillotson's theology would be incomplete without looking at his political ideas. Tillotson's political attitude has been examined by historians along with that of the London clergy closely associated with him, many of whom would be promoted to bishoprics by William III after the 1688 revolution. Though they embraced the revolution and the new regime of William, their main concern had been to protect the Protestant Church of England from the aggressive Catholic policy of James II, rather than advocating the right of resistance to tyranny.<sup>9</sup> A popular way to justify the revolution among the clergy was asserting that it was the providence of God, not human action, which had achieved such a wonderful deliverance of the church and state from the Catholic design. Tillotson took an active part in supporting the Williamite government with the argument from providence. Furthermore, close examination of his comments on civil authority shows that, not only after the revolution, but throughout his career, Tillotson expressed his belief in a providence that controlled the secular sphere as well as the religious one. Because it was divine providence that brought the ruler to power, disobedience to the magistrate was against the governance of God. It is worth noting that Tillotson's providentialism was in harmony with his unwavering stress on charitable behaviour. Tillotson believed charity should cover differences and even errors in civil and religious matters. Thus, according to Tillotson, people - even if they disagreed with the government over some of its policies, or thought it had its faults - should support *de facto* authority out of charity, as long as it performed its function of maintaining order.

However, Tillotson did not affirm unlimited support for the existing government. His view was embedded in a Protestantism whose core value was charity, so his standpoint was different from the *de facto* argument purely based on civil principles. In fact, his *de facto* argument was shaken by James II's Catholic rule, because Tillotson believed Catholicism *per*

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<sup>9</sup> Tim Harris, *Politics under the later Stuarts: party conflict in a divided society, 1660-1715* (London, 1993), pp. 117-46; Craig Rose, *English in the 1690s: revolution, religion and war* (Oxford, 1999) pp. 152-94; John Spurr, *The Restoration Church of England, 1646-1689* (New Haven, 1991), pp. 376-401.

*se* tended to be against the spirit of charity. So, it was hard for him to think that providence would fully support Catholic government. This was shown in Tillotson's participation in the seven bishop's petition against James's order to read his declaration of indulgence. Though it was not an armed resistance, the collective action of clergy, that might be called passive resistance, had a subversive effect on James's regime, which would be eventually toppled about half a year later. Yet, after the revolution which brought a new Protestant government, Tillotson, as noted, returned to his habitual support for government created by providence. And he saw the prospect that a new age of charity in England would start under the providentially installed regime. Tillotson hoped that a providence that rescued England from the Catholic malice would now create a virtuous nation, through the reformation of the lives of Englishmen.

What is the significance of Tillotson's theology? In what follows we will outline some of the lasting influences and effects of his line of thought. To begin with, we may use his theological emphases to shed a new light on the identity of the group of clergy with which he had a close connection. As seen in the introduction, he has been regarded as one of the leading Latitudinarian divines. Perhaps, his ecclesiology, which sought to achieve organisational unity by the bond of Christian love and mutual tolerance, formed the most distinctive feature of the group, differentiating them from both high churchmen and Dissenters. Latitudinarians agreed with the opinion of the high church that the Church of England ideally should be the sole Christian community in England, but while Latitudinarians stressed mutual charity and persuasion as the way to achieve the ideal, high churchmen justified coercive measures. Besides, unlike high churchmen who adhered to the ceremonial part of the Church of England, Latitudinarians thought a change of ceremony might be desirable if it could persuade Dissenters into the established church. Latitudinarians believed that the external form of the establishment was not fundamental to the Christian religion and that the essentials of religion lay in the practice of love rather than the observance of rituals. This mentality led Latitudinarians to have a tolerant attitude towards Nonconformity, but they still condemned Dissenters for their unreasonable and uncharitable objection to the externalities of the Church of England and aimed to comprehend them into the established communion.

While Dissenters thought they could lead a good Christian life in separate congregations, Latitudinarians maintained that the Christians of England should be united in a uniform national communion, though its rigidity could be softened. They argued that if English Christians were willing to obey Jesus's commandment of love, they should seek to establish one uniform church. This argument was put into practice through the proposed comprehension

schemes advanced by Tillotson and his fellows during the late seventeenth century, though all such attempts were frustrated by high church intransigence. Yet, the conciliatory spirit within the Church of England continued. Anglican clergy who were called Latitudinarians in the eighteenth century still wanted their church to allow greater diversity within its organisation. Some decades after Tillotson's death, this aspiration was manifested in the Feathers Tavern petition in 1771 - a request for the abolition of the duty for clergy to subscribe the Thirty-nine Articles - inspired by Francis Blackburn, the archdeacon of Cleveland. It is true that the petitioners mainly aimed to clear the conscience of some Anglican clergy, who had difficulty in sincerely accepting the theological positions taken by the Thirty-nine Articles, particularly on the doctrine of the Trinity. Yet they also had in mind that an abolition of the duty to subscribe to the articles would help dissenting ministers conform to the established church. Though the petition was defeated by a large margin in the House of Commons, it showed that the aspiration for a more comprehensive and charitable national church was alive.<sup>10</sup>

Although comprehension was Latitudinarians' preferred solution to the problem of Nonconformity, they also accepted toleration. It is true that the religious settlement of 1689 in which various dissenting groups were allowed to worship in their own ways was not ideal for Latitudinarians, but they did not like coercing Dissenters into uniformity by using penal laws. Latitudinarian emphasis on charity was less antagonistic towards religious diversity than towards uncharitable persecution. The appeal of toleration increased among Anglican divines in the reign of James II, who proclaimed the declaration of indulgence to seek the cooperation from Dissenters and to promote Catholicism, trying to isolate the established church. The churchmen who had been hostile to Dissenters now realised that alienating them could endanger the establishment. The increased awareness of the importance of tolerating Dissenters, which did not disappear after the removal of James, eventually brought about the 1689 Toleration Act. Though it was partly the consequence of political exigencies, the value of toleration continued to be acknowledged. Many clergy of the Church of England thought the removal of penal laws against Dissenters caused considerable troubles, but the repeal of the Toleration Act was rarely demanded. As time went by, the religious toleration enacted in 1689, and the general support for the value of toleration, became a part of national pride. Perhaps, Latitudinarians' commitment to toleration paved the way for wider acceptance of the principle

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<sup>10</sup> John Gascoigne, "Anglican Latitudinarianism and political radicalism in the late eighteenth century," *History*, 71.23 (1986), pp. 22-38; Martin Fitzpatrick, "Latitudinarianism at the parting of the ways: a suggestion," in John Walsh, Colin Haydon, and Stephen Taylor eds., *The Church of England c. 1689-c.1833: from toleration to tractarianism* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 209-27.



of tolerance and its incorporation into English national identity.<sup>11</sup> By the 1760s, ‘the law of toleration’ was regarded as ‘the most just of all public laws’ and ‘certainly of divine original.’<sup>12</sup>

Tillotson epitomised the Latitudinarian emphasis on behaviour in his sermon published in 1678, by maintaining that when the two parts of religion – ‘the exercise of Piety and Devotion in private and public’ and ‘the doing of good and charitable offices [duties] to others’ – came into competition, ‘Devotion is to give way to Charity, Mercy being better than Sacrifice; that the great End of all the Duties of Religion, Prayer and reading, and hearing the Word of God, and receiving the holy Sacrament is to dispose and excite us to do good, to make us more ready and forward to every good work.’<sup>13</sup> Thus, in a sense, he thought, forms of piety such as prayer, sermon hearing, and the sacrament, which were largely guided by the clergy, were subordinate to charitable works, which could be done without close clerical supervision. With this ethos, Latitudinarians may have opened the way for increased lay initiative in national spirituality. In the 1680s, lay voluntarism created new societies pursuing devotion under the guidance of Anglican clergy in and around London, and after the 1688 revolution, such societies grew in number and influence.<sup>14</sup> Probably this development in the capital was not unrelated to the fact that Latitudinarians were at the heart of the London clergy in the 1670s and 1680s. Josiah Woodward’s account of religious societies also, which was circulated by the Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge (SPCK), itself a group in which lay participation was prominent, encouraged further establishment of religious societies.<sup>15</sup> The members of religious societies were required to prove their loyalty to the established church by receiving the sacrament in it, and they met regularly for devotions like prayer, scripture reading, and sermon hearing. The autonomous characters of the participants were indicated by the fact that in many known cases they ‘organised their own affairs, invited their own preachers, and conducted their own prayers’ being ‘largely independent of the incumbents of their parishes.’<sup>16</sup>

More advanced lay voluntarism appeared in the Societies for the Reformation of Manners (SRMs) which began in the early 1690s. The first of these started with a small number

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<sup>11</sup> Tony Claydon, *Europe and the making of England, 1660-1760* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 312-24.

<sup>12</sup> William Warburton, *The doctrine of grace: or, the office and operations of the holy spirit* (London, 1673), p. 189.

<sup>13</sup> John Tillotson, *A sermon of charity and almes in Sermons preach’d upon several occasions* (London, 1678), p. 216.

<sup>14</sup> John Spurr, “The church, the societies and the moral revolution of 1688,” in Walsh, Haydon, and Taylor eds., *The Church of England*, pp. 127-42.

<sup>15</sup> Josiah Woodward, *An account of the rise and progress of the religious societies in the city of London, &c* (London, 1698); W. M. Jacob, *Lay people and religion in the early eighteenth century* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 80.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* p. 89.

of gentlemen in London. They aimed to promote the reformation of manners by inspiring informers to report offences, such as prostitution, blasphemy, and sabbath-breaking, to local magistrates.<sup>17</sup> This movement was backed by Latitudinarian clergy. For example, Edward Stillingfleet who was friendly to the SRMs, approached Queen Mary and asked her to support the reformation cause in Middlesex where the local society was facing controversy, and Justices of the Peace complained about irregularities in its activities. Stillingfleet's action led the queen to pen a letter to the JPs of the county in support of the society.<sup>18</sup> Edward Fowler joined in the support - he wrote a vindication of the society's activities in Middlesex, quoting the queen's letter.<sup>19</sup> The SRMs secured clerical support, but their 'unquestionably religious energy... did not subsist within the formal institutions of the church.'<sup>20</sup> They demonstrated 'the civic religion of the eighteenth century, pious but lay.'<sup>21</sup> The SPCK was, according to Brent Sirota, designed partly as a response to 'the growing religious and moral autonomy of the "associational world" that lay beyond the Church of England.'<sup>22</sup> The key figure in the establishment of the SPCK, Thomas Bray, 'cited the organization of rival denominations as an argument for Anglican engagement' and argued for the necessity of propagating sound religious knowledge through the distribution of devotional works.<sup>23</sup> Yet Bray did not adhere to clerical initiatives, but was happy to work with lay people who acted voluntarily. From his very first proposals for the society, he planned to include 'some gentlemen of the laity' as well as 'the London clergy of chiefest note.'<sup>24</sup> In fact, Bray was 'the sole clergyman among the five gentlemen who met on 8 March 1699... and constituted themselves as the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.'<sup>25</sup> Lay initiatives appearing across denominational lines, through or in cooperation with the voluntary societies, contributed also to other philanthropic movements such as the establishment of charity schools and hospitals.<sup>26</sup> The emergence of new voluntary associations, consisting of both clergy and laity, Conformists and Nonconformists, raised some uneasiness among high churchmen. As an illustration, high churchmen took part in establishing the SPCK, but its subsequent lay character, openness to Dissenters, and support

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<sup>17</sup> Brent Sirota, *The Christian monitors: the church of England and the age of benevolence, 1680-1730* (London, 2014), p. 92.

<sup>18</sup> Tony Claydon, *William III and the godly revolution* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 115-6.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. pp. 117-8; [Edward Fowler], *A vindication of an undertaking of certain gentlemen, in order to the suppressing of debauchery and profaneness* (London, 1692).

<sup>20</sup> Mark Goldie, "Voluntary Anglicans," *The Historical Journal*, 46.4 (2003), p. 989.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid. p. 989.

<sup>22</sup> Sirota, *The Christian monitors*, p. 101.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. p. 101.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. p. 105.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid. p. 105.

<sup>26</sup> Jacob, *Lay people and religion*, pp. 155-85.

for international Protestantism, which were a part of the society's drift towards Whiggery, diminished high church presence in its activities over time. By contrast, Latitudinarians praised those voluntary societies for suppressing vice and instructing people in religion.<sup>27</sup> To imbue the nation with a moral and charitable spirit, Latitudinarian clergymen encouraged the laity to play an active role and were willing to collaborate with them. The religion of charity Tillotson championed advanced hand in hand with laicisation.

The theological features of Tillotson and his Latitudinarian friends examined in this study may allow us to associate them with a popular religious movement which showed dramatic growth across denominational boundaries from the 1730s - Evangelicalism. The movement was characterised by the tendency to downplay outward rituals in favour of inward piety, or 'the religion of the heart' and from 'faith defined as correct doctrine' towards 'faith defined as correct living.'<sup>28</sup> Scholars have observed that Evangelicalism had multiple origins, among them continental pietism from abroad, and Puritanism and high church spirituality at home.<sup>29</sup> Meanwhile, low church or Latitudinarian ideas, which 'troubled serious believers of whatever sort, including the early evangelicals,' have been regarded as the antithesis of Evangelicalism.<sup>30</sup> The sermons of Tillotson 'stressed duty, human effort and common morality much more than original sin, a substitutionary atonement and the work of the Holy Spirit' which some scholars have seen at the heart of the evangelical movement.<sup>31</sup> So, the Evangelical revival has been presented as reaction against Latitudinarian rationalism.<sup>32</sup> This view might be influenced by the opinion of the eighteenth-century Evangelical writers. In 1740, an Evangelical itinerant preacher George Whitefield published an open letter in order to justify his assertion that 'Archbishop Tillotson knew no more of Christianity than Mahomet.'<sup>33</sup> Knowing the severity of the expression, Whitefield, partly to avoid exclusive responsibility for the attack, and partly to strengthen his case, revealed that his Evangelical friend John Wesley 'first spoke it in a private Society, when he was expounding Part of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and proving the Doctrine of Justification in the Sight of God, by Faith alone, in

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<sup>27</sup> Sirota, *The Christian monitors*, pp. 69-148.

<sup>28</sup> Mark Noll, *The rise of evangelicalism: the age of Edwards, Whitefield and the Wesleys* (Leicester, 2004), p. 47.

<sup>29</sup> John Walsh, "Origin of the evangelical revival," in Gareth Bennett and John Walsh eds., *Essays in modern English church history* (London, 1966), pp. 132-62; David Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain: a history from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London, 1989), pp. 20-74; Noll, *The rise of evangelicalism*, pp. 45-68.

<sup>30</sup> Noll, *The rise of evangelicalism*, p. 36.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. p. 36.

<sup>32</sup> Walsh, "Origin of the evangelical revival," pp. 148-9.

<sup>33</sup> George Whitefield, *Three letters from the reverend Mr. G. Whitefield* (Philadelphia, 1740), p. 2.

Contradistinction to good Works.’<sup>34</sup> However, Whitefield was willing to ‘join Issue with my honour’d Friend, and upon the maturest Deliberation, say again what I have often said before, That Archbishop Tillotson knew no more about true Christianity than Mahomet – whatever high Opinion others might have of that great Man his Works.’<sup>35</sup> Just like Wesley, Whitefield was offended by Tillotson’s emphasis on good works, rather than faith. Though the Arminian Wesley and the Calvinist Whitefield disagreed on soteriology, both stressed the importance of grace at an emotionally charged moment of conversion.<sup>36</sup> This shared point of view may have caused both Wesley and Whitefield to oppose Tillotson’s steady moralism. Whitefield cited Tillotson’s words that ‘the real Renovation of our Hearts and Lives’ were ‘the Terms of our Salvation, which are the necessary Causes and Means of it.’<sup>37</sup> Being indignant at this, Whitefield argued that Tillotson’s teaching contradicted ‘the all sufficient, perfect and everlasting Righteousness and Death of Jesus Christ, as being the sole Cause and Condition of our being accepted by the Father.’<sup>38</sup> In the eyes of Whitefield, ‘the Archbishop pretends to own Christ, and yet puts our Righteousness in the Place of his.’<sup>39</sup> Whitefield regarded Tillotson as ‘the strongest and most approved Adversary’ and claimed, ‘to confute such a one, is like David’s slaying the Goliath of the Philistines.’<sup>40</sup>

Yet, modern scholars’ interpretation and Whitefield’s judgement appear to be based on superficial observation of Tillotson and Latitudinarians. The present research has shown that Tillotson’s rationalism was checked by his biblicism and that he built his moralism on scriptural grounds, without denying the significance of the sacrificial death of Jesus and without excluding inward love for God as a motive of good works. As John Spurr demonstrated, in terms of pastoral concern and promoting private or ‘closet’ devotion, Anglican churchmen of various kinds had worked together in a shared programme: therefore what the scholars have considered to be high church spirituality, one of the origins of Evangelicalism, was indeed shared by Latitudinarian clergy.<sup>41</sup> This reassessment of Latitudinarians may open up a new interpretation that Latitudinarianism could be considered as one of the many elements which gave rise to the Evangelical revival. In fact, some Evangelical features remind us of

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid. p. 2.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. pp. 2-3.

<sup>36</sup> Arnold Dallimore, *George Whitefield: the life and times of the great evangelist of the eighteenth-century revival*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh, 1980), vol. 2, pp. 5-78.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid. pp. 3-4. This quotation was from John Tillotson, *Of the nature of regeneration, and its necessity, in order to justification and salvation in Several discourses...the fourth volume*, (London, 1697), pp. 263-4.

<sup>38</sup> Whitefield, *Three letters*, p. 4.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid. p. 5.

<sup>41</sup> John Spurr, “Latitudinarianism and the Restoration church,” *The Historical Journal*, 31.4, (1998), pp. 61-82.

Latitudinarian standpoint. The experience of conversion, whose importance was emphasised by Evangelicals, did not involve deep doctrinal knowledge, but a hearty acceptance of the simple gospel message. Conversion, in turn, led to Evangelical activism, which encouraged fervent evangelism and a holy life bringing honour to the gospel.<sup>42</sup> This kind of Evangelical sentiment might have had some resonance with the Latitudinarian preference for simple and fundamental doctrines and the emphasis on charitable behaviour.

Wesley might have realised this. Though Wesley, according to Whitefield, once thought Tillotson was no better than Muhammad in understanding true Christianity, later in his life Wesley seemed to become less hostile to Tillotson. Wesley's Arminianism may have led him to agree with Tillotson on some practical aspects of Christian life. When Wesley edited his *Christian library... extracts from and abridgments of the choicest pieces of practical divinity* between 1749 and 1755, he included two of Tillotson's sermons in it. Wesley's introduction to the Tillotson's sermons bore in mind the polarised assessment of Tillotson and suggested a middle way.

I have the rather inserted the following Extracts for the Sake of two Sorts of People: Those who are unreasonably prejudiced for, and those who are unreasonably prejudiced against this Great Man. By this small Specimen it will abundantly appear, to all who will at length give themselves Leave to judge impartially, That the Archbishop was as far from being the worst, as from being the best of the English Writers.<sup>43</sup>

Though Wesley proposed a middle way, the fact that he inserted Tillotson's sermons might indicate that he considered them as worth reading for 'practical divinity' - this is far from Whitefield's portrayal of Tillotson as 'the strongest enemy.' In addition, the content of sermons chosen by Wesley is noteworthy. One sermon emphasised the necessity of human effort - i.e. the 'co-operation' with the holy spirit - to be saved, and the other warned against the vice of evil-speaking.<sup>44</sup> The message of both sermons was reminiscent of Wesleyan stress on continued efforts for sanctification. Wesley's theological vocabulary included 'such terms as

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<sup>42</sup> Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in modern Britain*, pp. 1-19.

<sup>43</sup> John Wesley, *A Christian library: consisting of extracts from and abridgments of the choicest pieces of practical divinity... vol. XLV*. (Bristol, 1755), p. 295.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid. pp. 297-347. The first sermon was Wesley's abridgement of John Tillotson, *Of the ordinary influence of the Holy Ghost, on the minds of Christians in The evidence of our saviour's resurrection in Several discourses of the life, sufferings, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; and the operations of the Holy Ghost... the tenth volume* (1701, London), pp. 349-405. The second sermon was John Tillotson, *A sermon preached before the king and queen at Whitehall, February the 25th 1693/4 being the first Sunday in Lent* (London, 1694).

strive, strain, and labor - terms that highlight human cooperation with God.<sup>45</sup> The relationship between Tillotson and Wesley might suggest that there can be more affinity between Latitudinarian attitude and Evangelicalism than is often realised.

As we noted, religion was hardly separable from politics in Tillotson's time, and his theology influenced his political attitudes. Particularly, Tillotson's support for the government after 1688 deserves more attention because of the importance of William's regime in steering the course of British history in subsequent periods. Tillotson's enthusiasm for the new government, indeed he became one of the main clerical supporters of William, lay in the theological emphases we have been exploring. As Tony Claydon showed, Williamite clergy, under the lead of Gilbert Burnet, produced propaganda depicting William as God's instrument who had delivered England from the Catholic tyranny of James II, as a godly prince who reformed the manners of the nation, and as a defender of international Protestantism who fought against Louis XIV of France. The propagandists infused their arguments with the language of providence, moralism, and anti-Catholicism. Claydon pointed out that 'amongst the works published by Burnet's clergy before 1688, two genres of literature had stood out' - anti-Catholic polemic and 'English jeremiads' warning moral decay.<sup>46</sup> And these two genres were connected because the clergy 'blamed catholics for the moral temptations to which England had succumbed.'<sup>47</sup> The authors' 'calls for national repentance' before 1688 'anticipated the rhetoric of the Orange camp.'<sup>48</sup> This study confirms Claydon's analysis. We have seen that moralism and anti-Catholicism dominated Tillotson's sermons well before William came to power in England. Once the revolution was successful, Tillotson was convinced that William was an ideal monarch who could realise his vision of a godly nation. For Tillotson, the decision to support William was not political opportunism. He advocated the new regime, because he believed that God was using William for the good of God's true religion.

This observation may lead us to consider Tillotson's role in a wider context: if he was an influential propagandist for the Williamite regime, he might have played a role in 'modernisation' of Britain in wars against France. Before the Nine Years War (1689-1697), England had not experienced such a sustained commitment to conflict. Through the war, England emerged as 'a powerful fiscal-military state' with 'high taxes, a growing and well-

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<sup>45</sup> Kenneth Collins, *The scripture way of salvation: the heart of John Wesley's theology* (Nashville, 1997), p. 154.

<sup>46</sup> Claydon, *William III*, p. 65.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.* p. 66.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.* p. 66.

organized civil administration, a standing army and the determination to act as a major European power.<sup>49</sup> What made this change possible? Institutional developments have been considered decisive. For example, Peter Dickson argued that the development of a well-organised system of government borrowing, including the creation of the Bank of England, was crucial to the rise of England.<sup>50</sup> John Brewer stressed the role of the English parliament which made efficient management of resources. He maintained that taxation through the legislature allowed the Williamite government to have extensive access to national resources and that the influence of country ideology reduced administrative corruption.<sup>51</sup> However, in addition to these visible developments, we may reflect on the religious forces which kept Englishmen committed to the transforming war with France. Scholars who discussed the economic and institutional factors in the growth of England to become a world power tended to overlook religious aspects of the war and of the English national life of the time. Though the economic and political factors cannot be ignored, religious matters were still a significant consideration that influenced international politics. Religious conflicts in England played a major role in the replacement of Catholic James by Protestant William in 1688. The resultant change of religious mood of the English court provided a necessary condition for, if not caused, the war between England and France. Thus, the justification of the war on religious grounds given by Tillotson and other clergy should not be considered as merely rhetorical, though of course it is important not to underestimate the importance of propaganda in motivating people for a long and expensive conflict. In fact, such spiritual discourses may have provided many with genuine motivation. Religious arguments for the military campaign publicised through sermons and pamphlets might have played a pivotal role in encouraging Englishmen to support the war and to make the above-mentioned visible changes which moulded a powerful state with an unprecedented standard of efficiency. In this regard, Tillotson's support for William as a godly prince and for his providential war against France may be regarded to contribute, to some extent, to making of modern Britain.

Tillotson and the Latitudinarians perhaps also played a part in fostering a peaceful and polite society. It may be said that they contributed to the cooling down of the heat of religious and civil controversy which marked the last Stuart decades. In the seventeenth century, Englishmen 'killed, tortured, and executed each other for political beliefs; they sacked towns

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<sup>49</sup> John Brewer, *The sinews of power: war, money and the English state, 1688-1783* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 137.

<sup>50</sup> Peter Dickson, *The financial revolution in England* (London, 1867), pp. 3-14.

<sup>51</sup> Brewer, *The sinews of power*, pp. 137-161.

and brutalized the countryside' and they were 'subjected to conspiracy, plot, and invasion.'<sup>52</sup> By contrast, 'the political structure of eighteenth-century England possesses adamant strength and profound inertia.'<sup>53</sup> This stability was in part associated with the rise of politeness in the eighteenth century. The importance of 'the manner in which actions were performed' became more and more emphasised.<sup>54</sup> Political or any other kinds of arguments, no matter how excellent in content, might not be effective, unless accompanied by good manners. The ascendancy of politeness influenced the meaning of the words 'gentleman' and 'gentility.' The term 'gentleman' was understood more in connection with the manners of behaviour than hereditary position and land ownership. 'While it was certainly easier for the gentleman of lineage and land to be polite, the individual who lacked those criteria for gentility might achieve or enhance a claim to gentility through his or her politeness itself.'<sup>55</sup>

This rise of politeness and manners may have been promoted by Tillotson and his fellow Latitudinarian clergy. The Civil War experience of their youth, particularly its violent sectarian element, probably largely influenced Latitudinarians to have irenic spirit. They asserted that the number of fundamental religious principles to be agreed by all was small and that the opinions about inessentials should not be argued too strongly. Even if there might be technically correct positions in some non-fundamental disputes, Latitudinarians thought, a peaceful coexistence of different opinions in love was much better than reaching one right answer through hostile debates that could generate violence. This attitude was reflected in Burnet's *Exposition of the thirty-nine articles* published in 1699, which had been read and approved by his Latitudinarian colleagues before publication. In it, Burnet tried to persuade his readers that though the letters of the articles of the established church were fixed, they were open to different interpretations. So, mutual respect should be observed among the Christians who accepted the articles, though the interpretations of individuals on them might vary. It is true that the controversy between high and low church became more acute after the 1688 revolution. However, the frictions in the eighteenth century 'were over specific and sometimes transitory issues.'<sup>56</sup> They hardly destroyed 'the dominance of a mainstream Anglicanism' and 'a high degree of clerical fraternity, co-operation and consensus.'<sup>57</sup> Anglicans, particularly

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<sup>52</sup> John Plumb, *The growth of political stability in England: 1675-1725* (London, 1967), p. xviii.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.* p. xviii.

<sup>54</sup> Lawrence Klein, "Politeness and the interpretation of the British eighteenth century," *The Historical Journal*, 45.4 (2002), p. 874.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.* p. 876.

<sup>56</sup> Walsh and Taylor, "Introduction: the Church of England and Anglicanism," in Walsh, Haydon, and Taylor eds., *The Church of England c. 1689-c. 1833*, p. 30.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.* p. 30.



Latitudinarians to a greater degree, while seeking compromise on controversial theoretical issues, promoted the practice of good behaviour, which was uncontroversial. Virtuous life was more encouraged than detailed doctrinal knowledge, and the promotion of harmony in the spirit of charity was seen as the heart of virtue. Politeness and sociability, which characterised the eighteenth-century Britain, were a part of this approach to containing and managing disputes.<sup>58</sup> Lawrence Klein observed that ‘to an extent, the language of mainstream Anglican religion came to overlap with that of the polite courtesy book.’<sup>59</sup> Being a good member of the Church of England came to involve cultivating civility. The fact that Anglican condemnation of Nonconformists was mainly directed at their ‘enthusiasm’ also indicates the tendency of religious argument ‘from issues of doctrine to estimations of social personality.’<sup>60</sup> The standpoint that religion should promote mutual forbearance and stability, not animosity and chaos, was becoming more accepted. The message of Christian charity, delivered by Tillotson and his friends to the Englishmen who had experienced the national turmoil of the mid-seventeenth century, might have played not a small part in creating comparative peace and stability of the next century.

Scholars have tended to assume that Tillotson was an advocate of reason, which undermined the influence of revealed religion. Yet, not only Tillotson, but also the generality of Englishmen of his age was fascinated by the terms ‘reason’ and ‘rationality.’<sup>61</sup> Tillotson, preaching on the advantages of religion, observed, ‘because the Fashion of the Age is to call every thing into Question, it will be requisite to satisfie men’s Reason’ with regard to the benefits of religion.<sup>62</sup> Thus, ‘rational religion’ in the late seventeenth century was the result of the defensive clerical response to the challenges of the time, rather than an active project aiming to rationalise religion. Moreover, though Tillotson and other ‘rational’ clergy used the contemporary fashion of ‘rational’ methodology, as we have seen in this study, it was the revealed mystery beyond human comprehension which they sought to defend. Therefore, Tillotson may not have been a forerunner of a rationalism that attempted to judge everything in the light of reason and excluded something beyond human comprehension from debate. Rather, what we may see in Tillotson is the changing focus of religious life from the belief in

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<sup>58</sup> Klein, “Politeness and the interpretation of the British eighteenth century,” pp. 869-898.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. p. 889.

<sup>60</sup> Lawrence Klein, *Shaftesbury and the culture of politeness: moral discourse and cultural politics in early eighteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 1994), p. 162.

<sup>61</sup> John Spurr, “Rational religion in Restoration England,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 49.4 (1988), pp. 563-70.

<sup>62</sup> John Tillotson, *Prov. xiv. 34. Righteousness exalteth a nation; but sin is the reproach of any people* in *Sermons preach'd upon several occasions* (London, 1671), p. 129.

doctrines to the practice of virtues. Tillotson argued that Christians should believe the doctrines revealed in the Bible, but he also asserted that carrying out the simple command of love was more important and brought one closer to heaven than having a deep knowledge of doctrines. For Tillotson, this emphasis on charitable behaviour was the foundation not only of personal religious life, but of the Christian community. He believed that all true Christians should achieve institutional unity, by showing brotherly love to each other. As a clergyman of the Church of England, Tillotson sought to comprehend Dissenters into the established church, but what he considered to be the central point of unity was Christian charity rather than a form of church government, or an agreement on ceremonial or doctrinal issues. Developing the ecclesiology based on charity and seeking to put it into practice may be Tillotson's most important contribution to the Church of England, and one that has been underappreciated. His stress on Christian charity and moral behaviour left a lasting impact on British society.

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