

1650

Man in the Moon. Discovering a World of Knavery under the Sunne; both in the Parliament, the Councell of State, the Army, the City, and the Country. With other Intelligence from England, Scotland, and Ireland, 37 (2–9 January 1650). N&S 248.

Abiezer Coppe, *A Fiery Flying Roll: A Word from the Lord to all the Great Ones of the Earth, whom this may Concerne: Being the Last Warning Piece at the Dreadfull day of Judgement* (London, 1649), title page, preface, contents, pp. 1–5. Wing, C6087.

Die Veneris, 1 Februarii, 1649 (1650). Wing, E2295.

Die Veneris, 8 Martii, 1649 (1650). Wing, M2271.

To the Honourable, the Commons Assembled in Parliament ([London], 1650). Wing, T1430.

‘An Act Against several Atheistical, Blasphemous and Execrable Opinions, Derogatory to the Honor of God, and Destructive to Humane Society’ (London: Edward Husband and John Field, 1650). ESTC, R212947.

The Ranters Ranting: With the Apprehending, Examinations, and Confession of John Collins, J. Shakespear, Tho. Wilberton, and five more which are to Answer the Next Sessions. And Severall Songs or Catches, which were Sung at their Meetings. Also their Several Kinds of Mirth and Dancing. Their Blasphemous Opinions. Their Belief Concerning Heaven and Hell. And the Reason why one of the Same Opinion Cut off the Heads of his Own Mother and Brother. Set forth for the Further Discovery of this Ungodly Crew (London: B. Alsop, 1650), title page, sig. Av, pp. 1–2. Wing, R450.

In the year 1650 the regicides finally destroyed the royalist underground only to find themselves assailed by new types of radical, sectarian heresy and blasphemy. The *Man in the Moon* (issue no. 37 of which is reproduced below) was one of fifty-one separate royalist weekly newsbooks which appeared in London in the turbulent months between September 1647 and June 1650. Many of these royalist newsbooks survived for only a few weeks but a number managed to appear for longer periods of between one and two years. The *Man in the Moon* was written largely by the Smithfield bookseller John Crouch and was printed by his kinsman Edward Crouch. Soon after its first appearance in April 1649 the regicides tried to suppress this title but it managed to survive – with some notable gaps in publication – until June 1650.¹

There was little news as such in the *Man in the Moon*; it was mostly devoted to rather coarse attempts to poke fun at the perceived ridiculousness, cruelty, pomposity and hypocrisy of the Puritans. Issue no. 37 began with standard royalist complaints about the tax known as the excise, and it expressed the belief that Charles II, the English Presbyterians, the Scots and aid from Europe would combine to defeat the Commonwealth during the summer of 1650. John Crouch was at pains to attack the Oath of Engagement to the Commonwealth; those who took it were assured that they would burn in the flames of hell. Crouch also launched stinging attacks on England's new rulers for their alleged oppression of the poor, and falsely claimed that Cromwell had recently suffered a great defeat at Waterford in Ireland. Crouch finished this issue of the newsbook by claiming that he was 'still bark'd at, and hunted after by their *Beagles*; it is his comfort, that he yet scapes their *Traps* and *Ginnes*;² each Moone-shine night they stare upwards, as if they would eat him alive'. Despite these constant dangers, Crouch claimed that

he would lay downe his life for the Cause he maintaines as willingly as ever he did his body into his Nuptiall Bed, and will rather expose himselfe to all Miseries of Hunger, Cold, Imprisonment, yea, Hanging, Drawing, and Quartering, then betray the Cause of God, his King, and Countrey.³

Issue no. 37 of the *Man in the Moon* might stand as an example of 'double censorship', in the sense that it contained a text which purported to be a 'Declaration and Protestation of the Governour and Inhabitants of Virginia' abhorring the regicide and pledging the settlers to fight for Charles II. No other copy of this purported 'Declaration and Protestation' is known to exist. The text is a pugnacious, self-consciously royalist document. Its strong biblical focus reminds us that Puritans did not have a monopoly on religiosity and piety. It also displays an understanding of the English law of treason, which considered thoughts of violence against the king to be as serious as actual violence against him. The claim that the colonists would rather join with their '*neighbour Savages*'⁴ than yield to the regicides is striking when one considers that they had fought a brutal war against the Native Americans between 1644 and 1646.

There are a number of powerful arguments for supposing that the 'Declaration and Protestation' presented in the *Man in the Moon* might not be genuine. There is apparently no surviving original copy of it, and no other historical source from the period quotes it. Furthermore, the *Man in the Moon* was known for its joyful eschewal of journalistic accuracy in favour of obscenity, sexual libel and wonderfully colourful and inventive lies and misinformation. Despite these understandable misgivings about the authenticity of the 'Declaration and Protestation', however, John and Edward Crouch did have personal and business connections with at least two members of the London book trade who had

access to regular and reputable information from Virginia and the New World: John Hammond and Thomas Harper. Indeed, in 1651 Thomas Harper published a book about Virginia by a resident of London who had recently returned from the colony, where he had been in the company of the man who allegedly promulgated the 'Declaration and Protestation', the Governor of Virginia, Sir William Berkeley. On the balance of probabilities, then, the 'Declaration and Protestation' is likely to be genuine. Its survival in the sole surviving copy of this issue of the *Man in the Moon* was both fortuitous and entirely contingent. The 'Declaration and Protestation' may well force us to rethink our approach to the politics of early colonial America,⁵ but at the very least it will force us to reassess the generally low opinion held by modern scholars about the *Man in the Moon*. There may well have been, surprisingly, some wheat among the chaff of John Crouch's eminently readable publication.

On 1 February 1650 the Commons read 'Several Passages' from Abiezer Coppe's *A Fiery Flying Roll* (reproduced below). It was resolved that the book contained 'many horrid Blasphemies, and damnable and detestable Opinions'. All copies of the text were ordered to be burnt 'by the hand of the Hangman' at four named places. The Lord Mayor and Sheriffs of London and the 'Bailey' of Southwark were required to search for copies, as was the Serjeant-at-Arms to the Commons. It was further resolved that all Mayors, Sheriffs, and Justices of the Peace throughout the country should seize any copies of the book that could be found and have them burnt by the local hangman. The Commons ordered that its condemnation of this book 'be forthwith printed and published'.⁶

The blasphemous portions of *A Fiery Flying Roll* are easily identifiable; they concern Coppe's statements that God had revealed himself to the author and that the most 'Excellent Majesty' of God dwelled within him,⁷ as well as the Antinomian heresy that to the pure all things are pure. Coppe argued that particular actions such as swearing, drunkenness or adultery were only sinful if one happened to believe that they were sinful: 'there's swearing ignorantly, i'th darke, vainly, and there's swearing i'th light, gloriously'. In a provocative phrase in the context of 1650, Coppe quoted the royal motto 'Honi Soit qui Mal y Pense' to condemn those who attacked the actions of Antinomians.⁸

A Fiery Flying Roll was, however, not merely blasphemous;⁹ it was also considered to contain 'damnable and detestable Opinions', some of which may have been religious in nature but many of which must surely have related to the very real threat of social disorder and political and economic upheaval contained within Coppe's book. *A Fiery Flying Roll* was presented as a warning to the 'Great Ones of the Earth' that they could only avert a terrible judgement and plague by feeding, clothing and relieving the oppressed and the poor: beggars, prisoners and widows. Those in power 'must bow to the poorest peasants, or else they shall rue for it', and in bowing down to the 'Eternall Majesty' of God they must 'bow

down to equality, or free community.’¹⁰ God would ‘overturne’ all those who opposed him, and Coppe claimed that the Levellers were ‘but shadowes of most terrible, yet great and glorious good things to come’. Coppe sketched a line of righteousness – if not quite a radical tradition – from the blood of biblical Abel to that of ‘the last Levellers that were shot to death.’¹¹ He warned that the Lord ‘will plague your Honour, Pompe, Greatnesse, Superfluity, and confound it into parity, equality, community’. The Lord would surely deliver the people of England from their suffering under ‘Tythes, Excize, Taxes, Pollings, &c.’¹²

Coppe explicitly renounced violence and denied any interest in ‘sword levelling, or digging-levelling’: he wrote ‘this levelling ... shall up, not by sword, not by might, &c. but by my Spirit, saith the Lord’. He was emphatic that ‘the Prime levelling, is laying low the Mountaines, and levelling the Hills in man’¹³ Yet, there are both ambiguities and explicitly contradictory statements about the nature of this levelling within the text. It should perhaps be noted that Coppe said the ‘Prime levelling’, but by no means the only levelling, was to be within the hearts of man. He explicitly claimed that there were ‘Angels (now) come downe from heaven, in the shapes and formes of men, who are full of the vengeance of the Lord; and are to poure out the plagues of God upon the Earth, and to torment the Inhabitants thereof’. Coppe used the well-known biblical story about Belshazzar’s feast (Daniel 5:2–30) to warn the ‘Great Ones’ that ‘God hath numbered thy Kingdome, and finished it’. God had now used Coppe to deliver his final warning about the cries of the poor to proud men who would ‘dare to sit in my [i.e. God’s] throne, and judge unrighteous judgement.’¹⁴ The social, political and economic implications of *A Fiery Flying Roll* are even more explicit when one realizes that both of the points in the text at which Coppe explicitly states that he has no interest in ‘sword levelling’ look like they have been added as asides by Coppe or his printer at the production stage, perhaps to blunt the very strident message of the text, or to provide them with some measure of legal cover should they have found themselves in trouble with the law.¹⁵ Coppe’s millenarianism does not fit comfortably within the paradigm of religious radicalism which has found almost universal acceptance among historians in the decades since the 1980s; here we find millenarian religion enmeshed with calls for social, legal and political reform.¹⁶

On 8 March 1650 the Commons heard a report from Mr Millington MP concerning a book entitled *The Doctrine of the Fourth Commandment Deformed by Popery*, and was informed about the interrogations of the bookseller John Hide and a certain Augustine Nicholas, who was a servant to Gertrude Dawson, the woman who had printed the book.¹⁷ The Commons resolved that the book was ‘Erroneous, Scandalous and Prophane’, and it ordered that all printed copies be burnt by the City Marshall at the Exchange and in Cheapside. All copies of the book found throughout England and Wales were also to be burnt.¹⁸ This

74-page quarto book by James Ockford caused offence by arguing that the true Sabbath was Saturday, and that Christians were blind to this fact because they had not yet cured themselves of all the deformities of Popery. Ockford proposed a very strict form of Sabbatarianism which would have proscribed all forms of labour and non-religious activity on Saturdays. In the context of the millenarian and messianic politics of the day, this seemingly arcane theological point was a matter of pressing urgency because the author wished to work for the conversion of the Jews to Christianity: a necessary prerequisite to the Second Coming.¹⁹ In censuring Ockford and his book, the Commons was laying down a marker which was designed to distance themselves from the seemingly permanent revolution of sectarian religious change, innovation, radicalism and extremism. *The Doctrine of the Fourth Commandment Deformed by Popery* was to be burnt across the country so that citizens in every place where it turned up could see that England's new rulers had no sympathy with such outlandish and dangerous ideas. To an extent, then, one may talk about certain incidents of censorship as acts of propaganda.²⁰

The Commons was so concerned at a perceived increase in heterodox opinions that, on 9 August, it passed 'An Act against Several Atheistical, Blasphemous and Execrable Opinions, Derogatory to the Honor of God, and Destructive to Humane Society'. This piece of legislation began by stating Parliament's concern for propagating the 'Gospel in this Commonwealth'. It complained that despite a number of laws and Ordinances for 'the good and furtherance of Reformation', there were men and women 'who have lately discovered themselves to be most monstrous in their Opinions'. The effect of these monstrous opinions would be not only 'the notorious corrupting and disordering, but even ... the dissolution of all Humane Society'. The legislation was aimed at a number of specific types of offender: anyone who, by words or in writing, maintained or affirmed 'him or her self, or any other meer Creatrure, to be very God'; those who claimed that they were in 'honor, Excellency, Majesty and Power equal to God'; or those who asserted that God dwelled within them and other physical creatures 'and no where else'. The legislation was also designed to punish those who proclaimed the heretical concept that to the pure all things are pure.²¹

Those who were found 'avowedly professing, maintaining or publishing' these 'Atheistical, Blasphemous or Execrable Opinions' were to be brought before one or more Justice of the Peace or any other head officer of any town or corporation, and upon the oath of two or more witnesses could be imprisoned for up to six months, or until sufficient sureties were found for the accused to swear to be of good behaviour for one year. For a second offence the individual was to be confined to custody until 'the next Assizes or Gaol-Delivery' and, if found guilty, was to be banished from 'England, and all the Dominions thereof'.

A second offender who returned to England without express permission would be considered a felon, and treated accordingly. The Act was to be publicly proclaimed in 'every City, Borough or Town Corporate' upon the next Market Day. To modern ears these provisions sound harsh and barbaric, but they were felt to be necessary because such blasphemies tended 'to the Dishonor of God, the Scandal of Christian Religion,' and were also 'destructive to humane Society.'²²

Historians assert that the Blasphemy Act was rarely used during the 1650s.²³ This neglect may possibly be explained by reference to the fact that there is always a level of inertia, incompetence, confusion and inefficiency in any given administrative body. There are often competing, contested interests within organizations, and administrative practice then, as now, was rarely as efficient, coherent or 'joined-up' as it could or should have been. Yet, the disregard for the Blasphemy Act may also, at least partly, have been due to the very harshness of the Act; juries were often unwilling to convict if the likely punishment was seen to be disproportionate to the crime, and the acquittal of an offender could have been disastrous in propaganda terms for the authorities.²⁴ Yet, even if the Act had been more widely used, one might wonder what impact it could have had at a time of such ferment upon men and women who had discovered salvation in such a shrill, self-assured and boisterous truth? Once the first flush of radical enthusiasm had passed, it is likely that it was time and the mundane experience of everyday life – not the Blasphemy Act, prison or banishment – which proved to be the most effective weapon in disappointing, discouraging and disillusioning many members of the sects. Time and experience also proved very effective in inoculating large sections of the populace against the radical contagion.

However, the neglect of the Blasphemy Act may be more apparent than real; a function of historians' over-reliance on the large number of lively newsbooks produced in London during this period, and their familiarity with the printed calendars of the papers of various committees established at Westminster by the Cromwellian state. In other words, scholars of censorship, blasphemy and free speech still invariably use a small number of historical sources which impose a centralized, 'statist', top-down view of censorship upon the period. By contrast, historians of the early modern British state have long realized that the state cannot adequately be viewed as merely a coercive body at the apex of society. The maintenance of law, order and social stability were underpinned, as Mark Goldie and others have shown, by a widely diffused 'unacknowledged republic' of men who held local positions of civic and religious responsibility and power. The early modern British state relied to a surprising degree on the active participation of unpaid, part-time or local officials who were often drawn from outside the ranks of the elite.²⁵ It would be very useful to know whether claims about the disinclination of the authorities to use the Blasphemy Act would hold water in the wake of a historical methodology which, in addition to the standard Westminster-

focused sources for the period, was able to draw upon research in a large number of legal records generated across the metropolis and throughout England and Wales during the 1650s.

The Blasphemy Act of 1650 was much discussed by scholars in the late 1980s and early 1990s in the context of J. C. Davis's claim that one could not demonstrate that the radical group known as the 'Ranters' had actually existed if one relied – as historians had traditionally done – upon hostile printed accounts of their activities written by pamphleteers.²⁶ Davis's arguments provoked a fierce defence of the existence of the Ranters from, among others, Bernard Capp, Nigel Smith and J. F. McGregor. On balance, Davis's arguments about the problematic nature of the sources that had been used by scholars and the impossibility of the existence of a coherent, fixed group or party called the Ranters were valid and helpful, but he went too far in asserting that 'Ranterism' was nothing more than a slur – a literary trope – which had no connection with the small and unimportant number of antinomians present in England at the time.²⁷ Some might dismiss the furore over the Ranters as a semi-forgotten squabble among a small group of academics which generated much heat and little light, but it is of interest in the context of the argument in these volumes about the need for histories of censorship and free speech to examine sources that have rarely, if ever, been used by scholars. With the benefit of hindsight it is striking that Davis wrote pugnaciously about the lack of evidence for the existence of the Ranters but never examined the types of sources where one might find such evidence: court cases. Those who wished to defend the existence of the Ranters were, strangely, equally remiss on this point. Nigel Smith, for example, wondered whether Davis should have used sources other than pamphlets, but conspicuously did not suggest that Davis (or he himself) should seek the Ranters in legal archives.²⁸ In a similar vein, J. F. McGregor defended the existence of the Ranters by reference to the arrest on 2 November 1650 of a group of alleged Ranters at a drinking establishment called the 'David and Harp' in Moor Lane in the parish of St Giles Cripplegate. These individuals were, apparently, tried and imprisoned for their supposed activities, but McGregor chose not to follow this very specific information into the archives. Instead, he relied on what he called 'the fertile imagination of the yellow press' in order to establish the facts of the case.²⁹

One account of the incident at the 'David and Harp' is recorded in a pamphlet entitled *The Ranters Ranting*, a portion of which is reproduced below. *The Ranters Ranting* is of interest for the description of the way in which a constable allegedly broke up the raucous 'Ranter' meeting; searched a number of those present; found 'two written papers stuffed with very blasphemous matter'; and brought them to the prison known as the Compter. They were then allegedly brought before a Justice of the Peace and confined to the Bridewell for a period before 'bound over to answer for their offences, according to Law the

next Sessions.³⁰ It is known that three of the alleged defendants – John Collins, J. Shakespeare and Thomas Wiberton – were indeed involved with religious sects at the time³¹ and it would be a valuable exercise to use the details in this and a host of other pamphlets to follow the Ranters into the archives and establish, once and for all, the extent of the use of the Blasphemy Act in the years after 1650. This research might provide valuable evidence with which to revisit and reassess the arguments of Davis and his one-time sparring partners about the nature and extent of radical antinomianism in revolutionary England.

Notes

1. J. McElligott, 'John Crouch: A Royalist Journalist in Cromwellian England', *Media History*, 10:3 (2004), pp. 139–55.
2. I.e. 'guns'.
3. *Man in the Moon*, below, p. 269.
4. *Ibid.*, below, p. 267.
5. See J. McElligott, 'Atlantic Royalism? Polemic, Censorship and the "Declaration and Protestation of the Governour and Inhabitants of Virginia"', in J. McElligott and D. L. Smith (eds.), *Royalists and Royalism during the Interregnum* (forthcoming, 2010).
6. *Die Veneris*, 1 Februarii, 1649, below, p. 277.
7. Coppe, *A Fiery Flying Roll*, below, p. 273.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 9 (not reproduced below). The latter phrase might be translated as 'Shame on those who think ill of it'.
9. Cf. J. Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England, 1558–1689* (Harlow: Longman, 2000), p. 149.
10. *A Fiery Flying Roll*, below, p. 273, and p. 14 (not reproduced below).
11. *Ibid.*, below, pp. 274, 275. On the concept of a radical tradition, see J. McElligott, 'William Hone, Print Culture, and the Nature of Radicalism', in A. Hessayon (ed.), *Rediscovering Radicalism in the British Isles and Ireland* (forthcoming, 2010).
12. *A Fiery Flying Roll*, below, p. 275, and p. 10 (not reproduced below).
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 273, 275, below.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 8, 12, 13 (not reproduced below). On Belshazzar's feast, see S. Barber, 'Belshazzar's Feast: Regicide, Republicanism and the Metaphor of Balance', in J. Peacey (ed.), *The Regicides and the Execution of Charles I* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 94–116.
15. See the notes added into the margins of *A Fiery Flying Roll*, below, p. 273, and p. 11 (not reproduced below).
16. We shall encounter this phenomenon again in connection with a number of texts published in 1652.
17. These interrogations have not survived due to the fire which destroyed the Palace of Westminster in 1834.
18. *Die Veneris*, 8 Martii, 1649, below, p. 278.
19. *The Doctrine of the Fourth Commandment* (London, 1650), sig. A2v.
20. On the dangers of pursuing too far the argument that censorship was merely a rhetoric act of propaganda, see J. McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship in Revolutionary England* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2007), ch. 7.

21. 'An Act Against several Atheistical, Blasphemous and Execrable Opinions', below, pp. 285, 287. J. C. Davis was plainly wrong to claim that the 'so-called' Blasphemy Act was designed only to combat 'atheism, licentiousness and royalism'. J. C. Davis, 'Fear, Myth and Furore: Reappraising the "Ranters"', *Past and Present*, 129 (November 1990), pp. 79–103, on p. 81, n. 10; J. C. Davis, 'Fear, Myth and Furore: Reappraising the "Ranters": Reply', *Past and Present*, 140 (August 1993), pp. 194–210, on pp. 196–8; J. C. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History: The Historians and the Ranters* (1986; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 3.
22. 'An Act Against several Atheistical, Blasphemous and Execrable Opinions', below, p. 287.
23. Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration*, p. 150; A. Hessayon, 'Gold Tried in the Fire': *The Prophet Theauraujohn Tany and the English Revolution* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), pp. 205–8.
24. On these two points, see McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship*, ch. 8.
25. M. Goldie, 'The Unacknowledged Republic: Office-Holding in Early Modern England', in T. Harris (ed.), *The Politics of the Excluded, c. 1500–1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), pp. 153–94.
26. Davis, *Fear, Myth and History*; Davis, 'Fear, Myth and Furore'; Davis, 'Fear, Myth and Furore: Reply'.
27. Hessayon, 'Gold Tried in the Fire', pp. 11–12.
28. N. Smith, 'Fear, Myth and Furore: Reappraising the "Ranters": Debate', *Past and Present*, 140 (August 1993), pp. 171–8, on p. 173. Davis, characteristically, picked up on this flaw in Smith's argument. See his 'Fear, Myth and Furore: Reply', pp. 194–5.
29. J. F. McGregor, 'Fear, Myth and Furore: Reappraising the "Ranters": Debate', *Past and Present*, 140 (August 1993), pp. 155–64, on p. 160.
30. *The Ranters Ranting*, below, pp. 289–91.
31. I am grateful to Ariel Hessayon for this information.

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Man in the Moon. Discovering a World of Knavery under the Sunne; both in the Parliament, the Councell of State, the Army, the City, and the Country. With other Intelligence from England, Scotland, and Ireland, 37 (2–9 January 1650). N&S 248.

The Man in the Moon.
Discovering a World of
KNAVERY
Under the
SUNNE;

Both in the *Parliament*, the *Councell of State*, the *Army*, the *City*, and the
COUNTRY.

With other *Intelligence* from *England*, *Scotland*, and *IRELAND*.

Die Lunae, From Wednesday *January 2* to *January 9* 1650.

Traitors engage with might and maine,
yet, Fairfax doth deny,
Because Tom Ladle with his Traine,
can't sweare so well as lie.

Excise they still put on all things,¹
double as much, or more,
And yet these Hell-bred, covetous Kings,
are needy as before.

Great Charles, the Scot, and Presbytry,
with Lords, and Cavees all,
This Summer one tugges more will try,
to make Rebellion fall.

The Sea, the States, France, Denmark, Spaine,
Sweden, and Germany,
Joves vengeance too, will end their reigne,
and scourge their perjury.²

Now are the Rebels ty'd together by their late wicked combination (called the Engagement) as fast as Dog and Bitch,³ which the Saints thinke will beget a new Litter of Independent / Puppies to barke for their Masters at *Westminster*, and give them warning that King *Charles* is comming to claime his Right.

This Weeke they put forth a Crack-fart Act, for all persons above 18 years of age to subscribe to their Engagement,⁴ and so give their souls to the devill; that *Cromwells* Witch may charme the affections of the people into an acknowledgement of their usurped *power*, and force them to bow their knees as well as their backs, to their *Baal*-Traytorships,⁵ and patiently take up the burthens their Taskmasters have provided them: Have wee not a blessed Parliament, think you, to damn our souls once every year, by forcing us to take contradicting Oaths? as this is both to the Oaths of Allegiance, Supremacy, Freedome, Obedience, Solemn League and Covenant, Protestations, &c. must we take an Oath one year, and forswear it the next? Is there no God, no Hell, no Wrath, no Judgements, no Damnation, to dehort and scare us from this open perjury? if we cannot beleve this; yet let these Reasons stop us in our Carriere to Hell, lest we perish like the *Gadarenish* Swine,⁶ possessed with a far worse devill, and so run head-long into the vast Sea of Confusion and Ruine. What hath this everlasting Parliament done these eight yeares, but oppresse, rack, and raven on the people, by unheard of Assesments and unsupportable Excise, whereby all conditions of people both rich and poor are involved into irrevocable slavery, being both in lives and estates over-aw'd by the Sword of Arbitrary Usurpers, who at our own charges tyrannize over us? besides, what Trading or Commerce can we expect with Forreign Nations, so long as the Sea is invested with Pyracies and forreigne invasions? whilst the King and the House of Lords are denied their Right, and the common people engaged to assist Tyrants in the wayes of Injustice and Usurpation, who approve not of any settlement of Religion, but make a high-way to all evill Opinions, licentious Profanenesse, illegall Marriages, Blasphemies, Schismes, Errors, and Herefies, and renders us Slaves to a part of a part of the Parliament,⁷ who govern by no other Law but the Sword and their own tyrannicall wills: This me thinkes should move us to keep from this ungodly Engagement; and rather with *Daniel* endure the Lions Den or Prison for a time, then to live slaves for ever; to keep a good Conscience, rather then for slavish feare wrong our King, betray our Countrey, beguile free Parliaments, damne our owne / soules and bodies, by forswearing what we formerly swore, and so mock God and the World; I hope this will be a sufficient caution for all discernable, or rationall men.

At the *Rose* Taverne in *Tower*-street, right against *Barkin*-Church, where the Bishop of *Canterbury* was buried; a knot of Excise-men, Committee-men and Customhouse men and a Colonell of their Army, being revelling and feasting out of the ruines of their native Countrey, were in the midst of all their jollity blown up by Gun-powder at eight a clock at night, with five or six houses and families more; they say the Gun-powder was for the Parliaments Navy, about a hundred persons kill'd and wounded, and all the windows of the Church battered to peeces, and the heads of two or three blowne into the Church-yard; a fearfull example of Gods heavy Judgements: none knowing how the said powder

should take fire; which some would make a plot to take the Tower. This is questionlesse a warning-piece for this wicked City, that hath been long the *Nurse* of Rebellion, and consequently the *Ruiner* of the whole Nation.

The Parliaments new Coyne is now come abroad: it being offered by a Citizen to a Countrey-man; he denied it, and said it was counterfeit; not so, quoth the Citizen, it is the Parliaments Money; then sure, quoth the Countrey-man, the Parliament be most⁸ Colliers and Fidlers, for the *Crosse* is the Colliers Armes, and I think the *Harp* is the Fidlers, at which the Citizen laughed hartily, and bad him read the Superscription, which he did; quoth the Countrey-man, 'tis pretty, but here is one mistake in the *Motto*, and that is a great one, for they have put *God* for the *Devoll*, for in saying *God with us*, it should have beene the *Devoll with us* as may appear by their late horrid action in murdering our King, and robbing and killing one another.

Pride,⁹ and (the yearly Gentlewoman) his Wife, walking the other day in St. *Jamses* Parke; old pusse being something behind her Husband, calls to him; Sweet-heart (quoth she) good Lord what makes our Deere to look so leane?¹⁰ would not some grains fatten them? no Chuck, quoth the Firkin-man; hay shall suffice them: wee'l make King-pies of the fattest Rogues, & let the poor Rascalls alone till they have got more flesh on their backs; but the poore Commons have not the like Liberty, for they are starv'd every day by new Excise: but 'twas *Cromwells* instructions / when he went,¹¹ to make the people as poor as they could, and then they should not want Souldiers nor Money.

Their great Almighty Rebell Generall *Jones*,¹² is gone on an Embassie to *Pluto*, to provide Lodgings for the rest; who so soon as they have finished the great *Worke* of their owne double Damnation, are to march after him; they say he dyed mad, raving and crying out, *the Devill, the Devill, he was damn'd, he was damn'd*; he was buried at *Youghall* a fortnight agoe. The Siege before *Waterford* is for certaine raised, and as I hear thus; Certain Officers in the Towne complied with *Cromwell* for a summe of Money to betray the Towne to him; and at such an houre he was to enter at the Gate on the Northwest side, which was according unto Covenant opened unto him, and three or four Drakes laden with Chain-shot planted at the upper end of the street, blinded with earth, and two Ambuscadoes placed behind them; *Cromwel* no sooner entring, but they fired upon his men, and with a party of foot wheeled about, and fell on him in the reare of his Army, and killed 800 of his men, and tooke many more, as is by good Intelligences reported, scarce forty of his men escaped, and hee himselfe either taken, or mortally wounded; this is the generall report, and if true, will be welcome news to all loyall hearts; yet themselves say by the mouth of *Walker*,¹³ their News-Monger, or Lyar-generall, in his *Parliament Proceedings*, that *Cromwell* is at *Youghall*, at the House of one Mistris *Simmes*; if it be true, Mistris *Simmes* it may be goes to Bull, or else *Walker* deserves to goe againe to the Pillory, for

telling such a notorious lie: yet a while after he sayes, his Noeship is again before *Duncannon*, hath hang'd the Governour thereof, slaine 200, and taken 300 prisoners, with the losse of the Leg of one man on our side; these Parliament lies kill more then their Guns: it seemes strange, he should hang the Governour before he had taken the Towne; but a lye sounds so ridiculous, as you may know it in the telling; and if *Walker* mend not his manners, it is thought he may take the place for the Governour, and be hang'd before him. He desires you to take notice hee is to play *Iack Puddings* part in Sir *Balthazars* Puppet-Play,¹⁴ and those that desire to see him eat his Custard, would send before hand, that room may be kept for them; provided they com before 3 afternoon. *Vivat Bradshaw*. Ald. *Atkins*¹⁵ is desired to com a little before to perfume the roome, because *Walkers* breath so stinks, that it is like to be very offensive to the Ladies and Gentle-women. /

There is a Declaration and Protestation of the Governour and Inhabitants of *Virginia*, which was taken by all, onely some few of the Independent party; it came to my hands by a Captain that came in a *New-England* Ship, which I will give you *verbatim*.

When we do duly consider the late report that hath bin brought in amongst us; That the Schismaticall Faction in England, that walk in the name of Independents, have laid violent hands upon the sacred person of the King, and with horror we report it here, usurped the power & formalitie of lawful Justice, and to depose him, and imbrue their inspious hands more then barbarously in his royal blood, whom the lawes both of God and man hath fenced from us, yea, from account or question by any earthly power; we confesse the villanie of this Act exceeds all or any yet what soever that beares the name of wickedesse, hoping that though the guilt of so superlative a Treason could not refraine their madness, yet the sense of punishment would affright them, which the whole world of men must threaten against such open sinne, so pernicious, as destructive to humanitie it selfe: yet we call to mind, with what a high and desperate hand this viperous brood have carried on their designs, not sparing the most sacred and most precious blood of Gods Anointed to satisfie their Avarice, nay, defying God himselfe, by their open Blasphemies & pernicious Lyes: when we have these things in memorie, our fears surpasse our hopes, [and] may allow us the boldnesse to separate from their master-piece of villanie: and though we have not hitherto received other wayes then a bare Report, and not by a lawfull Information, which only injoyneth a publike notice to be taken thereof, yet doubting, though the Information but slight, yet our silence might argue our allowance or approbation of so horrid a Treason, and give the world occasion to suspect our Loyaltie: To vindicate our selves from so hated an Imputation, we thought it our dutie to publish this our Declaration and Protestation, that we have in detestation of Treason so high and horrid, monstrous, impious and hereticall, according to our Oath, and the many Oathes the Miscreants have taken themselves, that damnable,

Jesuiticall and now Independent doctrine That Princes may be deposed and murdered by their owne subjects.

That with all reall sinceritie we will prosecute such who shall be in our power, and shall be convinced to have bene Actors and consenting or in mind approving so horrid a treason: That we wil never submit to any Commission, Act, or Ordinance, from those that call themselves the Parliament of England, who are said to have usurped / power over the Kings life; but rather trust our selves to the Woods and Mountaines, nay first to the faith of the Turks, or our neighbour Savages,¹⁶ then yield obedience to these perjured Traytors: that in case of the K. death, we do acknowledge the Late Prince of Wales his heire & Lawfull successor, & now to be rightfull King of all his Dominions, and of this Country of Virginia; and that laying aside all other interest of Wife, Children and Estates we will maintaine and defend his Titles to our last blood and latest breath: All this we swear upon the holy Evangelists, and as we do duely and Religiously observe the same so may the blessing in Gods holy Book contained, fall upon us, our wives: and children, and for the breach thereof, may all the Curses in the same Booke be the portion and inheritance for us, our wives, and children. So help us God.

I would that this might be a patterne of Loyaltie, not onely for *New-England*, but for old *England* too.¹⁷

Letters from the *Barbado's* speake, That the Apprentices and servants there (being held to such hard labour and bondage by many Independents who have lately swarmed thither) combined together to set upon their Masters, and cut their throats, but was discovered: The Independents here it seemes have taught a Lesson to servants, and it were but Retaliation, that others should doe to them as they have done to their Liege Lord and Sovereaign here.

Two Ships belonging to the Almighty States of *Westminster*, readie mann'd and victuall'd, I heare are Revolted to the King, and it is hoped more will follow after.

The Newes from *Scotland* is very good: Colonel *King* is landed in the North with 8000 men, and Gen. *Massey* and divers other Commanders with him; and *Montrosse* is still at *Hamborough*,¹⁸ shipping more men in 28 Ships to come after him. A Parliament is to be summoned, and Writs gone out in his Majesties Name, that in all likelyhood will unite all parties there,¹⁹ save those that had a hand in the Kings death. Generall *Levens* souldiers are most for the King. Her Majestie of *Swethland*²⁰ is raising 10000 for *Montrosse*, and will provide pay for them for a yeare. Seven or eight thousand of *Grahams* partie are risen, and joyned with those of *Orkney*. The Lord *Libberton* I heare is returning, fully satisfied from his Majestie.

His Majestie is yet at the Island of *Jersey*; but suddenly takes / his Journey to *Hamborough* to see his *Swedish* and *Danish* forces shipped away. There is some difference between the States of *Holland* and the Prince of *Orange*, about the

States adhering to the Parliament of *England*, and the Prince is likely to prevaile over the States so farre, as to send *Strikeland*²¹ their Agent back with a flea in his eare. The Duke of *Lorraine*, with 2000 horse and 8000 foot are quartered about the *Barsse*, in readinesse to serve the King of *England*. The Jewels that were pawned by her Majestie, are now sold out-right to the States for readie Money, and a great summe of Money rayseed for *Montrosse* his Armie, who is now for *Scotland* with all speed possible. Prince *Ruport* is at *Lisburne*, raying Moneyes by some Prizes.

The *Sickness*, and Warres together, still wastes away the *Bloud-hounds* in their *Irish* Armie, that they still die like sheepe of the Rot; and yet they make their brags, of the Lord and God to troupe amongst them. They would make you beleeve, that the raying their siege before *Duncannon*, and now before *Waterford*, were onely occasioned by weather; but beleeve them and hang them. The Lo: *Inchequin* is with 500 horse and 4000 foot in *Kilmallock*, and the Marquis of *Ormond* is quartered at *Waterford*, *Kilkenny*, and thereabouts: For all their great *Cracks*; and mock-*Victories*, the *Irish* are yet reported to be 15000 at least, and their souldiers most part strong, healthie, and lustie;²² besides *Jones*, there is two more of their Rake-shames dead, *viz.* Colonel *Wolf*, and Scout-Master Generall *Roe*. The *Irish* have taken a strong Castle, callen *Jeviscersy*, within seven miles of *Wexford*, wherein was a garrison of *Cromwells*, and put them every one to the Sword.

A black Committee are to consider this Wednesday, the ninth of *January*, of the Succession of their Bloudie Parliament, and Regulating *Elections*, That no honest man hereafter may be chosen amongst them, least he discover the Knaverie of the rest: as *Wollaston*²³ said when M. *Lilburn* was elected Common-Councelman; That if they took not in such as were ingaged by Purchases of Bishops Lands and Offices, as the rest were, it would go neere to spoyle all: so, it seemes, if the Knaves hold not together, all comes out, and that will bring all about their eares.

Ordered, That no Timber-trees shall be felled in the Forest of *Deane*, and the Iron-works there demolished: it is wel they spare the Trees, they may doe them a courtesie, if the King comes / home, if it be but to make them *Swings*, after their tedious siting. The Ships called the *Prince*, the *Mary*, the *Elizabeth*, and *Royall Sovereigne*, are to be *new dipt*, and call'd the *Cromwell*, the *Fairfax*, the *Pride*, &c. and are to be prepared for Sea-service. In seemes all is not well in the *Straits*; the *Hollander* claimes the Fishing, and Narrow Seas; and some say, hath a Commision from the King, and is setting out a Fleet of about fortie Sayle of Ships.

A fearefull Comet was seene lately at *Dublin*, that much affrightned *Hewson*²⁴ the Cobler, and had almost brought him to his *Last*: it was all *Dublin* over as light as if there had beene many Torches placed in the streets: it shot twice in the manner of *Granadoes*, once into the River, and once into the Citie, burning

and bruising some; which make them thinke there, that it bodes no good unto their Army, nor Almighty *Cromwell*, who carryes a more ominous Comet on his Nose.²⁵

The North and West Countries utterly denie to signe this ungodly Ingagement; and say, they will endure all torments, imprisonments, and cruelties, that can be inflicted, rather then to ingage in so wicked and ungodly a Designe.

The *Man in the Moone* is still bark'd at, and hunted after by their *Beagles*; it is his comfort, that he yet scapes their *Traps* and *Ginnes*: each Moone-shine night they stare upwards, as if they would eat him alive; but he is out of their *Gun-shot*, and little feares their envie: he hath but a mortall fraile body for them, if they should catch him; but if he had one free from all the Diseases and Casualties that attend fraile Mortalitie, and it were at his dispose to live as long as *Methusalem*²⁶ in all riches and worldly prosperitie; he would lay downe his life for the Cause he maintaines as willingly as ever he did his body into his Nuptiall Bed, and will rather expose himselfe to all Miseries of Hunger, Cold, Imprisonment, yea, Hanging, Drawing, and Quartering, then betray the Cause of God, his King, and Countrey: They can but kill my Body, my soule I trust they have no power over, and that findes free accesse to the upper House of Heaven, and there Petitions against their Murther, Bloud, and Tyrannie.

*They cannot prosper long by their Ambition,
But will fall headlong to their owne perdition.*

FINIS.

Abiezer Coppe, *A Fiery Flying Roll: A Word from the Lord to all the Great Ones of the Earth, whom this may Concerne: Being the Last Warning Piece at the Dreadfull day of Judgement* (London, 1649), title page, preface, contents, pp. 1–5. Wing, C6087.

A Fiery Flying Roll:

A

Word from the Lord to all the Great Ones
of the Earth, whom this may concerne: Being the
last WARNING PIECE at the dreadfull day of
JUDGEMENT.¹

For now the LORD is come

to $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} 1 \text{ Informe} \\ 2 \text{ Advise and warne} \\ 3 \text{ Charge} \\ 4 \text{ Judge and sentence} \end{array} \right\}$ the Great Ones.

As also most compassionately informing, and most lovingly and
pathetically advising and warning *London*.

With a terrible Word and fatall Blow from the LORD, upon the
Gathered CHURCHES.

And all by his Most Excellent MAJESTY, dwelling in, and shining through
AUXILIUM PATRIS, $\eta\kappa$ alias, *Coppe*.

With another FLYING ROLL ensuing (to all the Inhabitants of the Earth.) The
Contents of both following.

Isa. 23.9, *The Lord of Hosts (is) staining the pride of all glory, and bringing into con-
tempt all the honourable (persons and things) of the Earth.*

*O London, London, how would I gather thee, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her
wings, &c.*

Know thou (in this thy day) the things that belong to thy Peace –

*I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jewes, and are not, but are the Syna-
gogue of Satan, Rev. 2.9.*

Imprinted at *London*, in the beginning of that notable day, wherein the secrets of all hearts
are laid open; and wherein the worst and foulest of villanies, are discovered, under the best
and fairest outsides. 1649. /

THE PREFACE.

An inlet into the Land of Promise, the new *Hierusalem*; and a gate into the ensuing Discourse, worthy of serious consideration.

My Deare One.

All or None.

Every one under the Sunne.

Mine own.

My most Excellent Majesty² (in me) hath strangely and variously transformed this forme.

And behold, by mine owne Almightynesse (In me) I have been changed in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the sound of the Trump.

And now the Lord is descended from Heaven, with a shout, with the voyce of the Arch-angell, and with the Trump of God.

And the sea, the earth, yea all things are now giving up their dead. And all things that ever were, are, or shall be visible – are the Grave wherein the King of Glory (the eternall, invisible Almightynesse, hath lain as it were) dead and buried.

But behold, behold, he is now risen with a witnesse, to save *Zion* with vengeance, or to confound and plague all things into himself; who by his mighty Angell is proclaiming (with a loud voyce) That Sin and Transgression is finished and ended; and everlasting righteousnesse brought in; and the everlasting Gospell preaching; Which everlasting Gospell is brought in with most terrible earthquakes, and heaven-quakes, and with signes and wonders following. *Amen* /

And it hath pleased my most Excellent Majesty, (who is universall love, and whose service is perfect freedome) to set this forme (the Writer of this Roll) as no small signe and wonder in fleshly *Israel*; as you may partly see in the ensuing Discourse.

And now (my deare ones!) every one under the Sun, I will onely point at the gate, thorow which I was led into that new City, new *Hierusalem*; and to the Spirits of just men, made perfect, and to God the Judge of all.

First, all my strength, my forces were utterly routed, my house I dwelt in fired, my father and mother forsook me, the wife of my bosome loathed me, mine old name was rotted, perished; and I was utterly plagued, consumed, damned, rammed, and sunke into nothing, into the bowels of the still Eternity (my mothers wombe) out of which I came naked, and whetherto I returned again naked. And lying a while there, rapt up in silence at length (the body or outward forme being awake all this while) I heard with my outward eare (to my apprehension) a most terrible thunderclap, and after that a second. And upon the second thunder-clap, which was exceeding terrible, I saw a great body of light, like the light of the Sun, and red as fire, in the forme of a drum (as it were) whereupon with,

exceeding trembling and amazement on the flesh, and with joy unspeakable in the spirit, I clapt my hands, and cryed out, *Amen, Halelujab, Halelujab, Amen.* And so lay trembling, sweating, and smoking (for the space of half an houre) at length with a loud voyce (I inwardly) cryed out, Lord, what wilt thou do with me, my most excellent majesty and eternail glory (in me) answered & sayd, Fear not, I will take thee up into mine everlasting Kingdom. But thou shalt (first) drink / a bitter cup, a bitter cup, a bitter cup; whereupon (being filled with exceeding amazement) I was throwne into the belly of hell (and take what you can of it in these expressions, though the matter is beyond expression) I was among all the Devils in hell, even in their most hideous hew.

And under all this terrour, and amazement, there was a little spark of transcendent, transplendent, unspeakable glory which survived, and sustained it self, triumphing, exulting, and exalting it self above all the Fiends. And confounding the very blacknesse of darknesse (you must take it in these tearmes, for it is infinitely beyond expression.) Upon this the life was taken out of the body (for a season) and it was thus resembled, as if a man with a great brush dipt in whiting, should with one stroke wipe out, or sweep off a picture upon a wall, &c. after a while, breath and life was returned into the form againe; whereupon I saw various streames of light (in the night) which appeared to the outward eye; and immediately I saw three hearts (or three appearances) in the form of hearts, of exceeding brightnesse; and immediately an innumerable company of hearts, filling each corner of the room where I was. And me thoughts there was variety and distinction, as if there had been severall hearts, and yet most strangely and unexpressibly complicated or folded up in unity. I clearly saw distinction, diversity, variety, and as clearly saw all swallowed up into unity. And it hath been my song many times since, within and without, unity, universality, universality, unity, Eternall Majesty, &c. And at this vision, a most strong, glorious voyce uttered these words, *The spirits of just men made perfect.*³ the spirits &c. with whom I had as absolute, cleare, full communion, and in a two fold more familiar / way, then ever I had outwardly with my dearest friends, and nearest relations. The visions and revelations of God, and the strong hand of eternall invisible almightinesse, was stretched out upon me, within me, for the space of foure days and nights, without intermission.

The time would faile if I would tell you all, but it is not the good will and pleasure of my most excellent Majesty in me, to declare any more (as yet) then thus much further: That amongst those various voyces that were then uttered within, these were some, *Blood, blood, Where, where? upon the hypocriticall holy heart, &c.* Another thus, *Vengeance, vengeance, vengeance, Plagues, plagues, upon the Inhabitants of the earth; Fire, fire, fire, Sword, sword, &c. upon all that bow not down to eternall Majesty, universall love; I'le recover, recover, my wooll, my flax,*

my money. Declare, declare, feare thou not the faces of any; I am (in thee) a munition of Rocks, &c.

Go up to *London*,* to *London*, that great City, write, write, write. And behold I writ, and lo a hand was sent to me, and a roll of a book was therein, which this fleshly hand would have put wings to, before the time. Whereupon it was snatcht out of my hand, & the Roll thrust into my mouth; and I eat it up, and filled my bowels with it, (*Eze. 2.8. &c. cha. 3.I, 2, 3.*) where it was as bitter as worm-wood; and it lay broiling, and burning in my stomach, till I brought it forth in this forme.

And now I send it flying to thee, with my heart, *And all*

Per AUXILIUM PATRIUS. ... /

CHAP. 1.

Containing severall strange, yet true and seasonable Informations, to the great ones.

As also an apologeticall hint, of the Authors Principle, standing in the front. —

1. Thus saith the Lord, *I inform you, that I overturn, overturn, overturn.* And as the Bishops, *Charles*, and the Lords, have had their turn, overturn, so your turn shall be next (ye surviving great ones) by what Name or Title soever dignified, or distinguished) who ever you are, that oppose me, the Eternall God, who am UNIVERSALL Love, and whose service is perfect freedome, and pure Libertinisme. /

2 *But afore I proceed any further, be it known to you, That although that excellent Majesty, which dwels in the Writer of this Roule, hath reconciled ALL THINGS to himselfe, yet this hand (which now writes) never drew sword, or shed one drop of any mans blood. [I am free from the blood of all men] though (I say) all things are reconciled to me, the eternall God (IN HIM) yet sword levelling, or digging-levelling, are neither of them his principle.

Both are as farre from his principle, as the East is from the West, or the Heavens from the Earth, (though, I say, reconciled to both, as to all things else) and though he hath more justice, righteousnesse, truth, and sincerity, shining in those low dunghils, (as they are esteemed) then in the Sunne, Moone, and all the Stars.

3 I come not forth (in him) either with materiall sword, or Mattock,⁴ but now (in this my day ____) I make him my Swordbearer, to brandish the Sword of the Spirit, as he hath done severall dayes and nights together, thorow the streets of the great City.

*It not being shewen to me, what I should do, more then preach and print something, &c. very little expecting I should be so strangely acted, as to (my exceeding joy and delight) I have been, though to the utter cracking of my credit, and to the rotting of my old name which is dammed, and cast out (as a toad to the dung-hill) that I might have a new name, with me, upon me, within me, which is, I am

* An Apologeticall hint concerning the Authors Principle, the result is negative; hee speaks [illeg.] in the affirmative because not one in a hundred, yea even of his former acquaintance, now know him, neither must they yet.

4 And now thus saith the Lord:

Though you can as little endure the word LEVELLING, as could the late slaine or dead *Charles* (your forerunner, who is gone before you⁵ _____) and had as live heare the Devill named, as heare of the Levellers (Man-Levellers) which is, and who (indeed) are but shadowes of most terrible, yet great and glorious good things to come.

5 Behold, behold, behold, I the eternall God, the Lord of Hosts, who am that mighty Leveller, am comming (yea even at the doores) to Levell in good earnest, to Levell to some purpose, to Levell with a witness, to Levell the Hills with the Valleyes, and to lay the Mountaines low.

6 High Mountaines! lofty Cedars! its high time for you to enter into the Rocks, and to hide you in the dust, for feare of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majesty. For the lofty looks of man shall be humbled, and the haughtinesse of men shall be bowed downe, and the Lord ALONE shall be exalted in that day; For the day of the Lord of Hoasts, shall be upon every one that is proud, and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up, and he shall be brought low. And upon all the Cedars of *Lebanon*, that / are high and lifted up, and upon all the Oaks of *Bashan*;⁶ and upon all the high Mountaines; and upon all the Hills that are lifted up, and upon every high Tower, and upon every fenced Wall; and upon all the Ships of *Tarshish*,⁷ and upon all pleasant Pictures.

And the LOFTINESSE of men shall be bowed down, and the haughtinesse of men shall be laid low. And the Lord ALONE shall be exalted in that day, and the Idols he shall utterly abolish.

And they shall go into the holes of the Rocks, and into the Caves of the Earth, for scare of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majesty, when he ariseth to shake terribly the earth.

In that day a man shall cast his Idols of Silver, and Idols of Gold _____ to the bats, and to the Moles. To go into the Clefs of the Rocks and into the tops of the ragged Rocks, for feare of the Lord, and for the glory of his Majesty. For the Lord is now RISEN to shake terribly the Earth, *Isa.* 2.10 to the end of the Chapter.

7 Hill! Mountains! Cedars! Mighty men! Your breath is in your nostrils.

Those that have admired, adored, idolized, magnified, set you up, fought for you, ventured goods, and good name; limbe and life for you, shall cease from you.

You shall not (at all be accounted of (not one of you) ye sturdy Oake) who bowe not downe before eternall Majesty: Universall Love, whose service is perfect freedome, and who hath put down the mighty (remember, remember your fore-runner) and who is putting down the mighty from their seats; and exalting them of low degree.

8 Oh let not, (for your owne sakes) let not the mother of Harlots⁸ in you, who is very subtle of heart.

Nor the Beast (without you) what do you call 'em The Ministers, fat parsons, Vicars, Lecturers, &c. who (for their owne base ends, to maintaine their pride, and pompe, and to fill their owne pauncher, and purses) have been the chiefe instruments of all those horrid abominations, hellish, cruell, devilish persecutions, in this Nation which cry for vengeance. For your owne sakes (I say) let neither the one, nor the other bewitch you, or charme your eares, to heare them say, these things shall not befall / you, these Scriptures shall not be fulfilled upon you, but upon the Pope, Turke, and Heathen Princes, &c.

9 Or if any of them should (through subtilty for their owne base ends) creep into the Mystery of that forementioned* Scripture. And tell you, Those words are to be taken in the Mystery only; and they onely point out a spirituall, inward levelling (once more, for your owne sikes, I say) believe them not.

Isay 2

10 'Tis true, the History, or Letter, (I speake comparatively) is but as it were haire-cloth; the Mystery is fine Flax. My flax, saith the Lord, and the Thief and the Robber will steale from me my flax, to cover his nakednesse, that his filthinesse may not appeare. But behold, I am (now) recovering my flax out of his hands and discovering his lewdnesse – *verbum sat* –

11 'Tis true, the Mystery is my joy, my delight, my life.

And the Prime levelling, is laying low the Mountains, and levelling the Hills in man.

But this is not all.

For lo I come (saith the Lord) with a vengeance, to levell also your Honour, Riches, &c. to staine the pride of all your glory, and to bring into contempt all the Honourable (both persons and things) upon the earth, Isa. 23.9.

12 For this Honour, Nobility, Gentility, Propriety, Superfluity, &c. hath (without contradiction) been the Father of hellish horrid pride, arrogance, haughtinesse, loftinesse, murder, malice, of all manner of wickednesse and impiety; yea the cause of all the blood that ever hath been shed, from the blood of righteous *Abell*, to the blood of the last Levellers that were shot to death.⁹ *And now (as I live saith the Lord) I am come to make inquisition for blood; for murder and pride, &c.*

13 I see the root of it all *The Axe is laid to the root of the Tree* (by the Eternall God, *My Self, saith the Lord*) *I will hew it down.* And as I live, I will plague your Honour, Pompe, Greatnesse, Superfluity, and confound it into parity, equality, community; that the neck of horrid pride, murder, malice, and tyranny, &c. may be chopt off at one blow. And that my selfe, the Eternall God, who am Universall Love, may fill the Earth with universall love, universall peace, and perfect freedome; which / can never be by humane sword or strength accomplished.

14 Wherefore bow downe, bow downe, you sturdy Oakes, and tall Cedars; bow, or by my self Ile break you.

Ile cause some of you (on whom I have compassion) to bow &c. and will terribly plague the rest.

My little finger shall be heavier on them, then my whole loynes were on *Pharaoh* of old.

15 And maugre¹⁰ the subtilty, and sedulity, the craft and cruelty of hell, and earth: this Levelling shall up.

Not by sword; we (holily) scorne to fight for any thing; we had as live be dead drunk every day of the weeke, and lye with whores i'th market place, and account these as good actions as taking the poore abused, enslaved ploughmans money from him (who is almost every where undone, and squeezed to death; and not so much as that plaguy, unsupportable, hellish burden, and oppression, of Tythes taken off his shoulders, notwithstanding all his honesty, fidelity, Taxes, Freequarter, petitioning &c. for the same,) we had rather starve, I say, then take away his money from him, for killing of men.

Nay, if we might have Captains pay, and a good fat Parsonage or two besides, we would scorne to be swordsmen, or fight with those (mostly) carnall weapons, for any thing, or against any one, or for our livings.

16 No, no, wee'l live in despite of our foes; and this levelling (to thy torment, O mighty man) shall up, not by sword, not by might, &c. but by my Spirit, saith the Lord.

For I am risen, for I am risen, for I am risen, to shake terribly the earth,¹¹ and not the earth onely, but the heavens also, &c.

But here I shall cease informing you.

You may for your further information (if you please) reade my Roule to all the rich Inhabitants of the earth.

Reade it if you be wise, I shall now advice you.¹²

Die Veneris, 1 Februarii, 1649 (1650). Wing, E2295.

*Die Veneris, 1 Februarii, 1649.*¹

Several Passages in a Book printed, entituled, *A fiery flying Roll*, composed by one *Coppe*, were this day Read.

Resolved by the Parliament, That the Book entituled, *A fiery flying Roll, &c.* composed by one *Coppe*, doth contain in it many horrid Blasphemies, and damnable and detestable Opinions, to be abhorred by all good and godly people.

Ordered by the Parliament, That the Book entituled, *A fiery flying Roll, &c.* composed by one *Coppe*, and all the printed Copies thereof, be burnt by the hand of the Hangman, at the New Pallace-Yard at *Westminster*, the Exchange, in Cheapside, and at the Marketplace in *Southwark*.

Ordered by the Parliament, That the Lord Major and Sheriffs of *London* and *Middlesex*, be enjoyned and required to take care that the same be done in the places aforesaid within their respective Liberties; And that the Bailey² of *Southwark* be enjoyned and required to take care the same be done in *Southwark* accordingly.

Ordered by the Parliament, That the Sergeant at Arms do forthwith cause diligent search to be made in all places, where any of the said Blasphemous Books, entituled, *A fiery flying Roll, &c.* composed by one *Coppe*, are or may be suspected to be, and to seize them, and cause the same to be burnt at the places appointed; And that all persons who have any of the said Books in their custody, do cause the same to be burnt at the places aforesaid.

Ordered by the Parliament, That all Majors, Sheriffs and Justices of Peace in the severall Counties, Cities and Towns within this Commonwealth, be required to seize all the said Books in all places where they shall be found, and cause the same to be forthwith burnt by the hand of the publique Hangman.

Die Veneris, 1 Februarii, 1649.

Ordered by the Parliament, That these Orders be forthwith printed and published.

Hen: Scobell, Cleric. Parliamenti.

London, Printed by *Edward Husband* and *John Field*, Printers to the Parliament of *England*. 1649.

Die Veneris, 8 Martii, 1649 (1650). Wing, M2271.*Die Veneris, 8 Martii, 1649.¹*

Mr. *Millington* Reports from the Committee of Plundred Ministers, the matter of Fact touching the Book entituled, *The Doctrine of the Fourth Commandment deformed by Popery, reformed and restored to its Primitive Purity, &c.* And the examination of *Augustine Nicholas*, Servant to *Gartrude Dawson*, Printer of the said Book for *James Oakeford*; and the examination of *John Hide*.

Resolved by the Parliament,

That this Book (entituled, *The Doctrine of the Fourth Commandment deformed by Popery, reformed and restored to its Primitive Purity, &c.*) ascerting the observation of the Jewish Sabbath, and condemning the observation of the Lords day as the Christian Sabbath, is Erroneous, Scandalous and Prophane, contrary to the practice of the Apostles, and of all the Christian Churches.

Resolved by the Parliament,

That all the Printed Copies of the said Books be burnt; And that the Marshal be required to do the same at the Exchange and in Cheap-side.

Resolved by the Parliament,

That all Printed Copies of the said Book, wheresoever they shall be found in *England* or *Wales*, shall be brought to the Chief Magistrate of the place where the same shall be found, who is hereby required and enjoyned to cause the same to be burnt accordingly.

Hen: Scobell, Cleric. Parliamenti.

London, Printed by *Edward Husband* and *John Field*, Printers to the Parliament of *England*, 1649.

To the Honourable, the Commons Assembled in Parliament
([London], 1650). Wing, T1430.

To the Honourable, the *Commons* assembled in PARLIAMENT.¹

The Humble Petition of divers well-affected People inhabiting in the Cities of London and Westminster, the Borough of Southwark, Hamblets and Places adjacent Promoters and approvers of the Petition of the 11 of September, 1648.

Sheweth, That if it be altogether uncomfortable to say unto the naked and destitute of daily food, be you warmed and filled, when nothing is given needful for the body, how extreemly grievous would it be to say unto such, ye are warmed, ye are filled, when their cold and hunger is increased; but nothing ministred for sustentation.

And yet except we should stifle our Consciences, betray the truth, and by a sinful silence, even break our hearts; we cannot but attest and bear witnes, that, of this sad and woful nature is our misery.

For how uncomfortable, yea, what torment of spirit, must it necessarily be to a people that have done and suffered so much and so many several kinds of afflictions, for recovery of our Native Liberties, and for redress of grievances, not only to be frustrated in all our hopes, and to be deprived of them by those who can and ought in Conscience to restore the one, and to redress the other, (being obliged thereunto by all possible tyes both to God and Man,) but to be born down continually, by private and publick discourses, (yea, and to have it dangerous for any to deny) that we are a free people, that we have injoyed the first,² and that this is the second year³ of *Englands* Liberty, when *God* he knoweth, we find and feel the contrary: our just fundamental Liberties, being never more invaded and restrained, our burthens never more grievous, and which maketh them ten fold more grievous: our very groans, sighes and complaints (of late) meet with no relief, but are attended with threats, bonds, imprisonments, yea death it self; a condition sufficient to distract us, but that *God*, we trust, supports us for better things, in dread of whose awful and glorious name, we dare neither by speech nor silence call good evil, nor evil good; we dare not say, our Liberties are restored, or our grievances as yet redressed.

And although there are a sort of men, formerly full of complaints, for want of those Liberties, and frequent in *Petitions* for them, whose mouthes being since stop't with Offices and employment of gain, Honour, or domination, or by relations to such as have them, that are not only silent themselves, as to any complaint now, but make it their works to suppress and silence all others, and to boast of the happiness and freedom of these sad times; yet the woful lamentations of well

minded people, throughout the Land, bear witness against them; and the things themselves bear witness against them, and against all such unchristian delusions: We judge our selves bound in Conscience, to bear our witness perpetually, though 10000 High Courts of Justice (those new *English Monsters*;) were set up to terrifie or devoure us, chusing rather to suffer for a cause so evidently righteous, then to enjoy the pleasures of corruption, for a season;⁴ and it will be good that all such mockers, remember that it will be bitterness in the latter end.

And that it may not be said unto us, as it was to the over-grieved *Israelites*, ye are idle, ye are idle, or that we intend to asperse or scandalize *Authority*, (a hard measure we frequently meet withall.) In the bowels of *Christ Jesus* we beseech you, bear with us in comparing times with times, and the things of the former times of bondage, with the present; so much cryed up, for Liberty and Freedom.

And surely it will be found, and cannot be denied, that if it were a breach of known liberty, and a sore grievance that any Laws should be made, or Customs brought in, contrary to our Native Liberties contained in *Magna Charta*:⁵ such being null and void in themselves, and not to be obeyed, though made in full *Parliament*: (as appeareth in the case of *Empson* and *Dudley*)⁶ how exceeding grievous must the late Act declaring what shall be treason,⁷ that for unlicensed *Printing*,⁸ and that for erecting the High Court of Justice, &c. appear in these times; was imprisonment for debt, confest by all to be an incroachment upon our just Right? and is it not lamentable, it should be continued to the ruine of the poorer, and to the sheltering of the richer sort of debtors, as it is known to be? was it grievous, that all men were made liable to be attached by *Pursevants*, to be adjudged, fined, imprisoned, by the Councel-board[,] High Commission and *Star-Chamber*, without being tryed by *Juries*, to be examined against themselves, and imprisoned in illegal Prisons, and remote Castles, and there to be most barbarously abused? And doth not the same dealing from a continued *Parliament*, a *Council of State* and *Committees*, executed by *Messengers*, and *Souldiers* too, violently hauling and terrifying people, prove much more grievous? If Tythes were then a burthen to the industrious and conscientious, is it not much heavier now, being exacted upon treble damages? If Customs then were accounted an unreasonable burthen, destructive to traffique and navigation, can they be less, being required with more strictness and severity? If Patents and Projects, and Ship-money, were intolerable burthens and grievances: how much more burthensome and destructive to Trade, is the Excise and the perplexities thereon depending to all *Trades-men*, and consequently to all industrious people? If the great number of Officers belonging to the *High Commission*[,] *Star-Chamber*[,] *Councel-board*, to *Pattentees*, *Projectors*, *Bishops*, *Courts*, and the like, bred and fostered an interest against the common freedom of the People, to their excessive charge and trouble: all such being arguers for arbitrary power, and maintained by the sweat

of other mens browes, is it not so and much more, by those many employed about *Customs, Excise*, and in *Committees*: in so much, as men can hardly say any thing, or discourse together, for fear of being insnared in their words by some of them? If it were then deemed most injurious, to make it dangerous to mention a *Parliament*: is it not most lamentable, that it should be now as dangerous to move for a new *Parliament*, after so long continuance, and so many grievances unremoved? If Conscience then were oppressed by Oaths of Allegiance and supremacy is not the enforcement of the *Engagement* upon penalty of being out-law'd, a greater grievance? If Conscience in divine worship were free only to some, is not its freedom restrained now? or should we for that one part of our just freedom, sell all the rest of our *Birth-right*, (*God* forbid) and the liberty of *Printing* more restrained, (except to books maintaining the most tyranous principles as the Book entituled, *The Case of the Common-wealth of England stated*,⁹ and the like, which to the shame of these times were freely licenced.¹⁰ If those times were judged of cruelty, in censuring men to be whipt, gag'd, and pillor'd, for small or verbal things; how can that time escape that makes the like verbal things Capital as is evident in many Acts of this *Parliament*? If it were deemed of dangerous consequence, that almost all *Officers & Magistrates* both civil & military, as *Judges, Sheriffs, and Justices, &c.* were not chosen in a free way by the People, (as by right they ought) but were chosen and imposed by the *Court*, thereby to incline all men and things to the bent of one particular party or Interest, rather then to the impartial good of all, is it not as prejudicial to be so now? If monopolizing of the principal Marchandizes of the Nation by Companies, were then esteemed a most pernicious evil, they remain still much after the same manner, and so also do Law-sutes, and all proceedings in Law, continue as full of tedious chargable perplexities as ever, and the numbers of *Lawyers, Attorneys, Solicitors, Goalers*, and their *Officers*, all feeding themselves fat, as the other *Officers* forementioned) by the spoyles of the distressed, never more countenanced, yea, 1000. pounds a peece *per annum*, added to the *Judges* above their ordinary Fees, which alone was formerly accounted a large proportion, and great preferment. If tryals by extraordinary packt *Commissions* of *Oyer* and *Terminer*, and *Tryals* by *Court-Martials*, (though of loose and dissolute people) were esteemed utterly destructive to the Lives & Liberties of the People, (as appeareth by the *Petition of Right*,) are not those kinds of *Tryals* more frequent now, or can any thing exceed in dangerous *Tryals* by *High Courts* of *Justice*, a *Court* against which no legal defence or privilege is permitted, it being to be admired, that in times pretending liberty, there should be found persons to serve in such a *Court*. If these are the effects of Freedom, then are we free indeed, but if they are, we have lost our understandings. If then be considered the manifold miseries accompanying these ten years strife for liberty, as decay of *Trade*, excessive *Taxes*, *Poverty* and *War*: to supply which, a new and never before heard of grievance is added, as the loss of Servants and

Children, through a liberty given them, to betake themselves to Arms, though against their *Master* or *Parents* liking, to the impoverishment of whole *Families*, and to the unexpressible grief of many tender-hearted *Fathers* and *Mothers*. And then if the *Parliaments Declarations* in behalf of *Magna Charta*, and the *Petition of Right*, with all things concerning *Life, Limb, Liberty*, and *Estate*, be duly weighed, and after them, those of the *Army*, manifesting a most deep sense of the long suffering of the Nation, for want thereof: would it not pierce and grieve the most hard and stony heart, that yet all things should remain in this woful condition, as is evident they now do? And that through discontents, divisions, and distractions, arising from so continued an unsettlement, and the presumption of enemies thereupon, a War should frequently be threatned within the bowels of the Land, (as more then once hath been seen) and that a more dangerous one then any yet is now already begun,¹¹ and yet no regard taken for the real restoration of our liberties, or redress either of old or new grievances, (the only means of reconciliation) but in place thereof, all mouthes are stopt with the meer Title of a free *Common-wealth*, and of a free people, to the heightening of all discontents, and withholding from the Army the assistance of thousands of zealous cordial people, that upon the real (but not verbal) restoration to just Liberties, and the real redress of those known grievances, would readily assist them.

And therefore as you tender the preservation of *Parliaments*, from utter annihilation, (a thing much to be feared upon prevalence of an Enemy, which *God* defend) the supply and recruit of this Army, the speedy ending of this most threatning War, as you regard the end for which the people chose you, or that for which the Army reserved you; when they excluded the greater number of your own Members: as you regard you own safeties, or that which is above all the known will of God in the keeping of a good Conscience, and performance of all your promises and vowes, made in his all-seeing presence: We beg and beseech you for the tender mercies of *Christ*, that you will be pleased instantly to make a plenary restoration to our fundamental liberties, and really redress all the grievances forementioned; and for a clear pledge of your full purpose therein, that you will immediatly and for ever abolish the High Court of *Justice*, (that *Serpent* ready with open mouth to devoute us: and from which, none can be safe, whilst treacherous Informers can be found) and to null all things and proceedings appertaining thereunto, as a Plant, which our fore Fathers never planted, but would have ventured all they had willingly, to have rooted out any jurisdiction of so forraign a breed, so expresly opposite to all *English* Liberties, as is manifest by what trouble and danger they under went in all former times.

But if so be the whole work be too hard for you, or that you cannot agree therein, before the War growes to fast upon you; We beseech you then to remember the humble *Petition* and advice of his *Excellency* and Council of Officers, the 20 of *Jan.* 1649¹² with those other *Petitions* to the same effect, concerning the

way of settlement by an agreement of the People, and that you will be pleased to give countenance and protection to all peaceable people, in entering into such an agreement as themselves shall judge most effectual to their own safety, Freedom and well-being, and whereby they may set such express bounds and limits, to all kinds of Authorities, so restore and establish their fundamental Liberties, and so unrevocably remove their burthens, and redress their grievances, as shall not be in the power of future Authorities or persons (without certainty of punishment) to supplant the one, or to re-impose the other; and this work we trust in God, you will freely encourage, having acknowledged by your votes, the People to be the original power, from whom all just Authorities are derived, which were unavailable, if you should (which *God* forbid) withhold them from exercising the same, in a work wherein they are so nearly concerned: and which once effected, would render the Nation absolutely free, (not in word only) but in deed and in truth, to the exceeding joy of your humble, (but as yet grieved *Petitioners*, and of all well-minded people) restore it to much more unity within it self, and so, would become more formidable to all sorts of Enemies, your labours would be exceedingly abated. And in countenancing so just, so due a work, would bring great Honour to God, Peace, Freedom, and prosperity to the *Common-Wealth*, be at rest in your own Consciences, guarded by the cordial voluntary¹³ affection of the People, whilst you live here, and remain as a sweet favor to all Posterity. And thus as faithful Witnesses to the *Truth*, and in behalf of the Nations just Rights, we have discharged our Consciences, referring the issue and our selves wholly to *God*, whom we continually worship in *spirit* and in *truth*; and before whose righteous judgement we must all one day appear: and therefore although for *the Truths sake*, our portion in this life should be scofs, reproaches, afflictions, poverty, imprisonment, or Death: We have chosen it, rather then at that great and terrible day of the Lord, to have our portion with the *Hypocrite*, or that our Consciences should then testify against us, that we have made lyes our refuge.

*This is printed only for the better gathering of Subscriptions,
'tis desired you Would make no other use of it.*¹⁴

‘An Act Against several Atheistical, Blasphemous and Execrable Opinions, Derogatory to the Honor of God, and Destructive to Humane Society’ (London: Edward Husband and John Field, 1650). ESTC, R212947.

AN ACT

Against several
Atheistical, Blasphemous and Execrable

OPINIONS,

Derogatory to the
Honor of God,
And destructive to
HUMANE SOCIETY.¹

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Die Veneris, 9 Augusti, 1650.

Ordered by the Parliament, That this Act be forthwith printed and published.

Hen: Scobell, Cleric. Parliamenti.

*London, Printed by Edward Husband and John Field, Printers
to the Parliament of England, 1650. /*

AN ACT
Against several
Atheistical, Blasphemous and Execrable
OPINIONS

Derogatory to the Honor of God, and destructive to Humane Society.

The Parliament holding it to be their Duty, by all good ways and means to propagate the Gospel in this Commonwealth, To advance Religion in all Sincerity, Godliness and honesty; have made several Ordinances & Laws for the good and furtherance of Reformation, in Doctrine and Maners, and in order to the suppressing of Prophaneness, Wickedness, Superstition and Formality, that God may be truly glorified, and all might in well doing be encouraged. But notwithstanding it is their care, finding to their great grief and astonishment, that there are divers men and women who have lately discovered themselves to be most monstrous in their Opinions, and loose in all wicked and abominable Practices hereafter mentioned, not onely to the notorious corrupting and disordering, but even to the dissolution of all Humane Society; who rejecting the use of any Gospel Ordinances, do deny the necessity of Civil and Moral Righteousness among men: The Parliament therefore, according to their published Declaration of the Twenty seventh of September, One thousand six hundred forty nine, To be most ready to testifie their displeasure and abhorrency of such Offenders, by a strict and effectual proceeding against them, who should abuse and turn into Licentiousness, the liberty given in matters of Conscience, Do therefore Enact and Ordain, and be it Enacted and Ordained by the Authority of this present Parliament, That all and every person and persons (not distempered with Sickness, or distracted in Brain) who shall presume avowedly in words to profess, or shall by writing proceed to affirm and maintain him or her self, or any other meer Creature, to be very² God; or to be Infinite or Almighty, or in Honor, Excellency, Majesty and Power to be Equal, and the same with the true God; Or that the true God, or the Eternal Majesty, dwells in the Creature and no where else; Or whosoever shall deny the Holiness and Righteousness of God; or shall presume as aforesaid to profess, That Unrighteousness in persons, or the acts of Uncleanness, Prophane Swearing, Drunkenness, and the like Filthiness and Brutishness, are not unholy and forbidden in the Word of God; or that these acts in any person, or the persons for committing them, are approved of by God; or that such acts, or such persons in those things,

are like unto God: Or whosoever shall presume as aforesaid to profess, That these acts of Denying and Blaspheming God, or the Holiness or Righteousness of God; or the acts of Cursing God, or of Swearing prophanely or falsly by the Name of God; or the acts of Lying, Stealing, Couzening and Defrauding others; or the acts of Murther, Adultery, Incest, Fornication, Uncleaness, Sodomy, Drunkenness, / filthy and lascivious Speaking, are not things in themselves shameful, wicked, sinful, impious, abominable and detestable in any person, or to be practised or done by any person or persons: Or shall as aforesaid profess, That the acts of Adultery, Drunkenness, Swearing, and the like open Wickedness, are in their own nature as holy and Righteous as the Duties of Prayer, Preaching, or giving of Thanks to God: Or whosoever shall avowedly as aforesaid profess, That whatsoever is acted by them (whether whoredom, Adultery, Drunkenness, or the like open wickedness[]), may be committed without sin; or that such acts are acted by the true God, or by the Majesty of God, or the Eternity that is in them; That heaven and all happiness consists in the acting of those things which are Sin and Wickedness; or that such Men or Women are most perfect, or like to God or Eternity, which do commit the greatest Sins with least remorse or sense; or that there is no such thing really and truly as Unrighteousness, Unholiness or Sin, but as a man or woman judgeth thereof; or that there is neither Heaven nor Hell, neither Salvation nor Damnation, or that these are one and the same thing, and that there is not any distinction or difference truly between them; All and every person or persons so avowedly professing, maintaining or publishing as aforesaid, the aforesaid Atheistical, Blasphemous or Execrable Opinions, or any of them; upon complaint and proof made of the same in any the cases aforesaid, before any one or more Justice or Justices of Peace, Major,³ or other Head-Officer of any City or Town Corporate, by the Oath of two or more Witnesses (which Oath the said Justice or Justices and Head-Officer have hereby power to administer / in all the cases aforesaid) or Confession of the said persons, the party so convicted or confessing, shall be by the said Justice or Justices, of other Head-Officer committed to Prison, or to the House of Correction, for the space of six Moneths without Bail or Mainprize, and until he or she shall have put in sufficient Sureties to be of Good Behaviour for the space of one whole year: And if any person or persons so convicted as aforesaid, shall at any time afterwards avowedly profess, maintain or publish as aforesaid, any of the aforesaid Atheistical, Blasphemous or Execrable Opinions, upon complaint and proof made of the same before any one or more Justice or

Justices of the Peace, Major, or other Head-Officer of any City or Town Corporate, by the Oath of two or more Witnesses (which Oath the said Justice or Justices, or Head-Officer have hereby power to administer) or Confession of the said person, the party so confessing, or against whom proof shall be made as aforesaid, shall be by such Justice or Head-Officer sent to the Common Goal of such County, there to remain without Bail or Mainprize, until the next Assizes or Goal-Delivery to be held for the said County: And if any such person shall be there convicted, by Confession or otherwise, for such aforesaid avowedly professing, maintaining or publishing as aforesaid, any of the Atheistical, Blasphemous or Execrable Opinions aforesaid, That then the Judge or Judges before whom such Conviction shall be had as aforesaid, shall have power, and is hereby required to pronounce Sentence of Banishment upon such person so convicted as aforesaid, out of the Commonwealth of England, and all the Dominions thereof; And thereupon every such person and persons so convicted / and adjudged as aforesaid, shall depart out of this Commonwealth at such Haven or Port, and within such time as shall be in that behalf assigned and appointed by the said Judge or Justices, unless the same Offender be letted or stayed by such reasonable means or causes, as by the Common Laws of this Nation are allowed and permitted in Cases of Abjuration for Felony; And in case of such let or stay, then to depart within such reasonable and convenient time after, as the Common Law requireth, as in case of Abjuration for Felony as aforesaid: And if any such Offender so convicted and adjudged as aforesaid, shall not go to such Haven, and within such time as is before appointed, and from thence depart out of this Commonwealth, according to this present Act; or after such his departure, shall return or come again into this Commonwealth, or any the Dominions thereof, without special License of the Parliament in that behalf first had and obtained, That then in every such case the person so offending shall be adjudged a Felon, and shall suffer as in case of Felony, without benefit of Clergy.⁴ And to the end this Law may be the more effectually put in execution, and the growth of the aforesaid, and the like abominable and corrupt Opinions and Practices, tending to the Dishonor of God, the Scandal of Christian Religion, and the Professors thereof, and destructive to Humane Society, may be prevented and suppressed, Be it Enacted by the Authority aforesaid, That all and every Justice and Justices of Assize, Justices of Oyer and Terminer,⁵ Justices of the Peace and Goal-Delivery, be required and enjoined at their Assizes and Sessions of the Peace in every County, City and Town Corporate

respectively, which shall be held next after / the publishing of this Act, to cause the same to be openly read and published, and do from time to time give in charge to the Grand Jury, to enquire of, and present the Offenses and Neglects aforesaid; which the said Justices of Assize, Justices of Oyer and Terminer, Justices of the Peace and Goal-Delivery, have likewise by vertue of this Act power and Authority to Hear and Determine. And be it lastly Enacted by Authority aforesaid, That the Sheriffs of every County, the Majors, Bayliffs, or other Head-Officer of all and every City, Borough or Town Corporate, be Enjoynd and Required within one week after this Act shall be sent unto them or any of them, to read, or cause the same to be Read and Proclaimed in every City, Borough or Town Corporate, upon the Market-day, and to cause the same to be affixed and set up in the publique places of such City, Borough or Town as is usual and accustomed. Provided always, That no person or persons shall punished, impeached, molested or troubled for any Offence mentioned in this Act, unless he or she be for the same Offense Accused, Presented, Indicted or Convicted within six Moneths after such Offence committed.

Die Veneris, 9 Augusti, 1650.

Ordered by the Parliament, That this Act be forthwith printed and published.

Hen: Scobell, Cleric. Parliamenti.

The Ranters Ranting: With the Apprehending, Examinations, and Confession of John Collins, J. Shakespear, Tho. Wilberton, and five more which are to Answer the Next Sessions. And Severall Songs or Catches, which were Sung at their Meetings. Also their Several Kinds of Mirth and Dancing. Their Blasphemous Opinions. Their Belief Concerning Heaven and Hell. And the Reason why one of the Same Opinion Cut off the Heads of his Own Mother and Brother. Set forth for the Further Discovery of this Ungodly Crew (London: B. Alsop, 1650), title page, sig. Av, pp. 1–2. Wing, R450.

The Ranters Ranting:

WITH

The apprehending, examinations, and confession of *John Collins, J. Shakespear, Tho. Wilberton*, and five more which are to answer the next Sessions. And severall songs or catches, which were sung at their meetings. Also their several kinds of mirth and dancing. Their blasphemous opinions. Their belief concerning heaven and hell. And the reason why one of the same opinion cut off the heads of his own mother and brother. Set forth for the further discovery of this ungodly crew.¹

LONDON

Printed by B. *Alsop*, 1650. /

Courteous Reader, having perused a printed sheet intituled The Routing of the Ranters,² and finding that many things are totally omitted, and other things minced and come short of the truth, which might have been said. And having taken the advice of some friends (well wishers to the present Government) concerning some passages which I have gleaned, either from such as have accidentally happened in the society of the kind of people, or else were at the apprehending of some of them and heard their examinations before the Magistrate, it is thought fit and necessary that there should be a more perfect discovery of them, to the end that when they appear more in their proper colours (according to their deserts) they will be rendred a hissing and by word to the nation; and that if any of them pertain³ to the election of grace, they may return from their wickednesse and live; for that which I shall relate proceedeth not from rancor and bitterness of spirit, but meerly for the love of the truth, that they may be distinguished and known, and that which the Apostle calls pure Religion and undefiled may shine with the more splendor, for if these notorious Atheists (who if it were possible to excell the Divell in wickednesse) are not nipt in the bud, it is feared that it presageth some sad Omen to this Nation, which that the Almighty will divert is the constant prayer of him,

That is thine in any office of Christian love.

J. R. /

Copyright
Behold, ye Despisers[.]
Wonder and Perish.

Upon the first day of November 1650 (towards evening) came one *Shakespear* (that called himself a Warrenner) one *John Collins* a Glover, one *Wyberton*, and four others to the house of one *Middleton*, at the *David and Harp* in Moor lane, in the parrish of *Giles Creplegale*,⁴ *London*, where some of them being known, they were soon admitted into the best room in the house, and entertained by the woman of the house, who long before was suspected to be one of the Ranting crue.⁵ When they had continued many hours in the house, and it grew something late in the evening, when the street was void of noises, and sober men prepared to go to bed, these people were heard to sing blasphemous songs in the tune of *Davids* Psalms, and many uncivil words and actions were perceived and heard to pass amongst them; which put it into the hearts of some of the neighbours to acquaint the Constable therewith; who being as desirous to suppress disorders, as willing to bring such wicked persons to condign punishment, he took some others with him to apprehend them; but to make the fuller discovery of this wicked pack, one that had some acquaintance with an active Ranter, went alone to the door where this wicked company were, and enquired of *John Col-*

lins that opened it, whether such a one were not amongst them? who replied, he was not there yet, but was expected; asking him if he was of his acquaintance? to which the party answered, that he was: then *Collins* took him about the neck, and kissed him, saying, *Welcome fellow creature*. With this the party came into the room, / where the like ceremony was offered by the rest (some Women being also amongst them:) presently after, one of the men let his breeches slip down in the middle of the room, and another ran and kist his buttock, and called to the rest to come and kisse their *God*. And after the passing away of a little more time in blasphemous words and uncivil behaviour, a joynt of meat and some other things were brought and set upon the table, about which they hackt⁶ like brut beasts, without any order, or sign of reverence; but on the contrary, one of them laid hold on the meat and tearing it to pieces like dog, both for himself and the rest of the fellow creatures, for a beastly manner he let a great Fart, and as it gave report he voiced these words, *Let every thing that hath breath praise the Lord*.⁷

In the midst of which prophane and wicked words and behaviour, came in the Constable and apprehended them, who thinking them to be given over to commit all manner of wickednesse, thought good to search their pockets, for fear they might have some dangerous weapons about them to do mischief, and in searching them, he found two written papers stuffed with very blasphemous matter, which are not fit to be made publick, especially untill such time as they have received their tryall, when this was done the Constable brought them down stairs into another room, and himself and others reproved them for their wickednesse, in the midst of which reproof, one of them, that were taken took a candle and made as though he did seek for something that he had lost, and being asked what he sought for, in a jeering and disdainfull manner he answered, *That he sought for his sins but there were none*, and that which they thought so great unto him, was so small, that he could not see it, by which it appears that they hold forth an opinion, that *Sin is no sin*, for which opinion an Officer of the Army was lately cashiered, and his sword broken over his head, at the head of the Regiment. But to return to that which I was relating before, the Constable finding them desperately incorragible and hardened in their iniquity, carried the said *Collins*, *Shakespeare*, and five others to the Compter,⁸ (who had been accompanied with Mrs. *Middleton* her self, had she not privately made an escape[]).

The next morning they were brought before Sir *John Wolaston*,⁹ and charged with the matters before recited; as also that they had sung vile and filthy songs to the time of Psalms, and uttered many oaths (or asseverations of oaths) and execrations: some of which were, *Ram me*, *Dam me*, &c. and it being demanded of one of them what they meant by these words, he said by the word *Ram*, they meant *God*: and many other things of this nature were confessed by them: whereupon Sir *John* sent them to Bridewell,¹⁰ where for a time they beat hemp; and are bound over to answer for their offences, according to Law the next Sessions.¹¹

Two Letters from Nedham to Oxinden

1. *Letter 1*: BL, Add. MS 28,002, f. 170.
2. [*Mr Thompson*]: Henry Oxinden erased the name, but it is still legible. The fact that he was arrested because of the betrayal of his friend James Thompson obviously hurt Nedham greatly.
3. *You had*: i.e. would have.
4. *half a dozen Factions*: i.e. the plethora of political and religious factions which made up the anti-royalist side in the conflict. This was a way of saying that he was reduced to wearing a strange assortment of clothes.
5. *Perewig*: i.e. 'periwig'. A wig that was fashionable in the early modern period.
6. *the Colledge*: The Royal College of Physicians.
7. [*Thompson*]: Oxinden again erased the name.
8. *M. Hamden*: 'Hamden' is an anagram of 'Nedham'.
9. *Letter 2*: BL, Add. MS 28,002, f. 172.
10. *Lord President's*: John Bradshaw (1602–59), who was then President of the Council of State established by the Commonwealth.

1650

Man in the Moon

1. *Excise ... all things*: It was common to complain about the high level of this innovative tax, first collected in 1643.
2. *The Sea ... perjury*: This prediction about the crushing of the republic due to a combined internal rising and invasion from abroad proved to be nothing more than wishful thinking.
3. *as fast as Dog and Bitch*: a particularly striking metaphor.
4. *all persons above 18 ... Engagement*: a declaration of loyalty to the Commonwealth. Initially, it was intended that it would be taken by public officials, but early in 1650 it became compulsory for all adult males in England.
5. *Baal-Traytorships*: The name of a false God worshipped by the Canaanites: see Judges 2:10–15; 1 Kings 18:16–39; Jeremiah 11:13.
6. *Gadarenish Swine*: see Mark 5:1–13.
7. *a part of the Parliament*: i.e. the tiny Rump.
8. *be most*: i.e. must be?
9. *Pride*: The regicide Colonel Thomas Pride, who was often mocked for his humble origins.
10. *Deere to look so leane*: The incongruity of such an allegedly coarse woman ('old pusse') talking about the royal deer as belonging to she and her husband was designed to elicit laughter and anger from readers.
11. *when he went*: when he went to Ireland during the summer of 1649.
12. *Almighty Rebell Generall Jones*: Lieutenant General Michael Jones was Cromwell's second-in-command during the Irish campaign. He died at Dungarvan, near Youghal, on 10 December 1649. See A. Clarke's article in *ODNB*.
13. *Walker*: Henry Walker (fl. 1638–60); see J. Raymond's article in *ODNB*.
14. *Sir Balthazars Puppet-Play*: Sir Balthazar Gerbier (d. c. 1667) was an art agent, pedagogue, miniature painter and architect.

15. *Ald. Atkins*: Alderman Thomas Atkins was infamous for having soiled his trousers on hearing a volley of shots during the First Civil War. See McElligott, *Royalism, Print and Censorship*, pp. 48, 170.
16. *Savages*: the native Americans.
17. *a patterne of Loyaltie ... old England too*: For suggestions as to why Crouch did not comment at length on this remarkable ‘scoop’ see J. McElligott ‘Atlantic Royalism? Polemic, Censorship and the “Declaration and Protestation of the Governour and Inhabitants of Virginia”’, in J. McElligott and D. L. Smith (eds.), *Royalists and Royalism during the Interregnum* (forthcoming, 2010).
18. *Hamborough*: The German city of Hamburg.
19. *there*: i.e. in Scotland.
20. *Swethland*: Sweden.
21. *Strikeland*: Walter Strickland (d. 1671), the Commonwealth’s ambassador to the United Provinces. He replaced the assassinated envoy, Isaac Dorislaus.
22. *Irish are yet ... lustie*: The forces opposing Cromwell in Ireland were in a shambolic state by this point in time.
23. *Wollaston*: probably John Wollaston; see note 7 to *The Humble Petition and Information of Hunsco*, above, p. 511.
24. *Hewson*: John Hewson (d. 1660), army officer and regicide.
25. *Cromwell ... Nose*: A reference to Cromwell’s notoriously red nose, which, it was often insinuated, was linked to a fondness for alcohol.
26. *live as long as Methusalem*: Methuselah reportedly lived until the age of 969; see Genesis 5:21–7.

Coppe, *A Fiery Flying Roll*

1. *A Fiery Flying Roll ... JUDGEMENT*: quarto pamphlet. This copy is from the BL, shelf-mark BL, TT E.587 (13). Thomason wrote the date ‘Jan. 4 1649 [i.e. 1650]’ on his copy of this pamphlet.
2. *My most Excellent Majesty*: An ambiguous and provocative phrase to use in the context of early 1650. Perhaps the ambiguity and provocativeness were deliberate.
3. *The spirits ... made perfect*: Hebrews 12:23.
4. *Mattock*: a tool used for digging hard ground.
5. *Though you can ... before you*: The threat to the England’s new rulers is explicit.
6. *Oaks of Bashan*: Isaiah 2:13.
7. *Ships of Tarshish*: Isaiah 2:16.
8. *let not ... Harlots*: Revelation 17:3–6.
9. *For this Honour ... shot to death*: The construction of an interesting radical tradition. See J. McElligott, ‘William Hone, Print Culture, and the Nature of Radicalism’, in A. Hessayon (ed.), *Rediscovering Radicalism in the British Isles and Ireland* (forthcoming, 2010).
10. *maugre*: i.e. despite.
11. *For I am risen ... the earth*: Isaiah 2:19.
12. *advice you*: This brings us to the end of page 5. Chapter II is on pages 6–9; III on pages 10–12; IV on pages 12–13; V on 13–14; and VI on pages 14–15.

Die Veneris, 1 Februarii, 1649

1. *Die Veneris, 1 Februarii, 1649*: i.e. 1650. A single-sheet broadside. This copy is from the BL, shelfmark TT 669.f.15(10). The text is in Roman font.
2. *Bailey*: i.e. bailiff. Southwark was governed by its own bailiff until 1327, when the mayor of London was constituted bailiff of Southwark, and empowered to govern it by deputy. See J. Elmes, *A Topographical Dictionary of London and its Environs* (London: Whitaker, Treacher and Arnot, 1831), p. 374.

Die Veneris, 8 Martii, 1649

1. *Die Veneris, 8 Martii, 1649*: i.e. 1650. A single-sheet broadside. This copy is from the BL, shelfmark TT 669.f.15(18). The text is in Roman font.

To the Honourable, the Commons Assembled in Parliament

1. *To the Honourable ... PARLLAMENT*: single-sheet broadside. This copy is from the BL, shelfmark TT 669.f.15(54). Thomason wrote the date 'Aug: 31 1650' on his copy of this broadside.
2. *the first*: i.e. 1649.
3. *the second year*: i.e. 1650.
4. *We judge ... for a season*: a reference to Hebrews 11:25.
5. Magna Charta: the charter of legal rights granted by King John in 1215.
6. Empson *and* Dudley: two powerful members of Henry VII's Privy Council, who were executed by Henry VIII in 1510 for fraud and embezzlement.
7. *the late act ... treason*: of May 1649; reproduced above, pp. 231–2.
8. *that for unlicensed* Printing: of September 1649; reproduced above, pp. 233–41.
9. The Case ... England stated: Wing, N376. An eloquent defence of the Commonwealth by its newly hired polemicist Marchamont Nedham.
10. *to the shame ... licensed*: An indication that the Levellers would not have allowed free speech to all.
11. *War ... already begun*: the Cromwellian invasion of Scotland.
12. *humble Petition ... 20 of Jan 1649*: An Agreement of the People of England. See *CJ*, 6, p. 122.
13. *voluntary*: i.e. voluntary.
14. This is printed ... use of it: The printer has squeezed this line of italicized text into the bottom of the sheet.

'An Act Against several Atheistical, Blasphemous and Execrable Opinions'

1. *AN ACT ... HUMANE SOCIETY*: Thomason's copy of the Act is at the BL, shelfmark TT E.1061(14).
2. *very*: i.e. actual.
3. *Major*: i.e. mayor.
4. *benefit of Clergy*: see note 4 to *An Ordinance for the Punishing of Blasphemies and Heresies*, above, p. 514.
5. *Justices of Oyer and Terminer*: The commission by which an assize judge sat and heard cases. Literally: 'hear and determine'.

The Ranters Ranting

1. *The Ranters ... ungodly crew*: eight-page quarto pamphlet. This copy is from the BL, shelfmark BL, TT E.618(8). Thomason wrote the date 'Decemb: 2' on the title page of his copy.
2. *The Routing of the Ranters*: This pamphlet is Wing, R2055.
3. *pertein*: i.e. pretend.
4. *parrish of Giles Creplegale*: St Giles, Cripplegate.
5. *crue*: i.e. crew.
6. *hackt*: i.e. hacked.
7. Let every thing ... the Lord: from Psalm 150:6.
8. *the Compter*: a small prison in Cheapside.
9. *Sir John Wollaston*: see note 7 to *The Humble Petition and Information of Hunscoot*, above, p. 511.
10. *Bridewell*: a prison on the banks of the Fleet River in London.
11. *next Sessions*: This account brings us to the bottom of page 2 of the text proper, which is the fourth page of the pamphlet. The author filled the remaining pages of the pamphlet with accounts of songs allegedly sung by Ranters at a different meeting in Thames Street. He then padded out the final page of the text with comments on the Ranter leader Coppe and an unrelated story about a Welshman called Evan ap Bevan who allegedly 'cut off the heads of his own mother and brother' (p. 6).

1651

Resolved by the Parliament

1. *Monday the First of September, 1651*: single-sheet broadside. No Gothic font used. This copy is from the BL, shelfmark TT 669.f.16(23). The offending royal declaration is Wing, C2981.

Ball, A Brief Treatise concerning the Regulating of Printing

1. *A BRIEFVE ... England*: quarto pamphlet. Title page, blank page and then 35 pages of text. This copy is from the BL, shelfmark TT E.1295(3). Thomason wrote the date 'Novemb. 24' on the title page of his copy.
2. *The lawfull Acts ... carefully conserved*: It was, to say the least, hard to defend the idea of the control of printing as a prerogative right of the Crown during this early stage of the English Commonwealth.
3. *10l*: i.e. £10.
4. *for ever disenabled ... one whole yeare*: These suggestions were much harsher than the provisions of any licensing orders ever passed by Parliament.
5. *That all the Books... one of them*: Such a wonderfully complex system, which relied on a large number of people performing to the best of their abilities over a long period of time, could never hope to work.
6. *vinnet*: i.e. vignette; see *OED*.
7. *Factors*: According to *OED*, a factor is 'one who acts for another; an agent, deputy, or representative'.
8. *Fardells*: i.e. bundles; see *OED*.
9. *demise*: the conveyance or transfer of an estate by will or lease; see *OED*.