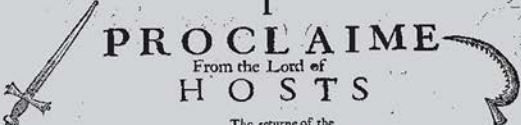


'Gold Tried in the Fire'. The Prophet Theaurau John Tany and the English Revolution

ARIEL HESSAYON



I
PROCLAIME
From the Lord of
H O S T S
The returne of the
J E W E S

From their Captivity, and the Building of the
TEMPLE in Glory, in their owne
L A N D,


Feaere O ye Jewes my Brethren, I am a Jew of the Tribe of Reuben : but unknowne to me till the Lord spake unto me by voice : whose Voice I heard, but saw no appearance, and He changed my Name from *Thomas* to *Theaurau John*, since the 23. of *November* 1649.

Now unto ye Jewes, my Brethren, am I sent to proclaime from the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, your *Returne* from your *Captivity* in what *Nation* soever ye are *Scattered*. From thence ye shall be *Gathered* into your own Land: and *JERUSALEM* shall be built in *Glory*, in her owne Land, upon her own foundation, as the Lord hath shewn mee, though it seeme never so impossible in the Judgement of Men. Yet by him this is wrought for evermore, it shall be accomplished. And ye my Brethren, who say, Our Bones are dried, and our hope is gone, and we are cleane cut off. As the Lord Liveth, who brought our Fathers out of the Land of *Egypt*, so SVRE shall your *Returne* bee. And ye my Brethren, shall be the *Glory* of all the Earth, and the feare of Nations, For I saw the *SPIRIT* of the *LORD* goe forth, to Effect His owne *WORK*, and for his owne Names sake will He bring this great Thing to passe.

Therefore my Brethren, Feare not; neither be afraid, for the *Lord of Hosts* is your *Leader*. And I *Theaurau John* His *Servant* your *Brether*.

This Yeare 1650, is the *Lord* beginning to make away for ye my Brethren.

Danced from the three Golden Lions without
Temple Barre in London for Admission
of England April 15. & 1550.



Signed and Sealed by me
THEAURAVIOHN
TANY Coast-South

LONDON, Printed by Charles Seaman for Giles Calvert, And are to be sold at the Back-shop-Right, at the West-End of Pauls, under Dow, 1650.

'GOLD TRIED IN THE FIRE'.
THE PROPHET THEAURAUJOHN TANY
AND THE ENGLISH REVOLUTION

To my Mother and the memory of my Father

‘Gold Tried in the Fire’.
The Prophet TheaurauJohn Tany
and the English Revolution

ARIEL HESSAYON

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 - 17b. Thomas Totney's appropriated armorial device depicting his assumed coat of arms. Detail from TheaurauJohn Tany, *Hear, O Earth* (1654), brs.



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The day George Best died.



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List of abbreviations

For reasons of space many references have had to be omitted from this book and footnotes generally refer only to the sources for direct quotations. This is regrettable but readers who would like to consult further supporting documentation are referred to my doctoral dissertation which contains additional sources together with a more comprehensive bibliography

The year is taken to begin on 1 January and English dates are ‘old style’, while European are ‘new style’.

A Bk	Apprentice Book
<i>A & O</i>	Charles Firth and R.S. Rait (eds), <i>Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–1660</i> (3 vols, London, 1911)
Add.	Additional Manuscript
<i>APC</i>	<i>Acts of the Privy Council</i>
Berks RO	Berkshire Record Office, Reading
BL	British Library, London
Bodl.	Bodleian Library, Oxford
brs.	broadside
C Bk	Court Minute Book
Cambs RO	Cambridgeshire County Record Office
CCE	Consistory Court of Ely Probate Records
<i>CJ</i>	<i>Journals of the House of Commons</i> (34 vols, London, 1742–92)
CLRO	Corporation of London Record Office
Coll Arms	College of Arms, London

CPC.	H. Firth (ed.), <i>The Clarke Papers</i> , Camden Society (4 vols, London, 1891–1901)
CSPD	<i>Calendar of State Papers Domestic</i>
CUA	Cambridge University Archives
CUL	Cambridge University Library
DWL	Dr Williams's Library, London
EDR	Ely Diocesan Records
Essex RO	Essex Record Office, Chelmsford
FHL	Friends House Library, London
G & C Coll	Gonville & Caius College, Cambridge
GL	Guildhall Library, London
Gs Co	Goldsmiths' Company, Goldsmiths' Hall, London
Herts RO	Hertfordshire Record Office, Hertford
HLRO	House of Lords Record Office, London
HMC	Historical Manuscripts Commission
HP	Hartlib Papers
JFHS	<i>Journal of the Friends Historical Society</i>
JWCI	<i>Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes</i>
LMA	London Metropolitan Archives
LPL	Lambeth Palace Library, London
Lincs AO	Lincolnshire Archives Office, Lincoln
Muggleton, <i>Acts</i>	Lodowick Muggleton, <i>The Acts of the Witnesses of the Spirit</i> (London, 1699)
NA	National Archives, London

- NLW National Library of Wales, Aberystwyth
- n.s. 'new style'
- o.s. 'old style'
- PCRS Publications of the Catholic Record Society
- RSEH Records of Social and Economic History
- Rep Co Ald Repertory of the Court of Aldermen
- RO Record Office
- RS Rolls Series
- Rushworth, *Historical Collections*
John Rushworth (ed.), *Historical Collections of Private Passages of State*
(8 vols, London, 1721)
- Sabine, *Winstanley* George Sabine (ed.), *The Works of Gerrard Winstanley*
(Ithaca, New York, 1941)
- sig signature
- St Co Stationers' Company, Stationers' Hall, London
- SUL Sheffield University Library
- Smith, *CRW* Nigel Smith (ed.), *A Collection of Ranter Writings from the*
17th Century (London, 1983)
- Tany, *I Proclaime*, brs.
TheaurauJohn Tany, *I Proclaime From the Lord of Hosts The returne of the Jewes*
From their Captivity, and the Building of the TEMPLE in Glory, in their owne LAND
(London, 1650), brs.
- Tany, *My servant*
TheaurauJohn Tany, *Whereas Theauraujohn Taiiiiijour My servant* ([London],
1650)
- Tany, *Nations Right*
TheaurauJohn Tany, *THE NATIONS RIGHT in Magna Charta discussed with the*
thing Called Parliament ([London], 1650)

Tany, *Aurora*

TheaurauJohn Tany, *THEAURAUJOHN His Aurora in Tranlagorum in Salem Gloria* (London, 1651)

Tany, *Theous Ori Apokolipikal*

TheaurauJohn Tany, *THEAURAUJOHN His THEOUS ORI APOKOLIPIKAL: Or, Gods Light declared in Mysteries* (London, 1651)

Tany, *High Priest*

TheaurauJohn Tany, *THEAVRAUIOHN High Priest to the IEVVES, HIS Disputive challenge to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, and the whole Hirach. of Roms Clargical Priests* ([London], 1652)

Tany, *Epitah*

TheaurauJohn Tany, *THEAVRAU IOHN HIS EPITAH And EVROPS Looking-glass* ([London], 1652)

Tany, *Second Part of His Theous-Ori Apokolipikal*

TheaurauJohn Tany, *THEAURAUJOHN TANI His Second Part OF HIS Theous-Ori APOKOLIPIKAL: OR, God's Light declared in Mysteries* (London, 1653)

Tany, *High News*

TheaurauJohn Tany, *HIGH NEWS FOR HIERUSALEM* ([London], no date = 1653?)

Tany, *Tharam Taniah*, brs.

TheaurauJohn Tany, *THARAM TANIAH, Leader of the LORDS Hosts, Unto his Brethren the QUAKERS scornfully so called* ([London], 1654), brs.

Tany, *Hear, O Earth*, brs.

TheaurauJohn Tany, *Hear, O Earth, ye earthen men and women* ([London], 1654), brs.

Tany, *ThauRam Tanjah his Speech*, brs.

TheaurauJohn Tany, *ThauRam Tanjah his Speech in his Claim, verbatim* ([London], 1654), brs.

Tany, *EDICT*

TheaurauJohn Tany, *My EDICT Royal* ([London], no date = 1655?)

Tany, *Law Read*

TheaurauJohn Tany, *THE LAVV READ June the 10. 1656. unto the people ISRAEL, belonging to the returning from Captivity, at the Tent of JUDAH* ([London], 1656)

List of abbreviations

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WCA	Westminster City Archives
Worc Coll	Worcester College, Oxford



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Introduction: TheaurauJohn Tany and the English Revolution

Now know I am a mad man. And ye declare me so to be, it will be a weaknesse in you to question me

[TheaurauJohn Tany, *THE NATIONS RIGHT in Magna Charta* (1650), p. 8]

I say, and many know, that by madness I came to knowing, and in time God will make me speak plain knowledge, that by all shall be acknowledged

[TheaurauJohn Tany, *THEOUS ORI APOKOLIPIKAL* (1651), pp. 62–63]

On Friday, 23 November 1649 Thomas Totney, a puritan and veteran of the Civil War, was working in his goldsmith's shop at 'The Three Golden Lions' in the Strand. He was to claim that after fourteen weeks of self-abasement, fasting and prayer the Lord came upon him in power, overwhelming his wisdom and understanding, smiting him dumb, blind and dead in the presence of hundreds of people. Next his body began to tremble and he was tied down in his bed. During his indescribable sufferings he saw the Passion of Jesus. Then he was transported into God's presence in the 'High and holy Mount' where he beheld a great light shine within him and upon him, saying '*Theaurau John* my servant, I have chosen thee my Shepherd, thou art adorned with the jewel of Exceiciency'. He was convinced that the Lord had spoken unto him, changing his name from Thomas to TheaurauJohn.

Totney was baptized on 21 January 1608 in the parish of South Hykeham, Lincolnshire, the third but eldest surviving son of John Totney and Anne, *née* Snelle. His father, although a poor farmer and never of the parish elite, was a respectable member of the local community. Nothing is known of Thomas's education, yet it seems likely that by the age of seven he would have learned to read and by the age of nine, if his family could still cope without him, he would have learned to write. In April 1626 he was bound as an apprentice in London to a fishmonger but was not taught their trade. Instead he received instruction in his master's adopted profession, that of goldsmith. On receiving his freedom he married a daughter of Richard Kett, a prosperous Norfolk landowner, whose great-uncle had been executed as leader of the 1549 East Anglian rebellion; Kett's uncle was burned for heresy in 1589 and his father imprisoned for the same offence. Rather than serving as a journeyman, Totney quickly established himself as a householder – a costly progression suggesting he received a charitable loan or financial assistance from family and friends. He set up in St. Katherine Creechurch, a location favoured by small retailers for its inexpensive rents, his shop marked by an unknown sign near Aldgate. To ensure that Totney's business activities fell within their orbit he was translated to the Goldsmiths' Company in January 1634. However, along with the majority of 'remote' goldsmiths he resisted a Company initiative which had gained royal approval, to vacate his dwelling and relocate in Cheapside, the hub of the goldsmiths' trade.

Totney remained in St. Katherine Creechurch for another six years. There he heard the fiery sermons of Stephen Denison on the immutability of God's decrees of predestination. It was a doctrine that troubled Totney until his epiphany. When his first son was born in December 1634 Totney refused to have him baptized, for which he was presented before an ecclesiastical court. Following his wife's death he remarried by licence during Lent, probably on Friday, 25 March 1636. This was the first day of the New Year in the old calendar and his actions hint at a type of confrontational godliness and perhaps also zealous Sabbatarianism. Upon his father's death in 1638 he went to Little Shelford, Cambridgeshire to manage the family farm. In the summer of 1640, probably while serving as one of the parish's petty constables, he played an important part in resisting the collection of ship money. By his own account he was imprisoned in London and his horse distrained on the county sheriff's authority. A series of payments in 1642 show his support for those opposed to Charles I. Moreover, he claims to have witnessed one of Captain Oliver Cromwell's orations delivered at Huntingdon to newly mustered volunteers. Totney later possessed a great saddle, musket, pair of pistols and sword, suggesting he served as a harquebusier. By December 1644 he had returned to Little Shelford where he resumed his duties as a local tax official, as well as taking up sequestered land and providing quarter for Parliamentary soldiers and their horses. Following the outbreak of a second Civil War, Totney uprooted. He rented out his lands to a local villager and moved with his family to St. Clement Danes, Westminster. In June 1648 his second wife died and was buried in the parish.

After his supposed revelation Thomas Totney assumed the prophetic name TheaurauJohn Tany. TheaurauJohn he understood to mean 'God his declarer of the morning, the peaceful tidings of good things'. While his former surname may have been vocalized as *Tawtney*, his new last name was usually pronounced *Tawney*. Because he had a speech impediment he may have dropped the consonant. In addition, he appropriated the coat of arms *azure, three bars argent* surmounted by the crest *a hind's head erased, gules, ducally gorged, or*. This device, borne by Sir John de Tany of Essex during the reign of Edward I, appears on several of his works. Furthermore, he declared himself 'a Jew of the Tribe of Reuben' and took the titles High Priest and Recorder to the thirteen Tribes of the Jews. Tany justified his claims by inventing a fantastic genealogy that traced his descent from Aaron, brother of Moses, through the tribe of Judah and by way of the ten tribes of Israel, the Tartars and the Welsh. He also circumcised himself. Thereafter, believing he had been given the gift of tongues with which to preach the everlasting gospel of God's light and love to all nations, he went forth armed with sword and word. Crying vengeance in the streets of London, he declared woe and destruction upon that bloody city, prophesying that the '*Earth shall burn as an Oven*' and all the proud, the wicked and the '*ungodly shall be as stubble to this flame*'. Drawing on the potent image of Christ as goldsmith, purging dross and corruption in a furnace, Tany forged his prophetic identity – the messenger foretold by Malachi. He claimed his authority rested with the one who sent him, God:

but who may abide the day of his appearing? for he is like fullers sope, a refiners fire.

Insisting that the restitution of the Jews was at hand and that he had been sent forth to gather them and proclaim 'Israels return', Tany set about enacting a millenarian mission to restore the Jews to their own land. In the manner of the children of Israel before him, he began living in a tent, perhaps modelled upon the tabernacle, which he decorated with a symbol representing the tribe of Judah. He preached in the parks and fields around London and gathered a handful of followers. His message was strong, denouncing the clergy as 'diabolical dumb dogs, Tythe-mongers', who fleece rather than succour the people. Gospel injunctions also made him demand justice:

feed the hungry, clothe the naked, oppress none, set free them bounden, if this be not, all your Religion is a lye, a vanity, a cheat, deceived and deceiving.

Tany's first publication was a broadside entitled *I Proclaime From the Lord of Hosts The returne of the Jewes From their Captivity* (25 April 1650). It is likely that Captain Robert Norwood, a wealthy London merchant, paid for its printing. In early September 1650 Tany was at Bradfield, Berkshire at the same time as William Everard, one-time leader of the Diggers. There was bedlam. It was reported that the rector, John Pordage, fell into a trance while preaching and bellowing like a bull, ran to his house. There he found his wife upstairs clothed all in white from head to toe, holding a white rod in her hand. Moreover, an adolescent was said to have fallen into a very strange fit, foaming at the mouth for two hours. He dictated verses concerning the destruction of London and demanded to go there to meet a goldsmith.

Tany next published two tracts: *Whereas TheaurauJohn Taiiiijour My servant* (15 November 1650) and *THE NATIONS RIGHT in Magna Charta* (28 December 1650). Both demonstrated his earnest desire for social reformation, the latter exhorting the common soldiers to dissolve Parliament and call fresh elections. His next offering *Aurora in Tranlagorum in Salem Gloria* seems to have been written on three consecutive days in late December 1650. It was printed by a Baptist who had previously printed a 'very dangerous' book. The publisher was Thomas Totney's brother-in-law. It was sold by Giles Calvert from his shop at 'The Black-spread-Eagle' at the west end of St. Paul's cathedral. In January 1651 Tany wrote the first of the epistles that eventually comprised *THEOUS ORI APOKOLIPKAL* (1651) and *Second Part OF HIS Theous-Ori APOKOLIPKAL* (1653). On 6 March he was apparently brought before the Westminster Assembly of Divines, responding to their questions with thirty-seven of his own queries. Nonetheless, they accounted him mad. Perhaps shortly thereafter he forsook his trade.

On 25 March 1651 Tany preached at Eltham, Kent and then again on 13 April at Norwood's house in St. Mary Aldermary. In May Norwood was excommunicated from his gathered church. The following month an indictment was prepared jointly against Norwood and Tany. The indicters seem to have understood Tany as some type of Ranter, as one of ungodly conduct who allegorized the Bible and internalized hell; as an antiscripturian universalist who repudiated gospel ordinances and averred that men might live as they wished; as one who glorified sin and maintained that the soul is God. Yet as Norwood recognized, only two of the charges fell within the scope of the Blasphemy Act of August 1650 – the allegations that Tany and Norwood affirmed:

the Soul is of the essence of God
There is neither hell nor damnation.

As their own accounts of the trial's proceedings make clear, the defendants adamantly maintained that their words had been misrepresented, altered and taken out of context. Even so, on 13 August 1651 they were convicted jointly of blasphemy by a jury of twelve men at the London sessions of the peace held at the Old Bailey. They were each sentenced to six months imprisonment in Newgate gaol without bail or mainprize. Conditions for those that could not afford the services of the gaoler were apparently intolerable.

On 27 October 1651 legal proceedings were initiated in the Court of Upper Bench appealing the verdict. After several sessions the case was deferred until the next law term. More hearings followed. On 4 February 1652 Tany appeared before the Court. That same morning God spoke to a London tailor named John Reeve, revealing to him that he had been chosen as the Lord's 'last messenger', or so Reeve was to claim. Reeve and his cousin Lodowick Muggleton, a freeman of the Merchant Taylors' Company, announced themselves to be 'the two Witnesses of the Spirit' foretold in the Revelation of Saint John. In addition, they denounced Tany as a 'counterfeit high Priest' and pretended prophet, marking him as a Ranter, the spawn of Cain. A few days later the judges of the Upper Bench made their judgement: Lord Chief Justice Rolle washed his hands of the business. On 16 February 1652 Tany and Norwood having served their sentence were each released on 100*l.* bail pending good behaviour for one year. Thomas Totney's former master and another man later described as a goldsmith, provided sureties. In Easter term Norwood initiated a new legal appeal. After several hearings the judges deferred proceedings until the following law term. On 28 June 1652 they reversed the guilty judgement against Norwood and Tany, resolving that their opinions had been made to rigidly conform to the strictures of the Blasphemy Act. For whereas the Act made it unlawful to maintain that 'there is neither Heaven nor Hell, neither Salvation nor Damnation', the defendants who affirmed that:

there is 'no Hell nor Damnation', are not within the Statute, for tho by Implication if there be no Hell there is no Heaven, yet the court is not to Expand these words by Implication but according to the Letters of the Stat[ute].

Within a month of his release Tany published a pamphlet he had written in Newgate entitled *High Priest to the IEVVES, HIS Disputive challenge to the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge and the whole Hirach. of Roms Clargical Priests* (March 1652). Echoing Paul's epistle to the Romans, Tany proclaimed the return of 'Israel's Seed' from captivity. About 1 January 1653 it appears from his own account that Tany underwent another purificatory ritual. He refrained from speaking for thirty-four days, isolating himself for twenty-one of them. On the fourteenth day he transcribed an edict to 'all the Jewes the whole earth over', which was to be engraved in brass and sent to the synagogue in Amsterdam. He signed this proclamation with his new name and titles, 'Theauroam Tannijahhh, King of the seven Nations, and Captain General under my Master Jehovah, and High-Priest and Leader of the Peoples unto HIERUSALEM'. Together with some other material it was issued by an unknown

publisher under the title *HIGH NEWS FOR HIERUSALEM* (no date). It exasperated one reader, who complained ‘truly I skill not the man, nor his spirit; in his writing he offends against all rules of Grammar, Geography, Genealogy, History, Chronology, Theology & c, so far as I understand them’.

In March 1654 a list of some thirty ‘Grand Blasphemers and Blasphemies’ was submitted to the Committee for Religion, which included:

XIX. A Goldsmith that did live in the *Strand*, and after in the *City*, and then at *Eltham*; who called his name *Theaurau John Tany*, the High Priest, & c. Published in Print, *That all Religion is a lie, a deceit, and a cheat*.

Writing from ‘the Tent of *Judah*’ on the ‘Tenth DAY NISAN’ (probably 16 April 1654), Tany addressed a millenarian epistle ‘*Unto his Brethren the QUAKERS scornfully so called, who ARE the Children of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; who ARE circumcised in Heart*’. He saluted them as descendants of the Jewish race, an elect remnant who spoke a pure language and trembled at the word of God. On 8 May 1654 he issued an edict to all ‘earthen men and women’ announcing that he would shortly proclaim the Law and Gospel from his tent standing in the bounds of the Middle Park at Eltham, Kent. On 8 June 1654 he read out a speech in which he laid claim to the crowns of France, Reme, Rome, Naples, Sissiliah and Jerusalem, as well as reaffirming an earlier claim to the crown of England. He did this by repeating Pilate’s reply to the chief priests of the Jews after Pilate had written ‘JESUS OF NAZARETH THE KING OF THE JEWS’ as the title to be put on Christ’s cross:

What I have written, I have written.

On the morning of Saturday, 30 December 1654, in the week that Cromwell was offered the crown, Tany solemnly made a large fire at Lambeth into which he cast his great saddle, sword, musket, pistols, books and bible. He crossed the Thames in a rowing boat and made his way to Parliament, ascending the stairs into the lobby outside the door. Unable to deliver a petition he departed, returning after about an hour oddly attired with a long, rusty sword by his side. Pacing up and down the lobby he suddenly threw off his cloak and began slashing wildly, but was disarmed before anyone was hurt. He was brought to the bar of the House and questioned by the Speaker. He refused to remove his hat, was evidently mistaken for a Quaker and committed to the Gatehouse prison. Having been examined by the Committee for regulating printing, he wrote to the Speaker requesting liberty to have an audience with Cromwell. He then attached a great lock and long chain to his leg as a symbol of ‘the people of Englands Captivity’. Legal proceedings were transferred to the Court of Upper Bench but on 10 February 1655 he was bailed upon *habeas corpus*.

Two days later a fire broke out in Fleet Street. In the following months London was engulfed by several more unexplained fires which were interpreted as a sign of the impending destruction of the world. Eventually an arsonist was apprehended who may have been in the pay of William Finch, one of Tany’s disciples. In September 1655, after weeks of heavy rain and widespread floods, Tany ‘in one of his old whimsies’ pitched his tent in the large tract of open ground between Lambeth Marsh and Southwark known as St. George’s Fields. A satirical newsbook writer

thought him '*a madman*' fitter 'for *Bedlam* then a *Tent*'. On 10 June 1656 Tany's tent was pitched on Frindsbury Street near 'The Black Lion' in Frindsbury, Kent. That day, according to the title-page of his last known work, Tany read the law 'unto the people ISRAEL, belonging to the returning from Captivity'. Then, sometime after 16 June 1656, Tany set sail, perhaps from Kent, bound for the:

Wars, wars, wars, wars, wars, wars, wars.

He crossed the English Channel successfully and at an unknown date arrived in the United Provinces, perhaps to gather the Jews of Amsterdam. Some three years later, now calling himself Ram Johoram, he was reported lost, drowned after taking passage in a ship from Brielle bound for London. He was survived by his eldest daughter and probably also a second daughter and second son.

During his prophetic phase Tany wrote a number of remarkable but elusive works that are unlike anything else in the English language. His sources were varied, although they seem to have included almanacs, popular prophecies and legal treatises, as well as scriptural and extra-canonical texts, and the writings of the German mystic Jacob Boehme. Indeed, Tany's writings embrace currents of magic and mysticism, alchemy and astrology, numerology and angelology, Neoplatonism and Gnosticism, Hermeticism and Christian Kabbalah – a ferment of ideas that fused in a millenarian yearning for the hoped for return of Christ on earth. The English Revolution freed men and women both self-taught and formally educated to speak their minds and challenge their times. But only by contextualizing and then unravelling the mind of this exceptional person can we truly appreciate what it meant to be living in a world turned upside down.

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For as long as it is studied disagreements about the nature of the English Revolution will continue. Even the name, popularized in the early nineteenth century by François Guizot, is in dispute. Yet as well as the all too familiar argument about naming, there is also lack of consensus as to the causes of events, the manner in which some of them occurred and their significance. Moreover, whereas class conflict once seemed a plausible explanatory tool, it has been one of the major achievements of revisionist historians to shift the emphasis away from tension towards consensus. Within this grand scheme violent incidents have become examples of disorder rather than ideologically motivated revolts, and localism and neutralism forces to be reckoned with. Radical religious beliefs are considered unpopular and there is little room for a dissenting tradition. As for troublemakers, they have been regarded as unrepresentative, their extreme opinions advocated for only a brief period of their lives, their impact upon society exaggerated by paranoid contemporaries and left-wing historians alike.

As with the English Revolution so with the English Reformation there is an ongoing debate about its character and wider effect on society and culture. But if there is one word that can be used to describe a religious identity that suggests a link between the aftermath of the Reformation, the origins of the Civil War and the period

after 1642, then it is puritan. This is contentious, though even attempts to ignore the relevance or deny the existence of puritan and its 'ism(e)' have had the effect of drawing attention to its importance. Furthermore, as one of the major concerns of this study is mapping the trajectory of an individual's religious experiences that were rooted in a faith that can – at least to an extent – be signified by the signifier puritan, it is worthwhile outlining the issues that have and doubtless will divide scholars. At stake is what puritan does or does not denote and, if its association with class conflict is chimerical, whether it offers a viable if partial alternative for explaining why things happened in the manner that they did.

In *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (1964) Christopher Hill argued that for contemporaries puritan was a useful if ambiguous term of reproach. It had 'no narrowly religious connotation' and contained social and political overtones. Adopting Slingsby Bethel's phrase 'the industrious sort of people' as an accurate description of those 'yeomen, artisans and small and middling merchants who supported ... Puritanism generally', Hill stressed that unlike Popery, which was suited to 'a static agricultural society', Protestantism was suited to 'a competitive society'. Puritanism in particular, he maintained, appealed especially to those preoccupied with labour, trade, hard work, productivity and profit.¹ In *The World Turned Upside Down. Radical Ideas During the English Revolution* (1972) Hill turned not to the revolution which 'succeeded' – the triumph of the protestant ethic – but to the revolution which 'never happened'; what he called 'the revolt within the Revolution'. Hill regarded physically mobile 'masterless men' as 'potential dissolvents' of English society. He distinguished five kinds. Firstly, rogues, vagabonds and beggars roaming the countryside in search of work. They attended no church, belonged to no organized social group. Secondly, the London 'mob', a large urban population living very near if not below the poverty line. Thirdly, Protestant sectaries, who by opting out of the state church had released themselves from the bonds of a hierarchical society. Determined and rejecting all mediators between man and God, they were strongest in the towns. Fourthly, destitute cottagers and squatters living in forests and on commons and waste ground. Finally there was the rank and file of the New Model Army; the most powerful and politically motivated group. When the courts of Star Chamber and High Commission were abolished, when strict censorship broke down and there was 'extensive liberty of the press', when the old world was "'running up like parchment in the fire'", class antagonism came to the surface. This was a popular revolt that threatened the propertied.² Hill's subsequent essay 'From Lollards to Levellers' attempted to provide both a genealogy and ecology for this 'lower-class' radicalism by exploring the continuity of radical ideas within an orally transmitted 'underground tradition'. His focus was on doctrinal and geographical continuities,

1 Christopher Hill, *Society and Puritanism in Pre-Revolutionary England* (Harmondsworth, 1986 edn), pp. 16, 19, 26, 28, 30, 126–30.

2 Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (Harmondsworth, 1984 edn), pp. 14, 15, 17, 39–57.

particularly in pastoral, forest, moorland and fen areas where ecclesiastical control was less tight.³

Hill's work, as this study will make clear, is a mixture of insights and inaccuracies. Ancestry, family, environment, means, social status, experience, theology, political and military developments, oral culture, literacy, numeracy, manuscripts and print all influenced the formation of individual identities and, to varying degrees, helped shape beliefs. Yet he used evidence selectively to fit his theories, relying almost exclusively on printed sources. Hill's argument that during the English Revolution there was class conflict between middle-class puritans and lower-class radicals is misleading and underplays religious divisions. Moreover, his assertion that censorship collapsed and there was widespread press freedom is an oversimplification. While Hill remains largely unconvincing Patrick Collinson has persuasively argued that the Elizabethan puritan movement was 'a church within the Church', a common theological outlook working inside the Elizabethan establishment for 'a further reformation', with its own mechanisms of discipline and spiritual government. Measuring the ideological differences between English puritanism and 'Anglicanism' in 'theological temperature', he regarded Elizabethan puritanism as the vanguard of Protestant evangelism, which by the early decades of the seventeenth century embodied 'the mainstream of English Protestantism'. This was not to deny, however, that elements within puritanism espoused a nonconformist position and experienced alienation. Accordingly, Collinson suggested, in agreement with Nicholas Tyacke, that it was 'Arminian doctrine and Laudian formalism, which appeared strange and novel in the 1630s'. Furthermore, he invited scholars to share with contemporaries 'a sense of Puritanism which is at once polemical and nominalistic', maintaining that incidences of the term in contemporary discourse were 'indicative of theological, moral and social tensions'.⁴ From one angle, that of godly magistrates and ministers in the localities, Collinson may be correct. Even so, there is another perspective: the religion of the 'hotter sort' of Protestants lower down the social scale. That is the viewpoint of this book.

The reception of a 'particular kind' of Protestantism preached by godly ministers has been discussed in a well-known study of an obscure London turner's mentality. Paul Seaver's *Wallington's World. A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Stanford, 1985) used its protagonist's surviving personal testimony – memoirs, religious reflections, political reportage, letters and a spiritual diary – to reveal how one man's spiritual journey was marked by self-examination, inner turmoil, melancholy, private prayer, bible reading, sermon attendance and receiving the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.⁵ More recent work by Peter Lake and David Como

3 C.Hill, 'From Lollards to Levellers', in Christopher Hill, *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill* (3 vols, Brighton, 1986), vol. 2, pp. 91, 99, 107.

4 Patrick Collinson, *The Elizabethan Puritan Movement* (Oxford, 1990 edn), pp. 12, 14, 27; Patrick Collinson, *Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism* (1983), pp. 534, 535; P.Collinson, 'A Comment: Concerning the Name Puritan', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 31 (1980): 488.

5 Paul Seaver, *Wallington's World. A Puritan Artisan in Seventeenth-Century London* (Stanford, 1985), pp. vii, 2, 15, 37.

has explored the internal workings of what they sometimes term ‘the London Puritan underground’ – though they acknowledge that, in many ways, this is a misnomer (they almost prefer to speak of a ‘puritan public sphere’). Populated by a variety of ‘more or less radically Puritan divines’ and ‘quite humble lay Puritan engagés’, this ‘very active underworld’ of intra-Puritan ‘dispute, discussion, and display’ discloses ‘a vision of Puritanism more open-ended, more dynamic, more potentially fissiparous’ than usually conceded, in which the ‘Calvinist consensus’ of the Jacobean church was being ‘undermined from within as well as from without’.⁶ In *The boxmaker’s revenge. ‘Orthodoxy’, ‘heterodoxy’ and the politics of the parish in early Stuart London* (Manchester, 2001) Lake used an ‘eerily protracted altercation’ between Stephen Denison, minister of St. Katherine Creechurch, and John Etherington, a one-time box maker, to develop his notion of godly insiders. Contextualizing this dispute within intra-puritan conflicts on a local and national level regulated both by authority and the godly themselves – though not entirely successfully – he discussed the nature of Denison’s puritanism, Etherington’s alleged Familism and the London puritan scene. According to Lake, these men sought to construct themselves and their strained relationships with ‘orthodoxy, order and the national church’ by defining themselves ‘against a polemically constructed other, an ideal type of sectarian, separatist and indeed, heretical excess’. While stressing the legitimacy of puritanism as a term to denote a particular if fluid social and ideological entity in the period before the Civil War, he simultaneously destabilized the concept by noting the inherently dynamic, open-ended nature of puritan faith and experience. Questioning the notion of a sectarian tradition outside puritanism, Lake argued that ‘puritanism could generate quite enough of its own dissent and heterodoxy from within’. In addition, he suggested some ways in which the ‘order- and hierarchy-obsessed world of the godly before 1640’ was ‘connected to the ideological cacophony of the 1640s’. The discordant voices reported in Thomas Edwards’s *Gangraena* (3 parts, 1646) were thus as much the product of mainstream puritan impulses towards order and ‘orthodoxy’ as of a ‘radical or antinomian fringe’.⁷

Como’s *Blown by the Spirit. Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford, 2004) largely supports Lake’s argument: ‘to understand the disintegration of the puritan cause is to understand the course of the English Revolution’. Following T. D. Bozeman’s contention that antinomianism represented ‘a rejection of many of the most hallowed priorities of puritan religiosity’, Como considered it the ‘product of a deep structural instability within puritanism itself’; ‘a subculture within the larger English godly community, an underground within an underground’.⁸ Conceding that the ‘informal, ephemeral, and

6 D. Como and P. Lake, ‘Puritans, Antinomians and Laudians in Caroline London: The Strange Case of Peter Shaw and its Contexts’, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History*, 50 (1999): 685; P. Lake and D. Como, “‘Orthodoxy’ and Its Discontents: Dispute Settlement and the Production of “Consensus” in the London (Puritan) “Underground””, *Journal of British Studies*, 39 (2000): 34, 37, 63, 64.

7 Peter Lake, *The boxmaker’s revenge. ‘Orthodoxy’, ‘heterodoxy’ and the politics of the parish in early Stuart London* (Manchester, 2001), pp. 5, 262–63, 403, 410, 413.

8 David Como, *Blown by the Spirit. Puritanism and the Emergence of an Antinomian Underground in Pre-Civil-War England* (Stanford, 2004), pp. 20, 29, 30, 131.

even secretive nature' of anti-legalists prior to 1640 ensured that 'little documentary evidence' concerning their thought and activities remains, Como was nonetheless able to partially chronicle an 'escalating conflict', particularly in London, which served 'as a kind of womb, nurturing both people and ideas that would have significant impact during the years of civil war and revolution'.⁹ Even so, his definition of antinomian – primarily a hostile term of abuse – as embracing both a 'perfectionist' and an 'imputative' strain is arguably too broad. Hence Como's identification of 'at least five distinct nodes of anti-legal opinion' developing concurrently in early Stuart England and the so-called paradoxes of his analysis; that 'orthodox puritanism' contained the germ of antinomianism while at the same time being open to charges of legalism and works righteousness; the Somerset-born separatist minister John Traske's early beliefs accommodating 'both explicitly antinomian and strenuously legalistic elements'; the notion of a 'general non-antinomian anti-legalism'.¹⁰ That is not to detract, however, from the undoubted importance of anti-legal thought in the development of radical ideas (Como knowingly omits Anabaptism and millenarianism from his analysis). Nor is it to underestimate the connection between militant pre-Civil War puritanism and the manifest radicalism of the English Revolution.

The fragmentation of puritanism and the Presbyterian campaign against perceived schism and heresy during the Civil War is fully examined in Ann Hughes's *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2004). Though *Gangraena* was 'a disorganized text with complex or even contradictory messages and approaches' the work can be placed in a long line of anti-heretical writing. Moreover, Hughes convincingly suggests Edwards's central theme was that 'the godly faced the most serious crisis since the Reformation' and that his main polemical purpose was 'to implicate the mainstream Independents in the spread of religious chaos'.¹¹ Yet *Gangraena* was 'never a finished product', but a text 'ever in the making', by an author 'almost overwhelmed by events' who early on decided against complete coverage. Nor did Edwards possess (or was unable to exercise) 'the basic skills of the effective heresiographer – to précis, classify, and sectarianize'. Consequently, there are dangers in regarding his text as an accurate reflection of what people really thought.¹² Indeed, *Gangraena*'s trustworthiness has, rightly or wrongly, played a considerable part in wider debates; notably the extent of radicalism in the 1640s and the nature of the English Revolution. Thus for Hughes a study of *Gangraena* is concerned at the 'most fundamental level' with 'truth, the status of evidence, and the validity of arguments'. As all researchers are only too well aware, there is a real problem of what evidence does and does not say – and how far one can push it to make a point. The question of Edwards's "'accuracy'" and Hughes's attempt to check his "'facts'" brought her 'face to face with the limitations of the historian's craft where certainty can never be achieved'. While she remains convinced that Edwards 'made nothing up', so much 'cannot be checked that this must remain a provisional

9 Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, pp. 53, 74, 447.

10 Como, *Blown by the Spirit*, pp. 38, 40, 46, 166, 450.

11 Ann Hughes, *Gangraena and the Struggle for the English Revolution* (Oxford, 2004), pp. 55, 105, 107.

12 Hughes, *Gangraena*, pp. 64, 65, 73, 98, 102.

and contestable judgement'.¹³ Similar doubts about establishing a convincing truth are at the heart of the 'Ranter' debate.

In *Fear, Myth and History. The Ranters and the Historians* (Cambridge, 1986) J. Colin Davis attacked the assumptions of Hill and A.L. Morton, author of *The World of the Ranters* (1970). Both had belonged to the Communist Party Historians' Group and were accused of exaggerating the importance of the Ranters. According to Davis, abusive terms like 'Ranter' were 'witness to some sort of social struggle rather than functioning as precise cognitive signifiers or markers'. Furthermore, he detected 'a tension between the word "Ranter", as revelatory of the perception of seventeenth-century commentators, and the thing Ranter, as perceived by twentieth-century historians'. Indeed, he found no contemporary accepting the application of it to him or herself. To help identify a small core of 'Ranter ideologists' linked by common theological doctrines and a shared social programme, Davis proposed two central features of alleged Ranter thought: antinomianism and pantheism. He then set about eliminating the Ranter fringe ('new messiahs', 'new prophets' and 'new victims') before tightening the core to dispense with several alleged Ranters – George Foster, Joseph Salmon and Richard Coppin. There followed an examination of the Ranter core, which consisted of Jacob Bauthumley, Abiezer Coppe, the anonymous author of *A Justification of the Mad Crew* (1650) and Lawrence Clarkson. For Davis, the evidence suggested that 'the Ranters did not exist either as a small group of like-minded individuals, as a sect, or as a large-scale, middle-scale or small movement'. Consequently, he was forced to explain why if there were no Ranters so many contemporaries believed the contrary. Accordingly Davis ascribed literary conventions to the 'sensational' literature; 'short, racy, disapproving and at the same time prurient'. He maintained that Ranterism was 'a powerful and dangerous slur' which had to be directed 'away from the Commonwealth towards its enemies'. Amidst 'the reckless fabrication and repetitive exploitation of material' he noted two themes – the influence of atheism and the relationship between Ranterism and royalism. Moreover, sectarian exploitation of the term by Baptists, Quakers and Muggletonians kept this image of 'deviance' alive. There was thus 'no Ranter movement, no Ranter sect, no Ranter theology'.¹⁴

It is easy to pick holes in much of this. Though anxious to avoid anachronism, Davis was inconsistent, using 'pantheist' (unrecorded before 1705) and labels like 'General' and 'Particular' Baptist (unrecorded before 1717). Again, his assertion that no one acknowledged being a 'Ranter' is disingenuous. Even if Gilbert Roulston's claim to be 'a late Fellow Ranter' can be dismissed as the work of an ex-royalist hack (Davis's identification is questionable), others called themselves the 'Mad Crew' and were also termed 'High Attainers'. Indeed, most contemporaries did not appropriate an opprobrious epithet; Coppe claimed he had found 'a more excellent way' (1 Corinthians 12:31), while those scornfully called Quakers declared themselves to be Children of Light. More significantly, Davis depended entirely upon printed documents and was apparently unaware of evidence contradicting his conclusions. As this book and my

13 Hughes, *Gangraena*, pp. 9, 435.

14 J. Colin Davis, *Fear, Myth and History. The Ranters and the Historians* (Cambridge, 1986), pp. 17, 18, 20, 21, 75, 77–78, 81, 83, 92, 124.

accompanying biographical articles on Coppe and company demonstrate, he made what can be considered factual errors, dismissed inconvenient sources, overlooked Baptist influences in Coppe's writing, and severely underestimated the extent of his subjects' social networks. Nonetheless, in the furore generated by his book it has generally been ignored by Davis's critics that parts of his argument are persuasive and that some of what he said – even if he was unable to substantiate it – is correct. Davis was right to warn against taking Clarkson's autobiography or polemics by Baptists, Quakers and Muggletonians at face value. Likewise, several pamphlet and newsbook accounts of 'Ranters' were either completely fictional or mainly invented. The majority, however, mention names that can be corroborated from court records and seem to accurately reflect charges brought against the accused. 'Ranter' should therefore be used cautiously by scholars to indicate hostile yet shifting contemporary attitudes towards individuals who knew each other, usually through conventicles or Baptist congregations, espoused similar notions that were regarded as blasphemous, justified cursing through scriptural precedents and enacted shocking gestures. While none of this was exclusive to the 'Ranters', it characterizes their perceived ideas and behaviour.

Another important question has been the extent of continental influences on English puritanism in general and religious radicalism in particular. The subject was first extensively investigated by Rufus Jones, particularly in *Studies in Mystical Religion* (1909) and *Spiritual Reformers in the 16th and 17th Centuries* (1914). Jones maintained that as the Reformation developed mystics emerged who broke with Protestant theology. He identified the most significant as Hans Denck, Sebastian Franck, Caspar Schwenckfeld, Sebastian Castellio, Valentin Weigel and Jacob Boehme, whom he regarded as forerunners of Quakerism. In contrast, Geoffrey Nuttall insisted that Quakerism was the product of English contexts, growing out of 'the soil and climate of the time'. He suggested that it indicated the direction of the Puritan movement as a whole and dismissed studies of Quaker origins against a largely European background of Anabaptism, spiritualism and mysticism as primarily of academic interest.¹⁵ Following Nuttall, Nigel Smith emphasized how in their search for perfection the 'most extreme' of the radically religious attempted to 'bear witness in expression and behaviour to the immediacy and *charisma* of the Holy Spirit'. Yet, like Jones, he too acknowledged 'a body of writings mostly with continental origins, pre-, post-, and Counter-Reformation, and concerned with personal illumination' as 'a significant component in English seventeenth-century devotion'. He termed them 'mystical, Neoplatonic, and occult', exploring their influence upon or significance for English 'radical religious writers' in the central chapters of *Perfection Proclaimed. Language and Literature in English Radical Religion 1640–1660* (Oxford, 1989).¹⁶ While Smith argued that this 'flourishing' dissent 'produced its own culture, literature, and language-usages, as diverse, syncretic, and mutually interactive as the radical churches and sects themselves', he

15 Geoffrey Nuttall, *The Holy Spirit in Puritan Faith and Experience* (2nd edn, 1947; reprinted, Chicago, 1992), pp. xxvi, xxviii, 150.

16 Nigel Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed: Language and Literature in English Radical Religion 1640–1660* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 10, 107.

has been criticized for treating radical religion as if it were a category sufficiently homogenous to make valid general statements about.¹⁷ More recently, Nicholas McDowell has made new claims for the ‘social, cultural, and literary diversity’ of radicalism in the English Revolution. In *The English Radical Imagination. Culture, Religion, and Revolution, 1630–1660* (Oxford, 2003) he attempted to demonstrate the ‘interpretative advantage’ gained from recognizing the great diversity of ‘culture and education’ amongst radical groups. Focussing on interaction rather than conflict between learned and unlearned, McDowell tried combining biographical details with literary theory ‘to relate the radical beliefs expressed by writers in the 1640s and 1650s to their cultural experiences in the 1630s’.¹⁸ Though successful in illustrating how some heterodox ideas were expressed as parodies of the language and typography of conventional educational texts, his biographies sometimes work backwards from later sources and make assumptions based on established knowledge rather than incontrovertible truths.

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This book, which grew out of my PhD dissertation, is the first about Tany.¹⁹ Previous studies have discussed him within wider contexts – Judaizing, Muggletonians, Diggers, Ranters, Quakers, Behmenists, Familists, Independents, religious dissent and toleration, antinomianism, prophecy, millenarianism, glossolalia, early modern theories on the origin of language and divine signification, uses of Hebrew in the English Revolution, Islam in Interregnum England, the English Bible and the seventeenth-century Revolution, the Goldsmiths’ Company and early Stuart imperial culture, the raising of the ‘Ironsides’, popular politics and religion in Civil War London, the newsbooks of Revolutionary England, and the first Protectorate Parliament. There are also a number of bibliographical entries, and brief biographical studies. In addition, modern admirers have reissued his writings.²⁰

Eighteenth-century commentators regarded Tany as a notorious Quaker, blasphemous Jew and adversary of the Muggletonians. Their sources were hostile: a notice by the antiquary Anthony Wood, a mention in Bulstrode Whitelocke’s *Memorials of the English Affairs* (1682), Lodowick Muggleton’s posthumously published narrative *The Acts of the Witnesses of the Spirit* (1699). In 1869 the Unitarian minister and historian Alexander Gordon published a paper on the origin of the Muggletonians having read Tany’s writings preserved in the collection of the seventeenth-century London bookseller George Thomason together with several

17 Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, p. 341; J.C. Davis, ‘Puritanism and Revolution: Themes, Categories, Methods and Conclusions’, *Historical Journal*, 34 (1991): 486.

18 Nicholas McDowell, *The English Radical Imagination. Culture, Religion, and Revolution, 1630–1660* (Oxford, 2003), pp. 1, 5, 12.

19 Ariel Hessayon, ‘“Gold Tried in the Fire”: The Prophet TheaurauJohn Tany and the Puritan Revolution’, Unpublished Cambridge University Ph.D., 1996.

20 Andrew Hopton (ed.), *Thomas Tany: The Nations Right in Magna Charta discussed with the thing called Parliament with other writings of Thomas Tany (TheaurauJohn)* (Aporia press, 1988); Jarett Kobek (ed.), *TheaurauJohn Speaks! The Collected Work of Thomas Tany* (Providence, Rhode Island, 2003).

critical references: *A List of some of the Grand Blasphemers and Blasphemies* (1654), Alexander Ross's *Pansebeia: Or, A view of all Religions in the World* (second edition, 1655), Christopher Fowler's *Daemonium Meridianum. Satan at Noon* (1655). Gordon considered Tany an insane enthusiast whose head had been turned by Jacob Boehme's books. Yet there were 'bright flashes of intelligence gleaming out now and then from beneath the load of ashes and rubbish'.²¹ He said much the same in his entry on Tany for the *Dictionary of National Biography*; 'fanatic' who 'published pantheistic tracts, showing illiteracy and mania, but with some flashes of beauty'. Though Gordon had consulted additional sources, notably newsbook accounts, he was unable to provide information about Tany's life before November 1649 or after September 1655; his suggestions that there were traces of Tany's family in the parish of St. Mary Aldermary and that he was the prophet who visited the Flemish mystic Antoinette Bourignon at Amsterdam in 1667 were wrong.²² Other nineteenth- and early twentieth-century scholars agreed that Tany was an extravagant fanatic or madman. They could not decide, however, if he was a Ranter, a kind of Quaker, or something else.

Christopher Hill was more responsive, linking Tany's statements on the Norman Yoke and the redistribution of land with Gerrard Winstanley's notions, as well as noting his scheme to restore the Jews to their native land. He showed that Tany moved in 'very radical circles', a theme developed in *The World Turned Upside Down*. Hill thought Tany an eccentric individual and acknowledged that it was very difficult to extract any coherent principles from his expressed views. Having included him among the Ranters because he was sometimes called one, Hill concluded that Tany 'was probably, as he ingenuously confessed, mad', 'but he expressed very seditious views in his madness'.²³ For Hill's student, J.F. McGregor, Tany was 'a highly eccentric enthusiast', who 'has been described as a Ranter more frequently by historians than by his contemporaries'. Davis went further, observing that Tany 'rejected the labels of Ranter and antinomian'. He maintained that Tany's 'strange language comes close to a pantheist universalism, but he never entirely rejects the notion of sin'. Consequently, under the criteria of Davis's discussion, Tany could not be accepted as a Ranter.²⁴ Even so, Jerome Friedman called Tany 'perhaps the most provocative and radical of all Ranters' and 'certainly the most insane'. His suggestion that Tany 'combined neo-Gnostic dualism with an extreme intellectual anarchism and an absolute faith in his divinity' has, however, gained little support since he failed to demonstrate how Gnostic thought was transmitted through the ages.

21 A.Gordon, 'The Origin of the Muggletonians', *Proceedings of the Literary and Philosophical Society of Liverpool*, 23 (1869): 264.

22 A.Gordon, 'Tany, Thomas (fl. 1649–1655)', *Dictionary of National Biography* (published 1898); cf. Joseph Chester (ed.), *The Parish Registers of St. Mary Aldermary, London 1558–1754*, Harleian Society (1880), p. 19; George Garden, *An Apology for M. Antonia Bourignon* (1699), p. 299.

23 Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1990 edn), pp. 89, 143, 305; Hill, *World Turned Upside Down*, pp. 204, 225–26, 282.

24 J. F. McGregor, 'Seekers and Ranters', in J. Frank McGregor and Barry Reay (eds), *Radical Religion in the English Revolution* (Oxford, 1984), p. 133; Davis, *Fear, Myth and History*, p. 27.

Brian Gibbons likewise emphasized the importance of dualism in Ranter theology, though he believed it was probably mediated through ‘the Weigelian-Behmenist synthesis of medieval mysticism and Renaissance Hermeticism’. Accordingly, he compared Tany’s ideas with contemporaries he regarded as forming part of a ‘Ranter’ movement. E.P. Thompson looked in the same direction. Yet he found it difficult to say how much came to Tany through the ‘Familist tradition’, how much from Boehme, how much from ‘the general radical and Ranting milieu’, and how much was his own variation upon all these themes.²⁵

While Tany’s place within the ‘Ranter’ debate was sometimes contested, historians accepted his significance in their accounts of Judaizing in early modern England. Thus David Katz devoted half a chapter of *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England 1603–1655* (Oxford, 1982) to the activities of Tany and John Robins, with whom he has often been associated. Nonetheless, Katz uncritically used the Scottish biblical scholar Alexander Ross’s representation of Tany’s theological views, deeming them a ‘neat summary’ of a ‘confused collection of radical religious notions’. Katz insisted that Tany knew ‘less than nothing’ about Hebrew, dismissed the incident in the lobby outside Parliament as a ‘slapstick raid’, and confused St. George’s Fields (between Lambeth Marsh and Southwark) with the location of the Digger colony on St. George’s Hill near Walton-upon-Thames, Surrey. His narrative illustrated the importance of Tany and Robins to the readmission of the Jews by locating their ‘notorious and scandalous careers’ within Protestant millenarian exegesis. Yet despite using newsbooks overlooked by Gordon, he too was unable to extend Tany’s life backwards or forwards beyond what was already known.²⁶ Katz returned to Tany with the publication of a manuscript version of Tany’s ‘Edictorie Vnto all the Jewes the whole Earth ouer’ (1653). This document had been discovered and photographed by Cecil Roth, in whose papers the photograph remains. Roth, however, did not indicate where he saw the manuscript.²⁷ Katz’s assertion that Tany had no knowledge of Hebrew was subsequently challenged by Nigel Smith, who spotted that the first five letters of TheaurauJohn spelled Theau, a transliterated play on ת – that is *thau*, the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet. Similarly, N.I. Matar noticed Tany’s use of the word ‘Allah’, although his remark that ‘even in the subconscious of the insane, the Koranic name of God reverberated’ did nothing to elucidate Tany’s knowledge of Islam or Arabic.²⁸

25 Jerome Friedman, *Blasphemy, Immorality and Anarchy: The Ranters and the English Revolution* (Athens, Ohio, 1987), p. 167; B. Gibbons, ‘Debate. Fear, Myth and Furore: Reappraising the Ranters’, *Past & Present*, 140 (1993): 181, 184; E. P. Thompson, *Witness against the Beast. William Blake and the Moral Law* (Cambridge, 1993), pp. 28–31.

26 David Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England 1603–1655* (Oxford, 1982), pp. 107, 108, 110, 117, 119.

27 D. S. Katz, ‘The Restoration of the Jews: Thomas Tany to World Jewry (1653)’, in J. van den Berg and E. G. E. van der Wall (eds), *Jewish-Christian Relations in the Seventeenth-Century: Studies and Documents* (Dordrecht, 1988), pp. 187–93.

28 N. Smith, ‘The Uses of Hebrew in the English Revolution’, in Peter Burke and Roy Porter (eds), *The Social History of Language* (Oxford, 1991), p. 65; N. I. Matar, ‘Islam in Interregnum and Restoration England’, *The Seventeenth Century*, 6 (1991): 59.

An equally significant issue has been the extent of Jacob Boehme's influence, especially among religious radicals. This aspect of Tany's thought was dealt with harshly in a footnote by Serge Hutin. It has also been partially explored by Smith. He argued that Tany 'did not read Boehme extensively and distil a philosophy from him which resembled the original in general terms'. According to Smith, Tany combined his inconsistent borrowings from Boehme with gleanings from other occult ideas but his writings display 'no genuine contiguous set of insights which collectively could be said to constitute a cosmology'.²⁹ In response, readers may turn to chapter twelve, 'The book of Theos-ologi according to TheaurauJohn', which offers a reconstruction of Tany's cosmology – including his understanding of cosmogony, anthropology and soteriology. Similarly, in his analysis of Behmenism and the Interregnum spiritualists Gibbons highlighted Tany's use of masculine and feminine imagery. He suggested that Tany made Christ 'the masculine counterpart of a feminine creation' in the story of Adam and Eve, though he made little sense of a passage concerning the Virgin. In addition, Gibbons stated that Tany believed in 'the duality of Adam's sex' and that in common with John Pordage's associates Tany had a developed sense of sexual asceticism. Consequently, within Gibbons's version of the 'Ranter milieu' Tany's advocacy of celibacy counterpoints the "libertine" sexual ethic' of men such as Abiezer Coppe and Lawrence Clarkson.³⁰ Some of these inferences are perceptive. Pordage was charged with giving a rabbinical interpretation to Genesis 1:27 in which male symbolized the deity and female the humanity. His community at Bradfield, moreover, were said to have cried down sexual relations and appear to have objected to the lawfulness of marriage. Furthermore, Tany compared the creation to God's weak woman and Christ's spouse. Likewise, following Boehme, he conceived a first fall in which the fallen angels took on earthly forms called men, represented by a hermaphrodite Adam dwelling in the Garden of Eden. However, while Tany instructed his followers to refrain from kissing when greeting one another and advised husbands and wives to remain pure by avoiding sleeping next to each other in bed, he advocated marital sexual intercourse with kissing when the intention was procreation.

Tany claimed that all tongues and languages under heaven and upon the earth had been revealed to him together with the secret knowledge of how to interpret them. Drawing on influences ranging from the Behmenist concept of signatures to Adamic naming he developed a linguistic system that placed great stress on 'Radaxes' – the unspeakable truth contained in the original radicals. Unsurprisingly, his glossolalia and theory of signification have generated comment. For Hugh Ormsby-Lennon, Tany's purported Adamic ability to unravel etymologies was 'no better than the vision of a madman clouded by the show of things', while his glossolalia was 'a gibberish of his own making'. Less critical if equally unhelpful was Clement Hawes' verdict that Tany's texts 'are so focused on hieroglyphic connotations that they completely fragment the verbal surface, seeming to dissolve into a private macaronic

29 Serge Hutin, *Les Disciples Anglais de Jacob Boehme aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris, 1960), p. 233 n. 207; Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, pp. 190, 214.

30 Brian Gibbons, *Gender in Mystical and Occult Thought. Behmenism and its Development in England* (Cambridge, 1996), pp. 129, 132, 133, 134, 135, 138, 139.

surrealism'.³¹ In contrast, Smith recognized that Tany had 'taken pains to establish his own pattern of linguistic descent which has no small degree of sophistication, if equally no small degree of dishonesty'. He also observed that Tany 'reassigns some English letters' so that English 'begins to approximate to the original language'. This is shrewd, but Smith could have added that the English letters Tany excluded were those he believed had no equivalent in Hebrew. More problematic is Smith's assumption that for Tany the Hebrew spoken by seventeenth-century Jews was the same as that spoken since the time of Babel and no different from Old Testament Hebrew.³² This is debatable. Tany supposed that the first Hebrew had been written 'Hieroglyphically'. This primal Hebrew consisted of seven characters that were the letters of creation. Furthermore, he declared that whereas Moses had written Hebrew in its 'virgin state', the Hebrew studied by Biblical critics of his own day was 'the tenth derivacy' of the Hebrew 'radiases' and had been corrupted by human intervention. Indeed, he appears to have known that the Hebrew Bible had been written without punctuation or vowel points, blaming the Papacy for introducing 'subtile pointings' in the Scriptures.

Incidents from Tany's eventful life have also been incorporated within larger frameworks. Thus Tany's and Norwood's trial and conviction on the charge of blasphemy has been touched on in studies by Alan Cromartie, Keith Lindley and John Coffey.³³ Similarly, Tany's encounter with John Reeve and Lodowick Muggleton on 4 February 1652 has ensured his presence in discussions of the Muggletonians. Christopher Hill, for example, thought it pretty clear that Tany was 'mentally deranged'. In the same vein, T.L. Underwood mentioned Tany in his introduction to a new edition of Muggleton's *Acts of the Witnesses* – even if he followed Gordon and Katz rather than recent research.³⁴ Tany's public bible burning also came to Hill's attention in his treatment of the Bible and radical politics. Yet his explanation for Tany's deed was inadequate since he quoted unsympathetic contemporaries instead of examining Tany's writings.³⁵ As for what happened in the lobby outside Parliament, R.L. Greaves and R.Zaller called this 'inspired guerrilla theatre' which 'embodied the contradictions of a world turned upside down'. Although their entry

31 Hugh Ormsby-Lennon, "'The Dialect of those Fanatick Times": Language Communities and English Poetry from 1580 to 1660', Unpublished University of Pennsylvania Ph.D., 1977, pp. 369–70; Clement Hawes, *Mania and Literary Style. The Rhetoric of Enthusiasm from the Ranters to Christopher Smart* (Cambridge, 1996), p. 59.

32 Smith, *Perfection Proclaimed*, pp. 304, 307.

33 Alan Cromartie, *Sir Matthew Hale 1609–1676: law, religion, and natural philosophy* (Cambridge, 1995), p. 174; Keith Lindley, *Popular Politics and Religion in Civil War London* (Aldershot, 1997), p. 71; John Coffey, *Persecution and Toleration in Protestant England 1558–1689* (Harlow, 2000), p. 150.

34 C. Hill, 'John Reeve and the Origins of Muggletonianism', in Christopher Hill, Barry Reay and William Lamont, *The World of the Muggletonians* (1983), p. 69; T. L. Underwood (ed.), *The Acts of the Witnesses: The Autobiography of Lodowick Muggleton and Other Early Muggletonian Writings* (Oxford, 1999), p. 5.

35 Christopher Hill, *The English Bible and the Seventeenth-Century Revolution* (1993), pp. 233, 243–44.

on Tany for the *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals* is full of errors, their conclusion is just as noteworthy:

in its combination of madness and insight no career cast a more oddly penetrating light on the crisis of the Interregnum than Tany's.³⁶

*

This is not a biography. Nor was it meant to be. This is not a linear narrative. Nor was it meant to be. This is not a conventional work of history. Nor was it meant to be. Like Carlo Ginzburg's *The Cheese and The Worms: The Cosmos of a Sixteenth-Century Miller* ([1976], 1980), which used Domenico Scandella, known as Menocchio, to revise the accepted relationship between elite and popular culture, so 'Gold tried in the Fire'. *The prophet TheaurauJohn Tany and the English Revolution* uses its subject to ask questions about the nature of History and how it should be written. It does not claim to provide all the answers, but I hope at least it will give some suggestions. One of the challenges has been to marry the particular to the general, to establish some kind of certainty about minute details so as to speak with authority about the bigger picture. It has not always been easy. Nor should it be. What can be said with certainty I have said. What cannot I have indicated. The issue, of course, is whether the necessary use of conditional statements weakens my – or any – argument. If one were arguing about the relative merits of competing fictions I do not think this would matter. But for most historians who still believe in a recoverable past – however partial – it still does. Therefore what is at stake here is a vision of an aspect of that past that competes with other interpretations. It is for the reader to privilege the most persuasive.

³⁶ R. L. Greaves and R. Zaller, 'Tany (or Tani, Tannye), Thomas (*alias* TheaurauJohn) (fl.1649–1655)', in Richard Greaves and Richard Zaller (eds), *Biographical Dictionary of British Radicals* (3 vols, Brighton, 1982–84), vol. 3, pp. 223–24.

PART I

Genesis



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Chapter 1

Genesis

Nothing that has taken place should be lost to history
[Walter Benjamin, *Theses on the Philosophy of History*]

His name was Thomas Totney. He was baptized on 21 January 1608 in the parish of South Hykeham, Lincolnshire. He was the third but eldest surviving son of John and Anne Totney. His father John Totney came from the village of Little Shelford, Cambridgeshire.¹

Little Shelford, Cambridgeshire: The Totneys

Little Shelford is about six kilometres south of Cambridge, in the deanery of Barton, on the south-west bank of the river Cam. It is very flat, and lies mostly on the Lower Chalk, with a strip of alluvium and valley gravels along the river. Described as ‘fruitfully seated both for corn & Grass’, the village was favoured for hunting and hawking and known for its wholesome air.² The parish consisted of about 1,200 acres. Within the parish bounds there was a meadow, held in common, and three fields of arable land known by the seventeenth century as Middle field, White field and Danford field. These fields were divided into parcels known by the tenants’ names and by such names as ‘Bragge’ and ‘Angell Harpe’. Much of the land was held as copyhold by local farmers and the main crops grown were barley, saffron and peas. Villagers also kept cows, sheep, horses and pigs. The trees were largely oak, ash, elm, maple and willow. There was a water-mill used for grinding corn (usually wheat) and some inhabitants may have fished in the Cam. A bridge spanned the shallow brook, connecting Little with Great Shelford. Originally made of wood, it was rebuilt in stone by the 1630s. In the 1660s the foundations had become clogged with weeds and flags. This area of the river bank appears to have served as a dump for muck and manure. Unusually, Little Shelford had only one manor. This was held in the eleventh and twelfth centuries by the de Scalers family. In 1231 the manor passed by marriage into the possession of the Freville family. There it remained until 1577 when George Freville and his relations alienated the manor and other parish lands to John Banckes. Banckes proceeded to dismember the manor, alienating land, the water-mill and fishing rights before selling the chief demesne and the manor house to Tobias Palavicino. Palavicino’s manor house was occupied in the early seventeenth

1 Tany, *Hear, O Earth*, brs.; Lincs AO, Bishops’ Transcripts, South Hykeham; GL, MS 5576/1 fol. 64r; Cambs RO, CCE CW: Will of John Totney of Little Shelford (probate 22 December 1638).

2 BL, Add. MS 5823 fol. 56r.

century by Henry Wriothesley, third Earl of Southampton and was also leased to Thomas Coteele, a London merchant. In 1628 Palavicino sold the manor house and his demesne to John Gill of Northamptonshire for 3,300*l*. John Banckes's widow, Priscilla, retained the manor of Little Shelford until 1634. Afterwards, Banckes's son sold the manor to Daniel Wigmore, Archdeacon of Ely. The old manor house, seat of the Frevilles, was decorated with tapestries in the 1520s and contained a hall, two parlours, a great chamber and several little chambers. Rebuilt by Palavicino in the early seventeenth century in the Italian style as a three-storey brick structure with gabled wings and a large piazza the manor house was accounted a 'delicate neat' dwelling.³ The local church was dedicated to All Saints and said to be 'very great & comely'. It was a stone structure, parts of the nave dating from the twelfth and fifteenth centuries, the chancel from the thirteenth, and the vestry and tower from the early fourteenth.⁴ Grave covers from the Saxon and post-Conquest period were also worked into the building. On the steeple was a cross. Often in decay the church was in constant need of cleaning and repair. Incorporated in the interior was a south chapel belonging to the lords of the manor. Most likely seating for the parishioners was set, with families having rights to particular pews (whole or in part). Among the church ornaments were a rood-screen, figures of saints in alabaster and a number of stained glass windows. There were also several monuments to the Freville family – images, coats of arms and accompanying inscriptions in the chancel windows, and some sepulchral brasses dating from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. On an altar tomb in an arch of the north wall of the chancel was a stone effigy of Sir John de Freville, a knight of St. John of Jerusalem who died in the reign of Edward II, fully armoured, legs crossed, sword by his side, a lion at his feet, incised lettering above his head. The octagonal stone font was early fourteenth century. In the sixteenth century there was a pair of copper censers and two candlesticks, while the pulpit dated from 1633 and a silver chalice and paten from 1638. Light was provided by torches, lanterns and candles in times of darkness. The living was a rectory, valued at 15*l*. 9*s*. 8*d*. in the reign of Henry VIII, and at 100*l*. in 1650. The advowson was in the patronage of the lords of the manor. During the sixteenth century several rectors were non-resident, their duties taken over by a curate. In 1615 the rectory had two barns, a hayhouse, a stable, gardens and an orchard. No rectors are known to have been presented for non-residence during this period. In a survey made for the Bishop of Ely in 1563 Little Shelford was listed as having twenty-two households. Though the population could slump in times of dearth and plague (thirty-eight burials were recorded for the old style years 1625 and 1626) it continued to rise steadily: the mean number of baptisms per annum between 1601 (o.s.) and 1627 (o.s.) was 6.85, the mean number of burials 5.48. By the 1660s there were between thirty-five and forty households in the parish. The majority of the inhabitants were tied to the land, but in the early seventeenth century the parish also had a miller, blacksmith, carpenter, tailor and victualler. From the late sixteenth century there was, moreover, a schoolmaster in neighbouring Great Shelford. In the 1660s many villagers lived in two room cottages with no second floor or three roomed dwellings with hall,

3 BL, Add. MS 5823 fol. 56v.

4 BL, MS Harleian 6768 fol. 69r.

parlour and service room. Some husbandmen and yeomen had additional service rooms and upper rooms. The contents of these homes reflected wealth and social status. At their deaths some villagers' possessions amounted to little more than a bed, mattress, pair of sheets, pillow and blanket; others might have a chest, trunk, table and chairs, candlesticks, pewter dishes, brass pots, frying pan, kettle, cheese press, kneading trough, a quern for grinding corn and a stone trough in the yard for the horse. A few literate parishioners may have owned a Bible, and perhaps also other printed material; books (possibly devotional works), pamphlets, chapbooks, almanacs, ballads and the like. The wealthier sort wore fine or course woollen gowns, doublets and jackets over their undergarments; their widows, petticoats and gowns. The clothing of the poor is unrecorded. The church bells – when not broken and ropes were available – were rung on Coronation day and other special occasions. The lives of most of the inhabitants seem to have revolved around the agricultural year and it is likely that a variety of local customs were observed. A villager may have subsisted on a diet of barley bread, butter, cheese (perhaps flavoured with saffron), garden vegetables (possibly cabbage, cauliflower and peas), and meat (most likely bacon). To drink there was beer brewed from barley. Sometimes a parishioner might keep an alehouse. There were, in addition, several inns, notably the 'White Lion' in nearby Trumpington and the 'Katherine Wheel' on Trumpington Street in Cambridge. Village pastimes included morris dancing, bowls, and football – played now and then on Sundays against neighbouring villages. Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the inhabitants of Little Shelford were presented before the church courts. Offences varied. Some failed to receive communion or attend church, others worked on the Sabbath or holy days. There were also a host of sexual misdemeanours: suspected whoredom, incontinent living (fornication, adultery), and begetting or harbouring bastard children.

*

The name Totney comes from the Old English personal name *Totta* and probably means *Totta's island of land, a piece of dry ground in a fen or marsh*.⁵ Totneys had been living in Little Shelford since at least 1279, though their presence there supposedly dated back to the Norman Conquest. Writing in the 1630s, the Cambridgeshire antiquarian John Layer recorded the survival of a 'Tradition'. He had been told by the locals of a certain Barnard de Freville, said to have possessed the manor of Little Shelford after the Conquest, who had come into England:

w[*i*]th W[*illia*]m the Conqueror, [and] brought w[*i*]th him one Totney his serv[*an*]t. Whom they say he made his homager of certain Lands in this Town, & that their Posterities have

⁵ Kenneth Cameron, *The Place-Names of Lincolnshire. Part Two*, English Place Name Society, 64–65 (1991), p. 127. A 'Totney Close' was recorded in Goxhill, Lincolnshire in 1648, though the name appears not to have been known in that county before the early seventeenth century.

lived & continued here ever since ... only Totney outlived the Frevile a while, & hath left some memory of his Name behind him there w[hi]ch the other has not.⁶

The name Totney is not recorded in the lists of the companions of William the Conqueror, though the name Freville is – as is the name Tany. Nor does the name Totney occur in the Cambridgeshire section of the Domesday Book. Indeed, of the early members of the Totney family little is known. A John Totney was named in an inquisition of 1325, fined in 1325–26 and assessed for a lay subsidy in 1327.⁷ A William Totney witnessed a will in 1487 and was named in a deed of 1490. His will was made probate in 1499.⁸ A Thomas Totney married a woman called Alice, witnessed a will in 1522, and may have been assessed in the subsidy of 1523–24. His will was made probate in 1525 and included the customary offering to the high altar for tithes negligently forgotten as well as gifts to the sepulchre, the guild of 'Our Lady's Light' and a contribution towards the restoration of the church steeple. The scribal formula for bequeathing his soul was after the orthodox Catholic fashion.⁹ A daughter named Rose Totney was left money by the lady of the manor in 1529.¹⁰ A William Totney married a woman named Elizabeth and witnessed wills made in 1537 and 1539. His will was made probate in 1540 and included a donation towards the repair of the church bells. His soul was bequeathed in a manner consonant with orthodox Catholic doctrine.¹¹ A son named John Totney was given two bushels of barley and his father's coat in 1546. A man of the same name was assessed in the subsidy of 1558.¹²

It seems likely that the Totneys were modest yeoman farmers. Recorded as tenants of the lord of the manor in the sixteenth and early seventeenth century, they occupied a messuage in the 1620s and held a small amount of copyhold land – some twenty acres of arable and four acres of meadow. This land was probably divided into parcels and lay in Little Shelford and the neighbouring parishes of Hauxton, Harston and Newton.¹³ The first Totney of whom something substantial is known was John Totney, grandfather of Thomas. John Totney and his wife were presented before the church courts in 1569 for permitting eating and drinking in

6 BL, Add. MS 5823 fol. 56v, printed in William Palmer, *John Layer (1586–1640) of Shepreth, Cambridgeshire. A Seventeenth-Century Local Historian* (Cambridge, 1935), p. 109.

7 NA, C 143/174 no. 15; Walter Rye (ed.), *Pedes Finium: or Fines, relating to the County of Cambridge* (Cambridge, 1891), p. 91; J. J. Muskett, 'Lay Subsidies. Cambridgeshire. 1 Edward III', *The East Anglian*, n.s. 11 (1905–06): 296.

8 Cambs RO, CCE VC 4 fol. 42r; NA, C 146/3261; Cambs RO, CCE VC 4 fol. 133r-v: Will of William Totnay of Little Shelford (probate 1499).

9 Cambs RO, CCE VC 8 fol. 77v; NA, E 179/81/130; Cambs RO, CCE VC 8 fol. 84r-v: Will of Thomas Todney of Little Shelford (probate 1 March 1525).

10 Cambs RO, CCE VC 8 fol. 155r.

11 Cambs RO, C.C.E VC 10 fol. 99; Cambs RO, CCE VC 10 fol. 155r; Cambs RO, CCE CW: Will of William Tottney of Little Shelford (probate June 1540).

12 Cambs RO, CCE VC 9 fol. 165; NA, E 179/82/234.

13 NA, C 66/1168 mem. 22; NA, C 142/385 no. 13, contemporary copy in Cambs RO, 126/M 42 [reverse]; Herts RO, MS 63,849 fols 81, 107.

their alehouse during divine service, a charge most likely indicating their poverty. In 1579 they were presented together with another married couple for failing to receive communion for almost a year. All four were described as malicious and slanderous persons living out of charity, suggesting a neighbourly dispute. Shortly afterwards the contending parties were reconciled before the rector and agreed to receive communion together.¹⁴ In the last years of his life John Totney seems to have been well-established within the social hierarchy of the village community. He could sign his own name, witnessed fellow parishioners' wills, and held the offices of sidesman in 1596 (o.s.) and churchwarden in 1599 (o.s.) and 1602 (o.s.).¹⁵ He also hired a cow from year to year belonging to the church, the rent going to benefit the poor. After a time, however, in what may have been a common abuse of local influence, he stopped paying the rent and sold the cow. In 1596 he was successfully sued and made to recompense the poor of the village. He died in 1605.¹⁶

John Totney had several children. A daughter named Alice married, was widowed and remarried John Bassingbourne, a widower and subsidyman who served five times or more as churchwarden of Little Shelford. Another daughter married Henry Bagshawe, tailor of Little Shelford. John Totney's two surviving sons were named after himself and the pair became known as John the elder and John the younger. The elder brother married Margery Trigg (*née* Marshall) of Albury, Hertfordshire in July 1602.¹⁷ She was the daughter of a husbandman and apparently a widow. For a woman of lower-middling social status Margery brought into the match a fair sized piece of property as her dowry – a parcel of freehold land that was to be sold for 30l.¹⁸ John the elder and Margery had at least two children. A son named John died in infancy.¹⁹ A daughter, Margaret, married aged twenty-two William Wise, a wealthy widower from neighbouring Great Shelford.²⁰ Wise had served as a churchwarden several times and held a substantial amount of freehold and copyhold land, including over fifty acres in the manor of Great Shelford.

John Totney the elder was presented for working 'in the time of divine service' on Sunday, 15 September 1605 – perhaps forsaking church for the more necessary task of gathering the summer harvest – and again in 1609 for 'cartinge upon Hallowmas day' (All Saints' day, 1 November). Like several other villagers, he had borrowed money from a local livestock farmer and moneylender. He died in 1627.²¹

14 CUL, EDR D/2/8 fols 51v, 56r, 70v; CUL, EDR D/2/10 fol. 208r.

15 Cambs RO, CCE VC 19 fol. 132; Cambs RO, CCE CW: Will of Lettice Ormes of Little Shelford (probate 10 November 1606); CUL, EDR B/2/16 (no foliation); CUL, EDR B/2/17 fol. 47r; CUL, EDR H 3: Little Shelford, no. 2.

16 CUL, EDR B/2/13 fols 55r, 157r, 170r; CUL, Add. MS 6605 nos 215, 216; CUL, EDR H 3: Little Shelford, no. 4.

17 Herts RO, D/P 1/1/1.

18 GL, MS 25,626/2 fol. 155r-v; Herts RO, MS 79,342; Herts RO, MS 79,343.

19 CUL, EDR H 3: Little Shelford, nos 10, 12.

20 CUL, EDR H 3: Little Shelford, no. 4; CUL, EDR H 3: Great Shelford, no. 26; CUL, EDR H 3: Little Shelford, no. 26, printed in A. Gibbons (ed.), *Ely Episcopal Records* (Lincoln, 1891), p. 355. The marriage was presumably by banns.

21 CUL, EDR B/2/25 fol. 3r; CUL, EDR B/2/28 fol. 138r; NA, Prob 11/131 fol. 13r; CUL, EDR H 3: Little Shelford, no. 27.

His wife Margery appears to have died five years later. Unsurprisingly in an age of high mortality rates, the provisions of John the elder's will had been thorough. On the death of his widow Margery, his respectably sized copyhold lands passed to his daughter Margaret. And if Margaret died without an heir, John's property was to go to his brother's eldest son – 'Thomas Totney his nephew and his heirs for ever'.²² Margaret, however, outlived her first husband, remarried, and was survived by a son. The lands of one old family of Cambridgeshire yeomen, the Totneys, appear to have passed into the hands of another, the Wises, and Thomas Totney, the eldest surviving son of a younger son, got nothing.

South Hykeham, Lincolnshire: John Totney the younger

South Hykeham is about ten kilometres south-west of Lincoln, in the deanery of Graffoe, and lies on rising ground between the river Witham and one of its tributary streams. Close by lay the ancient Foss-way running between Lincoln and Leicester, poorly maintained, and by the eighteenth century heavily overgrown with gorse. The terrain was suitable for cattle feeding and sheep grazing, the soil of lias clay, gravels and alluvial deposits considered of inferior quality for farming. The parish consisted of about 1,800 acres of which over 600 were in the hamlet of Haddington to the south. Within the parish bounds there was a pond, marsh and meadow land, and common pasture for cattle in Haddington. The three fields of arable land were known in the late sixteenth century as South field, West field and East field. These fields comprised of parcels of land known by the tenants' names and of closes with such names as 'Damker', 'Clapitt' and 'Lameberie'. Much of the land seems to have been held as leasehold by local farmers and the main crops grown were wheat, rye and oats. Villagers also kept cattle, sheep, horses, pigs, poultry and bees. There was a windmill on Beacon hill and the lord of the manor enjoyed fishing rights. Recorded in the Domesday book, the village of [South] Hykeham appears to have been a pre-Conquest settlement. By the thirteenth century the manor had passed into the hands of the Wake family. In the fifteenth century it was held by the Sutton family, who retained it until 1551, when Ambrose Sutton sold it to Humphrey Orme. Sir Humphrey Orme sold the manor to Sir Julius Adelmare (alias Caesar) for 5050*l.* in 1604. Known locally as 'the hall', the manor house at the beginning of the seventeenth century had stables, barns, beast houses, outhouses, orchards, gardens and a dovecote.²³ Sir Julius conveyed the manor to his youngest son, Robert Caesar, in 1631. Like many Lincolnshire churches, that at South Hykeham was dedicated to St. Michael and All Angels. There were also chapels dedicated to St. Nicholas at Haddington and to St.

22 Cambs RO, CCE CW: Will of John Totney (probate 7 April 1627); Herts RO, MS 63,849 fols 81, 107. John Totney farmed lands belonging to a Mr Dewport valued at 4*l.* per annum in the lay subsidy of 1621–22. In the lay subsidies of 1624–25 and 1625–26 he was assessed in lands valued at 20*s.* per annum. His widow Margery was assessed in the lay subsidy of 1628–29 for two subsidies in lands valued at 2*l.*, see; NA, E 179/83/360; NA, E 179/83/373; NA, E 179/83/331; NA, E 179/83/391.

23 Lincs AO, Brownlow muniments, 1/1/49/6; Lincs AO, Brownlow muniments, 1/1/49/7.

Leonard in North Hykeham. The church was built of stone, the lower parts of the west tower dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the spire from the fourteenth. Both church and chancel were in good repair in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century. During the Reformation many items associated with Popery were destroyed or defaced; the rood, altar stones, vestments, a pair of censers and a mass book. The small figure of a dragon in a niche on the steeple, however, together with the lower part of the chancel screen appear to have been spared. Among the church ornaments were a silver chalice and paten marked with the date letter for 1569 and a pewter flagon that may also be assigned to this period. The stone font may have been replaced with a pewter basin at the rebuilding of the church in 1724. Two handbells were defaced at the Reformation and of the remaining church bells all save one may have been melted. The surviving bell was probably replaced or recast towards the end of the sixteenth century. The living was a rectory, valued at 19*l.* 16*s.* 2*d.* in the reign of Henry VIII, and at 100*l.* in the mid-seventeenth century. The advowson, formerly held by the abbey and convent of Bourne, passed at the dissolution of the monasteries into the patronage of the crown. There was no rectory and during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries rectors were usually non-resident, their duties taken over by a curate. Tithes were paid according to custom at Easter. In a survey of the Diocese of Lincoln made in 1563 South Hykeham was listed as having eighteen households. By 1603 the parish had about one hundred communicants. Times of dearth and plague, though, could be devastating – a total of forty-four burials were recorded for the old style years 1615 and 1617. Famine and disease, together with migration, suggest that the parochial population may have remained constant. Indeed, the mean number of baptisms per annum between 1599 (o.s.) and 1626 (o.s.) was 11.96, the mean number of burials 11.66. The prime agricultural concern was the rearing of animals and the cultivation of crops, though subsidiary activities like spinning, weaving and dairying (particularly cheese-making) were also in evidence. Some villagers may have lived in two room cottages or three roomed dwellings, while a yeoman might have a hall, parlour, kitchen and buttery, service rooms, an additional upstairs room, and outhouses for milk, beer, bees and animals. The contents of these homes reflected wealth and social status. At their deaths some villagers' possessions amounted to little more than a bed, bolster, pillows, sheets and blanket. Others might have a musket, sword and dagger, bow and arrows, table and chairs, table cloth, napkins, candlesticks, brass pots and pans, pewter dishes and kettles. For winter fuel there was wood, coal, turf and gorse. The clergy and some yeomen possessed books, notably the Bible. Some widows wore hats and gowns, often dyed in bright colours. The main elements of a subsistence diet were most likely bread, butter, cheese, garden greens, bacon and beer, though a funeral feast could provide larger fare with dressed veal, mutton, pork, capon, chicken and pigeon for the mourners. Children and adolescents may have been more tempted by raisins, almonds, figs and the like. A variety of local customs may have been observed, including the feast of St. Michael the Archangel (Michaelmas, 29 September) to celebrate the gathering of the summer harvest. In the 1640s, and perhaps before, there may have been an alehouse. Like their neighbours, throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the inhabitants of South Hykeham were presented before the church courts. Offences varied. One parishioner was presented for quarrelling and drinking during divine service. Another, allegedly fearing a writ,

failed to attend church and receive communion at Easter. Others were charged with sexual misdemeanours: incontinent living and begetting bastard children.

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Probably sometime before the year 1600 John Totney the younger left Little Shelford. By that date he would have reached the stage of adolescence in the life-cycle and as the younger son of a yeoman his opportunities were likely to have been limited in his native parish. Perhaps he went to find work as a farm servant. If so, he may have found employment through a traditional pattern of contacts – distant kin, old family friends and one-time neighbours. It seems plausible to assume that when John Totney felt he had saved sufficient capital to establish his own household he decided to marry. This he did in June 1604 when he and one Anne Snelle were wed in the parish church of Aubourn, Lincolnshire.²⁴ The couple settled in the neighbouring parish of South Hykeham and had several children. Their first two sons, Roger and Henry, both died in infancy. The third was named Thomas. He was baptized on 21 January 1608 (St. Agnes's Day), probably aged eight days or less, on a Thursday rather than the customary Sunday. St. Agnes's Day was rarely observed after the Reformation and was not an approved holy day in the Book of Common Prayer, suggesting that Thomas Totney may have been baptized in the home rather than at church. Perhaps he was a sickly baby, though it is noteworthy that at South Hykeham the majority of baptisms in 1608 (o.s.) took place neither on a Sunday nor on an approved holy day, but on an ordinary week day. Thomas had two younger brothers, John and Michael, and a younger sister called Mary.²⁵

Thomas Totney was to claim that his parents were 'poor'.²⁶ This may have been true. His father was not one of the three wealthiest men in South Hykeham. He never, for example, contributed to a Parliamentary subsidy. Nonetheless, it may be suspected that Thomas Totney was being somewhat disingenuous. In March 1605 John Totney was described as occupying one tenement in South Hykeham. By the following month he had released this into the hands of the lord of the manor. Two years later he was paying an annual rent of 15*l.* 0*s.* 6*d.* on his lands, putting him

24 Lincs AO, Bishops' Transcripts, Aubourn, marriage of 'John Totnay & Anne Snelle' (Sunday, 10 June 1604), printed in W.P.W. Phillimore, A.K. Maples and R.E.G. Cole (eds), *Lincolnshire Parish Registers: Marriages* (11 vols, 1905–21), vol. 3, p. 118. In the early nineteenth century the city of Lincoln held a market on May Day at which many farm servants were hired. If this custom dated back to the seventeenth century and before, a June marriage may suggest that had John Totney been a farm servant he would have been hired and released from his annual contract on 1 May, see; *The Lincoln and Lincolnshire Cabinet and Annual Intelligencer of Public Business* (Lincoln, 1828), p. 120.

25 Lincs AO, Bishops' Transcripts, South Hykeham, baptism of Roger Totney (Sunday, 14 April 1605), burial of Roger Totney (10 May 1605), baptism of Henry Totney (Saturday, 25 October 1606), burial of Henry Totney (22 February 1607), baptism of 'Thomas the sonne of John Totney' (Thursday, 21 January 1608), baptism of John Totney (Sunday, 5 August 1610), baptism of Mary Totney (Tuesday, 26 January 1613), baptism of Michael Totney (Tuesday, 7 October 1617).

26 Tany, *High Priest*, p. 1.

in the upper bracket of tenants in the village.²⁷ Furthermore, unlike many of his fellow parishioners, John Totney could sign his own name, indicating a degree of literacy that probably enabled him to read fluently. As a literate member of the local community John Totney witnessed several significant land transactions and the appraisal of two inventories.²⁸ Through ties of kinship and friendship, moreover, John Totney appears to have had close links with the parish clergy and the church officer: the two inventories he helped appraise were those of the curate, Hugh Horberye, and the sexton, Nicholas Huddleston; his children were bequeathed money by the sexton's mother, Alice Hailes; his wife's relations were bequeathed money by the sexton's stepfather, John Hailes; and he had at one time borrowed 10s. from the rector Thomas Russell.²⁹ In addition, he held the office of churchwarden in 1607 (o.s.), 1608 (o.s.) and again in 1618 (o.s.).³⁰ John Totney then, while never one of the parish elite, seems to have ranked only a little below them in the social hierarchy of the local community.

In 1604 Sir Julius Adelmare (alias Caesar) bought the manor of South Hykeham and thereupon set about profiting from his investment. Through his agents he procured the release of tenants' holdings, purchased freehold land intermingled with his estate and began the process of converting arable land into pasture suitable for sheep and livestock rearing. Some of the local landholders soon followed suit and by 1625 the field at Haddington had been enclosed. Within a decade the lordship of South Hykeham had likewise been enclosed, the tillage turned to pasture. Another of Caesar's schemes to increase tenants' rates engendered parochial anxiety and opposition from a local notable, Sir John Meares. Claiming to act on his authority, Meares was able to forestall Caesar by leasing in 1606 the lordship of South Hykeham to the villagers for twenty-one years (an accepted tenurial arrangement). Even so, it remains unclear if the annual rent John Totney was charged at in 1607 represented that agreed upon by Meares and the tenants of South Hykeham or a new higher rate set by Caesar's stewards. The direct consequences for the Totney household are unknown, though in the years to come a lower rent may have enabled John Totney to initially spare his sons from the labour force, enabling them to have some basic education in preparation for an apprenticeship. While the grammar school at Lincoln was too far for a small child to walk, the nearby parish of Bracebridge had an unlicensed schoolmaster in 1607. By 1625 there also appears to have been a school at South Hykeham, so it seems likely that by the age of seven Thomas Totney would have learned to read and that by the age of nine, if his father could still manage without him, he would have learned to write.

27 Lincs AO, Brownlow muniments, 1/1/49/7 mem. 2; Lincs AO, Brownlow muniments, 1/1/49/24; Lincs AO, Brownlow muniments, 1/1/49/27.

28 Lincs AO, Brownlow muniments, 1/1/49/7 reverse; Lincs AO, Brownlow muniments, 1/1/49/9 reverse; Lincs AO, Brownlow muniments, 1/1/49/20 reverse; Lincs AO, Inv 117/490; Lincs AO, Inv 127/364.

29 Lincs AO, L.C.C. Wills 1615 fol. 582r; Lincs AO, L.C.C. Wills 1615 fol. 242r-v: Will of Alice Hayles of South Hykeham, widow (probate 8 September 1615), 'to John Totney his children xii d.'; Lincs AO, L.C.C. Wills 1615 fol. 146r-v; Lincs AO, Inv 130/191.

30 Lincs AO, Bishops' Transcripts, South Hykeham.

The incumbent of South Hykeham at the time of Thomas Totney's baptism was Thomas Russell, graduate of Christ's College, Cambridge, master of arts and a 'preacher of good behavioir'.³¹ Russell was also vicar of Bassingthorpe, where he had been presented in 1589 and was frequently non-resident. Among his curates for South Hykeham were Sir James Leeman (the 'Sir' was a pre-Reformation form of address for a priest) and Hugh Horberye, 'a mynister & noe a precher'.³² In October 1608 Russell resigned the benefice of Bassingthorpe and thereafter appears to have lived intermittently at South Hykeham for several years until his death. It is likely that under the tutelage of either Russell or one of his curates Thomas Totney's tuition would have been completed in South Hykeham church. Ideally, here in his youth, on Sundays and holy days, half an hour or more before evening prayer, Thomas Totney would have been instructed in the Ten Commandments, the Articles of the Belief, the Lord's Prayer and the catechism set forth in the Book of Common Prayer. By the age of sixteen he would have received his first communion, and this also seems to have been about the age at which church attendance became compulsory. In church Totney may have heard the sermons of Thomas Russell. Nothing is known of Russell's preaching style, the contents of his sermons or the impression he made upon his audience. There are no known works ascribed to Thomas Russell. And yet, while the type of ministration Totney received remains uncertain, there are strong indications of its character, for in an ecclesiastical court case Russell, along with several other ministers, testified against divers 'poynts of unsounde & dangerous doctrine' 'tendinge to popishe religione' vented by William Williams, rector of Asgarby, in a sermon delivered at Sleaford. These errors included the belief that 'noe man was eith[e]r elected or relected in the Cowncell of god but accordinge to workes foresene' and 'that the electe mighte fall awaye from grace totalle'.³³ In short, Russell appears to have been a Calvinist and a precisian, one for whom the doctrine of predestination had assumed a central importance. Thomas Russell died in the summer of 1625. At his death his possessions included several maps (mistaken initially for napkins) and books valued at 26*l.* 13*s.* 4*d.* – an extremely large clerical library for a rural area.³⁴

Russell was succeeded as rector of South Hykeham by Richard Thornton in August 1625. Within months of Thornton's presentation, John Totney had returned to Little Shelford with his family. He left unrepaired his part of the church yard fence.³⁵ In April 1626 John Totney witnessed his elder brother draw up his will. The following month one of his younger sons, John, died and was buried in Little

31 Lincs AO, L.C.3: Liber cleri 1611, fol. 24r.

32 Lincs AO, L.C.2: Liber cleri (no date), fol. 1r.

33 Lincs AO, Episcopal and Archdiaconal Courts, box 80, case papers against William Williams, rector of Asgarby (1599).

34 Lincs AO, Inv 130/191.

35 Lincs AO, Vj 26: Visitation of Lincoln 1623 and 1625, fol. 7r, a pointing hand in the margin emphasizes that John Totney had 'gone away'; see also, CUL, EDR K 22/unnnumbered: Dispute concerning the will of Thomas Thorne of Little Shelford (March 1636), deposition of John Totney, which describes him as having formerly lived in South Hykeham, Lincolnshire for twenty years.

Shelford.³⁶ Thomas though, did not remain with the family in Cambridgeshire. His father had used a contact to secure an apprenticeship for him with the Fishmongers' Company in London, and as a young and single man Thomas Totney formed part of the growing trend of those migrating to the burgeoning metropolis seeking work and fresh opportunities.

Apprenticeship: Thomas Totney

On Monday, 24 April 1626 at the Fishmongers' Hall in London, 'Thomas Totney sonne of John Totney of Shelford in the County of Cambridge husbandman', did 'put himselfe appr[enti]ce' to Thomas Letchworth, Fishmonger, for the term of eight years, beginning from Midsummer's day, 1625.³⁷ The Fishmongers were an ancient, prestigious and large livery company, one of the twelve Great London Companies, ranking fourth in the order of civic precedence. Their origin was dated to before the reign of Henry II. Their Hall, decorated with borrowed tapestries and paintings representing St. Peter and St. Dunstan, was located on Thames Street facing the river, a group of square looking timber roofed buildings set in an oblong-shaped plot of ground with two courtyards. In the early part of the seventeenth century company membership may have numbered about eight hundred. Some freemen were wealthy merchants occupying large houses in the City. In common with their brethren in other London companies, many of these men were actively engaged in civic politics and government, among them John Leman, specialist in buying and selling dairy produce and Lord Mayor of London in 1617.

How did Thomas Totney, the eldest surviving son of a younger son and husbandman, secure entry into one of the most reputable of London companies where an apprenticeship with a wealthy master could entail a premium of several hundred pounds? There were three routes into a city company and the freedom of London; redemption, patrimony and apprenticeship. Freedom by redemption was uncommon and usually expensive. It could be bestowed by favour, given as a gift for services rendered to the City government, or granted if a breach of the apprenticeship indenture had occurred.³⁸ An easier and cheaper way in was by patrimony, an option available to the legitimate London-born children of London freemen who had reached the age of twenty-one. This, for example, was the method by which Totney's master Thomas Letchworth had entered the Fishmongers' Company.³⁹ Far the most common way of getting into a city company, however, was through an apprenticeship – an agreed term of service fixed by a binding contract. In 1626 (o.s.), the year that Totney was apprenticed, the Fishmongers' Company enrolled 101 apprentices. Of these only

36 Cambs RO, CCE CW: Will of John Totney, drawn up 15 April 1626 (probate 7 April 1627); CUL, EDR H 3: Little Shelford, no. 26, burial of 'John ye sonne of John Totney J[u]n[ior]' (25 May 1626).

37 GL, MS 5576/1 fol. 64r.

38 Between 1615 (o.s.) and 1640 (o.s.) 57 freemen (6.6 per cent) were admitted to the Fishmongers' Company by redemption.

39 Between 1615 (o.s.) and 1640 (o.s.) 102 freemen (11.8 per cent) were admitted to the Fishmongers' Company by patrimony.